

TEHRAN TIMES

8 Pages | Price 100,000 Rials | 1.00 EURO | 4.00 AED | 46th year | No. 15307 | Thursday | April 23, 2026 | Ordibehesht 3, 1405 | Dhu al-Qadah 5, 1447



The Iranian military displayed a ballistic missile on its launcher on April 21, 2026, as citizens in Tehran have been holding nightly rallies in support of the Islamic Republic system amid the ongoing U.S.-Israeli war of aggression against Iran.

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US Blockade Dwarfed by Iranian Naval Power

The IRGC seized two vessels on Wednesday for 'disrupting order and safety in the Strait of Hormuz'

Tehran denies sabotage allegations in Azerbaijan, warns of Israeli 'false flag' ops

TEHRAN – Iran's embassy in Azerbaijan has strongly rejected accusations that Tehran is involved in sabotage activities on Azerbaijani soil, warning that such claims are part of an Israeli disinformation campaign aimed at driving a wedge between the two neighboring countries.

The statement, released on Wednesday, came in response to allegations by Israeli security and military institutions suggesting that individuals or entities linked to Iran had conducted operations against Israeli interests inside Azerbaijan. The Iranian embassy dismissed the claims as "false flag operations," a term used to describe deceptive tactics designed to mislead and provoke conflict. ▶ Page 2

The Lidless Eye of Sauron watches us all. Are we helpless?

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The name "Palantir" confesses its intent so plainly that it reads less like branding and more like a manual: a candid revelation of the method by which a world is watched.

Taken from the legendarium of Tolkien, the Palantiri were seeing stones that allowed powerful beings to observe across vast distances.

In the lore, these stones were ultimately corrupted by a dark lord to deceive the user and consolidate total vision. This metaphor is the beating heart of a company that has moved beyond mere software to become the Lidless Eye of a global surveillance panopticon. ▶ Page 5

Beyond brinksmanship: The Orientalism in Trump's Iran war cry

By Dr. Yasir Ali Mirza

NEW DELHI – In a striking display of aggressive posturing amid the war on Iran, United States President Donald Trump's apocalyptic warning of total annihilation in a prime-time television address from the White House has since been reverberating around the world. Demonstrating how his "madman attitude" has made the world more uncertain, he declared that the U.S. army would be hitting Iran "extremely hard," if his demand of lifting the siege on the Strait of Hormuz would not be heeded by the Islamic Republic Guards Corps (IRGC). ▶ Page 5

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'Iran's participation in Islamabad talks contingent on securing national interests'

TEHRAN – Iran has yet to decide whether it will attend a new round of peace talks with the United States scheduled for later this week, a senior Iranian official has confirmed, as a two-week ceasefire brokered by Pakistan hangs by a thread.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei, who was part of Iran's delegation to the first round of Islamabad talks, told the BBC that Tehran entered the negotiations with "good faith and a sense of seriousness." However, he accused the American side of displaying "lack of seriousness" and "lack of good faith," adding that Washington has been "changing its position frequently."

Baqaei pointed to "flip flops" and "threats of war crimes" by US President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly threatened in recent days to destroy Iranian infrastructure if Tehran does not accept what he describes as a "very fair and reasonable deal." The spokesman also underscored that the US naval blockade of Iranian ports in the Strait of Hormuz remains in force. He noted that on Sunday, US Navy forces fired on an Iranian vessel, boarded it, and took the crew into custody – an act Iran has condemned as "piracy" and a flagrant violation of the April 8 ceasefire.

Iran: Hormuz action means war, Europe's silence unacceptable

TEHRAN — Iran's top diplomat warned on Wednesday that blockading its ports constitutes an "act of war" and a violation of a fragile ceasefire, while sharply criticizing European countries for their silence over 'unlawful military attacks' by the United States and Israel against Iran's peaceful nuclear infrastructure.

In a series of telephone conversations and a post on social media, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi laid out a coordinated diplomatic message: Iran considers itself both legally entitled to take defensive measures in the Strait of Hormuz and increasingly impatient with 'Western double standards' on international law and non-proliferation.

The statements came just days before the expiration of a 20-day ceasefire brokered by Pakistan, which had temporarily halted open warfare that began on February 28 after the assassination of Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and several top military commanders.

Iran urges release of commercial vessel from US 'piracy'

TEHRAN – Iran has formally accused the United States of an act of "piracy" in the Sea of Oman, calling for the immediate release of an Iranian commercial vessel and declaring that a continued American naval blockade must be lifted before any new negotiations can resume.

The diplomatic efforts, delivered in a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and a subsequent press conference by Iran's ambassador to the world body, come just days before a 20-day ceasefire brokered by Pakistan is set to expire.

