



## How US-Israel attack on Iran is impacting Africa

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**Abstract:** The war between the United States, Israel and Iran may appear geographically distant from Africa. Yet its consequences are being felt across the continent. For millions of Africans from the Horn of Africa to Uganda, Sudan, the Gulf of Guinea and South Africa, among others, the conflict is not simply a geopolitical crisis. It is rapidly becoming a human rights crisis driven by inflation, food insecurity, disrupted trade, and heightened regional instability.

Wars fought by powerful states often produce the harshest consequences for those who have the least influence over them. Africa's experience with the [unfolding Iran conflict](#) is a stark reminder of that reality. The continent's economies, security arrangements, and fragile humanitarian systems are deeply entangled with [global energy markets](#) and Middle Eastern geopolitics. As the war escalates, it is ordinary Africans who risk bearing its heaviest burdens, not the political architects of the conflict.

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## **Energy shock that hits the poor first**

One of the most immediate effects of the war has been the [disruption of global energy](#) supplies. The conflict escalated dramatically after U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran on [28 February 2026](#), prompting retaliatory actions and effectively shutting down shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which is one of the world's most important oil routes. About [20 percent of global](#) oil supply passes through the strait, and its disruption has pushed prices sharply upward.

For African economies, many of which rely heavily on imported fuel, this shock has been severe. [Rising oil prices](#) quickly translate into higher transport costs, increased food prices, and broader inflation. [Analysts warn](#) that surging energy costs could destabilise currencies and deepen the cost-of-living crisis across multiple African countries.

In [Uganda](#) and other East African states, where large segments of the population already struggle to afford basic necessities, fuel price spikes threaten livelihoods and food security. Transport costs affect everything from public taxis to the delivery of farm produce to markets. When fuel becomes more expensive, the entire economy feels the ripple effects. For many households living near or below the poverty line, even small increases in food and transport costs can mean choosing between meals, school fees, or healthcare.

The Red Sea corridor connecting the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean is another crucial flashpoint. Disruptions here could affect trade routes linking Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. In response to the war and related security risks, shipping companies are already considering [longer and more expensive](#) routes around southern Africa. While this may reduce immediate security risks for ships, it raises transportation costs worldwide, again feeding into inflation and economic strain for import-dependent countries. For African economies struggling to recover from pandemic shocks and debt crises, this is yet another external blow.

## **Inflation as a human rights issue**

Inflation is often treated as a purely economic phenomenon. However, as explained by the United Nations, it is a profound [human rights issue](#). When the price of fuel rises, the price of food follows. Fertilisers, agricultural transport, and processing all become more expensive. For African countries already facing high levels of [food insecurity](#) such as Sudan, Somalia, and parts of the Sahel, this can have devastating consequences.

The war's economic shock also risks triggering a broader global slowdown. [Economists warn](#) that sustained disruptions to energy supply and shipping could push the global economy toward recession, further reducing demand for African exports and shrinking government revenues. Reduced public revenue often leads governments to cut spending on health, education, and social protection, the very

services that protect human dignity. The result is a silent erosion of economic and social rights.

### **Africa under pressure**

Beyond economics, the war threatens to [deepen insecurity](#) in the already volatile Horn of Africa. The region sits strategically along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which routes are central to global trade and military logistics. Experts warn that the ongoing war could spill into this fragile region through proxy dynamics, maritime insecurity, or geopolitical competition among Middle Eastern powers.

The potential involvement of regional actors and armed groups could inflame existing conflicts in [Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen](#). For instance, analysts fear that militant groups or [regional proxies](#) could target strategic ports or shipping routes in the Red Sea, further destabilising the region. If such scenarios unfold, the consequences would be dire. Disrupted humanitarian aid deliveries, reduced trade flows, and increased displacement. In a region already struggling with drought, conflict, and political instability, another layer of geopolitical confrontation could push millions closer to [humanitarian catastrophe](#).

Sudan's ongoing [civil war](#) illustrates how global conflicts can compound local tragedies. The country is already facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, with millions displaced and famine risks growing. External shocks such as rising fuel prices or disrupted aid supply chains make an already desperate situation even worse. When global crises divert diplomatic attention and resources, countries like Sudan risk becoming [forgotten emergencies](#). International mediation efforts have stalled as global powers focus on the Middle East conflict. For civilians trapped in Sudan's war zones, this geopolitical distraction could prolong suffering and delay peace.

The Iran war is also reshaping geopolitical alignments involving African states. Some countries are [navigating diplomatic pressure](#) to align with different global blocs, while others worry about becoming arenas for proxy competition. Strategic ports, military bases, and shipping corridors across the Horn of Africa are increasingly seen through the lens of the wider Middle East conflict.

This raises troubling questions about sovereignty and the militarisation of African territory. If external powers deepen their rivalries across African regions, whether through military cooperation, security partnerships, or intelligence operations, the risk is that African populations become collateral in conflicts that are not their own. History has shown that [proxy conflicts rarely remain contained](#).

The unfolding situation sheds a light to a fundamental injustice in the international system that those with the least power often suffer the greatest consequences of geopolitical conflicts. African countries did not cause the war between the United States, Israel, and Iran. Yet millions of Africans may experience its economic and

humanitarian fallout. This reality raises serious questions about accountability and global governance. If great powers wage wars that destabilise global markets and trade routes, they must also recognise their responsibility for the broader human consequences. Human rights do not stop at national borders. When global decisions push vulnerable populations deeper into poverty or insecurity, the international community must respond with solidarity and support.

### **What Africa and the world must do**

The first priority must be [diplomacy](#) as has been suggested by the European Union and the African Union. Preventing further escalation in the Middle East is essential not only for regional stability but also for global economic security. At the same time, African governments must strengthen regional cooperation to cushion the economic shock. [Strategic fuel reserves](#), coordinated monetary policies, and investment in [renewable energy](#) could reduce long-term vulnerability to external crises.

International institutions must also step up humanitarian and financial support for the most affected countries, particularly those already experiencing conflict or food insecurity. Finally, African voices must be heard more clearly in global debates about war and peace. Too often, decisions that reshape the world economy are made without considering their impact on the Global South.

The Iran war is a reminder that in an interconnected world, no conflict remains confined to its borders. Energy markets, shipping routes, and financial systems link the fate of distant societies in ways that are impossible to ignore. For Africa, the stakes are profound. Rising prices, fragile economies, and simmering conflicts mean the continent is particularly vulnerable to external shocks. Yet the deeper question is: 'Will the world allow millions of Africans to pay the price for a war they did not start?'