

US Shifts Goalposts as Iran Stands Unyielding

Tehran conditions its participation in fresh talks with Washington in Islamabad on the lifting of the US naval blockade



A view of the media centre ahead of the US-Iran peace talks, in Islamabad, Pakistan, 11 April 2026.

Families of Minab martyrs urge Pope Leo to “be the voice of their voiceless children”

TEHRAN - In a letter to Pope Leo XIV, a group of families of the students martyred by a US missile attack in the city of Minab on February 28 expressed their appreciation for the Pontiff and asked him to be the voice of their voiceless children.

They have called upon Pope to use his influence to press world powers for the opening of “all paths of dialogue” in the pursuit of lasting peace, saying his message of peace has “offered a healing touch to our broken hearts.”

The school massacre occurred when a US military attack using Tomahawk missiles struck Shajarah Tayyebah Elementary School in Minab, killing more than 170 children and teachers. ▶ Page 7

The rain fell, and the UAE’s house on sand is falling

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The United Arab Emirates had a defining choice to make, and it made the wrong one. For years, Abu Dhabi cast itself as the clever pragmatist of the Persian Gulf, a nimble trader that could glide above the region’s oldest fault lines.

Then it signed the Abraham Accords in September 2020 and traded the rock of genuine neighborhood relations for the shifting sand of an anti-Iran axis. Today, that foundation has given way.

This spring, Iranian ballistic missiles and swarms of drones demonstrated the reach of a neighbor that had warned against regional enablers.

Al Dhafra Air Base took direct hits. Stock exchanges in Dubai and Abu Dhabi lost more than 120 billion dollars in a single month. And now the same leadership that once projected invulnerability is quietly asking Washington for a currency-swap lifeline to keep its dirham from buckling. ▶ Page 5

Global ripple effects of Strait of Hormuz turmoil

TEHRAN- In recent weeks, the world has watched with growing concern as geopolitical tensions in the West Asia reach a boiling point.

The shifts in the Strait of Hormuz and its handling by Iran, following the assault by the US and the Israeli regime on Iranian territory, have not only triggered record-breaking swings in worldwide energy prices but have also set off warning bells for a severe economic meltdown across numerous nations.

What was once a localized conflict is now sending shockwaves through every corner of the global economy.

As the world’s most critical maritime corridor for energy, the Strait of Hormuz moves roughly 20–25 percent of the globe’s daily oil consumption. ▶ Page 4

Elucidating the mechanisms of ‘counter-speech’ in Israel’s media strategy

By Kourosh Alyani

TEHRAN - The credibility of any reasonable dialogue rests on two fundamental principles: a substantial and maximal commitment to alignment with reality and internal consistency.

In a rational exchange, both parties are bound by these two prerequisites and demand them as a right from one another. However, an analysis of Israel’s political and media discourse reveals a structure that, through the deliberate negation of these principles, effectively forecloses any possibility of genuine dialogue. ▶ Page 5

Iran and the demonstration of power

By Xavier Villar

MADRID - When observers in Manchuria relayed news of Russia’s defeat at the hands of Japan in 1904, the event was registered not merely as a regional upset but as a systemic transformation. Japan had entered the ranks of the great powers not through proclamation but through performance. This remains the only reliable criterion. Great powers are not declared; they are demonstrated.

Iran’s recent confrontation with the United States and its regional auxiliaries must be understood in precisely these terms. The question is not whether Tehran has achieved a decisive battlefield victory in the conventional sense. The central strategic datum is different: Iran has demonstrated the capacity to prevent the preponderant military power from translating its material superiority into effective defeat of Iranian territory and its architecture of power. In this sense, Iran has not merely avoided defeat but has actively blocked the conversion of American military superiority into operational strategic outcomes. This capacity for neutralization constitutes the qualitative threshold of the conflict.

Iran vows appropriate response to US-Israel military ‘adventurism’

TEHRAN - Iran has intensified its criticism of the United States’ approach to diplomacy, warning that continued inconsistencies and “bad faith” actions by Washington could provoke a decisive response, while also raising new concerns over regional security, maritime incidents, and the credibility of ongoing mediation efforts.

Speaking at a weekly press conference on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said Tehran sees a widening gap between US rhetoric and behavior, arguing that such contradictions undermine trust and cast doubt on the future of negotiations.

“Words and actions are not consistent,” Baqaei said, adding that Iran will determine its next steps based on national interests and strategic priorities.

His remarks come amid fragile conditions following a Pakistani-mediated ceasefire that took effect on April 8. Despite the agreement, Tehran says Washington has continued hostile measures,

Qalibaf warns global oil traders against ‘house of cards’ pricing

TEHRAN- Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf has cautioned global oil market participants against relying on unreliable “vibe-trading digital oil,” urging them instead to focus on real physical oil transactions.

In a message posted in English on his X account on Monday, Qalibaf warned traders as markets reopened, calling on them to avoid being misled by a “house of cards that works on paper.”

“Vibe-trading digital oil is like vibe-hedging in treasuries during Hormuz risk-off. Both share one house of cards that works on paper,” he wrote.

He quickly added, “Difference: oil at least has Dated Brent. Treasuries? Vibes all the way down.”

He is using financial market shorthand to say: “Look up the price of Russian Urals crude oil in Europe on your Bloomberg Terminal if you want to see the real market, not the fake ‘vibe’ market.”

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Hezbollah strikes Zionist convoy in first post-truce operation

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Amid the ongoing Israeli violations of the Lebanon ceasefire, Hezbollah ambushes a military convoy, destroying four tanks.

Hezbollah’s military media has issued its first statement since the temporary truce in Lebanon took effect, announcing that it carried out a “precision operation” in southern Lebanon.

The attack followed a series of blatant and documented violations by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) of the ceasefire agreement, which has been continuing since it went into effect on April 17.

Observers have also documented IOF violations. The occupation regime has been carrying out explosions in several towns. ▶ Page 5



Tears among the rubble: Foreign diplomats witness aftermath of strikes on Tehran civilians

TEHRAN - On April 20, a solemn tour brought foreign ambassadors, chargés d’affaires, along with domestic and international journalists, face to face with the human cost of recent strikes on Tehran, as they visited civilian, educational, and historical sites damaged during the latest round of conflict.

The visit began at Gandhi Hospital, which was hit on the second day of the war. Once a place of hope and healing, the hospital now stands silent—its operations suspended, its wards emptied, and its future uncertain. Corridors that once echoed with the urgency of doctors and patients are now scarred by destruction, their stillness heavy with loss. ▶ Page 2

TEHRAN PAPERS

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

US war: Over fifty days of costly effort with no results

Kayhan, in an editorial, examined Trump's costly and fruitless efforts. The paper writes that the two-week ceasefire ends on Wednesday, yet despite bearing enormous and miscalculated costs, Trump has failed to secure any presentable achievement — neither on the battlefield nor at the negotiating table. For this reason, he is under intense pressure. If he stops the war at this point, he will face severe criticism. At the same time, two contradictory concerns preoccupy him and his team: putting pressure to extract concessions, and the possibility that such pressure could trigger a larger counter-strike from Iran. In the negotiations, Iran must place credible operational threats on the table in advance, directly opposite the enemy's threats. Trump and his administration must be certain that Iran and its allies have prepared even more painful operational options — for example, adding the closure of Bab al-Mandab to the Strait of Hormuz, or crippling the transit of oil, energy, and goods.

Etemad: Maximizing achievements in the shortest possible time

Etemad spoke with Morteza Makki, a foreign-policy expert, about the growing US inclination toward reaching an agreement with Iran. According to this international-relations analyst, under current conditions, time appears to be moving increasingly in Iran's favor. In contrast, the Americans face political and temporal constraints. Among them is the fact that in the coming months, the United States will be occupied with major events such as activities related to the FIFA World Cup. On the other hand, the administration of Trump needs to present a clear, tangible achievement from this crisis. Nevertheless, the nature of the actions and positions taken by the Trump administration suggests that they are sensitive to the prolongation of the war and do not consider the continuation of this situation to be in their interest. For this reason, they are seeking to secure the maximum possible achievement in the shortest amount of time.

Sobh-e-No: National consensus as the backbone of diplomacy

Sobh-e-No analyzed the sources of strength behind Iran's diplomatic apparatus. Today's negotiating team benefits from a level of support that goes beyond any single political faction — a factor that has increased Iran's influence and bargaining power in the face of international proposals. Domestic stability and the management of livelihoods during a crisis have effectively conveyed Iran's message of strength to Western counterparts. The system's key

advantage in the current situation is the creation of unified messaging among the government, state institutions, and the battlefield. This coordination has made the other side realize that it is facing a single, cohesive entity — a unity that must also be preserved at the negotiating table. The ultimate goal of the system is the long-term protection of national interests. While temporary agreements may help resolve immediate issues, they must not distract from the primary objective: the lasting removal of sanctions and the consolidation of Iran's regional position.

Hamshahri: Gunpowder diplomacy, a fragile balance between deterrence and war

Hamshahri wrote that the current state of regional relations and conflicts can be described within a framework referred to as 'gunpowder diplomacy.' Broadly speaking, what is visible is that neither side has an immediate or strong desire to resume war. Tehran is reviewing the frameworks and clauses under discussion, while the opposing side is attempting to achieve its goals through propaganda and media noise. What is clear, the paper argues, is that power-balancing within the negotiations — and the use of geopolitical tools, especially the strategic position of the Strait of Hormuz — plays a decisive role in shaping the direction of both parties. Interventionist actors, such as the Israeli regime, are trying to push the situation toward renewed conflict. Yet behind the rhetoric of the US president, there appear to be constraints that could act as deterrents, preventing a return to open warfare.

Khorasan: Iran's conditions come first

Khorasan examined Iran's strong position in the negotiations and wrote that, given the American side's intentions, the Islamabad talks were never expected to conclude the first round. Although there is still no confirmed news about a new round of negotiations, one issue requires special attention. The paper argues that the Islamabad talks cannot — and should not — be treated as a continuation of the pre-Ramadan Geneva negotiations, because that agenda was designed to prevent a war that has already occurred. With Iran's victory in 39 days of defending its national security, new options now exist for consolidating battlefield gains at the negotiating table. This point — which was fully observed in the first round of talks in Pakistan, where the Iranian team firmly insisted that discussions proceed strictly within the framework of Tehran's ten conditions — must remain the priority in designing any potential future negotiations.

opment, security and cooperation and taking their future and destiny into their own hands" to promote regional stability.

The conversation underscores China's established role as a neutral powerbroker in the Middle East region. Building on the historic 2023 Beijing-brokered rapprochement that restored diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran, President Xi is leveraging this existing trust to prevent the current conflict from spilling into a wider regional war.

Last week, Xi suggested a four-point proposal for promoting peace in the Middle East.

First, he put emphasis on the principle of peaceful coexistence. He urged regional nations to improve relations to establish a sustainable security architecture that rejects the "law of the jungle" and bloc confrontation.

Second, he called on countries to respect the principle of national sovereignty, emphasizing that the territorial integrity of nations must not be violated under any pretext.

Third, he stated that to prevent the world from reverting to a state of chaos, it is imperative to firmly uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, rather than a "rules-based order" defined by a single power.

Finally, Xi said that all countries should combine development with security. He noted that China would share its modernization efforts to strengthen regional progress, asserting that economic development is the ultimate safeguard for lasting peace.

China has repeatedly criticized US military operations and pressure on Iran, saying they undermine regional stability. Beijing has also officially labeled the US naval blockade of Iranian ports as "irresponsible and dangerous."

Iran vows appropriate response to US-Israel military 'adventurism'

From page 1 ▶ including a naval blockade targeting Iranian ports and vessels—actions Iran considers clear violations of the ceasefire framework.

Baqaei pointed to a recent US attack on an Iranian commercial vessel in the Sea of Oman as further evidence of "aggression" and a breach of international maritime norms. He said the incident prompted a firm Iranian response that forced US forces to retreat.

Iran has since maintained restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz, insisting the situation will not normalize as long as threats and blockade measures persist. Baqaei stressed that the current instability in the strategic waterway stems directly from US and Israeli military actions, noting that conditions had been stable before the escalation.

Addressing recent reports of attacks on two Indian vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and subsequent claims raised by Indian officials, Baqaei said Iranian authorities are still investigating the incident and have not confirmed responsibility. He emphasized that the broader security situation in the Persian Gulf should be understood in the context of ongoing military pressure against Iran.

"We did not start this war," he said. "We have acted in defense of our sovereignty and will continue to defend our interests as long as necessary."

The spokesman warned that any new "adventurism" by the United States or Israel would be met with an "appropriate and necessary response" from Iran's armed forces, which remain on high alert.

