

TODAY'S MEDIA TRENDS

IRINN

MARCH 12, 2026

THE G D E L T P R O J E C T

IRAN 2026: THE "RAMADAN WAR" & THE NEW ERA UNDER MOJTABA KHAMENEI

THE PIVOTAL JUNCTURE: SUCCESSION UNDER FIRE (MARCH 2026)



10th Ramadan



SAYYID MOJTABA KHAMENEI:
3rd SUPREME LEADER
Rapid Transition by Assembly of Experts. Vows "Total Continuity" of Resistance Doctrine & Retribution.

THE NEW HARDLINE

THE GEOPOLITICAL BATTLEFIELD: OPERATION TRUE PROMISE 4 & THE HORMUZ CHOKEPOINT



IRAN'S DOMESTIC FRONT: MOBILIZATION & RESILIENCE



Weaponization of Martyrdom used to re-energize support. Quds Day Rallies expected as human shields. Government emphasizes "Food Security" despite 21,000+ hit locations.

US DOMESTIC BLOWBACK: POLITICAL & FINANCIAL STRAIN



Daily Cost est. \$2.8 Billion. Internal confirmation of Minab culpability triggers impeachment calls. Senators question war rationale.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT: THE LONG WAR TRAJECTORY

SHORT TERM (1-4 WEEKS)



Massive Quds Day Missile Wave Imminent.

Diplomatic push on civilian casualty narrative.

MEDIUM TERM (1-6 MONTHS)



Global Shipping Re-routes = Massive Inflation. Mojtaba Consolidates Power/Purges Moderates. "Unseen Fronts" may open.

LONG TERM GOAL (1-5 YEARS)



"War of Liberation." Objective: Total Withdrawal of US Forces from Bahrain/Qatar. Iran as Post-US Regional Hegemon.

IMPLICATION: THE HORMUZ BLOCKADE IS AN OPERATIONAL REALITY. A PERMANENT SHIFT IN GLOBAL TRADE & POWER DYNAMICS IS UNDERWAY.

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IRAN ENTERS A NEW ERA UNDER SUPREME LEADER MOJTABA KHAMENEI AMID AN ESCALATING REGIONAL WAR WITH THE US AND ISRAEL CHARACTERIZED BY THE CLOSURE OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ AND MASSIVE MISSILE EXCHANGES.

DAY-AT-A-GLANCE

March 12, 2026, marks a pivotal juncture in the history of the Islamic Republic, as the country navigates a high-stakes leadership transition in the middle of a hot war with the United States and Israel. Following the martyrdom of the previous Supreme Leader (Ali Khamenei) on the 10th of Ramadan, the Assembly of Experts has formally elected [Sayyid Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei](#) as the third Leader of the Revolution. In his first public address, the new Leader signaled total continuity with his predecessor's "Resistance" doctrine, vowing to extract reparations from the United States and maintaining a hardline stance on the [closure of the Strait of Hormuz](#) until the "shadow of war" is permanently lifted.

On the military front, the "Ramadan War" has entered its 13th day with the launch of "Operation True Promise 4." The IRGC and regional allies have executed waves 37 through 42 of missile and drone strikes targeting Tel Aviv, Haifa, and several US regional headquarters, including [Mina Salman in Bahrain](#) and Al-Azraq in Jordan. A central narrative theme today is the "Minab School Massacre," in which Iran alleges 168 children were killed by US Tomahawk missiles; this event is being leveraged to drive domestic mobilization for the upcoming Quds Day rallies and to fuel [criticism of the Trump administration](#) within the US Congress.

Economically, the global energy market is facing a systemic shock. Despite the release of hundreds of millions of barrels from US and international strategic reserves, Brent crude has [surpassed \\$100 per barrel](#), with some reports indicating spikes as high as \$120. Iranian analysts suggest that if the Hormuz blockade persists through the Iranian New Year (Nowruz), a total [collapse of global financial markets](#) is imminent. Domestically, the government is attempting to project a sense of "business as usual," with officials emphasizing food security and the stability of basic commodity supplies despite the ongoing aerial bombardments.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

• Leadership Succession and Stability

- The Assembly of Experts has officially appointed Sayyid Mojtaba Khamenei as the third Supreme Leader, emphasizing a [seamless transition of power](#) during a national crisis.
- The new Leader issued a 7-point communique addressing the military, the "Axis of Resistance," and neighboring states, while vowing [retribution for the previous Leader's](#) martyrdom.
- Massive public "allegiance" (Bay'ah) ceremonies were reported across the country, including among [Sunni scholars and ethnic tribes](#) in border regions to project national unity.

