



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

situation Assessment | 12 April 2026

The Ceasefire in the War on Iran: Determinants and Prospects

Unit for Political Studies

The Ceasefire in the War on Iran: Determinants and Prospects

Series: [situation Assessment](#)

12 April 2026

Unit for Political Studies

The Unit for Political Studies is the Center's department dedicated to the study of the region's most pressing current affairs. An integral and vital part of the ACRPS' activities, it offers academically rigorous analysis on issues that are relevant and useful to the public, academics and policy-makers of the Arab region and beyond. The Unit for Policy Studies draws on the collaborative efforts of a number of scholars based within and outside the ACRPS. It produces three of the Center's publication series: Situation Assessment, Policy Analysis, and Case Analysis reports.

Copyright © 2026 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. All Rights Reserved.

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies is an independent research institute and think tank for the study of history and social sciences, with particular emphasis on the applied social sciences.

The Center's paramount concern is the advancement of Arab societies and states, their cooperation with one another and issues concerning the Arab nation in general. To that end, it seeks to examine and diagnose the situation in the Arab world - states and communities- to analyze social, economic and cultural policies and to provide political analysis, from an Arab perspective.

The Center publishes in both Arabic and English in order to make its work accessible to both Arab and non-Arab researchers.

The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies

Al-Tarfa Street, Wadi Al Banat

Al-Dayaen, Qatar

PO Box 10277, Doha

+974 4035 4111

www.dohainstitute.org

Table of Contents

Context	1
Prospects	3
The Israel Factor	4
Conclusion	6

After forty days of military confrontation that brought the region to the brink of a wider war and an unprecedented global energy crisis, the United States and Iran announced on 8 April 2026 that they had reached a ceasefire brokered by Pakistan. The agreement provides for a suspension of hostilities for two weeks and for negotiations to be held in Islamabad, starting on 10 April 2026, with the aim of reaching a permanent end to the war.¹ News broke of the ceasefire just two hours before the expiry of a deadline set by US President Donald Trump to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, failing which Iranian energy facilities, bridges, and other infrastructure were to be targeted. The details of the agreement between the two sides to halt hostilities remain unclear, amid conflicting accounts, particularly regarding the status of the Strait of Hormuz and whether the ceasefire extends to fighting in Lebanon.² Each side has also claimed a significant victory in an effort to save face.³

Context

Around six weeks into the war launched by the US and Israel against Iran, intended to subdue the country or topple its regime, it had become clear that the campaign had produced the opposite of its intended effects.⁴ The war had been initiated based on Israeli-backed calculations that eliminating Iran's political, security, and military leadership would trigger a popular uprising leading to the regime's collapse, or at least to the subjugation of what remained.⁵ Instead, a younger and more hardline leadership assumed power in Tehran. Thus, the military operation, which had been expected to be short, swift, and decisive, would be prolonged, with significant political and economic repercussions. These stemmed primarily from Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the resulting rise in energy prices in the US during an important election year.

In an attempt to break the political deadlock triggered by Iran's continued refusal to submit to his conditions for ending the war, Trump resorted to escalation. On 21 March 2026, he issued an ultimatum to Iran stating that the US would "hit and obliterate" Iranian energy facilities, "starting with the biggest one first", if Tehran did not reopen the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours. However, under pressure from regional allies, Trump backed down just hours before the deadline expired on 23 March, announcing a five-day postponement of potential US strikes on Iranian energy facilities. He attributed this extension to "good and productive" talks between Washington and Tehran,

1 Steve Holland, Parisa Hafezi & Alexander Cornwell, "Relief as US and Iran Agree to Truce, but Enemies' Demands Unresolved," *Reuters*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNM9N>

2 "The Strait of Hormuz at the Heart of the Tehran-Washington Agreement: What Are the Special Arrangements?," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMmm>

3 Goldie Katz & Ariella Roitman, "Trump Announces 'Double-sided Ceasefire' between US, Iran Following Pakistani Proposal," *The Jerusalem Post*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMyV>; "Iran Says Talks with US will Begin in Pakistan's Islamabad on Friday," *Al Jazeera*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLHq>

4 "Trump and Netanyahu's Iran Gambit: The Strategic Calculations behind Epic Fury," Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 4/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9B9PH>

