



European Council

Brussels,  
19 March 2026

## II. MIDDLE EAST

### *Iran*

4. Developments in Iran and the wider region threaten regional and global security. The European Council calls for de-escalation and maximum restraint, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and full respect of international law by all parties, including the principles of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law. In this regard, it calls for a moratorium on strikes against energy and water facilities. The European Council deplores the loss of civilian life and is closely monitoring the far-reaching impact of the hostilities, including on economic stability.
5. The European Council strongly condemns Iran's indiscriminate military strikes against countries in the region and expresses its solidarity with countries affected. It calls on Iran and its proxies to immediately cease these attacks and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region, in line with UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2817, which should be fully implemented. The European Council underlines the importance of concerted action to help partners strengthen counter-drone and air defence capabilities. In that context, it welcomes Ukraine's readiness to provide support and expertise in air defence and counter-drone systems to Gulf countries.
6. The European Union stands firmly and unequivocally in support of Member States close to the region. It welcomes the support provided by Member States in this regard, in particular through the deployment of military assets in the Eastern Mediterranean and in support of Cyprus. The European Council acknowledges the intention of Cyprus to initiate a discussion with the UK on the UK bases in Cyprus and stands ready to provide assistance as needed.

7. The European Council recalls the need to safeguard regional airspace and ensure maritime security and respect for the freedom of navigation, and condemns any acts that threaten navigation or prevent vessels from entering and exiting the Strait of Hormuz.
8. The European Council highlights the role of the EU maritime defensive operations EUNAVFOR ASPIDES and EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, and calls for their reinforcement with more assets, in line with their respective mandates.
9. The European Council also welcomes the increased efforts announced by Member States, including through strengthened coordination with partners in the region, to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, once the conditions are met.
10. The European Union will continue to protect its security and interests, working with regional and global partners to counter the impact of the ongoing hostilities.  
The European Union and its Member States are taking all necessary steps to ensure the safety of EU citizens in the region, including by providing conditions for their safe departure.
11. The European Council invites the Commission to continue to report to the Council on the potential impact of recent developments for the EU in terms of energy security and energy prices, supply chains and migration, and to propose measures as appropriate. It also calls for coordination at EU level, including on the possible impact on internal security.
12. While the conflict has not translated into immediate migratory flows towards the European Union, the European Council underlines the importance of maintaining a high level of vigilance and ensuring the necessary level of preparedness, based on the tools and policies that the EU developed over the past years. On the basis of the lessons learned from the 2015 migration crisis and to avoid a similar situation, the EU is ready to fully mobilise its diplomatic, legal, operational and financial tools to prevent uncontrolled migratory movements to the EU and preserve security in Europe. The security and the control of the European Union's external borders will continue to be strengthened. The European Council stresses the importance of working with partners in the region to ensure that they receive the necessary assistance and support.

13. The European Union will continue to engage with partners in the region to contribute to de-escalation and regional stability. It stands ready to contribute to all diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and to bring about a lasting solution to end the hostilities, prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and put an end to its destabilising activities, including its ballistic missile programme.
14. The European Council reiterates that Iran must never be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon and that it must comply with its legally binding nuclear safeguard obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The European Council urges Iran to resume full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.
15. The European Council calls on the Iranian regime to cease the violence and repression against its own people. It calls for the respect of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Iranian people, including the right to choose their own future.

#### ***Gaza/West Bank***

16. The European Council discussed the deteriorating situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, which is of grave concern. It reaffirms the European Union's commitment to international law and a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders.
17. The European Council reiterates its call for the full implementation by all parties of the ceasefire and all other provisions of UNSCR 2803, in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and international political and legal principles. In this context, it calls for the permanent disarmament of Hamas and other non-state armed groups, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the deployment of the temporary International Stabilisation Force (ISF), as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict.

18. The European Union stands ready to work on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict in accordance with UNSCR 2803. Regarding the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah), the European Council calls on all parties to reopen the Rafah crossing point, facilitate checks and increase the number of crossings. It also calls for accelerating preparations to scale up the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS).
19. The European Council deplores the continuing catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls on Israel to allow immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to supplement land routes, and to enable the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering. It calls on Israel to reverse its decision regarding the NGO registration law, to reopen Gaza border crossings and to fully comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The European Council recalls the need to ensure the protection of civilians at all times.
20. The European Union will engage with international and regional stakeholders to contribute to the reconstruction and redevelopment of Gaza, in line with international law. It will also continue to support the Palestinian Authority, including in its reform agenda, so that it can securely and effectively take back control of Gaza. The European Council calls on Israel to urgently release withheld clearance revenues and extend the correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks, both being necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Palestinian Authority and the delivery of essential services to the population.
21. The European Council strongly condemns Israel's unilateral actions aiming to expand its presence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 declared to be unlawful, and urges the Government of Israel to reverse these decisions, to abide by its obligations under international law and to protect the Palestinian population of the occupied territories. The European Council reiterates its call for the preservation of and respect for the Status Quo of Jerusalem's holy sites.

22. The European Council strongly condemns the continued and growing settler violence against Palestinian civilians, including violence against Christian communities, and reiterates its call on the Council to take work forward on further restrictive measures against extremist settlers and entities and organisations that support them.

### ***Lebanon***

23. The European Council is deeply concerned about the increase in hostilities in Lebanon and its severe impact on civilians, including large-scale displacement, suffering and loss of life. It calls for de-escalation, the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. The European Union will continue to stand by Lebanon, its authorities and its people and will draw on its emergency reserves to assist the affected civilian population. It will continue to support the Lebanese State's sovereignty, territorial integrity and State-building efforts.
24. The European Council strongly condemns Hezbollah's decision to attack Israel in support of Iran and urges it to stop immediately. It welcomes the decision by the Lebanese authorities to ban Hezbollah's military activities. The European Union supports the authorities' efforts to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces in view of gaining control of the whole Lebanese territory.
25. The European Council reiterates its call on all parties to respect and implement the terms of the 27 November 2024 ceasefire agreement and for the full implementation of UNSCR 1701. The European Council calls on Israel to refrain from further escalation through air or land operations and to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It calls on all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and to refrain from actions resulting in further displacement.
26. The European Council reaffirms its unwavering support for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which plays a fundamental stabilisation role. The European Council condemns the unacceptable attacks targeting UNIFIL personnel and calls for a thorough investigation. Such attacks against UN peacekeepers constitute a grave violation of international law, are totally unacceptable and must stop immediately.