• Operation True Promise 4 Escalation

- IRGC forces launched Wave 42 of missile strikes, utilizing hypersonic **Fattah** and heavy **Khorramshahr** missiles against [targets in Tel Aviv](#) and US bases.
- The IRGC Navy conducted strikes on the [US 5th Fleet headquarters](#) at Mina Salman, Bahrain, claiming the destruction of drone depots and fuel reservoirs.
- Hezbollah initiated "Operation Asf al-Ma'kul," launching over 150 missiles and drones against Israeli [industrial-military complexes](#) in Kiryat Shmona and Nahariya.

• The Hormuz Blockade and Energy Crisis

- The Strait of Hormuz remains closed to "US aggressors and their partners," with Iran claiming total [maritime control of the waterway](#).
- Global oil prices have stabilized above \$100/barrel, as the US release of 170 million barrels of strategic reserves [failed to dampen the market](#) panic.
- Reports emerged of [attacks on US-linked tankers](#) (STS company) near the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr, further complicating regional logistics.

• US Domestic Political Blowback

- Internal US military investigations reportedly confirmed US culpability in the [Minab school strike](#), leading to calls for the impeachment of President Trump and the firing of the Secretary of Defense.
- US Senators including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren are quoted as [questioning the rationale](#) for the war and the escalating daily cost, estimated at \$2.8 billion.
- Iran claims over 113 billion dollars in [US military expenditures](#) were incurred in the first week of the conflict alone.

KEY GOVERNANCE TOPICS

Elite Politics & Leadership Dynamics: The transition to Mojtaba Khamenei is framed as a "rejuvenation" of the leadership (described as ["Khamenei the Young"](#)). The political establishment, including the Assembly of Experts and the heads of the three branches of government, has rallied around him to prevent a vacuum [during the war](#).

Energy Security & Financial Statecraft:

Iran is weaponizing its geographical advantage over the Strait of Hormuz. Analysts note that while Iran's oil exports are curtailed, it has maintained its [non-oil trade through northern corridors](#) (Sarakhs) and land routes to Russia and China. Conversely, the US is depleting its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) at a [rate of 400 million barrels](#) to prevent a domestic economic meltdown.

Diplomatic Engagement: In his first message, Mojtaba Khamenei explicitly warned neighboring states hosting US bases (Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, Jordan). He demanded the [immediate closure of these facilities](#), stating that while Iran seeks friendship with its neighbors, it will continue to strike US assets on their soil if they are used [for attacks against Iran](#).

Domestic Stability & Social Order: To counter internal unrest, the government is highlighting "National Unity" and the presence of [volunteer Basij forces](#) in neighborhood checkpoints. Major urban centers are dealing with significant damage to [civilian infrastructure](#) (21,000 locations hit, 160 medical centers, 69 schools), which the state is using to mobilize public anger against the "US-Zionist" coalition.

Economic Security: Vice President Arif and other officials are conducting field visits to ensure [food supply chains](#) are functioning for the upcoming Nowruz and Eid al-Fitr holidays. The government claims to have 7 times more food production [than in 1979](#), attempting to preempt fears of famine.

LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

Legislative activity centered on the emergency transition of power and the legal

framework for war-time governance and international lawfare.

• BILLS DISCUSSED/DEBATED:

- **Succession Decree:** The Assembly of Experts finalized the [legal vote](#) appointing Mojtaba Khamenei, bypassing the temporary leadership council.
- **Reparations Law:** The new Leader has mandated a policy of ["compulsory compensation,"](#) asserting that Iran will seize US assets or destroy equivalent value if war reparations for infrastructure damage are not paid.
- **Medical Exemption/Benefits:** A decree was issued for [free medical care](#) and financial benefits for all "veterans and victims" of the current aerial bombardments.

• HEARINGS & PRESS EVENTS:

- **Assembly of Experts Communique:** Announced the results of the [leadership vote](#) via state television to ensure national awareness and continuity.
- **MFA Briefing:** Spokesman Esmail Baghaei addressed the [German Foreign Minister's](#) visit to Israel, accusing Berlin of standing on the "wrong side of history" and ignoring the massacre of children in Minab.
- **Judiciary Presser:** Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje'i ordered that judicial services [must not be delayed](#) despite the war, particularly regarding the payment of year-end wages and pensions.

