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The Nordic Stance on the U.S.-Israel-Iran War

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Introduction

The U.S.-Israel-Iran war, triggered by a major escalation following U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28, 2026, sent immediate ripples across the global geopolitical landscape. While the direct military confrontation unfolded in the Middle East, its implications have extended well beyond the region, including to the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden). These nations, known for their strong commitment to international law and diplomacy, adopted positions characterized by deep concern over escalation, consistent calls for restraint, and a clear emphasis on diplomatic solutions. This analysis examines both the collective posture and the national distinctions that have shaped Nordic responses to the war.

Norway

Norway's position throughout the conflict has been characterized by a consistent appeal for de-escalation and a strong emphasis on international legal norms, reflecting its long-standing role as both a NATO ally and an active diplomatic mediator. Following the U.S.-Israeli strikes, Norway's leadership questioned the legality of these actions: “The attack is described by Israel as a preventive strike, but it is not in line with international law. Preventive attacks require an immediately imminent threat,” [said](#) Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, thereby signaling Oslo’s readiness to question actions of any actor within a legal framework.

At the same time, Norway also condemned Iranian retaliatory actions, with the Norwegian Foreign Minister [characterizing](#) the “indiscriminate Iranian attacks” in the Gulf as “completely unacceptable.” Foreign Minister Eide also repeatedly warned that a prolonged conflict would not only be devastating in the short term but would also have far-reaching global consequences for years to come. This dual positioning illustrates Norway’s effort to maintain balance, criticizing violations irrespective of the actor, while preserving its credibility as a mediator.

The eventual two-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran, reached on April 8, 2026, was met with relief by Norway. Minister Eide [described](#) the ceasefire as giving “diplomacy a chance, at a moment when the world stood on the brink of a dangerous escalation.” Norway's commitment to the international legal order was further underscored by State Secretary Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik’s statement entitled “[International Law is Still Worth Defending](#).” This statement reaffirmed Norway’s



belief that, even in moments of profound crisis, international law remains the only viable framework for long-term peace and stability.

Norway also played a crucial role in addressing the critical situation in the Strait of Hormuz. On April 17, 2026, Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre participated in a high-level virtual meeting focused on restoring freedom of navigation in this vital waterway, underscoring Norway's commitment to maritime security and global trade. During the meeting, the Prime Minister [conveyed](#) that “Norway is ready to participate in diplomatic and political efforts to support free navigation at sea,” while also “exploring the possibility of a Norwegian contribution to a maritime operation, should the necessary conditions be in place” and “emphasized the need to maintain the ceasefire and negotiations for a lasting resolution to the conflict between Iran, the United States, and Israel.”

Norway has also been engaged in diplomatic efforts concerning the future of Gaza. Foreign Minister Eide [explained](#) that U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace was “quietly engaging with international partners including the EU and the Palestinian Authority to stabilize Gaza and prepare for post-conflict governance.” In this context, Norway positioned itself as a bridge-builder between global institutions and the Board of Peace and the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

Sweden

Sweden's response to the Iran-U.S.-Israel war was shaped by a dual focus: the immediate regional conflict and its broader implications for human rights within Iran. On February 28, 2026, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson [expressed](#) deep concern over the “serious escalation of events in Iran and the region.” He unequivocally [stated](#) that it is in the interest of both Sweden and Europe that Iran is “never able to develop nuclear weapons,” highlighting Sweden's firm stance against nuclear proliferation. Kristersson also [affirmed](#) Sweden's support for the Iranian people and noted that Sweden, in coordination with the EU, had already imposed sanctions on the Iranian regime.

In addition, Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard was [vocal](#) in condemning human rights violations in Iran, a stance that gained urgency following the execution of a Swedish citizen in March 2026. The Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) also issued a [warning](#) on March 18, highlighting increased threats to Sweden stemming from the war, including risks to national security, indicating that the conflict is not merely a distant geopolitical event but one with tangible security implications for Sweden.



Sweden also welcomed the temporary ceasefire and noted it as a constructive step towards reducing tensions and strengthening regional stability. Sweden has also been involved in the attempt to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. “Freedom of navigation is a global concern that affects us all. Sweden is ready to contribute, after a permanent cease-fire, to ensure safe passage,” [stated](#) Prime Minister Kristersson.

Denmark

Denmark’s response to the U.S.-Israel-Iran war was characterized by a nuanced approach, balancing its strong transatlantic ties and commitment to European cooperation with a pragmatic assessment of regional stability and international law. From the outset, Denmark expressed deep concern over the escalation. The Danish Foreign Minister [called](#) Iran’s actions “completely unacceptable” and urged all parties to exercise restraint.

Denmark’s response was more closely tied to its role within the European Union and its traditionally strong transatlantic orientation, though the crisis demonstrated certain limits to its willingness to align with U.S. policy in this context. Despite pressure from the U.S. for NATO allies to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, Denmark, along with other EU and Nordic leaders, explicitly rejected military involvement in the region. Instead, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen advocated for a coordinated European approach and articulated a pragmatic view, [stating](#), “We must face the world as it is, not as we want it to be,” and suggested that Europe should remain open to contributing to freedom of navigation efforts, even if it does not support the U.S.-Israeli decision to initiate the conflict. This stance was further complicated by the lingering diplomatic tensions between Denmark and the U.S. over Greenland, which had previously strained their relationship.