Baqaei further argued that internal political divisions within the United States contribute to inconsistent policymaking, describing them as a key factor behind Washington's "confused and contradictory" behavior. He noted that



Photo of the missing martyr of Minab, Makan Nasiri, at the press conference of the MFA Spokesman

segments of American society and media have openly criticized their government's actions, suggesting a disconnect between policymakers and public opinion.

On the economic front, he said Iran continues to utilize all available capacities to sustain its oil exports despite US-imposed restrictions.

Turning to Europe, Baqaei criticized 'the selective application of international law,' particularly in response to calls by EU officials for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. He argued that international law "cannot be used as a convenient tool" to pressure some countries while ignoring violations by others.

He pointed to 'Western inaction over conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon,' as well as support for US and Israeli military actions, accusing European actors of prioritizing political alignment over legal consistency.

On regional dynamics, Baqaei rejected claims that Iran poses a threat to neighboring countries, calling such assessments "entirely wrong." He warned that some regional states are underestimating the risks posed by Israel's policies, cautioning that ignoring "expansionist ambitions" could have se-

rious consequences for the entire region.

At the same time, he acknowledged ongoing coordination with major international partners, including China and Russia, and welcomed their role in opposing 'anti-peace initiatives' at the United Nations. He said Tehran believes broader international mechanisms, including multilateral organizations, could play a role in holding the United States and Israel accountable.

Baqaei also underscored that Iran does not rely on external security guarantees, stating that the country's ultimate source of security is its own people.

Addressing the future of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, he said normalization depends on addressing the root causes of tension, including military threats and violations of the ceasefire. He added that Iran is considering new protocols to ensure the long-term safety of maritime transit, describing such measures as a "responsible approach" by a coastal state.

He emphasized that Iran's actions in the waterway fall within the framework of self-defense under international law, particularly given that large portions of

the strait lie within Iranian territorial waters.

Baqaei reiterated that Iran remains cautious rather than optimistic about diplomacy, given a "very costly experience" of repeated US breaches of commitments over the past year.

"We must remain vigilant, even more than in wartime," he said, stressing that all branches of the Iranian system are closely monitoring developments.

Reaffirming Tehran's red lines, he dismissed US proposals regarding Iran's defense and nuclear capabilities, stating that missile power is non-negotiable and rejecting any suggestion of transferring enriched uranium abroad. He clarified earlier remarks on the issue, saying Iran's nuclear achievements are valued as products of national scientific effort.

"Iran does not accept deadlines or ultimatums when it comes to safeguarding its national interests," Baqaei said.

He concluded with a warning that Washington has previously faced consequences for reneging on its commitments. "If the US insists on repeating its mistakes," he said, "it will receive a response similar to the past."

Iran and the demonstration of power

From page 1 ▶ Control over the Strait of Hormuz has become the most visible indicator of this transformation, though it does not exhaust its meaning. The deeper reality is that Iran has configured an environment of active deterrence, sustained interdiction capabilities, and articulated a form of distributed strategic resistance across multiple institutional, military, and non-state vectors. It has absorbed sustained pressure without systemic collapse and has responded through calibrated force operating via a complex network of allied actors, technological capabilities, and regional projection devices. In classical terms, Iran has shown it can sustain strategic positions against actors of greater material weight without ceding internal coherence or capacity for initiative.

Recognition tends to follow such demonstrations, even when it occurs reluctantly or indirectly. The language emerging from Western strategic circles—phrases like "stalemate,"

"unacceptable costs," or "need for negotiation"—expresses not analytical neutrality but adaptation to a new distribution of effective capabilities. What cannot be resolved through military superiority must be rearticulated in diplomatic terms. This is the grammar of accommodation between powers.

Structural power and system reconfiguration

Recognition, however, does not constitute an abstract or symbolic status. It reorganizes political space. It modifies the expectations of regional actors, recalibrates alliances, and transforms the structure of risk calculation. We find ourselves at a moment when categories inherited from the twentieth century—rigid blocs, fixed spheres of influence, or linear models of containment—lose explanatory capacity in the face of denser, overlapping, and more dynamic configurations of power.

Iran's rise does not conform to the classical model of territorial expansion nor to the pat-

tern of indirect influence characteristic of the Cold War. It operates through a form of structural power: the capacity to configure the conditions within which other actors must make strategic decisions. This is not about occupying physical or institutional spaces but about becoming inescapable in others' calculations.

The liberal Western order depended substantially on the naturalization of its own institutional architecture as if it constituted the neutral environment of international politics. Its norms, sanctioning mechanisms, and languages of legitimacy were presented as technical and universal, not as situated political decisions. The Iranian project—in partial convergence with other non-Western actors—consists precisely in denaturalizing this architecture, exposing it as contingent political construction and demonstrating that functional alternatives to that order exist.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

US war on Iran: Chinese president urges immediate, comprehensive ceasefire

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN — Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for an "immediate and comprehensive ceasefire" between Iran and the United States as President Donald Trump intensifies threats against Tehran.

China has maintained a critical stance toward the US-Israeli war on Iran, which erupted on February 28. Tehran and Washington reached a fragile two-week ceasefire on April 8 after 39 days of joint US and Israeli military operations. Despite large-scale strikes across the country, the war failed to destroy Iran's core military capabilities or reshape the nation's leadership structure in favor of Washington and Tel Aviv.

Nonetheless, President Trump once again threatened Sunday to wipe out "every single power plant and every single bridge in Iran" if Tehran walks away from a deal before the two-week ceasefire expires. Trump also imposed a naval blockade on Iranian ports a week ago, which Iranian officials say violates the terms of the truce. In response to the continued blockade, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday. Since the outset of the war, Iran has asserted full control over the strategic waterway, preventing vessels affiliated with its adversaries from transiting.

In a phone call with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Monday, the Chinese president called for the restoration of normal transit through the Strait of Hormuz. He also urged Iran and the US to prioritize dialogue.

"China calls for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, supports all efforts to restore peace and insists disputes be resolved through political and diplomatic means," Xi said.

He stated that China supports regional nations in "building a shared home of neighborliness, devel-

Pezeshkian: We aim to end the war with dignity and wisdom

TEHRAN— President Masoud Pezeshkian has emphasized the need for wise management of the current situation, stating that Iran is striving to overcome this difficult period with dignity, wisdom, and in Iran's goodwill, while planning for post-war reconstruction with the support of the Iranian people.

During an unannounced visit to a fire station in Tehran, Pezeshkian expressed his gratitude to firefighters and emergency personnel for their round-the-clock efforts throughout the 40-day war waged

by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran.

Addressing the forces, the President described intelligent crisis management as the key to a dignified resolution. He noted that following the end of hostilities, the country will inevitably face challenges in reconstruction, financial resource allocation, and market regulation — realities that require careful management and public cooperation.

Pezeshkian also stressed the importance of avoiding further escalation, stating: "Continued



conflict serves no one's interest — neither ours, nor the opponent's, nor the future of the region. To the

extent that we can manage issues with logic and calm, it will benefit everyone."

Tears among the rubble: Foreign diplomats witness aftermath of strikes on Tehran civilians

From page 1 ▶ Witnesses described shattered windows, damaged medical equipment, and rooms abandoned in haste. For many present, the devastation extended far beyond physical damage—it reflected disrupted lives, halted treatment, and a community left grappling with the consequences.

As the delegation moved on to other affected areas—including residential neighborhoods, schools, and cultural landmarks—the scale of the destruction became even more evident. Each stop revealed another layer of civilian suffering and disruption.

Throughout the visit, a lingering question cast a shadow over the tour: will the voices of those affected be heard beyond these streets?

For the visiting diplomats, the scenes were difficult to ignore. For Tehran's residents, they are impossible to forget.

US shifts goalposts as Iran stands unyielding

Tehran conditions its participation in fresh talks with Washington in Islamabad on the lifting of the US naval blockade

TEHRAN — Iran has adopted a firm stance as the deadline of a fragile two-week ceasefire with the US looms amid Washington's breach of the truce.

The ceasefire was reached on April 8 after President Donald Trump accepted Iran's 10-point plan following 39 days of a joint US–Israeli war that began on February 28.

Three days after the announcement of the ceasefire, Tehran and Washington held talks in Islamabad, mediated by Pakistan, aimed at ending the war. But the negotiations ended without a deal over what Iran called the US "excessive" demands.

The US delegation in the Islamabad talks, which were held on April 11 and 12, was led by Vice President JD Vance, with Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy, and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, also in attendance among other US officials.

The Iranian delegation was headed by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, and included senior officials such as Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Iran's 10-point plan includes reparations for damages caused by the conflict, guarantees that the US and Israel will not attack Iran again, and the lifting of sanctions. Iran also agreed to ease transit through the Strait of Hormuz during the ceasefire.

Naval blockade and seizure

But in violation of the ceasefire, President Trump imposed a naval blockade of Iranian ports. He says the US blockade of Iran's ports "will remain in full force" until Tehran reaches a deal with Washington.

In response to Trump's breach of the truce, Iran on Saturday once again announced the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, in response to the US violation of the ceasefire, including the continuation of the blockade on Iranian ports.

Since the outset of the joint US–Israel war on Iran on February 28, Iran has not allowed vessels affiliated with adversaries to pass through the strategic waterway.

The US seizure of an Iranian cargo vessel over the weekend heightened tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz and fresh talks.

American forces attacked the Iranian container ship *Touska* on Sun-



day, which was sailing toward Iran through the Gulf of Oman. US Central Command (CENTCOM) posted a video showing Marines boarding the vessel. The footage shows Marines deploying from the USS *Tripoli* amphibious assault ship by helicopter, then descending by rope onto the container ship and seizing it.

According to MarineTraffic, the container ship measures nearly 300 meters in length and more than 30 meters in width. The vessel departed Port Klang in Malaysia eight days earlier, according to VesselFinder, and was headed for the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas.

Trump said the ship was seized as part of his self-imposed naval blockade on Iranian ports.

"Today (Sunday), an Iranian-flagged cargo ship named TOUSKA, nearly 900 feet long and weighing almost as much as an aircraft carrier, tried to get past our naval blockade, and it did not go well for them," Trump wrote on Truth Social, adding that the US now has "full custody of the ship."

Iran strongly condemned the seizure of the vessel.

"The aggressor United States violated the ceasefire and committed maritime piracy by firing at an Iranian merchant ship in the waters of the Gulf of Oman and landing a number of its marines on the deck of the vessel, disabling its navigation system," said a spokesperson for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, which coordinates operations between Iran's Army and the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC).

Lieutenant-Colonel Ebrahim Zolfaghari vowed "decisive action" against the US "armed piracy."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson also told reporters on Monday in

his weekly press briefing that the US attack on the Iranian ship is "a violation of the ceasefire and constitutes an act of aggression."

"From the early days of the ceasefire, we were faced with the US's bad faith, contradictory statements, followed by a naval blockade," Esmail Baghaei said.

China also condemned the US seizure, describing it as a "forced interception."

Domestic pressure on Trump

President Trump has so far failed to open the Strait of Hormuz through military action and threats.

During the nearly 40-day war, the US and Israel bombed Iran's military and nuclear sites, hospitals, schools, energy infrastructure, and residential areas, killing nearly 3,400 people. The US and Israel also assassinated Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and senior Iranian military commanders, but they failed to achieve their main goals. These objectives mainly focused on destroying Iran's military capabilities and changing the Iranian leadership structure in their favor.

Despite the war, Iran maintained its retaliatory attacks against adversaries in the region. The leadership structure continues to follow the path of the Leader, and people continue to hold rallies at night to express allegiance to the Islamic Republic and denounce the US–Israel aggression.

Iran has entered talks with the US based on mistrust because during the latest war and in June last year, Tehran and Washington were in talks when the US and Israel launched war on Iran.

Nonetheless, Iran says its battlefield successes against the enemies have pushed Washington to hold

talks with Tehran. Iran says that despite the mistrust, it holds talks with the US based on its national interests.

Ebrahim Azizi, the head of the Iranian Parliament's National Security Committee, says that Iran's actions in the talks with the US complement its military achievements.

"We see the current negotiations as a continuation of the battlefield, and we see nothing other than the battlefield in this," he said. The lawmaker added, "If it yields achievements that sustain those of the battlefield, then the negotiation arena is also an opportunity for us... But not if the Americans intend to turn this into a field of excessive demands, based on their bullying approach."

Economic and strategic fallout

Trump on Sunday once again threatened to destroy every bridge and power plant in Iran if no peace deal is reached. He repeated similar threats before the two sides reached the ceasefire.

The war has not only drawn international reactions but has also damaged Trump's standing at home.

According to a new NBC News poll, the US president's job approval rating has hit a second-term low of 37 percent, driven by his handling of the war on Iran.