In a letter to Antonio Guterres and the presidency of the UN Security Council, Iran's permanent ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Irvani, described a hostile encounter involving the Iranian commercial vessel "Toska" near Iranian territorial waters. "On 19 April 2026, in the vicinity of the coasts of Iran in the Sea of Oman, US military forces carried out a hostile and unlawful attack against the Iranian commercial vessel 'Toska,'" the letter reads.



Tehran's Jewish community held a gathering on Tuesday night (April 21) at Valiasr Square in Tehran, aimed at demonstrating national unity. The spiritual leaders of the Iranian Jewish community were present at the ceremony, which was held at the same time as people took to the streets at night.

Iran delegation marches at 2026 Asian Beach Games

TEHRAN – The Iranian delegation, parading under the banner "Dena martyrs", marched at the opening ceremony of the 6th Sanya 2026 Asian Beach Games on Wednesday.

Iran has sent 57 athletes to the Games.

The sixth edition of the Asian Beach Games will be held in Sanya, China from April 23 to 30.

The Games feature 14 sports, 15 disciplines and 62 events.



TEHRAN PAPERS

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

The answer to the US naval blockade lies in closing the Bab al-Mandab Strait

Kayhan discussed the Bab al-Mandab Strait and the importance of closing it in an article. The paper wrote: The unveiling of the Bab al-Mandab Strait at the end of the two-week deadline opens a new front against Trump and his supporters, who will know that from now on there will be no safe spot for them in the vital arteries of the region. Iran's historic alignment against the enemy has now reached an irreversible point. Trump and Netanyahu, by foolishly attacking Iran, not only did they not achieve any of their sinister goals, but they also unintentionally opened a gate to hell for their strategic interests. Today, while the political system stands stronger than ever and Iran's defense capability has pushed the boundaries of military knowledge, terrible news is coming to the Washington palace: the good times in the maritime bottlenecks are over, and the Bab al-Mandeb is ready to block the artery of global trade in the event of the enemy's slightest miscalculation.

Shargh: Distrust between the negotiating parties after 40 days of war

In its editorial, Shargh referred to the distrust between Iran and the United States and the ambiguity in the negotiation process. According to this editorial, in the last two or three days, we have witnessed contradictory positions regarding the holding of the second round of negotiations in Islamabad. The conflicts in recent days in the southern waters of Iran and the ambiguity regarding the holding of the second round of negotiations are not unexpected, given the intensity of the confrontations, the sensitivity of the situation, the activity of extremist currents in the two countries, and the ever-destructive role of Israel. It is natural that the two countries have no trust in each other after a devastating 40-day war and that a ceasefire would be fragile in such circumstances. What is important in this regard is to focus on two goals that should be on the Iranian delegation's agenda: 1. Preventing renewed aggression and the destruction of the common assets of all Iranians in this historic land.

2. Moving towards the complete lifting of the oppressive US sanctions.

Iran urges release of commercial vessel from US 'piracy'

From page 1 ▶ According to Iravani, the American action involved "acts of coercion, intimidation, and the reckless endangerment of the vessel's crew and their families." He argued that such conduct "bears the hallmarks of piracy in nature" and constitutes a "grave and manifest violation of the fundamental principles of international law, including the peremptory norm prohibiting aggression."

The letter further asserts that the attack represents a "clear and material breach of the ceasefire of 8 April 2026" and qualifies as an act of aggression under Article 3(c) of UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 (1974). Iran has called on the Security Council to take an "immediate, firm, and principled position" by unequivocally condemning the act, ensuring full accountability for those responsible, and demanding the "immediate and unconditional release of the vessel, its crew and their families, and all those affected by this incident."

Also, speaking to reporters later on Tuesday at UN headquarters, Ambassador Iravani expanded on Tehran's political conditions. He explicitly labeled the US naval presence in the region a "blockade," stating that it violates the existing ceasefire and must be lifted before any new round of negotiations can begin. "The US naval blockade is a violation of the ceasefire," Iravani said. "The lifting of the blockade is a condition for the resumption of negotiations."

He speculated that once Washington ends the naval blockade, the next round of talks could be held in Islamabad – a reference to Pakistan's role as the mediator that brokered the April 8 truce. Iravani reiterated that the United States initiated the war against Iran,

Etemad: Negotiations are a continuation of national resistance

Etemad pointed out in an article that negotiations are not a field for settling political scores, but rather a continuation of the same national resistance at another level. The importance of this point is that victory in the military field, if not accompanied by a suitable achievement at the negotiating table, may remain incomplete. To preserve its dignity and interests, a nation must both stand up to aggression and act coherently and intelligently at the moment of negotiation. Reaching a proud conclusion is the ultimate goal of any type of negotiation. Therefore, successful diplomacy is the continuation of that resistance; a resistance that this time is formulated with the language of negotiation and political logic. In a world where law and morality have been weakened, countries can only defend their interests by relying on the people, national cohesion, and support for their official representatives. If Iran wants to pass this historical turning point, it must remain united in both the field of power and the field of dialogue.

