



BRISMES

British Society for Middle Eastern Studies

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Statement by the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Council on the US-Israeli Aggression on Iran and Bombing of Lebanon

The British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Council of Trustees expresses deep concern at the ongoing escalation of violence across the Middle East and the grave human consequences that have followed. We condemn the current United States–Israel military aggression against Iran as an illegal war that threatens regional and international peace.

The human cost of the current escalation is devastating. At the time of writing, reports indicate that more than 1,200 people have been killed in Iran and over 3 million displaced. In Lebanon, since the beginning of March, at least 800 people have been killed and 800,000 displaced. Israel has also announced its intention to occupy Southern Lebanon and prevent residents from returning to their homes - actions that could amount to ethnic cleansing.

Iranian retaliatory missile strikes have caused deaths and injuries across Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Iraq, Syria and Israel. Meanwhile, Israel has again closed all Gaza crossings, driving up food prices and increasing fears that famine will return. These developments underline the severe risk of a wider regional war and the immense toll such a conflict is already taking on civilian populations.

We deplore the loss of life across the region and warn of the dangerous consequences of continued escalation for peace and stability.

In particular, we condemn the bombing of educational infrastructure, which constitutes a war crime. On 1 March, the US bombed the Minab Primary School in Iran, killing more than 170 people, mostly children as well as their teachers. On 12 March, Israel bombed the Lebanese University in Beirut, killing two academics and destroying a learning site that serves thousands of students. We further condemn the targeting of other civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and cultural and historical sites, as well as the broader pattern of attacks that have caused widespread civilian suffering and environmental harms.

Western powers have long believed that they can shape and dominate the Middle East through military force. Yet history has repeatedly demonstrated the failure of this approach. The US-led war and occupation of Iraq after 2003 stands as a stark example: rather than bringing security or democracy, it produced years of devastation, loss of life, political fragmentation, and also led to the rise of the Islamic State.

Legal scholars and experts have warned that the past two and a half years of Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza have severely eroded the foundations of international law. Israel has not been held



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accountable for the crimes it has committed, and Western governments have failed to take meaningful measures to stop Israel's genocide. Endorsement of Trump's so-called peace plan - which subjects Gaza to colonial-like rule and deprives Palestinians of any meaningful participation in determining the future of their country - constitutes a continuation of the genocide under the banner of ceasefire and reconstruction. The absence of consequences has contributed to the normalization of the mass killing of civilians and attacks on civilian infrastructure as instruments of war.

We support the right to self-determination and freedom of the Iranian people and of all other people in the region and beyond. However, liberation from authoritarianism, corruption, and injustice cannot be imposed by Western bombing campaigns or externally-engineered regime change. The peoples of the Middle East have the right to live free from foreign military intervention.

We therefore call for an immediate end to the United States–Israel bombing of Iran, the Israeli bombing and invasion of Lebanon, a full arms embargo on Israel, and an end to Israel's military occupation and siege of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

BRISMES Council
18 March 2026