The findings, released on Sunday, suggested that 63 percent of US adults disapproved of Trump's job performance, with 50 percent expressing strong disapproval.

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz has also pushed energy prices higher, which has directly affected American citizens as they have to pay more for gas compared to the period before the war.

Now, it seems that Trump tries to create a fabricated sense of victory through his threats to find an off-ramp. Trump stands accused of making miscalculations and underestimating Iran's military power and its resilience.

For now, as Iranian officials have said, the US should drop its excessive demands and adopt a realistic approach if it wants the Islamabad talks to bear fruit. The ball is in the US court to decide whether it wants to de-escalate the situation or fan the flames of war again.

'Iran has the right to insist on durable peace'

TEHRAN — A university professor examines Israel's insatiable thirst for wars in the Middle East and gives reasons why Iran is insisting on a durable peace deal rather than accepting a ceasefire agreement in the war that Israel and the U.S. have launched against it.

Reza Bakhtiyari from the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Mazandaran University says repeated attacks against the Hamas and Hezbollah resistance movements show that Israel does not honor ceasefire agreements.

Israel and the U.S. launched a 12-day war against Iran in June 2025. Nine months later, in full coordination with the Trump administration, Israel again attacked Iran on Feb. 28. Though a Pakistan-mediated two-week ceasefire is holding between Iran and the U.S. and one round of talks has been held between the two sides in Islamabad and efforts are underway to restart the talks and even extend the ceasefire, Israel is impatient to resume its aerial raids on Iran.

In a 13-minute address on April 12, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the Israeli public that the war against Iran "is not yet over". On April 14, Israel's Mossad chief David Barnea also said "our mission has yet to be completed."

In its 10-point proposal to the U.S. prior to the Islamabad talks, Iran insisted on a "full cessation of the war".

Bakhtiyari says Iran has adopted a smart policy in rejecting long-term ceasefire proposals and is insisting on "sustainable peace agreement".

The following is an excerpt of his analysis posted on the IRNA Persian service:

The Zionist regime's military aggression against Iran in June 2025 and the current one clearly prove that Tel Aviv has intensified its «hostility» with Iran.

The ongoing military aggression of this regime, carried out with the participation of the United States, has inflicted severe damages on Iran, yet Iran has not accepted various proposals for a «long-term ceasefire agreement» and has instead emphasized a permanent peace agreement.

The question is why Iran has not accepted proposals for a long-term ceasefire and instead insists on a guaranteed and sustainable peace agreement.

Given Israel's behavioral pattern that is based on «preemptive security approach,» this regime shows no commitment to a long-term ceasefire agreement and will resort to military action against Iran again if necessary.

As some observers point out, military aggression against Iran is influenced more by the desires and intentions of the Zionist regime than by United States. In fact, Zionist lobbies have played a significant role in provoking Washington into war with Iran.

The perceptions of strategists and political elites in Israel are framed in such a way that Iran, unlike Arab countries that have waged war against this regime in past decades, possesses powerful material and spiritual resources to threaten this regime.

For this reason, over the past few decades, especially in the last two decades, the strategic focus of the Zionist regime has been on comprehensive confrontation with Iran, including military confrontation. In this context, it seems that Tel Aviv pursues several goals through this war: first, to eliminate Iran's military and economic power resources for at least a medium-term period; second, to reduce Iran's strategic depth and weaken the so-called «resistance crescent»; third, to create a political rift aimed at isolating



Iran regionally, especially among Arab nations; fourth, to advance and complete the Israeli-Arab alliance project against Iran by intensifying and expanding the geographical scope of the war.

The policies of the Zionist regime in recent years reflect the reality that the survival of Israel, and specifically Netanyahu's government, is closely linked to «maintaining and continuing insecurity» in the Middle East.

It appears that Hamas's October 7 operation against Israel, similar to the September 11 incident that created opportunities for the U.S., provided Netanyahu with the necessary pretext to advance regional objectives, particularly to realize the doctrine of «severing the head of the octopus», meaning Iran. It has now become clear that Netanyahu's insistence on his lie that Iran colluded with Hamas (in the October 7 attack) is essentially aimed at implementing this doctrine.

Initially, it seemed that the «regime change» policy could help Tel Aviv achieve its objectives in line with its doctrine. However, Iran's resilience and its effective military response, along with popular support for the ruling system, made it clear to the Israeli regime that, under current conditions, regime change is not feasible, though this option has not been completely set aside from the agenda. Therefore, the elites in Israel have decided to focus on the collapse of the regime and to intensify attacks on the country's infrastructure, aiming to turn Iran, if possible, into a «failed state». Thus, the policy of escalating war alongside preventing the realization of peace and diplomacy has become a priority for Israel.

The behavioral pattern of Netanyahu and his security cabinet in recent developments in the Middle East, especially regarding the Axis of Resistance and the June 2025 war against Iran, indicates that a long-term ceasefire agreement would only create a military breathing space for this regime and provide an opportunity to rebuild its military capabilities for further aggression.

This policy aligns with Israel's so-called «mowing the grass» strategy, which is based on periodic «preemptive» military attacks to eliminate enemies seeking to regain their power. The repeated violations of ceasefire agreements by this regime with Hamas and Hezbollah of Lebanon confirm this reality. Netanyahu's statements that «Israel will live by the sword forever» can serve as a basis for Iran's distrust of this warmongering regime.

For this reason, decision-makers in Iran emphasize that they will never accept any long-term ceasefire agreement and will only accept a sustainable and guaranteed peace agreement. Even Trump's repeated threats against Iran have not created any doubts regarding this decision. Therefore, it seems that despite the continuation of war and its extensive damages, adopting this policy under current circumstances may be rational.

Given the anarchic international system, if hostilities and geopolitical confrontations between the two sides continue, even the possibility of violating a sustainable peace agreement cannot be ruled out.

Qalibaf warns global oil traders against 'house of cards' pricing

TEHRAN— Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf has cautioned global oil market participants against relying on unreliable "vibe-trading digital oil," urging them instead to focus on real physical oil transactions.

In a message posted in English on his X account on Monday, Qalibaf warned traders as markets reopened, calling on them to avoid being misled by a "house of cards that works on paper."

"Vibe-trading digital oil is like vibe-hedging in treasuries during Hormuz risk-off. Both share one house of cards that works on paper," he wrote.

He quickly added, "Difference: oil at least has Dated Brent. Treasuries? Vibes all the

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solely by its people.

In a message issued Monday, Qaani rejected any form of foreign interference, stating that the election of the prime minister must be based exclusively on the will of the Iraqi people. He also praised Iraq's resistance and unity, warning external actors against meddling in the country's internal affairs.

■ Pezeshkian calls for rationality and vigilance amid tensions

Masoud Pezeshkian has emphasized the need for a measured and rational approach in addressing regional developments, while urging continued vigilance in the face of US–Israeli actions.

He noted that war benefits no one and called for diplomatic efforts to ease tensions. Highlighting distrust toward Washington due to its contradictory conduct, he stressed that national unity and public support remain essential.

■ Iran, Pakistan FMs hold fresh talks

Abbas Araghchi and Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation to discuss regional developments and the status of the ceasefire related to the US–Israeli conflict with Iran.

The exchange marks their second contact in the past two days and follows earlier discussions that paved the way for talks between Pezeshkian and Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan's top diplomat emphasized the importance of continued dialogue to resolve outstanding issues and promote regional stability. Both sides agreed to remain closely engaged.

■ Russia urges continuation of Iran talks to safeguard global economy

The Kremlin has expressed hope that diplomatic efforts surrounding Iran will continue, warning of potential repercussions for the

Persian Gulf and the global economy.

Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia does not currently serve as a mediator but stands ready to assist if necessary, cautioning that the situation remains fragile and requires careful handling.

■ Macron criticizes US and Iran over Strait of Hormuz tensions

Emmanuel Macron said he believes both the United States and Iran are taking flawed positions regarding the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, warning that miscalculations on either side could further escalate tensions in the region.

■ European Council chief hopes for breakthrough in US–Iran talks

Charles Michel said the world is closely watching upcoming talks between Washington and Tehran, expressing hope that the meeting will produce an agreement to end the conflict and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

"European Union has reiterated its support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East, stressing the importance of continued engagement and dialogue."

■ US to host second round of Israel–Lebanon talks

According to Axios, citing a US State Department official, Washington will host a second round of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon next Thursday as part of efforts to ease tensions between the two sides.

■ Russia evacuates nuclear staff from Bushehr after strikes on Iran

Rosatom said it has evacuated more than 600 Russian personnel from the Bushehr nuclear power plant to Russia following the start of military strikes on Iran, citing safety concerns amid rising tensions.

■ Bolton: Iranians 'sense panic' in the White House

John Bolton, a former US national security advisor, has argued that Tehran perceives signs of weakness inside the White House, saying recent rhetoric from Donald Trump has inadvertently strengthened Iran's position.

In an interview with CNN, Bolton told anchor Jessica Dean that Trump's frequent and increasingly urgent posts on Truth Social suggest he is eager to exit the conflict.

"I think they smell panic in the White House," Bolton said. "He's broadcasting it almost every day, and it gives the Iranians enormous leverage they shouldn't have."

Bolton also criticized Trump's approach, arguing that decisions appear to be driven more by domestic political considerations—particularly ahead of midterm elections—rather than a coherent geostrategic strategy. He further blamed the administration for failing to build a clear case prior to military action, pointing to declining public support as a result.

■ Conflicting reports on Vance's role in talks

Confusion persists over whether J. D. Vance will attend upcoming negotiations. While Trump stated that his deputy would not participate due to security concerns, Reuters reported—citing an informed source—that Vance remains in Washington and has not departed.

However, The New York Times, quoting US officials, suggested that the vice president could travel to Islamabad as early as Tuesday, leaving the situation uncertain.

■ Qaani: Iraq alone must choose its leadership

Brigadier General Esmail Qaani, commander of the IRGC Quds Force, has stressed that Iraq's political future must be determined

Iran's annual steel production increases 6%

TEHRAN- According to the statistics of the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA), steel production in Iran during the past Iranian calendar year 1404 (ended on March 20) has recorded a growth of over six percent.

Mehr News Agency reports that the Iranian Steel Producers Association has published the statistics for the year 1404 of the country's steel chain.

Accordingly, despite intensified energy restrictions, due to optimal management and the introduction of new capacities—both in production and in energy self-sufficiency by steelmakers—Iran's steel production increased by 6.2 percent. Thus, Iran's steel production in 1404 reached 32.1 million tons, equaling the production level of 1402.

The total production volume of steel products in the country in 1404, however, experienced a reverse trend, declining by 1.8 percent. Meanwhile, sponge iron recorded the highest production growth among steel chain products, with a 16-percent increase. However, in the upstream of the steel chain, production of pellets and iron ore concentrate remained at the same levels as the previous year.

According to this report, the significant growth in sponge iron production—due to new capacities coming online on one hand—and the stabilization of pellet and iron ore concentrate production on the other hand, indicates a worsening shortage of raw materials for direct reduction units. However, with the shutdown of more than 14 million tons of sponge iron production capacity due to damages caused by the third imposed war, this shortage will be temporarily absent.

A 3.8-percent increase in steel ingot production against a 1.1-percent decrease in long steel product production indicates the need to develop steel ingot exports. It is noteworthy that the shutdown of more than two million tons of steel ingot capacity due to the third imposed war can be compensated by activating idle capacities for producing this product.

Production of various steel sheets in 1404 remained almost at the level of the previous year. Meanwhile, slab production saw a double-digit growth of 10.2 percent. Unfortunately, due to the damages inflicted on slab-producing companies during the imposed war, the balance of the flat steel products chain has been disrupted, making the import of slabs and hot-rolled sheets necessary and urgent.

Iran's steel industry is a cornerstone of its non-oil economy, having grown into a significant global player. In 2025, the country produced approximately 32 million tons of crude steel, securing its position as the world's 10th-largest producer.

Beyond crude steel, Iran is a major force in the global direct reduced iron (DRI) market. The nation produced roughly 37 million tons of DRI in 2025, accounting for about a quarter of the world's total supply. This DRI is used by its modern electric arc furnace (EAF) mills, which form the backbone of its steelmaking capacity. However, the industry has faced severe headwinds. In early 2026, military strikes on key facilities, including the country's two largest steel plants, caused major disruptions. This came on top of long-standing challenges like international sanctions, domestic inflation, and energy shortages from power and gas cuts.

Despite these obstacles, the sector remains a vital export earner. It exports a significant portion of its output, with semi-finished steel products being a primary driver. While its immediate outlook is clouded by conflict, Iran's steel industry is a testament to resilience and strategic industrial development on the global stage.

