

# 2026 Minab school attack

On 28 February 2026, the first day of the [2026 Iran war](#), the Shajareh Tayyebeh<sup>[a]</sup> girls' elementary school<sup>[b]</sup> of the Shahrak-e Al-Mahdi neighbourhood in [Minab](#), [Hormozgan province](#) in southern Iran was destroyed by a missile strike. According to witness accounts verified by satellite-based analyses, the school was [triple tapped](#) by three distinct strikes.<sup>[4]</sup> The roof of the school collapsed on students. At least 175 civilians were killed, over 100 of which were schoolchildren.<sup>[5][6][1][7]</sup> As of 15 March 2026, the attack was the deadliest strike in terms of civilian casualties in the ongoing war. Multiple independent investigations concluded that the United States was responsible for the strike.

Sources involved with the US military's internal investigation of the incident corroborated that the strike was likely perpetrated by the US, despite the internal investigation not yet having reached a final conclusion. The attack was condemned by the Iranian government, [UNESCO](#), and [other international human rights organizations and activists](#) as a violation of [international humanitarian law](#).

## Background

### Minab elementary school

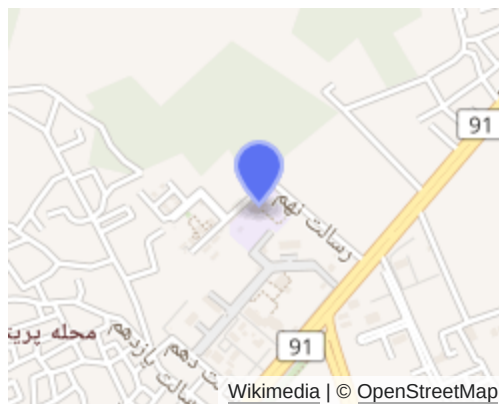
The Shajareh Tayyebeh girls' elementary school in southern [Minab](#) was attended by both boys and girls, taught on separate floors.<sup>[8]</sup> According to locals, the school was previously a military facility.<sup>[9]</sup> Its location was near<sup>[c]</sup> the Sayyid al-Shuhada military complex which included the headquarters of the Asif Brigade of the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy \(IRGCN\)](#).<sup>[12]</sup> As of early 2026, the school had existed as a civilian institution more than 10 years, close to but separate from the IRGCN compound.<sup>[12]</sup> According to satellite imagery, the building housing the school was walled within the IRGCN compound in 2013 and walled off by September 2016 at the latest.<sup>[5][3]</sup> Its new wall had three entrances separate from the rest of the compound and all were

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Part of the [2026 Iran war](#)



Rescue workers and bystanders at the school after the attack



Location of the school within the [Hormozgan province](#)

<b>Location</b>	<a href="#">27°6′35.4″N 57°5′05.1″E</a> Shajareh Tayyebeh girls' elementary school <a href="#">Minab</a> , <a href="#">Hormozgan province</a> , <a href="#">Iran</a>
<b>Date</b>	28 February 2026 Between 10:23 and 10:45 a.m. <a href="#">IRST (UTC+03:30)</a>
<b>Attack type</b>	<a href="#">Triple-tap missile strike</a>
<b>Weapon</b>	<a href="#">Tomahawk missile</a>
<b>Deaths</b>	at least 175
<b>Injured</b>	95
<b>Victims</b>	Primarily schoolchildren

without a military security checkpoint, allowing entry without having to pass through the compound.<sup>[3][8]</sup> Imagery of an outdoor play area was visible as late as August 2017.<sup>[3][6]</sup> *The Guardian* determined there was no indication that the building served a military purpose and found that the adjacent compound buildings were a medical clinic and a pharmacy,<sup>[13]</sup> the former of which was walled off from the compound between 2022 and 2023.<sup>[11]</sup> Furthermore, the compound's four military security posts had been removed by 2016.<sup>[8]</sup> According to Minab's mayor, the compound had been closed for about 15 years and all military personnel had moved out; the school was the only operational facility at the former base.<sup>[14]</sup> The school also had what *Reuters* described as a "vivid website and yearslong online presence."<sup>[15]</sup>