5 Jonathan Swan & Maggie Haberman, "How Trump Took the US to War with Iran," *The New York Times*, 7/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMwhq>

claiming that the two sides had agreed on fifteen points and expressing a preference for joint US–Iran arrangements to manage the Strait of Hormuz – claims that Tehran denied.⁶

Trump subsequently extended the deadline twice more: first until 6 April, and then until 8 p.m. Washington time on 8 April. In the interim, he continued to issue threats, including highly inflammatory language, demanding that Iran reopen the strait and threatening to return Iranian civilization to the “Stone Age” if it failed to comply.⁷ At the same time, the US was building up additional military capabilities to increase pressure on Iran, including promoting the possibility of a limited ground operation targeting Kharg Island, through which 90 per cent of Iran’s oil exports are shipped.⁸ To further intensify pressure on Tehran, Washington sought to secure a resolution from the United Nations Security Council, submitted by Bahrain in its capacity as the Council’s current president, calling for coordinated “defensive” measures to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. However, the draft resolution was blocked by vetoes from China and Russia, which argued that it did not address the party responsible for initiating the war and closing the Strait, and expressing concern that Washington might use it as a legal basis for broader military action against Iran.⁹

Trump grew increasingly wary of entanglement in a prolonged war with Iran – one that could last for months, damage his party’s electoral prospects, and impose significant strain on an already burdened US economy, as well as raise the risk of a costly ground operation. Iran, for its part, was also seeking a dignified exit from an expensive conflict. At the same time, Tehran took Trump’s threats, particularly regarding the destruction of energy facilities and major infrastructure, very seriously, with his recent statements appearing increasingly desperate.

Accordingly, at the last moment, Tehran agreed to a proposal put forward by Pakistan and announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.¹⁰ The proposal included the agreement of both the US and Iran to:

1. An immediate ceasefire between Iran, the US, and their respective allies in all theatres, including Lebanon.
2. The ceasefire taking effect immediately.
3. The convening of delegations from both countries on 10 April in Islamabad to continue negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement covering all areas of conflict.

6 “Trump’s Negotiations with Iran: Exit Strategy or Bluff?”, Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 26/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1CF4>

7 Julian Borger, Dan Sabbagh & Andrew Roth, “Donald Trump Says ‘a Whole Civilisation will Die’ if Iran Ignores Demands,” *The Guardian*, 7/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNM3j>

8 Dan Lamothe, “Pentagon Prepares for Weeks of Ground Operations in Iran,” *The Washington Post*, 29/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMfS>

9 David Brunnstrom, “China and Russia veto UN resolution on protecting Hormuz shipping”, 7/4/2026 accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1CMs>

10 Dave Lawler & Barak Ravid, “U.S. and Iran Agree to 2-Week Ceasefire,” *Axios*, 7/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMsr>; Jessie Yeung, “The US and Iran have Agreed a Ceasefire, with Talks to Bridge the Gulf between them. Here’s what to Know,” *CNN*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMFO>

The two sides also agreed to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to international navigation for a renewable period of two weeks, during which negotiations would take place to reach a permanent settlement to end the war, despite conflicting US and Iranian accounts on this matter.

In this context, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi stated on the platform X: “For a period of two weeks, safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz will be possible via coordination with Iran’s Armed Forces and with due consideration of technical limitations.”¹¹ For his part, Trump announced on his Truth Social platform: “The United States of America will be helping with the traffic buildup in the Strait of Hormuz.”¹²

Prospects

Since Trump returned to office in January 2025, the US and Iran have held two rounds of negotiations, spread over several sessions, in an effort to reach an agreement. Iran sought to confine the talks to its nuclear programme, whereas Washington aimed to expand them to include Iran’s missile programme and its relations with regional allies. The first round of negotiations began on 12 April 2025¹³ but was halted by the war Israel launched against Iran in June 2025, on the final day of the 60-day deadline Trump had given Tehran to reach an agreement.¹⁴ The US joined the war at its close, carrying out a strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities, before announcing a ceasefire on the twelfth day of the conflict. The second round, held across multiple sessions in Muscat, Rome, and Geneva in February 2026, followed mounting pressure on Tehran amid a wave of large-scale protests.¹⁵ It likewise ended with the US and Israel launching a wide-scale military operation against Iran, starting on 28 February and lasting till 8 April.¹⁶

During Trump’s initial 48-hour deadline, the US, via Pakistan, presented Iran with a fifteen-point proposal, demanding Tehran’s approval before proceeding with strikes on energy facilities. Iran responded with a ten-point counterproposal.¹⁷ Notably, the fifteen points were the same as those previously tabled by Washington in Geneva, where negotiations had already been under way.