Iran's steel industry produces a comprehensive range of products, from semi-finished materials to value-added goods, supporting construction, automotive, infrastructure, and manufacturing. The sector can be broken down into several key categories:

Semi-Finished Steel

The industry's backbone consists of products like billet, bloom, and slab, with Iran producing over 20 million tons of these in an eight-month period alone.

Flat Steel Products

Led by Mobarakeh Steel Company (MSC), the largest steel producer in the West Asia and North Africa, Iran's flat steel output includes hot-rolled and cold-rolled coils, as well



as coated products such as galvanized and pre-painted sheets. These high-quality sheets are used in major national projects, including large-scale water pipelines.

Long Steel Products

Specialized in by companies like Esfahan Steel Company (ESCO), this segment includes:

- * Rebar (reinforcement bars) for construction

- * Structural sections like I-beams, H-profiles, channels, and angles

- * Railway rails – ESCO is Iran's sole producer of rail tracks

Tubular and Finished Steel Products

These include various welded pipes, galvanized tubes for water and gas, and advanced automotive steel grades like CK45 and S650MC high-strength sheets, which have recently been produced locally to reduce import dependence.

Overall, the diversity of products demonstrates Iran's growing self-sufficiency and its role as a significant global steel producer.

According to the data released by the World Steel Association (WSA), Iran's crude steel production rose 15.1 percent year-on-year to 2.6 million tons in January 2026.

The figures show Iran maintained its position as the world's tenth-largest steel producer, outperforming the broader global trend.

Global crude steel production across 69 countries totaled 147.3 million tons in January, down 6.5 percent compared with January 2025.

China, the world's largest steel producer, recorded a 13.9 percent decline in output to 75.3 million tons. India produced 15.1 million tons, up 10.5 percent year-on-year, while the United States posted a 3.3 percent increase to 7.1 million tons.

South Korea's output rose 5.0 percent to 5.6 million tons. Japan produced 6.8 million tons, down 0.5 percent, and Brazil's production fell 1.4 percent to 2.7 million tons.

Germany registered a 15 percent increase to 3.1 million tons, while Russia's output declined 7.4 percent to 5.5 million tons. Turkey produced 3.4 million tons, up 5.8 percent year-on-year.

The data indicate that while global steel production contracted at the start of 2026, Iran expanded output at a double-digit pace consolidating its ranking among leading producers.

According to World Steel Association's previous report, Iran's steel production reached three million tons in December 2025, registering more than 16 percent growth compared to the same period last year.

The country remained in tenth place globally with a total steel production of approximately 32 million tons in 2025.

According to WSA data, the world steel makers produced 1.849 billion tons of steel in 2025, a two percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

In the last month of 2025 (December), Iranian steelmakers produced three million tons of steel, showing a 16.2 percent growth compared to the same period in 2024. In total (from January to December 2025), Iran's steel production reached 31.8 million tons, a 1.4 percent growth compared to the same period last year.

The report indicates that global steel production in December 2025 reached 139.6 million tons, a 3.7 percent decrease compared to the same period in 2024.

According to World Steel Association statistics, China, as the world's largest steel producer, has faced a decline in production. China's steel production from January to December 2025 decreased by 4.4 percent to 960.8 million tons, and in December 2025, Chinese steelmakers produced 68.2 million tons of steel, a 10.3 percent decrease compared to the same period last year.

Global ripple effects of Strait of Hormuz turmoil

TEHRAN - In recent weeks, the world has watched with growing concern as geopolitical tensions in the West Asia reach a boiling point.

The shifts in the Strait of Hormuz and its handling by Iran, following the assault by the US and the Israeli regime on Iranian territory, have not only triggered record-breaking swings in worldwide energy prices but have also set off warning bells for a severe economic meltdown across numerous nations.

What was once a localized conflict is now sending shockwaves through every corner of the global economy.

As the world's most critical maritime corridor for energy, the Strait of Hormuz moves roughly 20–25 percent of the globe's daily oil consumption.

Nearly two months after the US-Israeli coalition's military strike against Iran, it has become evident to all—even in the most distant corners of the world—that people are experiencing the fallout from restricted navigation through this channel in their everyday lives.

Today, it is commonly accepted that the effects of limiting ship traffic in the Strait of Hormuz have surpassed regional boundaries and disrupted the global economy.

Before the US-Israeli aggression against Iran began, approximately 20 large oil tankers passed through the strait each day. Now, due to the enforced constraints, it is estimated that 17 to 20 million barrels of oil have been removed from global supply.

Over recent weeks, we have



seen the immediate outcome in the spike of prices for various fossil fuels, particularly oil and gas, sparking a fresh inflationary wave first in energy-importing nations and then elsewhere.

Global economy analysts contend that the intensified restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz have crippled the West Asian oil supply chain for months, driving inflation and joblessness to unprecedented heights worldwide.

Among the countries most affected by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, China, India, Japan, and South Korea are at the forefront,

have been made to allow the remaining 10% to be cleared against a letter of guarantee, considering the wartime situation and related issues.

He stated that under the current circumstances, the priority right for registering orders for 2,800 essential industrial goods will be removed, and the waiting time in the currency allocation queue will be added to the validity period of the order registration.

He emphasized that given the necessity of securing goods and boosting exports, if importers of the 2,800 essential industrial goods use foreign currency obtained from their own or others' exports, they will be taken out of the currency allocation queue. This also applies to order registrations that have already expired.

Hajipour further said that it was also agreed that the 2,800 essential industrial goods, if available in customs warehouses, would be removed from the order registration queue.

Furthermore, if these goods are covered by the annual quota, they will be placed in the customs clearance queue; otherwise, they will be cleared through import without currency transfer.

Highlighting the importance of securing raw materials for production units, he said that reviewing the quotas of production units was another topic discussed in the meeting with the head of the Trade Promotion Organization. Due to the damage inflicted on certain industries—including steel and petrochemicals—during the recent war, it is essential to secure raw materials for production units that were previously produced domestically through imports. Therefore, it is necessary to seriously review the quotas of production units and take this consideration into account when determining the currency needs of production units.

Meanwhile, in a joint meeting between the Ministry of Agriculture and regulatory bodies as well as private sector associations, on April 16, issues related to the supply chain of essential goods were reviewed.

According to Mehr News Agency, a meeting to examine and determine mechanisms for supplying essential goods from the northern ports was held at the Ministry's headquarters, attended by the deputy ministers of agriculture, representatives from relevant regulatory bodies, and production and trade associations from the agricultural sector.

During this session, topics such as increasing silo storage capacity, improving the performance of systems, the necessity of strengthening the private sector and enhancing its financial capacity and trust, increasing port facilities and reducing warehousing costs, avoiding parallel work in the goods clearance process, import in exchange for export, as well as managing fuel supply for machinery and managing transportation costs, were discussed and reviewed.

TEHRAN- The Deputy Secretary of the Tehran Provincial Council for Dialogue between Government and the Private Sector has announced an examination of the challenges and crises caused by the war in the trade sector, aiming to expedite the processes of order registration and import of essential goods.

According to IRNA from the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Hooman Hajipour, referring to a joint meeting attended by the head of the Trade Promotion Organization, as well as Mohammad-Reza Ghafrollahi (head of the Trade Facilitation and Development Committee) and Ahmad-Reza Farschian (member of the Tehran Chamber's Board of Representatives and head of the Import Committee of the Iran Chamber), stated that 10 proposals and solutions have been put forward to accelerate the supply of goods and provide access to raw materials for production units.

Hajipour explained that "facilitating trade processes through interaction with state institutions and via the Government-Private Sector Dialogue Council is being pursued," adding that during the meeting with the head of the Trade Promotion Organization, trade barriers and import-export challenges—especially under current conditions, as the country has endured a 40-day war—were reviewed.

According to Hajipour, it was agreed in the meeting to reduce unnecessary administrative processes and review certain systems. Responsibility for some of these trade systems lies with the Trade Promotion Organization, while others fall under the currency working group of the Central Bank.

Hajipour noted that in the current situation, it is necessary to change the origin, destination, and entry customs points in some cases, and these changes require system updates.

He added that based on negotiations with the managers of the Trade Promotion Organization, it was decided that for the import of essential industrial goods, the origin, destination, and entry customs point can be edited without requiring approval, system waiting periods, or currency optimization reviews.

Supply of 2,800 essential industrial goods prioritized

According to the Deputy Secretary of the Tehran Provincial Council for Dialogue between Government and the Private Sector, outstanding order registrations from the past Iranian year 1404 (ended on March 20) for importers—especially those who achieved a certain percentage of customs clearance last year—will be exempt from systemic quota restrictions and currency optimization limits.

Hajipour also announced the extension of order registrations until May 30, 2026, and stated that for order registrations from the year 1404 that achieved 90% customs clearance, efforts

Banks pay special attention to securing necessary credit for damaged industries reconstruction

TEHRAN- In the meeting between bank managing directors and the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) on Sunday, the monetary, credit, and supervisory policies and guidelines of the Central Bank for the new Iranian calendar year (began on March 21) were outlined.

According to IRNA from the Central Bank, Abdolnasser Hemmati, during the meeting, while appreciating the efforts of bank managers and staff during the holidays and the difficult days of the Ramadan War, explained the main axes of currency, monetary, and credit policies for the new year and called

for serious efforts by banks to advance these policies.

The Governor of the Central Bank requested that banks pay special attention to securing the necessary credit for the reconstruction of damaged industries, supporting the preservation and restoration of employment in production

units, and financing purchases and strengthening demand within the framework of their credit capacity.

Hemmati expressed hope that the Central Bank and the banking network, just as during the war, would continue to provide services in the coming months with the same spirit and dedication.

as they obtain over 70 percent of their imported oil via this strait.

In Europe, nations like Italy, Spain, and Greece, which are heavily reliant on Persian Gulf oil, are confronting steep rises in energy expenses and a slowdown in industrial output.

Even the United States, despite boosting its own oil production, has not escaped price instability and interruptions in the global supply network.

As the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz deepens, no nation remains an island unaffected by the turbulence.

From Asian manufacturing hubs to European factories and American consumers, the pain of restricted energy flows is becoming universal.

Unless diplomatic solutions prevail and the waterways are reopened to normal traffic, the world should brace for prolonged economic instability, rising unemployment, and continued inflationary pressure.

The strait may be narrow, but its closure casts a very wide shadow.

Iran's Customs Administration announced in a statement that during the 39 days of the imposed American-Zionist war against the country, customs clearance procedures for 2,874,000 tons of essential goods were completed at the country's customs offices and dispatched.

According to an IRNA report from Iran's Customs Administration on April 13, the statement reads: "Accordingly, customs clearance and the exit of more than 112,000 trucks carrying essential goods were carried out at the country's customs offices during the 39 days of the war, from February 28, 2026 to April 7, 2026."

In total, during the aforementioned period, 2,874,000 tons of essential goods were loaded and brought into the country through the national transport fleet.

The statement emphasized: "The country's customs offices are ready to carry out customs procedures and 24-hour clearance of essential goods needed by the people, as well as raw materials for production units, and this process continues with the cooperation and solidarity of traders, adjacent organizations, and the national transport network."

Additionally, the support package offering customs facilities to economic actors in emergency situations remains in place at the country's customs offices.

Meanwhile, on April 11, the head of Iran's Customs Administration, referring to the directives and instructions issued during the war, emphasized the continued provision of special customs facilities to economic actors in emergency situations.

According to IRNA from Iran's Customs Administration, Foroud Asgari, while appreciating the relentless efforts of customs personnel as the country's economic border guards during the third imposed war, added: "During the third imposed war, the dedicated and hardworking customs staff, just as in the 12-day war, stood alongside the people in the field of service. With round-the-clock efforts throughout this period, they were present in the arena of service and defense of the homeland. These relentless efforts and hardships deserve appreciation and gratitude."

He stated: "Despite repeated threats at zero border points and ports across the country, bringing satisfaction and contentment to the people, especially economic actors, was the best reward during these difficult days. Customs personnel, as the economic border guards of the country, once again distinguished themselves with honor and pride by maintaining their presence at customs offices and carrying out customs procedures for essential goods and basic necessities around the clock, in defense of the homeland."

The rain fell, and the UAE's house on sand is falling

By choosing Washington and Tel Aviv over its own neighborhood, Abu Dhabi ignored the tectonic shifts that have now brought the storm to its doorstep

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The United Arab Emirates had a defining choice to make, and it made the wrong one. For years, Abu Dhabi cast itself as the clever pragmatist of the Persian Gulf, a nimble trader that could glide above the region's oldest fault lines.