<b>Perpetrator</b>  <u>United States Armed Forces</u> <sup>[1]</sup>
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## Start of the 2026 Iran war

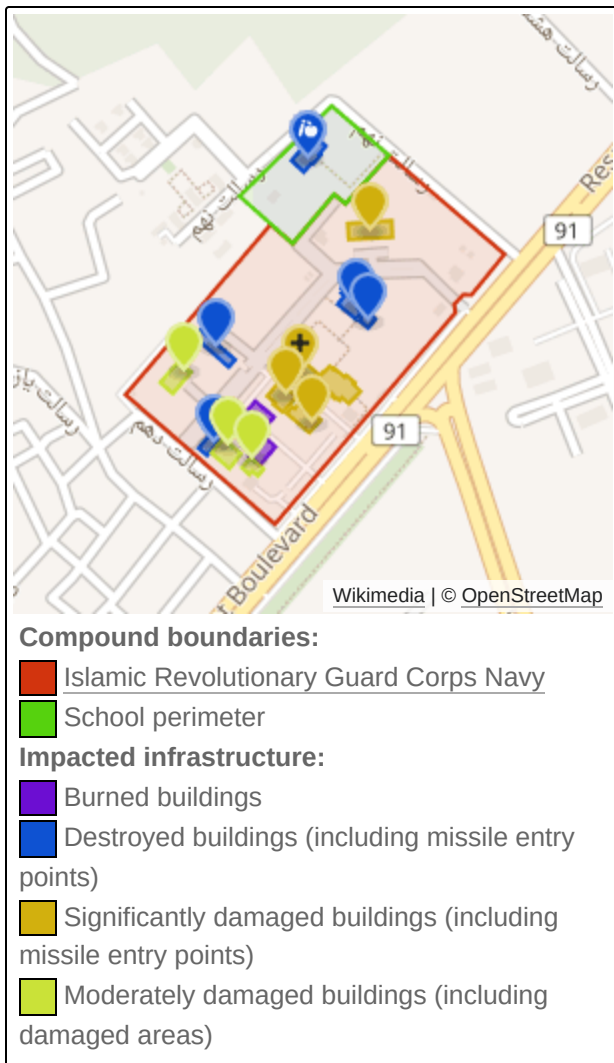
On 28 February 2026, the US and Israel launched attacks against Iran.<sup>[16]</sup> The airstrikes, which began at around 10:00 a.m. IST, coincided with the time at which Iranians usually send their children to school, as Saturday is a working day in Iran.<sup>[17][13][d]</sup> For planning Operation Epic Fury, the US military utilized the Maven Smart System, an artificial intelligence software designed to streamline the targeting process and greatly reduce the amount of personnel involved in it. Capable of producing 1,000 target packages in one hour, with the use of the system the US military said it had struck 6,000 targets in Iran during the first two weeks of the war.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Events

On 28 February 2026, between 10:23 and 10:45 a.m.,<sup>[e][12][3]</sup> the school was struck by a missile.<sup>[19][20]</sup> Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations representative, Shiva Amelirad, said the school had decided to close soon after the attack on the country began, at approximately 10:00 a.m., even prior to the nationwide announcement closing schools at 10:15 a.m. Due to congestion and distance, many parents were not able to reach the school before the airstrike landed on the compound. The school's principal, teachers, and other staff had remained inside to help escort the children out.<sup>[9][8]</sup>

Human rights organization Hengaw stated that around 170 students were present in the school at the time while the Iranian Ministry of Education said that 264 students were present.<sup>[17][14]</sup> The impact instantaneously killed dozens inside.<sup>[13]</sup> The impact affected over half of the structure, destroying the walls of the building and causing its roof to collapse, burying people underneath,<sup>[3][17][21]</sup> graphic footage shows some bodies partly trapped.<sup>[13]</sup> The explosion destroyed at least half of the two-story school building.<sup>[5]</sup> Footage taken on the school's brightly painted soccer and volleyball pitches shows smoke coming out of the school's windows, whose muraled walls were adorned with paintings of crayons, children, and an apple.<sup>[3][22]</sup>

