

SOLACE GLOBAL

LATEST

# TRAVEL ADVISORY





# Deadly Earthquake Strikes Iran

## KEY POINTS

- Two fatalities have been reported after a magnitude-6.0 earthquake struck western Iran on 26 August 2018.
- At least 310 injuries have also occurred.
- This earthquake occurred close to the epicentre of the November 2017 quake which led to the death of 600 people.



## SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

**Environmental:** At 0243 local time on 26 August 2017, a magnitude-6.0 earthquake struck in the western Iranian province of Kermanshah, 26km southwest of Javanrud. The earthquake measured a depth of 10 km according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). At least two people are confirmed dead and over more than 300 people are injured; this fatality rate is expected to rise. Extensive damage has been reported to buildings in the area, with at least 500 destroyed and many more damaged.

State media has reported that the town of Tazehabad on Iran’s border with Iraq was the worst hit by the earthquake and many rescue resources will be focused here. The earthquake was felt as far away as Baghdad, Iraq’s capital city, 350km to the west. More than 30 aftershocks have been reported with at least two measuring above 4.0 on the Richter Scale.



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## SOLACE GLOBAL COMMENT

The Iran-Iraq border sees frequent seismic activity due to the 1,500km fault line which runs between the Arabian and Eurasian tectonic plates. This is not the only recent deadly earthquake in the area. In November 2017, a 7.3 magnitude quake killed at least 620 people and injured thousands. In 2003, some 31,000 people were killed by a catastrophic tremor that struck the south-eastern city of Bam.

It is estimated that as many as 500,000 earthquakes occur every year with 100,000 able to be felt by humans. In certain places, minor earthquakes occur almost constantly; tectonic plates are located all over the world. The most famous and impactful area for earthquakes is the so-called 'ring of fire' in the Pacific Ocean; about 90 per cent of all the world's earthquakes occur in this area. Most earthquakes are natural occurrences, but human development has had an impact. The construction of dams and the impact of fracking for gas are thought to cause earthquakes or at least increase their impact.

It has been estimated that on average, there are 18 major earthquakes every year (those registering 7.0-7.9 on the Richter scale) and one great earthquake (those register 8.0 and above). Unlike volcanoes or tropical storms, scientists have found it impossible, at this point, to predict when an earthquake will occur.

It is unclear what impact the emergency operations will have on the government and government budgets. The Iranian economy and its government are under pressure from a weak currency, the burden of reinstated US sanctions, and a water shortage. Further natural disasters, which are not uncommon in Iran, may demonstrate the unpreparedness of the regime to deal with such situations. Officials within the area have already reported issues with drinking water and electricity supply due to infrastructural damage in the area. However, aid workers have reported that it had not yet been necessary to distribute food and tents.

## SECURITY ADVICE

## HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

**What to Expect:****Small to Moderate Earthquakes**

Seismic movements which are lower on the Richter Scale can occur across the world, including in places like the United Kingdom, which is not on or near any tectonic plates. These earthquakes do not represent an emergency risk. When such quakes occur, you can expect:

- Shaking to occur for only a few seconds.
- Lights to move and some minor movement of objects to occur inside buildings.
- To feel a small amount of shaking under your feet if outside.
- To hear a bang if very close to the epicentre

**Large Earthquakes**

The impact on larger earthquakes, which includes everything from 5.0 on the Richter Scale, largely depends on where they occur and at what depth. Their impact may be felt for several minutes. However, in general, when they do occur, you can expect the following.

- The ground to potentially shake violently, in some cases strong enough to knock you off your feet.
- To probably feel shaking followed by a sea-like rolling motion.
- Buildings may sway and the earthquake is likely to cause a roaring sound.
- To feel swaying if in the upper floors of a high-rise building.
- Furniture and fixings may be thrown across the room, especially if unsecured, and windows may break.
- It is possible that fire systems will be triggered with sprinklers and alarms activated. You can also expect lights and power to go off.