Then it signed the Abraham Accords in September 2020 and traded the rock of genuine neighborhood relations for the shifting sand of an anti-Iran axis. Today, that foundation has given way.

This spring, Iranian ballistic missiles and swarms of drones demonstrated the reach of a neighbor that had warned against regional enablers.

Al Dhafra Air Base took direct hits. Stock exchanges in Dubai and Abu Dhabi lost more than 120 billion dollars in a single month. And now the same leadership that once projected invulnerability is quietly asking Washington for a currency-swap lifeline to keep its dirham from buckling.

The biblical image from Matthew 7:24-27 feels precise: "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock... And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

The 'Abraham' trap

The Abraham Accords were a peace agreement in name only. In practice, they operated as a strategic containment pact, rebranding a shared hostility toward Iran and its allies as "normalization" while deepening regional divisions through a new military-security-financial axis.

Israel gained a forward base in the Persian Gulf for intelligence and sabotage. Washington secured another deep-pocketed customer for its weapons makers.

While the bin Zayed believed they were merely hedging their bets, they had actually walked into a trap.

Trade with Israel climbed to 3.2 billion dollars in 2024, but that figure was dwarfed by the 28 billion dollars in annual commerce



with Iran that the alignment has jeopardized.

Prior to the Accords, Abu Dhabi had mended ties with Tehran, highlighted by Tahnoun in Zayed's high-level diplomatic mission in 2021.

Since then, however, Abu Dhabi has pivoted. Increasingly, the UAE's actions have telegraphed a deepening strategic partnership with Israel, adopting a posture that mirrors Israeli security concerns.

When the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran erupted, Tehran responded exactly as it had warned it would. Public denials that Emirati airspace would be used rang hollow against the reality of hosting American assets and facilitating logistics.

Subcontracted sovereignty

The miscalculation ran deep. The UAE, a relatively small country of about 11 million people, of whom only roughly one in ten are citizens, chose to confront a millennia-old civilization with vast geography and a proven capacity for asymmetric reach. Iran had extended a hand of brotherhood through its neighborhood policy, trade, non-interference, and mutual respect.

Abu Dhabi turned away from that rock. Instead, it built an axis of secessionists across North Africa and the Horn, arming non-state actors to weaken central governments and counter revolutionary currents.

In Libya, it backed Khalifa Haftar with arms flights and mercenaries to revive Cyrenaica separatism. In Yemen, it sustained the Southern Transitional

Council, fragmenting the country through ports and oil networks.

In Sudan, Abu Dhabi has funneled logistics and secured gold-smuggling routes for the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This support not only fueled the flames of a brutal civil war but also rendered the UAE complicit in the RSF's genocidal massacres.

Similar patronage networks in Somalia's Puntland, Somaliland, and Jubaland secured bases while mirroring Israeli preferences for manageable chaos.

This divide-and-conquer approach bred blowback: proxy clashes with Saudi Arabia in Yemen and Sudan, isolation across the Islamic world and Global South, and the image of a state useful to U.S.-Israeli planners.

Tahnoun bin Zayed, the national security adviser known as the Spy Sheikh, has run the operational machinery: intelligence platforms, cyber cooperation, and the G42 tech empire.

Tahnoun's sovereign wealth funds poured hundreds of millions into Trump-family ventures, including a 500-million-dollar stake in World Liberty Financial just before the 2025 inauguration that funneled 187 million dollars to Trump entities. These attempts to purchase influence have offered no real protection.

The Washington tax

Financial subservience completed the picture of abasement. To keep the American umbrella aloft, Abu Dhabi bankrolled U.S. tech, energy, and manufacturing. The UAE accelerated its \$1.4 trillion investment pledge even while Washington's actions set

the region ablaze.

In March, Washington approved a \$4.5 billion THAAD radar package as part of an eight-billion-dollar arms surge.

These systems function as a recurring tax paid to Lockheed Martin and other contractors. Iranian Shahed drones cost tens of thousands of dollars; THAAD interceptors run into the millions.

For every dollar Tehran spent, Abu Dhabi spent twenty to thirty on countermeasures, an asymmetry that drains treasuries without delivering security.

The same pattern extended to G42's Microsoft deal, where U.S. pressure forced the removal of Chinese hardware, handing Washington the keys to the UAE's digital future.

The glass towers of Dubai, formerly a facade of unassailable success, have been stripped of their luster, standing now as fragile liabilities in a shifting landscape. Real-estate discounts proliferated as wealthy expatriates paid premium prices for evacuation flights.

In desperation, the UAE Central Bank has sought a currency-swap lifeline from Washington.

The idea of Dubai as a neutral bridge between East and West has perished.

The bin Zayed had believed they could bribe geopolitical reality with petrodollars and backroom deals. History does not cash those checks.

The house built on sand has fallen. The storm may have passed for now, but the eroded foundation remains, waiting for the next rains.

Elucidating the mechanisms of 'counter-speech' in Israel's media strategy

By Kourosh Alyani

TEHRAN - The credibility of any reasonable dialogue rests on two fundamental principles: a substantial and maximal commitment to alignment with reality and internal consistency.

In a rational exchange, both parties are bound by these two prerequisites and demand them as a right from one another.

However, an analysis of Israel's political and media discourse reveals a structure that, through the deliberate negation of these principles, effectively forecloses any possibility of genuine dialogue.

1. The collapse of internal logic and relation to reality

In its production of discourse, Israel systematically employs "structural contradictions" to shift the boundaries of discursive stability:

Contradiction in threat framing: An actor that is officially understood to possess approximately 400 undeclared nuclear warheads speaks of the "possibility" of a rival acquiring nuclear weapons as a global threat. This clear departure from internal consistency removes speech from the realm of mutual understanding and transforms it into an instrument of pressure.

Substitution of fact with myth: While realities indicate the killing of tens of thousands of children, the media apparatus constructs irrational narratives—such as claims about the baking of 40 Israeli children in an oven—in an attempt to provoke emotional reactions and entirely disregard commitment to objective reality. Here, the "fabricated narrative" is not only tasked with obscuring "tangible reality," but also with undermining internal consistency through the creation of double standards.

2. An architectural metaphor: From a broken window to a missile-struck house

The difference between a flawed yet functional dialogue and Israeli discourse can be understood through an architectural analogy:

In a reasonable dialogue, you are faced with a counterpart whose speech resembles a house with minor defects; for example, a broken window or a faulty faucet washer. In such a situation, you have a plan: you identify the defect and take steps to correct it (cri-



tique).

In Israeli discourse, you are confronted with a house struck by a missile. This is neither an "empty lot" on which one can build again, nor does it contain any intact part from which reconstruction can begin. In effect, the very infrastructure of truth has been completely destroyed.

3. The deadlock of "epistemic debris removal" and the hasbara trap

The fundamental problem in confronting this structure lies in the speed of its destruction. The rate of discourse production within the "hasbara" apparatus is so high that it does not allow the audience to complete the process of "debris removal" (refuting falsehoods and returning to reality). This strategy places the interlocutor in a dual deadlock:

Entrapment in the density of falsehoods: The individual engages in the act of responding, but due to the volume and density of successive falsehoods, all their time and energy are consumed in futile reactions, effectively trapping them within the opponent's narrative.

Abandonment of the ميدان (arena): Due to the impossibility of clearing the debris and the irrational nature of the claims, the individual withdraws, resulting in the complete domination of Israeli propaganda over the mental space of the audience.

Conclusion

Israeli discourse should not be understood merely as "dishonest dialogue"; rather, it constitutes a deliberate strategy for generating epistemic chaos. In this model, the primary objective is to drastically raise the cost of maintaining coherence and mutual understanding—both with the opposing side and the broader world—through the destruction of commitment to consistency, that the other party either exists the میدان or becomes buried beneath an overwhelming accumulation of narrative debris.

British universities paid security firm to spy on pro-Palestine students

British universities paid security firm to spy on pro-Palestine students

Twelve British universities paid a private firm run by former military intelligence officials to "spy" on student protesters and academics, including those who have expressed solidarity with Palestine, it can be revealed.

A joint investigation by Al Jazeera English and Liberty Investigates has uncovered evidence that Horus Security Consultancy Limited trawled through student social media feeds and conducted secret counter-terror threat assessments on behalf of some of Britain's most elite institutions.

Horus, which describes itself as a "leading intelligence" firm, has been paid at least 440,000 pounds (\$594,000) by universities since 2022.

Among those monitored were a Palestin-

ian academic invited to give a guest lecture at Manchester Metropolitan University and a pro-Gaza PhD student at the London School of Economics, according to internal documents.

In October 2024, the University of Bristol provided the firm with a list of student protest groups it wished to receive alerts about, an internal university email suggests. It included pro-Palestinian and animal rights activists.

In total, 12 universities paid the firm to monitor campus protest activity. Others include the University of Oxford, Imperial College London, University College London (UCL), King's College London (KCL), the University of Sheffield, the University of Leicester, the University of Nottingham and Cardiff Metropolitan University.

Outrage over Israeli soldier's vandalism of Jesus statue in Lebanon

There has been widespread condemnation after an image of an Israeli soldier hitting a statue of Jesus with a sledgehammer in southern Lebanon went viral.

Israel's prime minister claimed he was "stunned and saddened". Its foreign minister said: "We apologize for this incident and to every Christian whose feelings were hurt."

Locals say the statue was on a crucifix

outside a family home on the edge of Debel, one of the few villages where residents have remained during Israel's war with Hezbollah.

The head of Debel's congregation, Father Fadi Flaifel, told the BBC: "We totally reject the desecration of the cross, our sacred symbol, and all religious symbols. It goes against the declaration of human rights, and it doesn't reflect civility." He said similar acts had happened before.

Hezbollah strikes Zionist convoy in first post-truce operation

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN - Amid the ongoing Israeli violations of the Lebanon ceasefire, Hezbollah ambushes a military convoy, destroying four tanks.

Hezbollah's military media has issued its first statement since the temporary truce in Lebanon took effect, announcing that it carried out a "precision operation" in southern Lebanon.

The attack followed a series of blatant and documented violations by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) of the ceasefire agreement, which has been continuing since it went into effect on April 17.

Observers have also documented IOF violations. The occupation regime has been carrying out explosions in several towns, including Khiam, Bint Jbeil, Aitaroun, Rshaf, and Shamaa, alongside artillery shelling of other areas.

According to Hezbollah's statement, a convoy of eight IOF armored vehicles was struck by a coordinated explosion of explosive devices that had been planted in advance by its fighters. The convoy was moving from the town of Taybeh toward the town of Deir Seryan.

The statement said the explosions, which occurred in two waves, resulted in the destruction of four IOF Merkava tanks, with flames seen rising from them. It added that the IOF began withdrawing the damaged vehicles from the site.

On Saturday, Hezbollah Secretary-Gen-

eral Sheikh Naim Qassem stated that resistance fighters remain on high alert, with their "hands on the trigger," stressing that the Lebanese resistance movement does not trust the enemy and will respond to any violations.

Israeli media outlet reported that electronic warfare systems failed to intercept Hezbollah drones guided by fiber optics. It added that their range exceeded ten kilometers and posed a major challenge to maneuvering forces.

The outlets revealed a new challenge facing the IOF following its illegal ground operations in southern Lebanon: Hezbollah's extensive use of suicide drones guided via fiber-optic systems, which neutralized advanced electronic defense systems.

Avi Ashkenazi, a military analyst for the Hebrew newspaper Maariv, said Hezbollah fighters used hundreds of drones that do not rely on wireless communications or satellites. Instead, Ashkenazi added, they operate through a closed fiber-optic system, making it extremely difficult for the IOF to intercept or remotely control them, resulting in direct hits on its forces.

Reports described a "field shock" within the Zionist regime's security and military establishment after discovering that these drones have a range exceeding ten kilometers, far beyond earlier estimates of just two kilometers.

This technology creates a closed link between the operator and the drone, preventing electronic warfare systems from hacking or



taking control of it.

The newspaper quoted commanders from the IOF's 162nd Division as saying Hezbollah preferred remote operations using these tools to disrupt IOF movement of armored and infantry units, describing them as "the most challenging enemy."

A commander from the IOF's Nahal Brigade acknowledged that the drones' precision and visual capabilities have created a complex technological and operational dilemma, calling them the "most challenging layer" on the battlefield.

The Maariv analysis concluded that although the IOF described the cumulative damage from these drones as limited, they have proven highly effective and deadly, complicating maneuver operations and posing a serious technological challenge for the Israeli regime's defense industry.

Hezbollah has also denied any connection to a group that Syrian authorities claimed they had arrested.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iranian President orders urgent restoration of war-damaged heritage sites



TEHRAN – Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian has ordered the immediate restoration of cultural and historical sites damaged in recent attacks and called for targeted support for tourism-related businesses, along with accelerated infrastructure development.