According to testimony given to the *Middle East Eye* by two Red Crescent medics and a victim's parent, the initial strike to the school was followed by a second, "double tap" strike.<sup>[23][24]</sup> One of the medics recounted that, following the first strike, the school's principal moved a group of students to a prayer room and called parents, asking them to come pick up their children; that area was then hit by a second strike, killing most that had taken shelter.<sup>[24]</sup> The parent corroborates this story, relating he received a call from the school informing him of the first strike, which his daughter had survived; but before he could arrive, the school was hit again, and she was killed.<sup>[24]</sup> According to Minab's mayor and the Iranian Ministry of Education, the school was triple tapped, being struck three times in total.<sup>[14]</sup> Satellite-base analysis by BBC Verify suggest the school was hit with multiple missiles.<sup>[4]</sup>



Twelve structures within the IRGC compound were significantly impacted by airstrikes sometime after 10:23 a.m., including the Shahid Absalan Specialist Clinic shortly after the airstrike on the school, which had begun treating those injured in the prior airstrike;<sup>[3][11][8]</sup> it was one of five damaged sites whose roofs were punctured by munitions before the munitions' subsequent detonation. The clinic had been inaugurated in January 2025 by then IRGC commander-in-chief, Major General Hossein Salami.<sup>[3]</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* characterized the strike on the clinic as "what appeared to be a second attack on the same location"

and by authorities as a "follow-up attack."<sup>[25][26]</sup> *The New York Times* corroborated that smoke was billowing from two buildings.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Death toll

At least 175 people were killed in the strike,<sup>[5][6]</sup> with fatalities being raised from 168 people after recovery efforts on 4 March.<sup>[f]</sup> The day prior, Mizan News Agency claimed to have confirmed 66 boys, 54 girls, 26 teachers, and four parents had died.<sup>[8]</sup> A majority of those reportedly killed were schoolchildren.<sup>[28][29][32]</sup> Teachers were also killed,<sup>[9]</sup> including the school's principal.<sup>[3]</sup> According to a local official, the fatalities included multiple parents who had come to pick up their children.<sup>[13][21][33]</sup>

The victims were mostly schoolgirls aged between 7 and 12.<sup>[34]</sup>

## Aftermath

Immediate official statements in Iran included the Iranian government stating the missile was a US-Israeli airstrike, whereas Vice Governor of Hormozgan Ahmad Nafisi said the school was struck amidst US-Israeli air raids on Minab.<sup>[35]</sup> Videos taken of the destroyed school immediately following the attack were verified by *The New York Times*,<sup>[17]</sup> *The Washington Post*,<sup>[36]</sup> *Reuters*, and Iranian fact-checking organization Factnameh, as authentic; these videos were compared against existing imagery of the school.<sup>[20]</sup> *Drop Site News* published accounts of the incident from several parents whose children were among those killed.<sup>[33]</sup>

## Emergency and volunteer response

As reports emerged that the school had been hit, many panicked locals, including family members of victims, rushed to the scene while security forces attempted to push families back, fearing the area would be targeted again, and sealed off the building.<sup>[33]</sup> Soon after, recovery efforts began—some informal—as civilians, Iranian Red Crescent Society emergency workers, and individuals donning uniforms resembling the Basij searched through the debris.<sup>[5][8]</sup> Although initially using just their hands,<sup>[33]</sup> rescue services used construction cranes and shovels to save people trapped by rubble,<sup>[3][17]</sup> while black smoke scorching the remaining walls continued to pour from the building's windows.<sup>[9][37]</sup> Footage reveals items including severed arms,<sup>[5]</sup> bodies, and school bags being recovered.<sup>[37][38]</sup> Other imagery confirmed that areas struck within the school were used for schooling.<sup>[8]</sup> One video shows a man, previously digging through the rubble, waving dust-covered textbooks and worksheets; in a quote translated by *The Guardian*, he yelled:<sup>[13]</sup>