DEEP DIVE: TRENDS AND THEMES

- **The Weaponization of Martyrdom**

The state is utilizing the martyrdom of the Supreme Leader not as a point of weakness, but as a ["re-energizing" catalyst](#). The narrative suggests that Ali Khamenei "willed" his death on the 10th of Ramadan, and Mojtaba's ascension is a fulfillment of a "divine" plan. This is coupled with the [Minab school tragedy](#), which is being framed as the "Karbala of our time," ensuring that even secular or nationalist citizens feel a moral obligation to support the war effort.

- **Asymmetric Economic Warfare via Maritime Blockade**

Iran's strategy has shifted from tactical maritime threats to a total blockade of the "Global Energy Heart." Analysts are now openly discussing the ["collapse of the Dollar"](#) as a primary war aim. By holding the Strait of Hormuz, Iran is forcing the West to choose between a total regional withdrawal or a global depression. The Iranian perspective is that the US can afford a war, but it cannot [afford \\$120 oil](#) for more than a few weeks.

- **Information Warfare and Media Censorship**

Reports highlight a "media blackout" within Israel and US-aligned states. Iranian commentators claim that while IRINN shows the damage in Tehran, Israeli authorities are [threatening journalists](#) to prevent the true scale of the "True Promise 4" damage from being revealed. This "transparency vs. censorship" narrative is a core psychological warfare tool used to [demoralize the Israeli public](#), who are reportedly living in shelters due to constant "alarm-to-alarm" sirens.

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

Short Term (1-4 Weeks): The immediate focus is Quds Day (March 13/22 Esfand). The government expects ["millions" in the streets](#), which may serve as a human shield for government assets. Expect a massive missile wave tonight or tomorrow to coincide with these rallies. The US and Israel are likely to intensify strikes on IRGC launch sites to prevent this show of force. The "Minab School" narrative will be pushed in [international forums](#) to hinder further US Congressional funding for the war.

Medium Term (1-6 Months): If the Hormuz blockade persists, the global shipping industry will likely re-route entirely, leading to massive inflation in Europe and North America. Mojtaba Khamenei will likely consolidate power by purging any "moderate" elements who suggest a [premature ceasefire](#). The "Axis of Resistance" will move toward deeper operational integration, potentially opening ["unseen fronts"](#) as alluded to in the Leader's communique.

Long Term (1-5 Years): This conflict is being positioned as the "War of Liberation" for the

Middle East. If Iran survives the initial months without a regime collapse, it will emerge as the [hegemonic power](#) in a post-US West Asia. The total withdrawal of US forces from the 5th Fleet headquarters in Bahrain and bases in Qatar is now a [stated Iranian objective](#) for any permanent peace settlement.

RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

For International Policy:

- The Hormuz blockade is now an [operational reality](#); diplomatic efforts must focus on maritime de-escalation to prevent a permanent shift in global trade routes.
- The succession of Mojtaba Khamenei indicates that "regime change" strategies based on leadership vacuums [have failed](#); long-term policy must account for a more rigid and ideologically cohesive Iranian leadership.
- The narrative of civilian casualties (Minab) is gaining traction in the [Global South](#); Western states risk total diplomatic isolation in the UN if they do not address these claims.

For Private Sector/Investors:

- **Energy Exposure:** Prepare for sustained triple-digit oil prices. The efficacy of [Strategic Reserve releases](#) is declining as the conflict length exceeds initial projections.
- **Logistics/Supply Chains:** The Persian Gulf is effectively a war zone. Insurers will likely [suspend coverage](#) for all vessels in the region, including those not directly involved in the energy trade.

- **Asset Vulnerability:** Infrastructure in [UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain](#) is now at extreme risk of collateral or direct damage as Iran strikes US bases embedded within or near these civilian hubs.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Today's Media Trends is a public interest experiment in applying deep thematic trend analysis to television news coverage from around the world to explore how responsibly applied advanced AI can help journalists and scholars better understand the overarching trends, themes and patterns of our global world.

No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

Each morning, in collaboration with the Internet Archive's TV News Archive, we apply Google's Gemini 3 to deeply examine yesterday's coverage from each television news channel to tease out the overarching themes and trends of its news coverage into a richly annotated thematic analysis. Each high-level insight is connected back to the original broadcast, allowing journalists and scholars to understand the dominate themes and trends and instantly click out to the underlying sources for details.

By helping journalists and scholars see the broader trends and patterns of global news coverage, this analysis helps them identify relevant stories and coverage they might not otherwise have encountered and uncover connections, emphases and narrative shifts that enable more comprehensive reporting and deeper, evidence-based research.

This report is entirely machine generated using Gemini 3 and may include errors and

omissions. Please verify all findings. No data is used to train or tune any AI model.

For questions or suggestions, please contact kalev.leetaru5@gmail.com. You can also learn

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