

The Greater Middle East Conflict

The Impact of Explosive Weapons on Civilian Infrastructure, Essential Services, and the Human Consequences

28 FEBRUARY TO 31 MARCH 2026

Since the United States and Israel launched coordinated military strikes on Iranian military, nuclear and strategic infrastructure on 28 February 2026, which triggered an Iran response across Israel and the Greater Middle East, Insecurity Insight open source monitoring recorded a total of 208 impacts on essential civilian services from remote airstrikes in 10 countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Syria and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Since then, sustained violence through the use of explosive weapons has continued not only to hit military targets, but has impacted civilian infrastructure, with significant disruption to essential services necessary to ensure aid, education, food and water, and health care delivery. Emerging amid already high regional tensions, the conflict is driving a deepening humanitarian crisis and placing severe pressure on civilian protection, humanitarian access, and regional stability.

Number of recorded incidents where explosive weapons impacted health, education, aid and food systems, 28 February-31 March 2026				
	Health System	Education System	Aid Operations	Food and Water Systems
Iran	59	32	13	9
Lebanon	58	16	13	2
Israel	0	4	0	0
Greater Middle East*	11	5	0	11

*Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, oPt, Syria and UAE

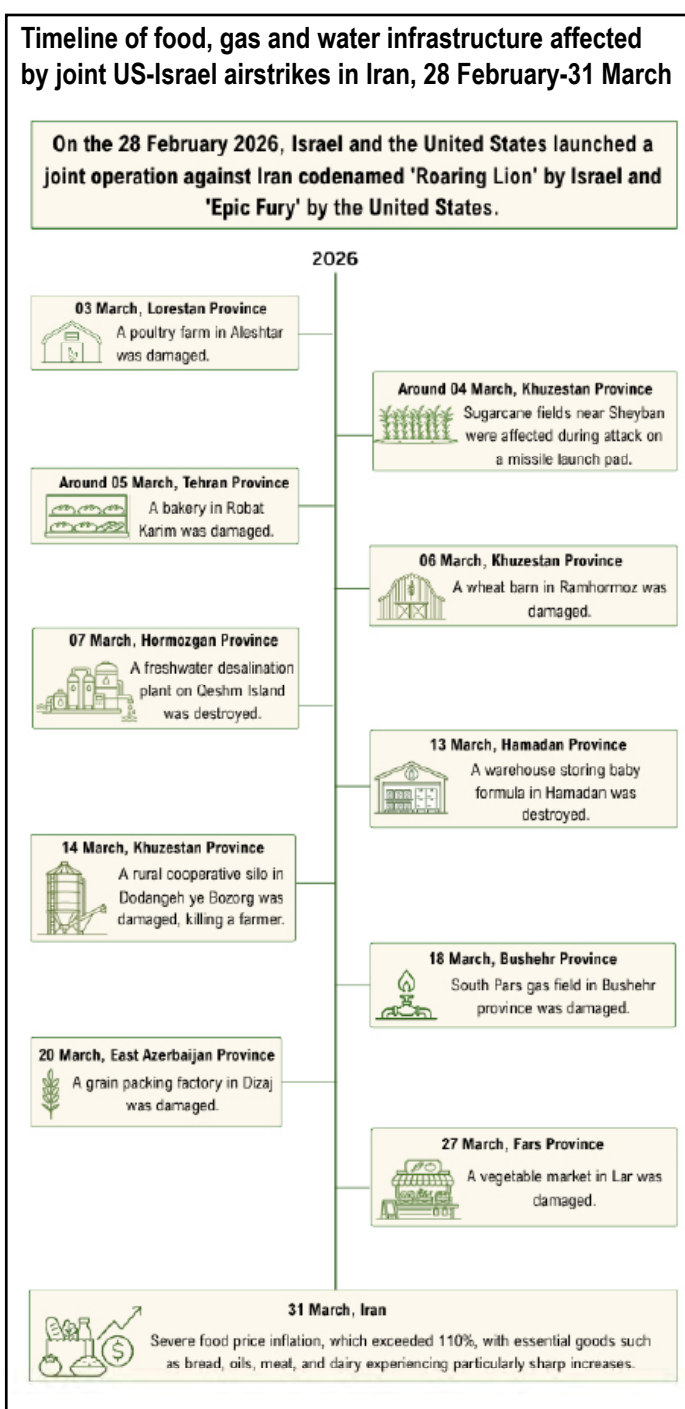
The publicly available incidents are not a full account of all incidents. Reporting restrictions are placing limitations on reporting and verification. The identified effects are not necessarily representative of all such reported cases where the use of explosive weapons caused civilian harm and damage to critical infrastructure. Instead, they are a sample of the types of harm that was reported. This report aims to highlight the scale and patterns of disruption affecting civilian populations and essential services.