People search through rubble after the school airstrike, via *Mehr News*

"These are the schoolbooks of the children who are under these ruins, under this rubble here," he shouts. "You can see the blood of these children on these books. These are civilians, who are not in the military. This was a school and they came to study."<sup>[13]</sup>

During recovery efforts, an opening was created between the IRGC and school's compounds, allowing recovery teams to move rubble out of the way.<sup>[8]</sup> Corpses were collected in body bags and injured victims taken away in ambulances,<sup>[5]</sup> with most initially being sent to the Hazrat Abolfazl located 2 km away from the school.<sup>[3]</sup> Later in the day of the airstrike, bodies of the victims were transferred to their relatives gathering at a nearby designated collection area.<sup>[33]</sup> The attack flooded Minab's morgues, however, forcing some of the bodies of victims to be held in refrigerated trucks.<sup>[9]</sup> The search for victims ended on 1 March.<sup>[5]</sup>

Authorities announced the end of search operations for survivors on 1 March.<sup>[39]</sup> The same day, Shiva Amelirad, representing the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, told *TIME* magazine that 108 or more children had been killed in the attack, according to sources within Minab she was in contact with.<sup>[9]</sup> Minab's public prosecutor office reported later that day, through the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency, that 150 "innocent school girls" were killed, with some still trapped under the rubble.<sup>[9]</sup> The judicial head of

Hormozgan stated that 140 of the deceased had been identified up to that point, while efforts continued to identify another 25 people, and that the remains of the bombs used in the attack had been located, seized, and transferred for analysis in preparation for an investigation.<sup>[40]</sup>

## Mass funeral

On 3 March, Iran held a mass funeral for the children killed in the airstrike in a public square in Minab, attended by thousands of mourners. Those in attendance held imagery of the attack and phrases condemning what one victim's mother called "a document of American crimes".<sup>[41][42]</sup> Images show excavators preparing a hundred or more graves at a mass burial site at Minab Hermud cemetery,



The funeral and mass burial of victims of the attack, both attended by thousands of mourners

whose grounds were subsequently filled with the mourners which held a procession bringing the caskets of victims to the site.<sup>[14][22]</sup> Some victims were buried at other sites outside Minab.<sup>[3]</sup>

## United States military investigation

On 5 March, Reuters reported that two American military personnel involved in an internal investigation believed the attack was likely perpetrated by the US, although a final conclusion had not yet been reached. The US and Israel had divided their strikes geographically, with the US responsible for striking targets in southern Iran where the school was located. Independent analysis of satellite imagery suggested that the school and the Sayyid al-Shuhada military complex had been struck near-simultaneously by air-delivered munitions.<sup>[43]</sup>

On 11 March, the *New York Times* reported that the preliminary findings of the investigation determined that the US was responsible for the strike. The inquiry suggested that the school was likely targeted due to outdated coordinates provided by the Defense Intelligence Agency.<sup>[44][45]</sup> In response to the attention to the *New York Times* article, on 13 March, US secretary of defense Pete Hegseth promised a thorough probe into the strike, in what the *Washington Post* described as a tacit acknowledgement of US responsibility for the attack.<sup>[46]</sup> The US military also said it elevated the investigation. Three US officials told *Reuters* that the administrative probe was known internally as a "15-6," which could be used as basis for disciplinary action.<sup>[47]</sup>