**If you are inside:**

The first thing to do when feeling an earthquake tremor is to drop to your hands and knees so the earthquake does not knock you down. You should then cover your head and neck with your arms as protection from falling debris.

You should then look for cover if you can move safely; a sturdy table is suitable, hold on to the legs so that it stays over you to offer protection from falling objects. If this is not available, crawl away from outside walls and next to inside walls away from windows or any fixtures or furniture which could fall on you. Remember: 'drop, cover, and hold on'

If you are in bed when the earthquake occurs, you should stay in bed and cover your head and neck with a pillow unless there is something overhead that could fall on you and cause injury. At night, it is difficult to see any hazards or debris which have emerged and attempting movement in the darkness may result in further injuries.

If you are in a lift get off at the next available floor and find cover.

Stay inside, do not rush to get outside and await the end of the tremors.

**If you are outside:**

If you are outside when shaking occurs, get to open space away from buildings, street lights, bridges/flyovers and overhead wires.

Once in the open, you should 'drop, cover, and hold on'. Then await the end of tremors.

**If you are in a moving vehicle:**

If driving when tremors begin, stop as quickly and safely as you can and apply the handbrake. Be aware of areas of potential landslides. Avoid stopping near buildings, trees, bridges, overpasses, and overhead wires. Once the earthquake tremors cease, proceed cautiously, avoid roads, bridges, and other infrastructure which may have been damaged by the earthquake.

**If you are trapped:**

If the worse happens and you become trapped it is important to remain calm and not move about or kick up dust. If you have a phone, try to use it to call for help. If possible, try tapping on a pipe or use a whistle so rescuers can locate you. Shouting should be a final measure taken as it is important to not inhale too much dust and debris.

**If you are not trapped when tremors stop:**

When shaking stops, leave the building if it is safe to do so and get to an open space away from any damaged areas.

If the building is undamaged, check for the smell of gas, turn it off at the main valve. If wiring is damaged turn that off at the main switchboard. Check for fires and evacuate the building if they are many or too large to safely extinguish.

Monitor local media through any means for information and instruction.

Check for any injuries and give treatment (provided you are trained to do so). Then assist with rescues if it is safe to do so.

Be prepared for a tsunami in coastal areas, learn if the area you are in is usually impacted by post-earthquake tsunamis. A strong earthquake that lasts more than 20 seconds in a tsunami zone will mean evacuation is imperative. If this is the case, once shaking has stopped, move inland and to higher ground immediately and continue to monitor for local instruction or evacuations. If you can see the waves you are still too close. Remain on high ground, tsunami waves can last up to eight hours or longer, only return when officials say it is safe to do so.

Maintain extreme caution in post-earthquake clean-up. Do not remove heavy debris alone and remember to use appropriate clothing and tools.

Be ready for aftershocks and be prepared to 'drop, cover, and hold on', should they occur.

Most earthquake-related injuries are caused by collapsing walls, objects falling, or glass shattering, rather than ground vibrations directly causing injury.

Travellers are advised to delay all non-essential journeys to areas surrounding the Iran-Iraq border due to the damage done to infrastructure, the likelihood of severe travel disruptions, and the threat of significant aftershock. For those in both Iran and Iraq, it is strongly advised to follow the advice of local officials as rescue and rebuilding work takes place. It is advisable that offices and other buildings in these areas undergo detailed security assessments to include a seismic risk assessment. An earthquake plan should be



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put into place and all staff trained in what to do should one occur. It should also be noted that building foundations may be damaged by this most recent quake and any further significant seismic activity may cause deadly infrastructural impairment.

For most travel to Iran, Solace Global would advise clients to employ the minimum of an airport meet and greet and a security-trained driver; this advice may change dependent on the area of travel. Travellers are also advised to use travel-tracking technology with an intelligence feed. This should enable a traveller to be alerted of any security updates within their vicinity and to update others of their movements in case of an emergency.



Solace Global remains available to provide the full range of Travel Risk Management services to clients.

Solace Global is also able to provide comprehensive risk consultancy, crisis management, tracking, response, and evacuation services.

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