Since 28 February, Insecurity Insight has monitored how explosive weapons have affected the delivery of aid, education, food and water, and health care across Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and the Greater Middle East region. **This brief focuses on how food and water security in Iran has been affected since the start of hostilities.** Future briefs will look at other sectors, patterns and/or incidents, and impact.

Focus: The impact of hostilities on food and water security in Iran

Food security becomes fragile during armed conflict as disruptions to supply chains, livelihoods, and infrastructure can rapidly restrict access to food and heighten the risk of hunger among affected populations. Under international humanitarian law (IHL), objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including food systems, should be protected, damage to them can have severe humanitarian consequences. Insecurity Insight’s monitoring of conflict events affecting Iran’s food and water system identified a total of nine events where markets, food and water production or storage infrastructure was damaged or destroyed.

Israeli-U.S. airstrikes and the wider conflict have intensified pressures on Iran’s food system, with the most severe effects stemming from disruption to trade, supply chains and prices rather than direct damage to the domestic food production. While airstrikes have damaged food infrastructures including farms, vegetable markets, a grain-packing facility, a sugarcane field, a bakery and a wheat barn, the broader and more immediate impact has been on import dependency and affordability, highlighting how the principles of protection of vital civilian services in conflict need to be applied to complex global food dependency systems.



Iran relies heavily on **imports** for key staples including corn, rice, soybeans, and vegetable oils, making it vulnerable to disruptions in maritime trade routes. Instability in and around the Strait of Hormuz has constrained shipping and forced greater reliance on overland corridors via Russia, Syria and Turkey, increasing transport costs and placing supply chains under external control. At the same time, damage to infrastructure, energy systems, and logistics networks complicates distribution within the country. For instance, the 18 March attacks on the **South Pars** gas field - the largest in the world and the biggest source of domestic energy in Iran - disrupted around **12%** of the country's gas production.

These pressures have translated into food price **inflation** in Iran, exceeding 110% by 31 March, with essential goods such as bread, dairy, oils and meat experiencing sharp increases. Rising energy and fertiliser costs linked to the conflict are expected to reduce domestic **agricultural output**, likely worsening supply constraints over time. More broadly, economic contraction and trade disruption are **amplifying shortages** and volatility across the food system, undermining food import, distribution and access - with the most acute impacts likely to emerge progressively as reduced capacity feeds through into sustained shortages.

Water systems in Iran are being pushed closer to crisis by the combined effects of conflict and long-standing structural scarcity. Water infrastructure was directly affected by Israeli-U.S. airstrikes: a **desalination plant** on Qeshm Island was damaged on 7 March, cutting water access to around 30 villages. Drainage channels were reportedly burned following Israeli airstrikes on oil depots on the outskirts of Tehran. Iran had already endured five years of drought, groundwater depletion, and mismanagement, with experts warning of **"water bankruptcy"** even before the escalation of hostilities. By late 2025, Tehran was nearing "Day Zero," with reservoirs supplying around **nine million people** running dry. The conflict has deepened Iran's vulnerability to prolonged water stress in a country already ranked the **14th most water-stressed** globally.