## UN Investigation

A UN investigation was initiated on 17 March and is ongoing.<sup>[7][48]</sup>

## Reactions

### Domestic

- President Masoud Pezeshkian said that "the American and Zionist aggression against Minab Elementary School will never be erased from the historical memory of our nation."<sup>[50]</sup>
- Foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said the "crimes against the Iranian people will not go unanswered."<sup>[33]</sup> The foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei called the airstrike a "blatant [war] crime," adding that "the world must stand up to this great injustice", including "the UN Security Council [which] must act now in line with its primary responsibility under the Charter."<sup>[26][51]</sup>
- The spokesperson for the Health Ministry, Hossein Kermanpour, called the report of the attack "the most bitter news" so far, adding that there may be even more bodies under the rubble.<sup>[20]</sup>
- Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Ali Bahreini, followed up on calls from Iranian officials on 1 March, raising the "unjustifiable" and "criminal" issue with UN human rights chief, Volker Türk,<sup>[42][52]</sup> which Türk heeded.<sup>[22]</sup> In an opinion piece for *Al Jazeera*, Bahreini placed blame on Trump as the commander-in-chief of the American armed force for the attack, arguing that "the legal question is tragically clear" before writing that "a missile engineered for precision struck a school building at the precise moment when children were present," the result of which "was not collateral damage but a human catastrophe."<sup>[53]</sup>
- The head of Iran's Red Crescent, Pirhossein Kolivand, said the "unique and bitter incident" had "no comparison with any other incident" even outside of Iran, as he said no singular attack killed so many students simultaneously, "even in Gaza".<sup>[5]</sup>

**Seyed Abbas Araghchi**  
@araghchi

The destroyed building is a primary school for girls in the south of Iran. It was bombed in broad daylight, when packed with young pupils.

Dozens of innocent children have been murdered at this site alone.

These crimes against the Iranian People will not go unanswered.

28 February 2026<sup>[49]</sup>



"Minab Died" protest in front of the UN office in Tehran, March 2026

### International

#### United States

The first US response to the strike came from Captain Tim Hawkins on 1 March, speaking on behalf of the US Central Command (CENTCOM). He said that "we are aware of reports concerning civilian harm resulting from ongoing military operations. We take these reports seriously and are looking into them. The protection of civilians is of utmost importance, and we will continue to take all precautions available to minimize the risk of unintended harm."<sup>[5][17]</sup> On 4 March, US state secretary Marco Rubio said the US Department of Defense and The Pentagon were investigating whether the airstrike was fired by the US and added that the US "would not deliberately target a school".<sup>[41][42][22]</sup> The same day, US defense secretary Pete Hegseth evaded questions on the matter and provided few details other than to echo Rubio in saying that the US was "investigating" the

incident and would "never target civilian targets".<sup>[42]</sup> On 7 March, Donald Trump claimed that the strike was "done by Iran", which he said he concluded "because they're very inaccurate with their munitions" and "have no accuracy whatsoever".<sup>[54][55]</sup>

Following *The New York Times*' reporting on the preliminary findings of the Pentagon probe,<sup>[56][57]</sup> Senators Brian Schatz, Jeanne Shaheen, Chris Van Hollen, Tim Kaine, and Elizabeth Warren led 46 mostly Democratic senators (including themselves) to demand Trump answer for the school strike, particularly probing on matters of responsibility, compliance with international law, the establishment of a "no-strike list," the use of artificial intelligence, and mitigation of civilian harm given the high volume of strikes the first day of the Iran war.<sup>[58][59]</sup> The only Democratic senator to abstain from the letter was John Fetterman, who has supported Trump and Israel, including having blocked a resolution to halt Trump's war powers a week prior;<sup>[56]</sup> Fetterman told *Reuters* that he did not sign the letter because "the [US] never intentionally targets civilians, including its own citizens, unlike Iran. Everyone agrees it was a tragedy. Everyone agrees on performing a full investigation."<sup>[56][60]</sup> No Republican senator was signatory to the letter.<sup>[60]</sup> Representative Jason Crow followed the Senate's suit, leading 120 Democratic congresspersons, including himself, to demand "answers on recent civilian deaths during Operation Epic Fury, including a US strike on an Iranian girls' elementary school where at least 175 civilians, many of them children, were killed." Signatories Sara Jacobs, Yassamin Ansari, and others sent a letter directly to Hegseth "requested detailed information about the strikes on the Shajareh Tayyebbeh school, the nature of the military targeting, the steps taken to mitigate and respond to civilian harm, and more," including findings of the US military-led investigation.<sup>[61][62]</sup> Some legislators also made individual statements condemning the attack.<sup>[63][64]</sup>

## Israel

It was publicly reported on 4 March that Israel had begun investigating the incident.<sup>[52]</sup> The same day, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson, Lieutenant colonel Nadav Shoshani, said Israel did not know who was responsible for the airstrike and said the IDF was not aware of any IDF operation within the region.<sup>[65]</sup>

