PM remarks on the situation in the Middle East: 5 March 2026

5.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

The Prime Minister's remarks at a press conference on the situation in the Middle East.

This morning, I chaired another Cobra meeting…

As we continue to coordinate our response to the situation in Iran and the Middle East.

I know that people are worried sick…

About their family and friends who are caught up in this…

About the impact on our lives… and our economy…

And about the potential for even greater escalation.

They can hardly believe that yet again…

We are seeing missiles and drones falling…

And civilians in the firing line across the region.

So I want to reassure the British public about the action we're taking.

While the region has been plunged into chaos…

My focus is providing calm, level-headed leadership in the national interest.

That means deploying our military and diplomatic strength…

To protect our people.

And it means having the strength to stand firm by our values and our principles –

No matter the pressure to do otherwise.

The longstanding British position…

Is that the best way forward for the region and the world…

Is a negotiated settlement with Iran, where they give up their nuclear ambitions.

That's why I took the decision…

That the UK would not join the initial strikes on Iran by the US and Israel.

That decision was deliberate.

It was in the national interest – and I stand by it.

But when Iran started attacking countries around the Gulf and the wider region –

The situation changed.

Iran has now fired drones and missiles at ten countries that did not attack them.

These are allies of the UK…

Where we have hundreds of thousands of British people,

As well as British military personnel.

Our number one priority is protecting our people.

That's why, long before the US and Israeli action last weekend…

We had already deployed additional military capabilities to the region to defend our interests –

And I want to pay tribute to our brilliant Armed Forces.

Throughout January and February, we were moving defensive assets to Cyprus and Qatar:

Fighter jets,

Air defence missiles,

Advanced radar,

And systems to take down drones…

To ensure we were in a heightened state of readiness in advance of any conflict beginning.

When the strikes began on Saturday…

We immediately put those jets into the sky…

On a mission to protect our people and our allies in the region –

And that is what they have done…

Flying over Cyprus and the wider region…

Shooting down multiple drones –

At least one of which was headed towards a base housing British military personnel.

Our jets were in the sky last night over Jordan, Qatar and other partners –

Refuelling in the air to prolong their mission.

And we're constantly resupplying our jets and missile stores.

And we are responding to requests from allies in the region for further help.

I can announce today,

That we are sending four additional Typhoon jets to join our squadron in Qatar…

To strengthen our defensive operations in Qatar and across the region.

Wildcat Helicopters with anti-drone capabilities are arriving in Cyprus tomorrow.

The Defence Secretary is on the ground in Cyprus right now,

Coordinating our work and meeting our brave service men and women.

We're deploying HMS Dragon to the Mediterranean.

And we have allowed the US to use British bases…

To conduct defensive operations…

To take out Iranian missiles before they are fired at our people and our allies.

We will maintain this shield over British people in the region and our allies.

We are working to strengthen it every day.

And we're working as fast as possible to get our people out.

As of today, over 140,000 individuals in the region have registered their presence –

Enabling us to get them the information and the support that they need.

We have Rapid Deployment Teams on the ground in Oman and Saudi Arabia.

And our consular teams are helping hundreds of the most vulnerable individuals.

Despite airspace closures,

We are working around the clock with airlines, travel companies and governments to open safe routes home.

More than 4,000 people have now arrived back in the United Kingdom on commercial flights from the UAE –

Including vulnerable Brits identified by our teams.

A further 7 flights are due to leave the UAE for the UK today.

And I can report that our first charter flight from Oman took off a few minutes ago.

We will lay on additional charter flights in the coming days.

British Airways is putting on daily flights from Oman.

And we will keep working with all our partners…

To increase the speed and capacity of this airlift.

I want to be very clear –

This is a huge undertaking.

It is one of the biggest operations of its kind…

Many times bigger than the evacuation from Afghanistan.

It is not going to happen overnight.

But we will not stop until our people are safe.

I also want to say a word about the economic impact.

Iran is targeting oil and gas facilities in the Gulf…

And tankers in the Straits of Hormuz –

Trying to inflict economic pain around the world.

So we will continue to work with the industries affected and our allies to respond to any impact.

This is where the long-term changes that we are delivering for the British people are paying off.

We have the right plan for defence –

Delivering the biggest increase in defence spending since the Cold War…

To strengthen our Armed Forces and keep people safe.

We have the right plan for our economy.

As the Chancellor said on Tuesday, we are sticking to that plan…

So that we can cut energy bills –

And keep helping families with the cost of living.

We also have the right plan for our energy supplies –

Building up clean British energy like never before –

Decreasing our dependence on volatile international markets…

And creating the energy security and independence we need.

Faced with this new geopolitical crisis…

The sad fact is that some will try to use it to divide us.

That's why the government is reaching out to communities across the United Kingdom –

Jewish and Muslim alike…

Making sure that communities and places of worship…

Have appropriate protective security in place.

But, look – as a nation…

We should come together in this moment.

Those citizens that are stuck in the region –

Scared and in need of help…

Come from all backgrounds.

The Armed Forces who protect them…

Come from all backgrounds too.

We are united by our common humanity –

And our love of this country.

This conflict could continue for some time.

So I want you to know that your government is resolute in our response – at home and abroad.

We will do everything we can to protect British lives…

Uphold British values…

And safeguard the national interest.

Thank you.

https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-remarks-on-the-situation-in-the-middle-east-5-march-2026