During a visit to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts on Monday, Pezeshkian reviewed the ministry's performance across sectors, with a focus on its response under what officials described as exceptional national conditions.

In a meeting with the minister and senior officials, the president received a comprehensive report on damage caused to historical and cultural sites during the recent war, which was commenced jointly by US and Israel on Feb. 28.

Pezeshkian stressed the importance of safeguarding the country's cultural and historical identity, urging authorities to accelerate documentation of damage, secure emergency funding, and draw on both domestic and international capacities to restore the affected sites.

Separately, the meeting reviewed the ministry's management of travel during the Nowruz holidays. Officials reported that despite constraints linked to the broader situation, measures were implemented in accommodation, transportation, welfare services and oversight of tourism facilities. These steps were said to have contributed to a more balanced distribution of travel and a relative increase in traveler satisfaction.

UNESCO grants 'enhanced protection' to cultural heritage sites in West Asia

Since West Asia war started on 28 February, several sites of major cultural significance have come under attack in Israel, Iran and Lebanon. Ensuring their protection is the task of the UN agency for education, science and culture, UNESCO.

At the request of the Lebanese Government, UNESCO placed 39 World Heritage sites in the country under so-called "enhanced protection".

But what is "enhanced protection" and what can the UN agency do to help in times of war? To help answer these questions, UN News spoke to Krista Pikkat, Director of Culture and Emergencies Entity at UNESCO.

Living heritage under threat

UNESCO has repeatedly warned about the impact of the hostilities on the region's very rich and diverse cultural heritage. Since the outbreak of the war, UNESCO has received reports of damage to more than 20 different cultural sites, including World Heritage Sites and others of national importance.

"We verify the reports that we receive from different sources either through satellite images by analyzing the before and after images, or through on-site inspections," explained Ms. Pikkat.

UNESCO has now confirmed damage to five cultural properties in the region, including a synagogue, the Golestan palace, the Sa'dabad palace and the old Senat palace – all in Iran – along with Tyre in Lebanon, where UNESCO has confirmed damage. "It's the living heritage of the communities that is under threat," Ms. Pikkat stressed.

What is 'enhanced protection'?

Lebanon has 39 sites on UNESCO's "enhanced protection" list, the most of any country.

The ministry highlighted the expansion of smart infrastructure, the launch of integrated travel service platforms, and increased field inspections among key actions taken during the period.

The session also addressed the condition of businesses and jobs linked to tourism, handicrafts and cultural heritage that have been impacted by the conflict and recent developments. Authorities outlined support packages including financial facilities, deferred debt repayments, insurance assistance, and capacity-building programs aimed at affected stakeholders.

Pezeshkian underscored the role of these sectors in employment and regional economic stability, calling for targeted assistance to avoid disruptions in production and service chains.

In concluding remarks, the president described the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts as strategically important for preserving national identity assets and strengthening cultural diplomacy. He called for greater coordination among government bodies, increased use of expert capacity, and faster implementation of reconstruction and development programs.

He also expressed appreciation for ministry officials, tourism industry workers, handicrafts practitioners and cultural heritage professionals, and emphasized the need to strengthen support for the private sector and expand the tourism industry.

"Enhanced protection is the highest level of international legal protection that exists" under the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention, Ms. Pikkat explained. "It's granted to sites that are of greatest importance to humanity and it provides them with the highest level of immunity from military attacks."

Any State or party not complying with the Convention could be guilty of a war crime.

In Lebanon, UNESCO works closely with the authorities, especially the Directorate General of Antiquities, providing technical advice and support for emergency cultural heritage protection. This includes training, emergency inventories, safeguarding measures, rehabilitating storage sites, evacuation guidelines for movable heritage, and marking protected sites with the Blue Shield emblem to ensure their protection.

More than stones and mortar

Particularly during conflict, UNESCO urges restraint and protection for educational, cultural, media and scientific institutions, as they form the foundation of future societies.

The UN agency insists that in times of war, culture and heritage define people's identity, providing comfort and support to communities.

When these key building blocks of society are targeted, their destruction deepens trauma, fuels resentment, and hinders recovery and dialogue, UNESCO says.

"We shouldn't only consider culture as something that is fragile and needs protection," Ms. Pikkat insists. "Culture is also a source of resilience. It's also an economic asset for recovery and peacebuilding."

(Source: UNESCO)

ICOM voices support for Iran's museums after wartime damage

TEHRAN — The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has announced its readiness to assist Iranian museums and cultural heritage sites damaged during the recent war with US and Israel, following a formal request from its national committee in Iran.

In a letter addressed to Monir Kholghi, head of ICOM Iran, ICOM President Antonio Rodríguez acknowledged the reported scale of destruction and said the organization stands prepared to provide technical, advisory and coordination support to safeguard affected collections and institutions.

According to a statement released by ICOM Iran's public relations office, Rodríguez confirmed that damage assessments submitted by Iranian authorities align with monitoring conducted by the ICOM Secretariat in cooperation with international bodies, including UNESCO.

"I acknowledge the reception of your letter dated 10 April requesting urgent support and protective measures for Iranian museums and cultural heritage," Rodríguez wrote, adding that ICOM had carefully reviewed Iran's request for immediate protective actions.

He highlighted the installation of Blue Shield protective emblems on museums and heritage buildings across Iran as a significant step in mitigating risks during armed conflict. Images of these symbols, which mark cultural sites under international protection frameworks, have circulated widely on social media, demonstrating both professional coordination and the use of established protective tools.

Rodríguez said ICOM is actively discussing the possibility of deploying an international advisory mission to assess risks and provide technical recommendations, although any such initiative would depend on security conditions on the ground.

He added that the organization could facilitate international consultations involving experts in conservation, restoration, museum security and heritage crisis management. This includes connecting Iranian professionals with ICOM's international committees and specialists from partner institutions such as ICCROM.

Expert urges balance between reconstruction and memory preservation in post-war cities

TEHRAN – Seyyed Ahmad Mohit-Tabatabai, the former president of Iran's branch of the International Council of Museums, has said cities emerging from conflict should preserve elements of their historical memory while planning reconstruction, citing global examples from London to Hiroshima.

Mohit-Tabatabai said decisions on war-damaged urban spaces should be made on a case-by-case basis, depending on their significance and context. "The city must preserve its memory," he said, adding that historical memory forms a core part of urban identity and should be considered in rebuilding efforts.

He said post-war cities face not only the task of restoring infrastructure but also the question of how to deal with the physical traces of conflict, including damaged residential areas, educational centers and historical sites.

Recent discussions in Iran, including references to civilian sites such as Minab's elementary school, in which some 170 students were martyred, have renewed attention to whether such locations should be cleared and rebuilt quickly or partially preserved as memorials, he said.

Drawing on international experience, Mohit-Tabatabai said approaches vary widely. He cited London after World War Two, where large parts of the city, including parliament and historic buildings, were destroyed but later reconstructed based on their original design. "Today, visitors feel they are facing a historic city, while much of it has been rebuilt in line with its past," he said.

He contrasted this with other cases, including the site of the World Trade Center in New York after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, which was not rebuilt in its original form but turned into a memorial space. In Hiroshima, he said, only the atomic bomb impact site was preserved, while the rest of the city was reconstructed.

"These examples show there is no single model," he said. "The type of response depends on the nature and importance of each site."

Mohit-Tabatabai said immediate measures during conflict should focus on emergency actions such as debris removal and preventing further damage, while major reconstruction is usually carried out after the end of hostilities.

Support package unveiled to bolster handicrafts sector amid economic pressures

TEHRAN – Iran's government outlined a support package to strengthen the handicrafts sector and preserve related jobs during a meeting with industry associations and entrepreneurs held on Saturday at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

The meeting, attended by Cultural Heritage Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri and representatives of professional associations, focused on coordinating policy and addressing challenges facing the sector under current economic conditions.

Malek Hosseini, deputy minister for entrepreneurship and employment at the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare, said businesses had seen reduced resilience due to inflation and the impact of war. "Wartime and post-war conditions have specific requirements and cannot be managed with pre-war models," he said, calling for changes in policymaking and the use of new



"Connecting quickly with experts in ICOM Documentation, ICOM Conservation and other relevant International Committees, as well as experts from other organizations such as ICCROM, is totally feasible," the letter said, noting that remote collaboration could provide an alternative where direct access remains limited.

On the issue of documentation, Rodríguez stressed that updating museum inventories should be a top priority. While ICOM's Red Lists are typically used to combat illicit trafficking of cultural property, he said current conditions in Iran require a different immediate focus.

Monitoring has identified "many threats of damage and destruction of cultural heritage," he wrote, urging museum authorities to ensure that inventories are accurate, detailed and supported by extensive photographic records. Such documentation, he noted, is essential for establishing ownership and facilitating recovery in cases of loss or theft.

He also recommended that these records be securely backed up in multiple locations to prevent further loss of critical data.

In addition, Rodríguez suggested that Iran consider submitting a list of cultural heritage sites of outstanding universal value to UNESCO for enhanced recognition and protection. He cited a recent case in which Lebanon successfully re-

quested special protection for 39 heritage sites, an initiative supported by ICOM.

Regarding financial assistance, Rodríguez pointed to existing international mechanisms, including UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund and resources from the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas. He said ICOM, as a partner of both entities, could help facilitate funding requests from Iranian museums that have identified urgent needs.

Rodríguez also noted that ICOM is preparing to issue a second formal statement condemning attacks on museums and cultural heritage and reiterating the importance of adhering to international conventions designed to protect cultural property during conflicts.

He said ICOM members worldwide have expressed solidarity with Iran and called for broader international mobilization to protect cultural heritage at risk.

"We look forward to continuing our collaboration and to identifying appropriate ways in which ICOM can support ongoing and future efforts to safeguard cultural heritage in Iran," Rodríguez wrote, concluding with a message of "deep and sincere solidarity" with Iranian museum professionals.



struction is usually carried out after the end of hostilities.

He said Iran has not consistently marked or preserved sites linked to wartime events. He cited examples in Tehran, including areas affected by missile strikes in the 1980s, where no visible markers remain today.

"In many cases, it would have been possible to design memorials or markers indicating what happened at a site, without preserving ruins themselves," he said.

He added that some locations, such as the site of the first missile

strike in Tehran, could be designated as memorial points, while surrounding areas are rebuilt.

Mohit-Tabatabai said preserving selected traces of conflict can serve cultural and social functions, including education and reflection for future generations, but should be balanced with the need to restore normal urban life.

"There is no single rule," he said. "Each space must be assessed based on its own characteristics, with a balance between reconstruction and preserving historical memory."

country, and planning for entry into international markets.

Ali-Asghar Shalbafian, head of the ministry's Investment and Economic Affairs Center, said a new package of dedicated financial facilities for handicrafts had been designed and implemented. He said 29,423 applications had been referred to banks, of which 22,000 were related directly to handicrafts.

Shalbafian said 95% of the applications were from areas outside provincial capitals, indicating a focus on rural areas and smaller cities. He said a requirement for social security insurance to access loans had been removed, easing access to finance for applicants.

He added that handicrafts workers could now register to benefit from employment support programs run by the labor ministry.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

Thousands of saplings being planted to commemorate Minab martyred students



TEHRAN - A ceremony was held on Sunday to plant ten thousand of saplings at the premises of Azadi Sports Complex in Tehran in memory of the students martyred by a US missile attack in Minab, southern Hormozgan province on February 28.

A 12,000-seater sports stadium, mainly hosting volleyball games, within the Azadi Sports Complex was destroyed in a U.S.-Israeli strike on March 2, Tasnim reported.

It added that the dormitory and new building of Iran's Cycling Federation, as well as a main swimming pool and parts of the Rowing Federation located in the complex, were also destroyed in the attack.

In the memory of the students of Shajareh Tayyebeh school, a park will also be created in Tehran.

The decision was made after the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei recommended people to plant trees to

commemorate the martyred students.

Shajareh Tayyebeh was a primary school where boys and girls educated together. Up to 175 people were killed, the vast majority of them were little girls between the ages of seven and twelve.

"The effort reflects a national response to enemies; it also symbolizes hope, fertility, and development in the city," ILNA quoted Mehdi Pirhadi, a member of Tehran's city council, as saying.

The National Tree Planting Day (March 5) was observed this year in the special memory of the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who always recommended planting trees as a good and righteous act toward environmental protection.

The day is observed annually on the fifteenth day of Esfand, the last month on the Iranian calendar, marking the first day of the natural



resources and watershed management week.

The occasion has been approved to be registered on the national calendar as 'Environmental Protection Education Day'.