During an interview on the Russia-based channel TV Rain, Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid, said:

"This is a war and in war there are always victims among the population. Obviously it is terrible when children suffer, children should not die when adults fight. The difference between the Iranian regime and the US and Israel is that we did it by mistake, and they do it on purpose as was the case in Beit Shemesh. Nobody has killed more Iranians than the Iranian regime, and now they are complaining that an attack, by mistake, killed these poor people. We are all so sorry that these young women and children were killed. It is terrible, it should not have happened. These are the tragic and terrible mistakes that sometimes happen in war. We wish it had not happened, but this is the reality."<sup>[66]</sup>

When questioned whether he was implying that the US military or the IDF attacked the school, he replied that he had "never taken responsibility on behalf of Israel for the attack on the girls' school in Iran. He added:

"On the contrary, I have sharply attacked in the international media the hypocrisy of those who remained silent when the Iranian regime killed 30,000 of its people and suddenly have something to say about every tragic mistake that could happen in the war. I suggest everyone follow the international propaganda operation that we opened and fight for Israel all over the world."<sup>[66]</sup>

## Intergovernmental organizations

- The first UN agency to condemn the airstrike was UNESCO, which called it "a grave violation of humanitarian law" the day of the attack.<sup>[50]</sup>
- United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres followed up shortly after, also condemning the airstrike.<sup>[67]</sup>
- On 4 March, a panel of 18 independent experts on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child said it was "alarmed" by news of the strike and said children must be protected from war. The UN human rights office, avoiding attribution of blame, said "the forces behind a deadly attack on a girls' school in Iran" must investigate the airstrike and report its findings.<sup>[52]</sup>
- Its high commissioner, Volker Türk, called for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation.<sup>[22]</sup>
- On 7 March, UNICEF called on all parties in the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians, noting the death of children in the strike.<sup>[68]</sup>

## Human rights activists and organizations

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor described the attack as a "horrific crime and a consolidation of the collapse of civilian protection", and said that any attack on "protected persons" such as children and teaching staff constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law.<sup>[12]</sup> The Norway-based human rights group, Hengaw, said it was seeking the names of victims of the attack, adding that "the establishment and expansion of military facilities in close proximity to schools and public spaces place civilians at heightened risk."<sup>[22]</sup>



Open-source researcher for the HRW Digital Investigation Lab, Sophia Jones, said "a prompt and thorough investigation is needed into this attack, including if those responsible should have known that a school was there and that it would be full of children and their teachers before midday." Jones added that "those responsible for an unlawful attack should be held to account, including prosecutions of anyone responsible for war crimes."<sup>[3]</sup> Its Washington director, Sarah Yager, said that "even if those responsible for the strike did not deliberately target a school full of children, the US military has an obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid civilian harm, which it clearly did not do in this case." Yager argued that the US reckoning with its accountability for the attack was also important for ensuring that "this never happens again."<sup>[69]</sup> HRW said, however, that if any buildings within the adjacent base were used for military purposes, the school would have been placed "at unnecessary risk" by Iranian authorities, in violation of the laws of war.<sup>[3]</sup>

Amnesty International's Senior Director of Research, Advocacy, Policy and Campaigns, Erika Guevara Rosas, said that "this harrowing attack on a school, with classrooms full of children, is a sickening illustration of the catastrophic and entirely predictable price civilians are paying during this armed conflict." Arguing that the US "could and should" have known of the building being a school, Guevara-Rosas believed the strike was "strictly

prohibited under international humanitarian law."<sup>[8]</sup> Like HRW, Amnesty called for impartial, transparent investigation from the US, but instead argued that whether the building was struck with people inside, without people inside, or strikes fell in the adjacent IRGC compound, civilians could, would, and did fall at risk, thus constituting some illegal international action.<sup>[8]</sup>

Pakistani female and human rights activist Malala Yousafzai, who is a United Nations Messenger of Peace and Nobel Peace laureate, said news of the airstrike left her "heartbroken and appalled". Yousafzai condemned the killings of civilians, particularly those of children.<sup>[5][67]</sup>

