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The Guardian

Trump threatens to unleash 'hell' on Iran in expletive-laden tirade

President gives Tehran deadline to reopen strait in 'unhinged' online rant

Saeed Shah Islamabad
Dan Sabbagh Jerusalem

Donald Trump has issued an expletive-laden warning to Iran that it has until tomorrow night to reopen the strait of Hormuz or his forces would obliterate the country's power stations and bridges.

In response, Iran's powerful parliament speaker warned that Trump's "reckless moves" would mean "our whole region is going to burn".

The latest threat of escalation in the five-week-old war followed the rescue of a second crew member of a downed F-15E fighter by US commandos, ending a two-day search after the warplane crashed in south-west Iran.

Iran distributed images showing the wreckage of several aircraft, but did not deny the US had rescued the officer, who had taken cover in a mountainous area while American special forces and Iranian troops raced to find him.

The US president has extended deadlines at least twice for Iran to reopen the strait, the closure of which has sent the price of oil shooting up. He shifted his deadline again from today until tomorrow in his expletive-laden post on Truth Social.

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, 8 ➔



▲ The damaged Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran after it was hit by a US-Israeli airstrike yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: FATEMEH BAHRAMI/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

PM takes aim at Greens in workers' rights launch

Exclusive

Ben Quinn

Political correspondent

Keir Starmer has used the number of workers' rights that come into force today to attack the Green party, saying a vote for Labour's rivals puts

progress on sick pay, parental leave and zero-hours contracts at risk.

The prime minister also took a swipe at business figures and opponents of what he described as the biggest strengthening of workers' rights in a generation, dismissing "vested interests" who had warned against them.

In a sign of how he views the threat from both the Green party and Reform UK in the run-up to local elections in May, Starmer said that having "a serious, credible economic strategy" set Labour apart from others.

"No other party offers both the economic credibility and the political will to do this," he wrote in an online article for the Guardian.

"A vote for any other party puts that progress at risk - whether through choices that would take us backwards, or approaches that simply don't stand up to the realities of governing." 2 ➔

Sponsors withdraw from Kanye West-led festival

Ben Quinn

Political correspondent

Pepsi and Diageo have said they are withdrawing their sponsorship of a festival due to be headlined by Kanye West after Keir Starmer joined criticism of the London event.

The musician is understood not yet to have applied to come to Britain and his visit could be blocked under powers allowing the authorities to exclude individuals deemed not conducive to the public good.

The Wireless festival has booked West, also known as Ye, to headline all three nights 10 ➔

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News War in the Middle East

Trump 'ranting like a madman', say Democrats after Iran threat

Continued from page 1

all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!! Open the Fuckin' Strait, you crazy bastards, or you'll be living in Hell - JUST WATCH! Praise be to Allah. President DONALD J. TRUMP", the US president posted.

Trump separately suggested that there was a "good chance" of an agreement with Iran today, telling Fox News talks were taking place. "If they don't make a deal and fast, I'm considering blowing everything up and taking over the oil," he said.

Trump has repeatedly said since the US-Israeli war started on 28 February that Iran wants to make a deal.

Iran has acknowledged that messages have been passed between the two sides, including through Pakistan. But Tehran insists it has not entered into peace talks. Iranian officials also fear that they will be targeted if they break cover to head to any negotiations, according to diplomatic intermediaries.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, responded to Trump's latest threats, saying: "Your reckless moves are dragging the United States into a living HELL for every single family, and our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following Netanyahu's commands."

"Make no mistake: You won't gain anything through war crimes. The only real solution is respecting the rights of the Iranian people and ending this dangerous game."

Trump's post also drew criticism on Capitol Hill. The Democratic Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, said on X: "Happy Easter, America. As you head off to church and celebrate

with friends and family, the president is ranting like an unhinged madman on social media. He's threatening possible war crimes and alienating allies. This is who he is, but this is not who we are."

The destruction on Thursday of Iran's highest bridge, hailed in the country as an engineering marvel, pointed to a grim new phase of the war, in which Trump has threatened to send Iran back to the "stone ages".

During war, international law protects civilians and what are known as civilian objects, such as infrastructure, rules that are enshrined in the Geneva conventions.

Oona A Hathaway, a professor of international law at Yale University, said Trump had offered no explanation that would make the civilian objects he has threatened to target into lawful military objectives. She also warned that other nations had an obligation to ensure respect of the Geneva conventions, and not to aid and abet wrongful acts.

"If these attacks were to be carried out, they would constitute war crimes," said Hathaway. "Immiserating the civilian population for bargaining leverage is not lawful."

Iranian steel manufacturing sites, petrochemicals plants, universities and medical facilities have all been bombed in the US-Israeli campaign. About 81,000 civilian sites have been damaged, including 61,000 homes, 19,000 commercial sites, 275 medical centres, and nearly 500 schools, according to Iranian authorities.

Last night, Trump was asked by ABC News about targeting civilian infrastructure in Iran and he said: "I don't want to talk about that." When asked if he would move back

his deadline, he replied: "They have plenty of time to make a deal. If they don't want to make a deal, their whole country is gone."

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said his country has destroyed 70% of Iran's steel production, claiming it was used to make missiles. He has also confirmed attacks on petrochemicals plants.

