

Special Update

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Israel-Iran Conflict: Situation Report

Overview

The ongoing armed conflict between Israel and Iran, which began on June 13, 2025, marks a significant escalation in the long-standing tensions between the two nations. Codenamed "Operation Rising Lion" by Israel, the conflict was initiated with Israeli airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear facilities, military infrastructure, and key leadership, with the stated goal of preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Iran responded with retaliatory missile and drone attacks under "Operation True Promise III," targeting Israeli military, intelligence, and residential areas. As of June 18, 2025, the conflict has entered its sixth day, with both sides continuing to exchange deadly strikes, raising fears of a broader regional war.

Background and Causes

The Iran-Israel conflict has roots in decades of hostility, transitioning from a covert proxy war to direct confrontations. Following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Iran adopted an anti-Israel stance, supporting groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, which Israel considers existential threats. Israel's concerns center on Iran's nuclear program, which it views as a direct threat to its security. In May 2025, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported Iran had amassed 409 kg of 60% enriched uranium, close to weapons-grade, prompting heightened Israeli fears. On June 10, 2025, U.S. Central Command commander Michael Kurilla warned that Iran was "weeks away" from nuclear weapons capability, and the IAEA declared Iran non-compliant with nuclear obligations, a first in 20 years. These developments, coupled with the collapse of U.S.-Iran nuclear talks, prompted Israel's preemptive strikes on June 12, 2025.

Military Developments

Israeli Operations

Israel's "Operation Rising Lion" began with a large-scale aerial assault on June 12, targeting over 100 sites across Iran, including the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility, military bases, and command centers. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and Mossad coordinated the strikes, which killed senior Iranian military figures, including General Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, and General Hossein Salami, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Israel claims to have gained aerial superiority over Tehran and has destroyed over 120 Iranian missile launchers, significantly degrading Iran's retaliatory capabilities. Strikes have also targeted oil and gas infrastructure and Iran's state broadcaster, with a notable attack on June 16 disrupting a live broadcast. The IDF has avoided targeting operational nuclear reactors like Bushehr to prevent nuclear accidents, though damaged centrifuges at Natanz may pose low-level radiation risks to personnel.

Iranian Response

Iran's "Operation True Promise III" began on June 13 with ballistic missile and drone attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets, including Tel Aviv and Haifa. Iran's advanced Haj Qassem missile has proven capable of evading Israel's Iron Dome defenses, causing significant damage. Iranian strikes have killed at least 24 civilians in Israel and injured around 600, with notable attacks on a residential building in Tamra and a power plant in Haifa. Iran has also threatened U.S., U.K., and French military assets if they intervene, though it has avoided direct attacks on U.S. bases to prevent escalation. Iranian cyberattacks have been limited, with some disruptions to ATMs reported but no significant cyber operations.

Casualties and Humanitarian Impact

The conflict has resulted in significant loss of life and infrastructure damage. Iran's health ministry reports over 224 deaths, predominantly civilians, with more than 1,400 injured, including 60 deaths in a single strike on a 14-storey apartment block in Tehran. In Israel, at least 24 civilians have been killed and nearly 600 injured since the conflict began. Both sides have targeted residential areas, exacerbating civilian suffering.

In Iran, a lack of shelters and air-raid sirens has left citizens vulnerable, with many fleeing Tehran. In Israel, sirens and shelter warnings have been frequent, disrupting daily life. The conflict has also stranded international tourists in Israel, with evacuations underway via sea routes.

Diplomatic and Regional Implications

As of June 18, 2025, the Israel-Iran war continues with no immediate resolution in sight. Israel's aggressive campaign has significantly weakened Iran's military and nuclear infrastructure but has not eliminated its capabilities. Iran's retaliatory strikes have caused substantial damage in Israel, though its response has been constrained by losses. The conflict's trajectory depends on U.S. involvement and the willingness of both sides to pursue diplomacy. The humanitarian toll and regional instability underscore the urgent need for de-escalation, though current rhetoric suggests prolonged hostilities.

Strategic Analysis

The conflict represents a "threshold war," where Israel aims to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability, while Iran seeks to preserve its program as a deterrent. Israel's strikes have damaged but not destroyed key facilities like Fordow, and experts warn Iran could reconstitute its nuclear program within a year or two at secret sites. Iran's missile capabilities, while degraded, remain potent, and its reliance on advanced missiles like the Haj Qassem poses challenges to Israel's defenses. The risk of escalation into a broader regional conflict remains high, particularly if the U.S. joins Israel with advanced weaponry like the Massive Ordnance Penetrator to target fortified sites.

Conclusion

The war has derailed diplomatic efforts, with U.S.-Iran nuclear talks scheduled for June 15 canceled after Iran withdrew, citing ongoing Israeli attacks. Iran has signaled willingness to resume talks if Israel halts its strikes, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected ceasefire calls, emphasizing the goal of eliminating Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities. U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed mixed signals, calling for a deal while warning Iran against attacking U.S. assets. The U.S. has deployed additional warships, including the USS Nimitz, to the region but insists it is not a party to the conflict. Regional actors, including Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Yemen's Houthi rebels, have threatened retaliation but have not yet acted decisively.

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