## Others

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned the attack, labelling it a "massacre."<sup>[70][71]</sup>

On 13 March, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun offered condolences to victims before pledging to donate US\$200,000 in emergency humanitarian assistance to the Iranian Red Cross through its own Red Cross Society, serving as further "condolences and compensation" to the injured persons and families of victims. In the regular press briefing, Guo added that the attack "constitute[d] an even graver violation of international humanitarian law and cross[ed] the bottom line of human conscience and morality<sup>[g]</sup>," before adding that China "stands ready to continue providing necessary assistance to Iran in a humanitarian spirit to support the Iranian people through this difficult time."<sup>[72][73][74]</sup>

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand condemned the attack on the Minab school.<sup>[75]</sup>



Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun speaking at the 13 March press conference

## Misinformation

Following the attack, Israeli and Iranian pro-monarchist opposition pages began disseminating disinformation that the airstrike was a failed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) interception. These claims, originating from associated Telegram channels, were debunked by news organizations,<sup>[76][12]</sup> with photographs used as supposed evidence of an IRGC misfire having actually been taken in the city of Zanjan, 1,600 kilometers away from Minab.<sup>[13][77]</sup> Other social media accounts claimed the footage was supposedly older footage shot in Pakistan, which has been debunked.<sup>[13]</sup> *The New York Times* stated that "a single errant missile wouldn't have caused such precise and targeted damage to several buildings across the naval base".<sup>[30]</sup> It was also falsely claimed on the social media website X that the IRGC had admitted to mistakenly destroying the school in a missile airstrike, despite the fact that no such statement admitting responsibility had been made by the Iranian state.<sup>[78]</sup>

U.S. president Trump claimed, without providing evidence, that Iran possessed Tomahawk missiles, and suggested that Iranian Tomahawk missiles may have been responsible for the attack on the school. However, PBS fact checkers rated Trump's claim as false, noting that the U.S. is the only party in the conflict, known to possess Tomahawk missiles. They also cited video evidence released by U.S. Central Command, showing that

the U.S. Navy had launched several Tomahawks on 28 Feb, the same day the school was struck.<sup>[79][80]</sup> A preliminary investigation by the US military further contradicted Trump's assertions, concluding that the attack was likely the result of a U.S. airstrike attacking the elementary school.<sup>[81]</sup>

## Analysis

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### Targeting process and precision

An initial Al Jazeera English investigation into the airstrike concluded that the attack was either based on "outdated intelligence" from before 2013, and would thus "constitute grave negligence", or that the attack was intentional and done "to inflict maximum societal shock and undermine popular support for Iran's military establishment".<sup>[12]</sup> The Al Jazeera investigation also linked the attack and subsequent misinformation to similar attacks targeting civilian facilities by the US and Israel, such as the Bahr El-Baqar primary school bombing (1970), Amiriyah shelter bombing (1991), Qana massacre (1996) and Kunduz hospital airstrike (2015) and Israeli attacks on schools during the Gaza war (since 2023).<sup>[12]</sup> Experts speaking to NPR corroborated the airstrike's precision. Researchers at Oregon State University's Conflict Ecology Laboratory, Corey Scher and Jamon Van Den Hoek, noted that the detonation centroids were "pretty clean". Satellite imagery specialist Jeffrey Lewis agreed that the airstrikes were precision airstrikes but added that the strike being an error was more likely.<sup>[11]</sup> A later HRW report published satellite imagery showing damaged roofs of buildings within the compound, where "relatively small circular" entry points through the roofs demonstrated the munitions' precise nature.<sup>[3]</sup>

### Tagging, verification, and use of artificial intelligence

Two people familiar with the logistics of the strike told The Washington Post that intelligence had tagged the school as either a factory or arms depot before approving it as an airstrike target.<sup>[6]</sup> Numerous reports, outlets, and US senators raised concerns over the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including Palantir's Maven Smart System and Claude systems.<sup>[8][6][58][82]</sup> One US-based source familiar with the process revealed that these systems were used to process vast amounts of data during the US's operations during the Iran war.<sup>[8][6][82]</sup> Furthermore, these AI tools are able to "evaluate a strike after it is initiated."<sup>[6]</sup> This opened the possibility for the strike being caused by these AI tools, either in part or without any further verification.<sup>[8][82]</sup> Many of these sources also raised concerns over who or what should be held responsible in cases like the one against the school.<sup>[82]</sup>

