

# TERROR IN IRAN: ON THE BLASTS IN IRAN'S KERMAN AND THE IMPACT

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The [twin blasts in the southeastern Iranian city of Kerman](#) at a memorial for [Qassem Soleimani](#), the Quds Force commander whom the U.S. assassinated in Baghdad in January 2020, expose the security vulnerabilities of the Iranian regime at a time when conflicts are spreading in West Asia. At least 84 were killed in the worst terror attack in the Islamic Republic's history. Soleimani, the brain behind the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) overseas operations, had enjoyed cult status when alive, and became a symbol of an embattled regime's resilience over the past four years. While Iran's leaders called it a terrorist attack but stopped short of blaming anyone, mid-rung officials said the responsibility for the attack "lies with the U.S. and the Zionist entity". However, on Thursday, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility. For the IS, Soleimani was a sworn enemy as he had mobilised Shia militias to fight the IS in Syria and Iraq. These groups played a role in the urban battles in Iraq during 2018-19 that saw the destruction of the physical structures of the IS Caliphate. The group lost its proto state but survived as a terrorist entity in parts of Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

For Iran, the attack has come at a precarious moment when tensions are rising in West Asia. The Kerman memorial event was bombed a day after a senior Hamas leader was killed in Beirut in a drone strike, for which Lebanese officials have blamed Israel. Hezbollah, which has been engaging Israeli troops in a limited way since October 7, has vowed retaliation. On December 25, an Israeli strike in Syria killed Seyyed Razi Mousavi, a senior IRGC adviser. Israel, whose ongoing attack on Gaza has already killed at least 22,000 people, seems ready to take more risks even at the cost of regional escalation, while in the Red Sea, Iran-backed Houthi rebels of Yemen have been repeatedly attacking commercial vessels since late November. Pro-Iran Shia militias have targeted U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria since October 7, and on Thursday, a U.S. strike in Iraq killed a Shia militia commander. The Israel-Hamas war is no longer about just Israel and Hamas. It has put the whole region in a ring of fire. As chaos spreads the IS seems to have found an opportunity to strike its old enemy which is under pressure. The attack should serve as a warning to Iran and its rivals. If chaos and instability spread it would be a boon for jihadists. This calls for a de-escalation of the current regional crisis. Iran, on the other side, should not walk into the web of provocations set by its rivals. It should show restraint and focus on strengthening internal security.

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