Key patterns identified in other sectors in Iran

Severe and widespread impact on health systems: Health facilities in Tehran and Iran's eastern and southern coastal provinces were repeatedly damaged or destroyed by Israeli-U.S. aircraft strikes, with health workers killed and injured, increasing pressure on remaining staff, and undermining continuity and quality of services. The loss of skilled personnel erodes health system resilience and contributes to long-term impacts, including PTSD, moral distress, and workforce attrition.

Emergency responders repeatedly affected: Ambulances, emergency service buildings, and response teams in Iran were repeatedly struck by Israeli-U.S. aircraft strikes, while first responders were killed and injured during rescue operations, undermining health providers' ability to deliver rapid emergency medical responses, increasing the risk of preventable deaths.

Students' access to education affected: Schools and universities in Iran were damaged by Israeli-U.S. airstrikes, including the devastating suspected U.S. tomahawk missile strike on Shajareh Tayyebah School for Girls in Minab city, that killed at least 165 students. Nationwide closures cut students - particularly those from at-risk groups and with special needs - off from essential therapeutic support and social structures, while increasing pressure on families to balance childcare, education, and work, with knock-on impacts on student wellbeing and parental livelihoods.

Economic and regional pressures intensify humanitarian risk: High inflation, sharply rising food prices, and disrupted trade routes through the Strait of Hormuz increase dependence on costly overland supply chains, while cumulative damage to infrastructure means shortages and humanitarian impacts could increase over time.

The impact of hostilities on food and water security in the Greater Middle East

There is no strong information of widespread food shortages and insecurity within **Israel**, though disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz and global fertiliser markets are pushing up food prices and agricultural inputs worldwide, which feeds into higher prices domestically. While food remains available, affordability and price stability are becoming more fragile. More noticeable is the effects on attacks on water desalination plants. Almost **75%** of Israel's water is obtained from 400 desalination plants across the Gulf region, which amounts to about 90% of water used for the country's irrigation and other agricultural purposes. Disruptions in this supply could interrupt irrigation cycles and lead to irreversible crop withering and cause vulnerability in livestock with the possibility of a spike in the price of meat and dairy products, as seen during the **droughts** in 2025.

Israeli airstrikes in southern **Lebanon** caused damage to civilian commercial infrastructure, including restaurants in Toul, Nabatieh governorate, on 5 March and shops and supermarkets in Tyre, South governorate, on 2 March, with fires reported and emergency responders deployed. These incidents occurred amid widespread airstrikes, mass evacuation orders across southern Lebanon, and large-scale displacement, forcing households to abandon livelihoods, including farming, likely increasing their reliance on aid and market access. Israeli airstrikes also damaged key transport infrastructure, including bridges, further disrupting movement and access to markets, often **isolating** rural areas.

Food and water security in **Gulf countries** is under increased strain as supply chains and critical infrastructure are disrupted. Attacks on liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities - essential for producing nitrogen-based fertilisers - compound the crisis, with **QatarEnergy** halting LNG production on 2 March following Iranian airstrikes. Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia play a **central role** in global fertiliser exports, and disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz** drive delays and sharp cost increases: prices of urea spiked by **19%** within a week. Iranian airstrikes on or near desalination plants, like in **Bahrain** on 8 March, highlight how water infrastructure has been drawn into the conflict.

These disruptions have serious regional and global consequences, as rising fertiliser costs increase food production expenses and threaten supply worldwide. Gulf countries remain highly vulnerable due to their **reliance** on food imports such as wheat and on water desalination. Around 100 million people **depend** on desalination plants, accounting for 90% of drinking water in Kuwait, 86% in Oman, and 70% in Saudi Arabia. If the conflict persists, the combined pressures on food and water systems could escalate into a broader global food and humanitarian crisis.

These combined impacts significantly undermine food security by disrupting local food systems at multiple levels and constrain both availability and affordability of food, increasing the risk of food insecurity among already vulnerable populations.

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The incidents reported in this briefing are neither comprehensive nor independently verified, but instead provide a snapshot of how explosive weapons have affected the delivery of aid, education, food and water, and health care across Iran, Lebanon, and the wider Middle East. Data is continuously updated and numbers may change if new information is made publicly available. Subscribe to our [Middle East](#) mailing list.

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