

Prime Minister's Oral Statement on Iran: 2 March 2026

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Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Oral Statement to the House of Commons on Iran.

With permission, Mr Speaker, I will update the House on the situation in Iran, the wider region, and the United Kingdom's response.

The United Kingdom was not involved in the initial US and Israeli strikes on Iran. That decision was deliberate. We believe that the best path for the region is through a negotiated settlement, one in which Iran agrees to abandon its aspiration to develop a nuclear weapon and ceases its destabilising activities across the Middle East. That has been the longstanding position of successive British governments.

President Trump has expressed his disagreement with our decision not to join the initial strikes. But it is my duty to judge what is in Britain's national interest, and that is the judgement I made. I stand by it.

However, Mr Speaker, it is now clear that Iran's outrageous response has become a threat to our partners, to our interests, and to our allies. Iran has lashed out across the region. It has launched hundreds of missiles and drones at countries which did not attack it, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Bahrain and Oman. And overnight, Hezbollah, Iran's proxy, carried out further attacks on Israel, seeking to escalate the conflict.

There are an estimated 300,000 British citizens across the region; residents, families, holidaymakers and others, many of whom are currently in airports and hotels where significant disruption is taking place. This is deeply concerning for the whole House and the whole country.

Our Armed Forces have also come under pressure. Last night, at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, an Iranian drone struck within 800 yards of British personnel. Thankfully, there were no casualties.

It is important for me to be clear: our bases in Cyprus have not been used by US forces for offensive strikes. A strike on RAF Akrotiri was not in response to any decision the UK has taken. Our assessment is that the drone was launched before our announcement. Iran's hostility toward Britain and our interests is long-standing, which is why our forces are always held at a high level of readiness.

Mr Speaker, it is very clear that the death of Iran's Supreme Leader has not moderated the regime. In fact, their actions are becoming even more reckless, destabilising and ruthless, deliberately planned to cause destruction not only to military targets but to civilian ones, with no regard for human life. That is the situation we face, and to which we must respond.

I have spoken to our partners, many of whom feel utterly outraged by Iran's attacks, particularly as they played no part in any strike against Iran. They have asked us to do more to help defend them.

And, Mr Speaker, my highest duty is to protect British lives. For several days now, British jets, Typhoons and F-35s, have been deployed as part of coalition defensive operations. They have already successfully intercepted multiple threats, including drones heading toward a coalition base in Iraq housing UK personnel. I want to pay tribute to the bravery of our servicemen and women, who put

themselves in harm's way to keep others safe. The whole House will join me in expressing our gratitude.

But it is simply not possible to shoot down every Iranian missile and drone once they are launched. The only way to prevent these attacks is to destroy the missiles at source, in their storage depots or at their launchers.

The United States requested permission to use British bases for that specific, limited defensive purpose. They have the capabilities required to prevent Iranian missiles from killing civilians, British nationals, or our allies in countries that played no part in the initial strike.

To be clear: the use of British bases is strictly limited to agreed defensive purposes. The UK has not joined US offensive operations. Our action is rooted in the principle of collective self-defence of longstanding friends and in the protection of British lives. We have published a summary of our legal position, which sets this out clearly. We will keep this decision under review.

France and Germany are also prepared to support the US in preventing Iran's ability to launch further missile and drone attacks. I have been in close contact with President Macron and Chancellor Merz, as well as leaders across the region.

Mr Speaker, the Iranian regime has long brought horror to the world. Its actions have destabilised the region for decades, sponsored terrorism worldwide, targeted British shipping in the Red Sea, and supported Russia's attack on Ukraine. Here in the UK, Iran has directed threats toward dissidents and the Jewish community. Over the last year alone, Iran-backed plots against people in the UK have been disrupted. We must be clear about the threat that Iran poses.

This is a dangerous moment. Our first thoughts are with British citizens in the region—friends, family members and constituents. I recognise the deep concern felt by those with loved ones caught up in these events.

We are asking all British nationals in the region to register their presence with the FCDO so we can provide them with the best possible support. Across much of the region, airspace remains severely restricted. Local authorities in several countries are advising individuals to shelter in place.

We are deploying rapid-response teams to support British nationals. We are in close contact with our partners, including in the UAE, given the possibility of British nationals needing to leave from there. We are exploring all options for helping our citizens return home as swiftly and safely as possible. Ministers are also engaging directly with airlines.

We are also in touch with community groups across the UK, including Muslim and Jewish organisations, and we are ensuring that sensitive sites have appropriate security.

Mr Speaker, the situation in the region is evolving rapidly. I will continue to update the House.

We have learned from the mistakes of the past. We were not involved in the initial strikes, and we will not join offensive US strikes. But in the face of Iran's dangerous escalation, we will defend British nationals and support the collective self-defence of our allies. That is our duty to the British people.

It is the best way to prevent further escalation, to protect British interests and British lives. That is what this Government has done, and I commend this statement to the House.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-oral-statement-on-iran-2-march-2026>