11 Seyed Abbas Araghchi, “Statement on Behalf of the Supreme National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran,” X, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMwv1>

12 Donald J. Trump, “A big day for World Peace! Iran wants it to happen, they’ve had enough! Likewise, so has everyone else! The United States of America will be helping with the traffic buildup in the Strait of Hormuz. There will be lots of positive action! Big money will be made. Iran can start the reconstruction process. We’ll be loading up with supplies of all kinds, and just “hangin’ around” in order to make sure that everything goes well. I feel confident that it will. Just like we are experiencing in the U.S., this could be the Golden Age of the Middle East!!! President DONALD J. TRUMP,” Truth Social, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMvEy>

13 “US-Iran Nuclear Talks: Background, Obstacles, and Prospects”, Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 6/5/2025, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1CTQ>

14 “The Trump Administration’s Response to the Israeli Attack on Iran and the Outlook for Nuclear Negotiations,” Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 19/6/2025, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLEb>

15 “Iran Protests Stir International Convergences and Conflicting Interests”, Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 19/1/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/1L9Bah4>

16 “Epic Fury: Washington’s Contradictory War Aims in Iran”, Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 8/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1D1e>

17 Barak Ravid, “Iran Sends ‘Maximalist’ Peace Plan Response as Trump Deadline Looms,” *Axios*, 6/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMvS9>; Barak Ravid, Dave Lawler & Marc Caputo, “Exclusive: How Iran’s Supreme Leader Reached a Truce with Trump,” *Axios*, 8/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMw5K>

Their reintroduction after the war suggests that the US was not so much negotiating as imposing conditions, expecting the other side to accept them either through diplomacy or under military pressure, underscoring the coercive nature of the conflict.

The US proposals included dismantling Iran's nuclear capabilities; a binding commitment never to pursue nuclear weapons; the cessation of uranium enrichment on Iranian soil; the transfer of all enriched material to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) according to an agreed timetable; and the decommissioning and destruction of facilities at Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow. They also required full transparency with the IAEA regarding all information inside Iran, the severing of ties with regional allies, and the maintenance of open navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. The missile issue would be addressed at a later stage, with restrictions on numbers and range, and their use limited to "self-defence".¹⁸

Iran responded that it would not enter any negotiations before Washington met two fundamental conditions: compensation for war damages and formal recognition of the aggression against it. It also demanded the full lifting of sanctions, guarantees against any future war, the preservation of its right to a peaceful nuclear programme, and the rejection of any restrictions on its missile programme.¹⁹

As Iran stood firm, refusing negotiations under fire and rejecting any ceasefire that did not include guarantees against renewed hostilities, Trump's rhetoric in his final statements shifted towards prioritizing the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz as a key condition for any truce. This marked a notable shift, driven by the consequences of the war itself, with other conditions deferred to later negotiations. This adjustment ultimately enabled the success of Pakistani mediation, despite the absence of agreement on any of the fifteen US or ten Iranian points. In effect, the closure of the Strait imposed the ceasefire. In the aftermath of a devastating forty-day war, and given the wide gap between the two sides' demands, it remains unclear whether Washington and Tehran will succeed where they failed in the previous two rounds. It is also uncertain whether President Trump might revert to military action in the event that negotiations collapse, or even during the talks themselves, by striking Iran to pressure it into accepting his terms, as occurred in the earlier rounds.

The Israel Factor

Although Israel was neither part of the agreement announced by Pakistan nor of the negotiations that led to it, it declared its commitment to a ceasefire in the war with Iran, while refusing to extend this to Lebanon. According to US media reports, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu informed Trump in a phone call, prior to the ceasefire announcement, that he would abide by the truce, but

¹⁸ "Washington sends 15-point plan to Iran starting with a month-long truce," *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed*, 25/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNMvG>

¹⁹ "Trump's Negotiations with Iran: Exit Strategy or Bluff?"

stressed that “the Lebanese front is not subject to the terms of the agreement”.²⁰ The White House spokesperson likewise confirmed that the ceasefire with Iran does not include Lebanon.