A Reuters investigation called into question the vetting processes for reviewing strike locations given reports of the US' potential use of outdated information, visibility from satellite imagery, and online presence.<sup>[15]</sup>

### Responsibility and intentionality

Shortly after the strike, Jeffrey Lewis said the US was more likely than Israel to be responsible for the strike based on Minab's location as related to where the US had been striking.<sup>[11]</sup> Investigations by the CBC and NPR corroborated Lewis' analysis, finding that the area where the school is located was the target of more than one

precision strike, with imagery showing multiple craters and plumes of smoke present. Both investigations suggested that the strike was likely the result of a failure in intelligence gathering.<sup>[11][83]</sup> An investigation by *The New York Times* also concluded that the school was likely hit by a US precision strike.<sup>[30]</sup>

The CBC and NPR investigation also found that the school and surrounding complex fell under the area of operations of the US military, with verified US airstrikes having taken place nearby.<sup>[11][83]</sup> Later investigations by *Bellingcat* and *BBC Verify* geolocated footage released by *Mehr News*, showing a subsonic cruise missile identified by both as an American UGM-109 Tomahawk land attack missile striking the area near the school shortly after it hit.<sup>[84][19]</sup> The missile being a Tomahawk was confirmed by eight other munition experts, Sam Lair of the *James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies*, U.S. Air Force Special Operations targeting expert Wes Bryant, Amnesty, among others.<sup>[84][19][85][86]</sup> Furthermore, the US was the only participant in the conflict to use the Tomahawk missile, with Lewis saying the missile in the footage did not match any known weapons possessed by Iran.<sup>[84][19][87]</sup> *Bellingcat*, among other sources, added that the footage having confirmed the US' striking of areas within the vicinity of the school contradicted Trump's claim that an Iranian missile hit the school.<sup>[86][84]</sup>



An American destroyer firing a Tomahawk missile as part of Operation Epic Fury on 28 February

A CBC investigation concluded that the school was bombed as part of a precision airstrike against the military complex adjacent to the targeted building and that it was not a mistake. It said the impact on the school demonstrated that it was either a weapons system failure or a serious CENTCOM intelligence gathering error, adding that the US primarily targeted military bases and missile launchers in southern and central Iran. Israel, on the other hand, was focusing its operations in the north saying that "Minab's location in the south, near the Strait of Hormuz, places it within the US military's primary area of operations and lines up with other US strikes on the Bandar Abbas Naval Base, about 80 kilometres west of Minab, and facilities in Konarak, which is 400 kilometres to the southeast."<sup>[83]</sup>

Photographs of missile fragments released by *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting* alongside independent video, satellite and debris analysis has consistently identified the munition as a Tomahawk cruise missile.<sup>[88][89]</sup> A satellite data link antenna was recovered from the site which was imprinted with the name of Colorado-based manufacturer, *Ball Aerospace & Technologies*, owned by British arms-manufacturer *BAE Systems*.<sup>[90]</sup> Further analysis of the debris connects it to a contract issued by the United States *Naval Air Systems Command* to contractor *Raytheon* on 24 September 2014 for the production of 231 Tomahawk Block IV missiles for \$251,133,201.<sup>[89]</sup>

## Legality

Shannon Bosch, an associate professor of law at *Edith Cowan University*, analyzed the strike from the perspective of international humanitarian law (IHL). Without drawing firm conclusions, Bosch noted that schools and children under 18 are especially protected under IHL, concluding that "the legality of that strike turns on whether the expected harm to children and the school was excessive compared to the military advantage gained by striking the target."<sup>[37]</sup> UN human rights experts characterized the strike as a potential war crime under the Rome Statute.<sup>[91]</sup> Regarding the attack, international humanitarian law expert *Janina Dill* said



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