Every year on the National Tree Planting Day, the martyred leader invited people to plant trees and protect the environment, saying that doing such important work requires national support.

In March 2025, the martyred Leader said planting trees is a beneficial act that highlights the nation's foresight for creating wealth for future generations.

All people should participate in planting trees as a good and righteous act so that with the increase of trees, the living environment will be refreshed and clean, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed.

The martyred leader emphasized that planting trees is a profitable

and rewarding investment. He noted that trees offer numerous advantages, like increasing oxygen levels and helping to reduce pollutants, making it a profitable investment choice.

He also reminded the importance of the connection between man and nature and the preservation of the environment in Islam, noting that planting trees is not only related to young people. All people of different ages should find enthusiasm and motivation towards this important, necessary, and beautiful work.

Referring to a national plan, kicked off in December 2023, to plant up to one billion trees across the country over the course of four years to combat desertification and restore forests, the martyred leader said: "If each Iranian plants three saplings, the government's goal to plant one billion saplings over the next four years will be realized."

Iranians call for students, teachers worldwide not to remain silent in face of US-Israeli crimes



TEHRAN - A group of Iranian students and teachers have published a letter in seven languages, calling on students and teachers around the world not to remain silent in the face of the crimes of the Zionist regime and the United States.

A short while ago, on February 28, the United States and Israel targeted a school in one of Iran's small cities, Minab, in a missile strike. In this crime, 168 students aged 7 to 12 lost their lives and were martyred, the letter reads.

"Iran has not accepted the unjust order of the world, because it has refused to go under the umbrella of American colonialism, because it did not allow its oil to be stolen and turned into weapons for killing children.

Today, American and Israeli missiles threaten every school in the world. We stand firm with strength, pride, and ultimately victory, and we pay the price so that no innocent child anywhere in the world becomes prey to the greed of tyrants."

Below is the full text of the letter.

"A heartfelt greeting to you from the land of Iran, a land that for thousands of years has been the cradle of knowledge, thought, culture, and refinement; a land from which the first scholars, the first teachers, and the first distinguished women emerged; a country that, throughout its history, has never pursued domination or colonialism, and the only things it has ever exported to other lands have been knowledge and art. That is exactly why we teachers have never taught aggression and oppression to our children in the classroom," the letter reads.

"Dear colleague, although our languages and nationalities may differ, our profession has greatly reduced the distance between us. Let the commitment and honesty of teaching reveal to you truths about this world that you will hear nowhere else.

First of all, we wish that wherever you are, you remain in the utmost peace and tranquility. I hope that through the blessing of your words and your conduct, your students grow into people who make every day in their homeland more prosperous and joyful than the day before. I hope you witness the flourishing and progress of your students, watch them grow tall beneath the shade of your affection and protection, and that no inhumane regime ever harms their little hands and faces.

I hope your strength proves effective against whatever threatens them, and that you are never left ashamed that you could not protect them.

A short while ago, on February 28, the United States and Israel targeted a school in one of Iran's small cities, Minab, in a missile strike. In this crime, 168 students aged 7 to 12 lost their lives and were martyred. Let me tell you why.

Iran has not accepted the unjust order of the world, because it has refused to go under the umbrella of American colonialism, because it did not allow its oil to be stolen and turned into weapons for killing children, because Ayatollah Khamenei did not send the daughters of his land to "Epstein," and because Iran has supported 20,000 Palestinian child victims.

At a time when they sacrifice infants to

the devil, Iran raises children who are conscientious, spiritual, humane, and kind, children who worship only God. Despite severe sanctions, Iran has reached leading global positions in many sciences and technologies.

Ayatollah Khamenei honored and supported the women and girls of this land and designed society for their dignified lives under their own management, documents concerning Trump's abuse of young girls were published. And thousands of other reasons...

Trump may continue tweeting and telling the world laughable lies about Iran, but in the end he will not be able to hide his disgrace.

The world is witnessing that Iran's armed forces, with their indigenous weapons, have prevailed over the American and Israeli armies and exposed them. Our missiles have taken away the peace of night and day from Israel and the American military bases. We have overcome them because we fight for global peace, while they fight for greater oppression.

"Iran fights for the freedom and independence of humanity!" We fight on behalf of the oppressed throughout the history of this earth: on behalf of the 75 million Native Americans killed in the United States, on behalf of American citizens beneath the boots of Trump's oppression, on behalf of the people of Gaza, Vietnam, the Philippines, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Venezuela, and so on; on behalf of all the peoples of East and West whose rights have been violated by colonialism.

For the children of Epstein's Island, and for our own history; 108 years ago, colonialism in Iran sent half the country's population to their deaths.

This oppression is spreading across the whole world, because they want the entire world. No child anywhere in the world has been or will be safe from these man-eating Epsteinites.

Today, American and Israeli missiles threaten every school in the world. We stand firm with strength, pride, and ultimately victory, and we pay the price so that no innocent child anywhere in the world becomes prey to the greed of tyrants.

This letter is not a request for help; this letter is itself a form of help. O living teacher, this war is the school of global resistance against imperialism. This battle is the battle of truth against falsehood. Everyone strives for it according to the measure of their conscience and freedom.

These days will pass, and we will judge ourselves in the court of conscience regarding what position we took before the greatest sign of God. If we remain silent before such a crime today, then what exactly are we doing in our classrooms?

Take a stand and act. Tell your students the whole truth. We must now stand on the right side of history so that tomorrow we may still use the words "humanity," "freedom" in our classrooms.

This event is a final proof and ultimatum for every human being. God's patience has reached its end; await a new order for the world... a new world is being born.

Girls hold gathering at Leader's place of martyrdom

TEHRAN - A large group of girls held a gathering on Sunday evening on Keshwar Doot Street, central Tehran, where the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was martyred during a US-Israeli airstrike that targeted his office on February 28.

The participants held pictures of the Leader and also students who were martyred on the same day during a US missile attack in the city of Minab.

The girls chanted slogans such as "Down with the USA" and "Down with Israel." Cultural and religious programs were also held to commemorate martyrs of the US-Israeli imposed war.

Meanwhile, thousands of girls from different age groups and from all walks of life participated in a rally in Tehran on Friday to show their preparedness to defend homeland against any aggression by enemies.

The event, organized under a campaign titled "JANFADA", literally meaning "ready to sacrifice life", aimed to renew allegiance to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and declare support for the armed forces.

The "JANFADA" campaign began on March 29 to demonstrate public readiness to defend the country under current sensitive conditions. Yet what unfolded exceeded expectations. Within just a few days, millions signed up, adding their



names to a list that continues to grow rapidly, and it has reached a staggering figure of over 28 million participants so far.

Families of Minab martyrs urge Pope Leo to "be the voice of their voiceless children"

TEHRAN - In a letter to Pope Leo XIV, a group of families of the students martyred by a US missile attack in the city of Minab on February 28 expressed their appreciation for the Pontiff and asked him to be the voice of their voiceless children.

They have called upon Pope to use his influence to press world powers for the opening of "all paths of dialogue" in the pursuit of lasting peace, saying his message of peace has "offered a healing touch to our broken hearts."

The school massacre occurred when a US military attack using Tomahawk missiles struck Shajareh Tayyebeh Elementary School in Minab, killing more than 170 children and teachers.

The signatories described the crime as "a direct result of the provocation and support of senseless warmongers who unleashed destruction upon our innocent children," Press TV reported.

"Today, instead of feeling the warmth of our children's embrace, we are left to hold onto their charred bags and bloody journals," the letter said.

"Our children will never return home to build a brighter future, but it is the prayer of us grieving parents that your message to 'lay down the weapons' be heard, at a time when the United States and the Israeli regime fuel the flames of these atrocities with their excessive demands," it stated.

They appealed to the Pope to be



"the voice for our voiceless children" and, through his enlightening words, help create a world where no parent "is ever forced to whisper a nightly lullaby over the cold gravestone of their child."

The signatories also expressed gratitude to the Pope for having reminded the whole world through his message that lasting peace would be achieved "not through force and weapons, but through the path of dialogue."

The 70-year-old pontiff has issued consistent calls for peace and dialogue, and has denounced the use of religious justification for war.

Specifically, he called US President Donald Trump's threat to annihilate Iranian civilization "truly unacceptable."

Trump insulted the pontiff in a message on his Truth Social, saying the Pope is "weak on crime."

Pope Leo, however, said later

that he will continue to speak out against war and preach peace, regardless of political pressure.

Earlier this month, the chairmen of Iran's religious and scientific institutions praised Pope Leo XIV for his "courageous stance" on the ongoing US-Israeli conflict, expressing hope that his position will help bring an end to hostilities.

In a joint letter addressed to the head of the world's Catholic Church, the Iranian officials wrote, "Your condemnation of the US-Israeli attacks against Iran and the killing of innocent people has been a source of pride for religious communities worldwide."

The letter added that the Pope's resistance to political pressure from the US president sets "an example for scholars and clerics of all faiths."

The signatories emphasized that the message of all divine prophets has consistently been one of peace,

human solidarity, and the rejection of oppression and violence. Citing religious teachings, they noted that the unjust killing of a single person is tantamount to the killing of all humanity.

Despite this principle, the letter stated that the "child-killing Zionist regime" — backed by the US administration — has attacked several countries over the past three years alone, killing tens of thousands of innocent men, women, and children in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Qatar.

The signatories specifically referred to the US-Israeli war of aggression launched against Iran on February 28, arguing that the two regimes crossed all red lines by assassinating the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and by striking civilian infrastructure, including universities, schools, and charity centers.

The authors argued that resources currently devoted to conflict should instead be used to promote moral values and alleviate human suffering.

The Iranian officials' remarks followed earlier comments by the Pope, who warned of escalating violence in West Asia and urged restraint. "Stability and peace are not built with mutual threats or weapons," he said, calling instead for "reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue." He also cautioned that further escalation could lead to a major humanitarian crisis.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The people whom I hate the most and who are the farthest from me on the Day of Judgment are those who talk uselessly, and those who put down others, and those who show off when they talk.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:01 Dawn: 3:53 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:23 (tomorrow)

New cinemas to be inaugurated in eight cities



TEHRAN – Eight cinemas are to be inaugurated soon in cities across Iran, which lacked movie theaters.

It is part of the program by the Shahr Cinema Institute to convert provincial cultural complexes into cinema halls in cities with over 100,000 inhabitants that lack cinema, ILNA reported.

The new cinemas include Shahrivar 3rd Cinema in the border city of Bileh Savar with a capacity of 340 seats and Azadegan Cinema with a capacity of 330 seats in Meshgin Shahr county, both in Ardabil Province, Fanoos Cinema with a capacity of 330 seats in the port city of Kangan in Bushehr Province, Farhang Cinema with three halls and a capacity of 900 seats in Khomeynishahr county in Isfahan Province, Mava Cinema with a capacity of 190 seats in the border county of Maku in West Azarbaijan Province, Taftan Cinema with a capacity of 220 seats in Khash county in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, Simorgh Cinema with a capacity of 256 seats in Sisakht county and Honar Cinema with a capacity of 210 seats in Yasuj county, both in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province.

Last year, 12 cinemas in 12 counties in 7 provinces were inaugurated. This added 2,198

seats to the capacity of cinemas nationwide.

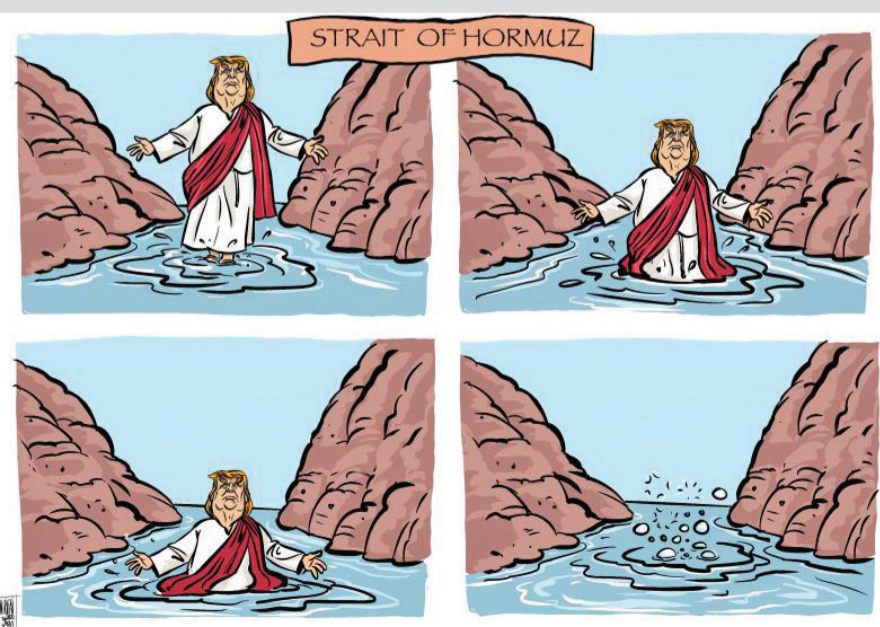
Established in 1994, the Shahr Cinema Institute is the specialized body responsible for developing, equipping, and managing the country's cinema infrastructure. It operates as the executive arm of the Iran Cinema Organization, affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Over three decades of continuous activity, the institute has played a central role in constructing, equipping, and renovating cinema halls across the country, significantly contributing to expanding public access to cinema.