Israel had played a central role in pushing for the war against Iran, with Netanyahu having personally sought to persuade successive US administrations to undertake it. However, it found a receptive partner only in Trump – perhaps owing to his particular disposition.²¹ Yet once the US had become entangled in the conflict, Netanyahu’s government, amid growing public debate over Israel’s role in drawing the Trump administration into a war that has significant economic repercussions for US citizens, sought to recede into the background, claiming it would comply with whatever Washington requested.²²

This did not prevent Israel, during the six weeks of the war, from attempting to disrupt any negotiating track between Washington and Tehran and to undermine any prospective agreement, as illustrated by its assassination of Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, who had been involved in the most recent round of talks held in February 2026. Likewise, Israel, keen to see Iranian energy infrastructure destroyed, moved swiftly, fearing a US–Iran agreement before the expiry of Trump’s deadline, to launch an attack on 6 April against Iran’s largest petrochemical complex in Asaluyeh, which accounts for roughly 50 per cent of the country’s petrochemical output. This was intended to signal the seriousness of threats to target Iranian infrastructure.²³

Nevertheless, Israel remains far from achieving its principal war aims, foremost among them the collapse of the Iranian regime. Nor has it succeeded in drawing the Arab Gulf states into direct confrontation by encouraging them to join the war rather than merely respond to any potential Iranian retaliation in the event that Iranian energy facilities were destroyed. It also remains unclear whether Israel’s refusal to adhere to the first clause of the agreement – announced by Pakistan’s Sharif, concerning an “immediate ceasefire between Iran, the United States, and their respective allies” (implicitly including Lebanon and the Houthis) – will hinder the implementation of the agreement, or whether Iran will refrain from responding to Israel despite its continued military aggression in Lebanon.

In an act widely condemned as egregious, Israel appeared to exploit the world’s preoccupation with the ceasefire announcement on 8 April to launch approximately one hundred air strikes on Beirut and its suburbs within the span of ten minutes, resulting in hundreds of casualties.²⁴ The timing

²⁰ Alexander Ward & Michael Amon, “Israel Says Cease-Fire doesn’t Extend to its Invasion of Lebanon,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 7/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxMwjI>

²¹ Swan & Haberman.

²² “Israel’s War on Iran and Netanyahu’s Role”, Situation Assessment, ACRPS, 9/3/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1D4V>

²³ Dov Lieber, “Israel Strikes Iran’s Largest Petrochemical Facility, Defense Minister Says,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 6/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBxNLNv>

²⁴ Edna Mohamed, AFP and Reuters, “World reacts to ‘brutal’ Israeli attacks on Lebanon after US-Iran truce”, *Al Jazeera*, 6/4/2026, accessed on 9/4/2026, at: <https://acr.ps/hBy1D8C>



suggests an attempt to inflict maximum damage before coming under increased pressure to halt operations on the Lebanese front.

Conclusion

As the Gulf states were bracing for a major and potentially devastating US operation, just two hours before the expiry of President Donald Trump's deadline to strike Iranian energy facilities should Tehran refuse to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, mediation efforts led by Pakistan, with the participation of several regional actors, succeeded in securing a ceasefire agreement accepted by both the US and Iran. A new round of negotiations is now set to begin, though its prospects for success remain difficult to assess, given the wide divergence between the two sides on the core issues under dispute. This is further complicated by the Israeli factor, which seeks to separate the theatres of conflict between Iran and Lebanon in order to isolate the latter, while also insisting that any final agreement to end the war must require Iran to relinquish its 60 per cent enriched nuclear material, permanently halt enrichment on its own territory, and abandon its ballistic missile programme – regarded by Tehran as its last line of defence against Israel and the US.

All of these demands are viewed by Iran as unrealistic and unworkable, leaving open the possibility of a resumption of war, despite the fact that it is in the interest of both the US and Iran – and indeed the wider world – that the conflict be brought to a definitive end.