Iran has been able to take control of the strait of Hormuz by threatening and attacking shipping passing through the waterway, providing a chokehold on the oil trade.

Iran continued to hit economic infrastructure in the Gulf over the weekend, in acts that legal experts have also said are unlawful. It struck a petrochemicals complex in Bahrain yesterday. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said a number of its facilities had been targeted by Iranian drone attacks, resulting in fires and "significant material losses".

In Lebanon, Israel again hit southern Beirut, killing at least four people and injuring 39. Lebanon's national news agency reported that an Israeli airstrike on Kfar Hatta, southern Lebanon, had killed at least seven people, including a four-year-old girl.

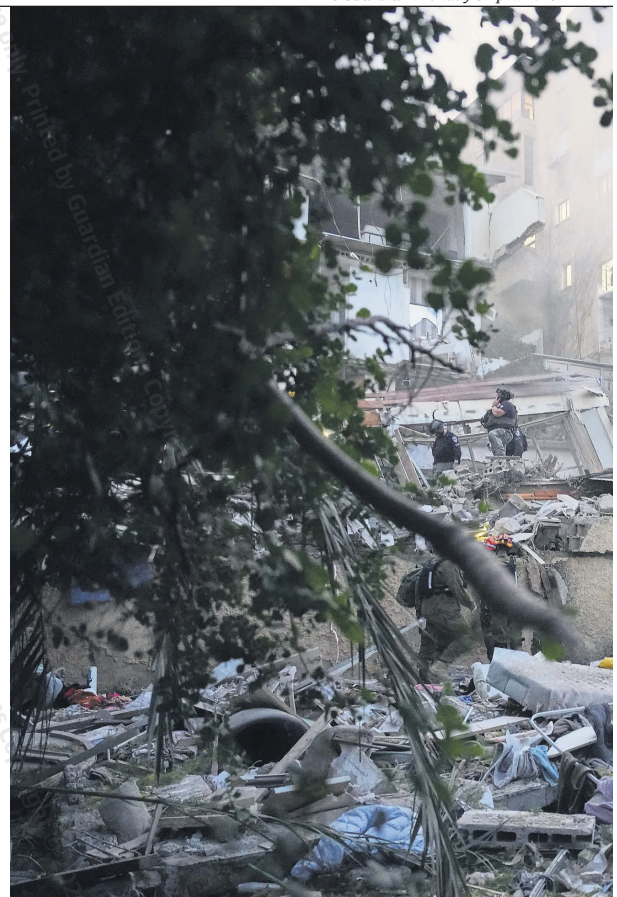
The destruction of the 136-metre-high (450ft) B1 bridge between Tehran and Karaj on Thursday demonstrated the kinds of attacks that may now be unleashed.

Reports say many families were picnicking nearby when missiles punched through the middle of the bridge. Local authorities said 13 people had been killed and 95 injured.

Trump posted a video of the bridge's demolition, warning Iran to make a deal before there was nothing left. He told Axios yesterday that the US and Iran were close to a deal to hold direct negotiations several days ago. "But then they said they will meet us in five days. So I said: 'Why five days?' I felt they were not being serious. So I attacked the bridge."

An engineer behind the bridge's construction, interviewed on Iranian television, broke down. "We made everything with our own knowhow, workers and resources," he said. "I am ashamed of myself for not being able to have people use it."

A civil engineer said strikes on infrastructure had "made it impossible to conceal hostility toward the Iranian people behind the mask of mere opposition to the government".



Christians under attack Israelis 'making life in West Bank intolerable'

Julian Borger
Taybeh

Taybeh, a small hilltop town in the heart of the West Bank, is one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. After increasing attacks from Israeli settlers it now feels itself under siege and is fighting for its very existence.

The town's ancient Greek name was Ephraim, where, according to the gospels, Jesus hid with his disciples from the Jewish religious hierarchy, the Sanhedrin, before making his final trip to Jerusalem.

A church was built here in the fifth century, and the entirely Christian community survived the crusaders, conquest by Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (Saladin), the Ottoman empire, the British empire and three Arab-Israeli wars, but its inhabitants say its long-term future is in question.

There are four substantial Israeli settlements around Taybeh, and countless unofficial outposts have also sprung up. They have been founded by messianic Jews who send their young people,

the "hilltop youth", to harass and intimidate local Palestinians in the surrounding countryside.

The relentless land grabs and intimidation are a pattern repeated up and down the West Bank in a campaign the UN has called ethnic cleansing, which has been driven by hardline members of the ruling coalition, the finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, and the national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir.

"First they kicked the Bedouin out in the last three years and put up their caravans and bring their cows and sheep. They are using the land without any permission from the owners and from ourselves," said Father Bashar Fawadleh, the parish priest of Christ the Redeemer church.

After driving out Bedouin nomads and their flocks, Fawadleh said, the settlers began to drive their cows and sheep into the olive groves and fields that have been Taybeh's lifeblood for millennia.

"For three years now, we have been forbidden to visit our land. We are forbidden from tending the olive trees," he said. The only time local people venture into the countryside is when diplomats from the French and Italian



◀ The historic Golestan Palace in Tehran. The US and Israel have been accused of unlawful attacks on civilian infrastructure

PHOTOGRAPH: ATTA KENARE/AFP/GETTY