

Israeli Forces Take Out Iranian Leader in Major Escalation

The Israeli military announced Tuesday that a targeted overnight strike killed Ali Larijani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and the man the Israel Defense Forces described as Iran's "effective" leader since the war began.

Larijani had stepped into a de facto leadership role following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last month. He was responsible for coordinating Iran's military response to the joint operation launched February 28, and the IDF also accused him of personally directing the regime's violent crackdown on anti-government protesters.

"Throughout the years, Larijani was considered one of the most veteran and senior figures within the Iranian regime leadership, and was a close associate of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei," the IDF said in a statement posted to social media. "During the most recent wave of protests against the Iranian terror regime, Larijani personally oversaw the massacre that was carried out against Iranian protestors."

□Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and the regime's effective leader, has been eliminated.

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– Israel Defense Forces (@IDF) March 17, 2026

Iran has not publicly confirmed or denied Larijani's death. Shortly before the IDF announcement, a post honoring Iranian navy "martyrs" appeared on Larijani's official X account.

The news comes less than a week after Larijani publicly threatened President Donald Trump on social media. Trump had warned Iran it would face strikes if it moved to block oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz. Larijani responded: "The Ashura-loving nation of Iran does not fear your paper threats. Even those greater than you could not eliminate the Iranian nation. Watch out for yourself, lest you be eliminated."

In January, the U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned Larijani over Iran's brutal response to anti-government demonstrations.

In a separate overnight strike, the IDF said it killed Gholamreza Soleimani, the commander of Iran's Basij Resistance Force, a paramilitary unit operating under the Revolutionary Guard Corps. "Yesterday, the IDF targeted and eliminated Gholamreza Soleimani, who operated as commander of the Basij unit for the past six years," the IDF said in a separate statement. "Under Soleimani, the Basij unit led the main repression operations in Iran, employing severe violence, widespread arrests, and the use of force against civilian demonstrators."

Tuesday's operations removed two of Iran's most senior figures within hours of each other. Khamenei was killed in the early stages of the conflict; now the closest adviser he had and the man directing Iran's military posture is also gone. Iran is now navigating a war without its top two leaders.

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