Finland

Finland’s response reflected its recent NATO membership and its heightened focus on territorial defense and regional security. President Alexander Stubb, on February 28, warned of a high risk of escalation following the U.S.-Israeli strikes. “We condemn all actions that seek to escalate the conflict in the region and urge for utmost restraint,” he [stated](#). The President also stressed that nuclear safety and long-term regional security remain of primary importance.

Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen clarified Finland's position on March 17, [asserting](#) that NATO was "not obliged" to assist the U.S. in Iran, particularly regarding the Strait of Hormuz. This statement was a crucial declaration of NATO's autonomy and



a rejection of any attempts to expand its mandate beyond collective defense of Europe and the North Atlantic. Finland's commitment to avoiding direct military involvement in the Arabian Gulf was reiterated on March 22, when it [formally ruled out](#) a military role in the region. While Finland joined international statements condemning Iran's attacks on commercial vessels, its overarching message was a call for a return to negotiations and a clear delineation of its military commitments.

Iceland

Iceland maintained a consistent emphasis on de-escalation, diplomacy, and international law. Foreign Minister Thórdís Kolbrún Reykjörd Gylfadóttir voiced alarm over rising tensions on March 1 and consistently called for restraint to prevent further escalation. Iceland was among the first nations to welcome the April ceasefire, emphasizing that diplomacy and respect for international law were the only viable paths forward.

A significant aspect of Iceland's position was its active role in international forums. Iceland [led](#) calls for a Special Session of the Human Rights Council on Iran at the United Nations. Furthermore, on March 12, Iceland made a notable decision to [intervene](#) in South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This move signaled a very critical stance toward Israeli military actions and underscored Iceland's commitment to upholding international justice even when it meant challenging traditional allies.

Collective Nordic Responses and Strategic Shifts

Beyond individual country positions, the Nordic nations have also pursued collective diplomatic efforts that underscore their shared values and strategic interests. These efforts highlight a unified front in advocating for international law, human rights, and de-escalation, while also strategically positioning themselves in a rapidly changing global security landscape.

A significant demonstration of this collective stance was the Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries and Canada on March 15, 2026. While not directly addressing the Iran-U.S.-Israel conflict, the statement's focus on enhancing defense industrial capacity, strengthening capabilities against hybrid threats, and building resilient infrastructure signaled a proactive approach to collective security amid heightened geopolitical tensions. This initiative represents a strategic shift towards "middle power" cooperation.



Crucially, on March 16, EU and Nordic leaders collectively rejected military involvement in the Strait of Hormuz, despite persistent pressure from the U.S. This unified front demonstrated a clear distinction between NATO's core mission of collective defense and the U.S.-Israel-Iran war, with Nordic leaders resisting any expansion of NATO's role into the Arabian Gulf.

Further solidifying their collective voice, the Nordic-Baltic 8 (NB8) states issued a strong statement on March 25, 2026, at the 61st Session of the Human Rights Council. Delivered by Sweden, the [statement](#) unequivocally condemned Iran's military strikes against third states that were not involved in armed hostilities. The NB8 [called](#) on Iran to immediately cease these attacks, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, and urged for de-escalation and restraint. Crucially, the [statement](#) also called on Iran to end violence and repression against its own people and ensure full respect for human rights, including condemning the use of the death penalty.

Conclusion

The Nordic responses to the U.S.-Israel-Iran war of 2026 reflect a combination of continuity and adaptation. While firmly rooted in principles of international law, human rights, and diplomacy, these responses were also shaped by evolving security considerations and alliance dynamics.

The urgency with which the Nordic countries call for de-escalation is not merely a reflection of their traditional diplomatic posture, but a pragmatic response to the severe risks posed by a prolonged conflict. For the Nordic region, the importance of immediate de-escalation is multifaceted. First and foremost, the humanitarian toll of an expanded war in the Middle East deeply conflicts with the core values of these nations, which prioritize human rights and civilian protection. The potential for mass displacement and a refugee crisis would inevitably have ripple effects reaching Northern Europe, straining social systems and political stability.

Secondly, the Nordic countries' economic vulnerability to global supply chain disruptions makes de-escalation an economic imperative. As highly developed, export-oriented economies, prolonged instability in the Arabian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz threatens their energy security and economic growth. The spike in oil prices and the threat to maritime trade routes directly impact their domestic markets. Furthermore, the conflict poses a significant strategic risk by potentially diverting NATO's focus and resources away from the Euro-Atlantic area, particularly the



Baltic Sea region and the High North, where the Nordic countries continue to face immediate security challenges from Russia.

Looking ahead, the Nordic countries are positioned to contribute to long-term stability in the region, leveraging their reputation as mediators and defenders of international law. Several possible ways forward emerge from their collective stance, including strengthening international legal frameworks, maritime security cooperation, and enhancing middle power alliances.

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