In its new phase of activity, Shahr Cinema Institute continues its core missions while adopting a broader and forward-looking approach. Its scope now includes system-building, digital transformation, human-resource empowerment, and advancing cinema technologies.

Drawing on its historical experience, specialized expertise, and future-oriented outlook, the institute is moving toward transforming cinema into a sustainable, intelligent, and accessible cultural infrastructure for all Iranian citizens.

Cartoon of Day



Jesus Trump Walking on the Water
Cartoonist: Mahmoud Rifai from Jordan

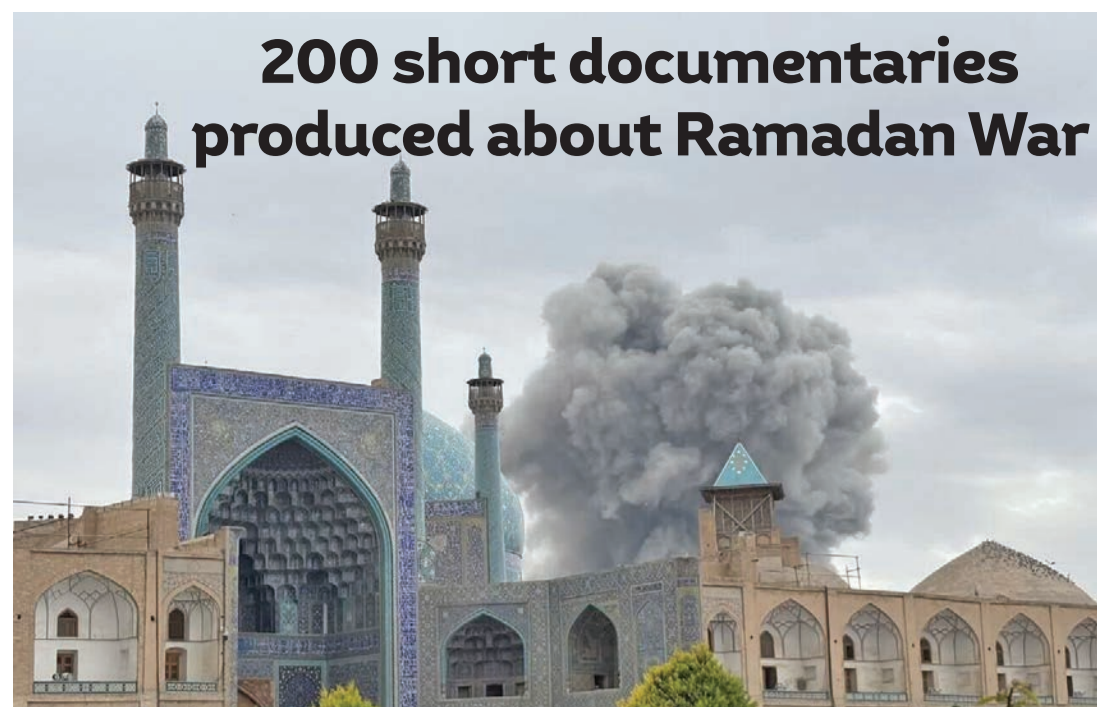
TEHRAN – Mohsen Eslamzadeh, one of the project managers for a documentary series about the war, has announced the production of 200 short documentaries about the 40-day war that was imposed on Iran by the US and Israel.

“The Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab, the Abyek School in Qazvin, and a farm in Buin Zahra are among the subjects documented in this project,” he was quoted as saying by IRNA.

Eslamzadeh explained that documentary filmmakers from various regions of Iran gathered and successfully produced 200 documentaries about the Ramadan War.

“This group consists of 20 documentary filmmakers from Tehran, Alborz province, and some other parts of the country. During this period, in addition to productions for domestic media, some documentary filmmakers produced content for foreign media in China and South Korea upon their request. Other products were translated into different languages and sent to foreign networks,” he added.

According to Eslamzadeh, the early days of the imposed war were very important to these networks, and they were closely following the atmosphere of the war in Iran. They were interested in details such as the condition of supermarket shelves during the Ramadan War, whether people rushed to stores for supplies, the situation at gas stations, and the daily lives of Ira-



200 short documentaries produced about Ramadan War

nians during the war.

“One of the aspects that was important to foreigners was the damage incurred by historical buildings and cultural heritage,” he noted.

“We tried to offer diverse products for different audiences. We also supported documentary filmmakers who approached us with ideas and obtained the necessary approvals for their documentary productions,” Eslamzadeh stated.

The US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28 and for 40 days martyred about 3,500 people including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali

Khamenei, several officials, and military commanders as well as numerous civilians, including women and children.

The aggressors claimed at the beginning that the attacks were aimed at preventing Iran's nuclear program but they later revealed their real objectives. For Israel, the maximalist goal was the regime change in Iran and the US sought to seize the oil and gas resources of the country.

Therefore, besides some military targets, the US and Israel launched organized attacks against civilian infrastructure, including residential homes, hospitals, refineries, power plants, schools, univer-

sities, art and cultural spaces, bookstores, museums, and ancient sites in several cities, causing total or partial damages and injuring innocent people, in an attempt to force the country to surrender to their illegitimate demands.

The attacks prompted a swift response from the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), with missile and drone launches targeting Israel and several US bases in the region.

After 40 days, Iran, the US and Israel agreed to a two-week ceasefire on April 8, during which they have held negotiations to end the war.

Iranian artists vow to rebuild Iran in solidarity with war-affected children

TEHRAN- A coalition of prominent Iranian cinema, theater, and music personalities gathered in Tehran on Saturday to host a solidarity event for children and families affected by the recent Ramadan War, vowing to rebuild a more beautiful Iran.

The event, titled “The Heart of Iran,” was organized through a joint initiative by the House of Cinema, the House of Theater, the House of Music, and the Hegta Tourism Holding, Mehr reported.

The event served as the first installment of a program aimed at providing psychological support and cultural entertainment to those impacted by the conflict, the report added.

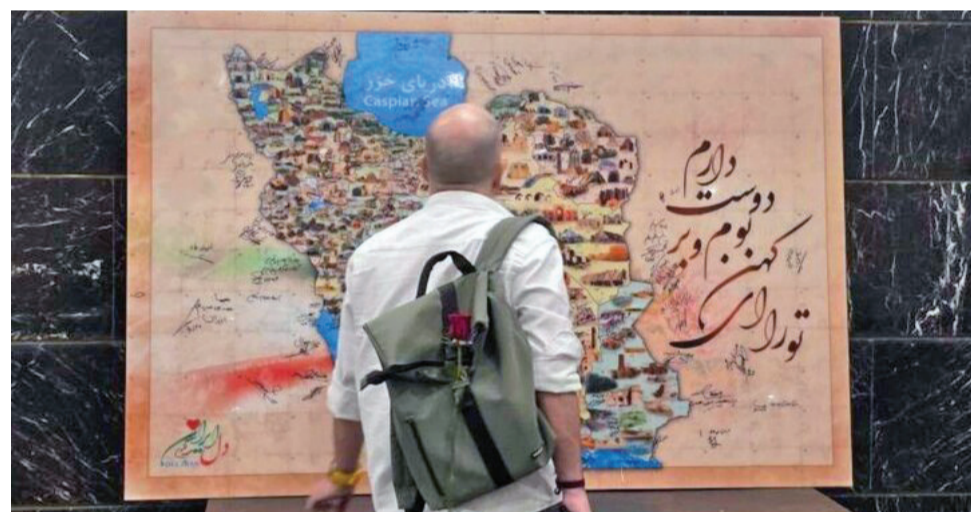
The ceremony featured a diverse artistic repertoire, including puppet shows by the Association of Puppet Performers, a traditional Kheimeh Shab-Bazi (marionette) performance led by Setareh Eskandari, and stand-up comedy. Musical sets were performed by the “D-Band” and the Vahid Asadollahi Azari ensemble, creating an atmosphere of joy and resilience.

In a symbolic act of unity, children and artists worked together to complete a massive puzzle of the map of Iran, dedicated to the memory of the martyred students of the Minab tragedy.

Addressing the audience during the closing ceremony, veteran actor and member of the House of Cinema's support committee, Alireza Shoja-Nouri, delivered a defiant and hopeful speech.

“The foolish Trump did whatever he wanted,” Shoja-Nouri said, referring to the recent aggression. “But standing here beside you tonight is one of the best memories of my life. Together, we will build and make this beautiful Iran even more magnificent, despite those who wish otherwise.”

The event drew a massive turnout of Iranian cultural icons, including Homayoun Asadian, Hossein Pakdel, Atefeh Razavi, Hadi Hejazifar, Shabnam Moqaddami, Gelareh Abbasi, and Alireza Kamali, among dozens of others. Leaders of Iran's major artistic guilds, including Hamid-



reza Nourbakhsh (House of Music) and Alireza Gilevari (House of Theater), were also in attendance.

The “Heart of Iran” initiative, spearheaded by the House of Cinema's support committee under the management of Anahid Abad, is scheduled to continue its activities to support war-affected communities across the country.

The children of Iran have faced an unimaginable emotional and physical burden following the recent US-Israeli war imposed on the country and the devastating aggression that began in late February. From the tragic loss of classmates in the Minab strike to the disruption of their daily lives, these little angels have been thrust into a reality of conflict far beyond their years.

The trauma of loss and the echoes of the sound of missiles have left a profound mark on a generation that should have been celebrating the joys of spring and spiritual growth, turning their innocence into a testament of endurance.

In response to these hardships, a wave of national empathy has emerged to help these children reclaim their sense of security and hope. Through initiatives like the “Heart of Iran” and the completion of symbolic puzzles of their homeland, these young survivors are being re-

minded that they are not alone.

By using art, music, and storytelling, Iranian cultural figures are working to transform the scars of war into a collective resolve, encouraging children to wear their identities with pride and to believe in a future where they will play the leading roles in rebuilding a more beautiful and peaceful nation.

In times of national crisis, Iranian artists have consistently stepped beyond the screen and stage to serve as pillars of social resilience and moral support. Through different initiatives and campaigns, figures from cinema, theater, and music have mobilized to offer more than just entertainment; they have provided a sanctuary of hope for those most affected by the recent conflict.

By visiting displaced families, performing for children, and using their public platforms to voice a message of defiant optimism, these cultural icons emphasize that art is a vital instrument for national healing. Their collective presence serves as a powerful reminder that while the physical landscape may bear the scars of aggression, the spirit of the nation remains unbreakable, fueled by a shared commitment to protect the future of the country and its children.

Glasgow's Kelvingrove Art Gallery temporarily closes after pro-Palestine protest

A Group of pro-Palestine protesters held a demonstration against Israel's newly passed death penalty law, forcing a busy museum in Glasgow to close temporarily.

Mothers Against Genocide held a silent protest on Friday at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum against an Israeli law that would make the death penalty the default sentence for Palestinians.

The legislation, which was passed last month, means that Palestinians convicted in Israeli military courts of carrying out

deadly attacks deemed to be “acts of terrorism” would be executed by hanging within 90 days, with a possible postponement of up to 180 days.

The death penalty would be carried out where the intention of the attack was to “negate the existence of the state of Israel”, which human rights organizations have said is designed to target Palestinians and would exclude Israelis who attack them, such as violent settlers in the West Bank.

Members of Mothers Against

Genocide held the protest to call on the UK Government to “urgently intervene”, and demand an end to the use of the death penalty and to the genocide in Gaza.

During the protest, the museum's regular organ performance was forced to temporarily stop and was followed by a song from the demonstrators who sang “we call it what it is, we call it a genocide”.

Protesters gathered on the balcony, where Palestinian keffiyehs were hung from nooses alongside a banner calling for an end to ex-

ecutions. Other members stood blindfolded, with their hands bound and mouths taped, which they said represented Palestinian hostages.

Emma Gall, a mother of two and Mothers Against Genocide member, urged the public to also “take action now before it's too late”.

She added: “These unlawful executions are immoral, indefensible, and set a hugely dangerous precedent worldwide that puts global democracy in danger.”