Iran: Honorable diplomacy

In support of the negotiations and the approach of the Iranian diplomatic apparatus, the Iran newspaper wrote: The logic of the Islamic Republic of Iran has neither failed in defending against aggression nor neglected the negotiating table and diplomacy during its nearly 5 decades of existence. Now, after 40 days of defense by the armed forces, which was accompanied by popular support, it is Iran's diplomats and negotiators who are sitting at the negotiating table and negotiating to consolidate the achievements of the war. Hassan Rasouli, a member of the board of directors of the Iranian Hope Foundation, believes that the fact that the aggressors did not achieve their predetermined goals is a significant achievement for our country, which was achieved through the resistance of the armed forces, the support of the people, and the role of the government. Since every war can ultimately be ended through diplomacy, we are forced to negotiate and use the country's diplomatic capacity. This field, as a complement and continuation of the heroic defense of the Iranian nation, must be considered without any deficiency and as another field of this patriotic defense.



which began on February 28 when Washington and Israel launched a "war of aggression" that included the assassination of Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and several top military commanders. "If Washington seeks to return to the negotiating table and find a political solution, we will be ready," the ambassador said. But he struck a markedly different tone in the same breath: "If they want to enter a war, then Iran is also ready for that."

Asked about the prospects for renewed dialogue, Iravani offered a cautiously hopeful response. "An opportunity must be given," he said. "We are hopeful." The April 8 ceasefire, brokered by Pakistan after 40 days of open warfare, was intended to be followed by negotiations to permanently end the conflict. But the attack on the Toska and the ongoing US naval blockade, in Iran's view, have already undermined that agreement.

Tehran denies sabotage allegations in Azerbaijan, warns of Israeli 'false flag' ops

From page 1 ▶ "The Israeli regime is persistently attempting to escalate the situation and extend the war into surrounding regions," the embassy said. It added that Israel, which "has been established through occupation and has committed numerous atrocities against innocent populations," seeks to instigate discord among its neighbors to fulfill its own hostile objectives.

The embassy pointed to a pattern of Israeli behavior, including military aggression against Iran in June 2025 and renewed assaults beginning on February 28, 2026, as evidence of a consistent strategy to broaden regional conflict. It also cited suspected drone attacks on Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, assaults on Caspian Sea port and shipping infrastructure, and efforts to disrupt air and sea routes as part of that agenda.

Despite such attempts at sabotage, relations between Iran and the



Republic of Azerbaijan remain notably warm and cooperative, underpinned by deep cultural and religious commonalities. Both nations are predominantly Shia Muslim, a shared faith that has long served as a foun-

ation for mutual understanding and people-to-people ties. Beyond religion, the two countries also share centuries of intertwined history, language, and traditions, particularly among the Azerbaijani-speaking population in northwestern Iran.

This cultural and religious kinship has been reflected at the highest levels of leadership. President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan have cultivated a positive and pragmatic working relationship, frequently engaging in bilateral talks and regional initiatives. Their mutual respect and cooperation have helped transform what could have been a rivalrous border relationship into one of strategic partnership, focused on trade, energy, and transport corridors.

Against this backdrop, the Iranian embassy in Baku reiterated the importance of vigilance against "the conspiratorial and destructive actions of the Israeli regime." It called on both Iran and Azerbaijan to safeguard their amicable and fraternal relations from external interference, urging that the two neighbors not allow themselves to be drawn into conflicts manufactured by third parties.

Iran: Hormuz action means war, Europe's silence unacceptable

From page 1 ▶ In a post on X, Araghchi issued one of his most direct warnings to date. "Blockading Iranian ports is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire," he wrote. "Striking a commercial vessel and taking its crew hostage is an even greater violation." He added that Iran "knows how to neutralize restrictions, how to defend its interests, and how to resist bullying."

The post appeared to refer directly to the April 19 attack on the Iranian commercial vessel Toska in the Sea of Oman, which Tehran has labeled an act of "piracy" by US forces.

Earlier on Wednesday, Araghchi held a telephone conversation with his Italian counterpart, Antonio Tajani, during which he condemned European countries for remaining silent over the US and Israeli attacks on Iran. According to a readout from the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Araghchi warned that such inaction "undermines international law and the non-proliferation regime" and blamed European "double standards" for eroding global norms.

He described the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz – a vital chokepoint for roughly one-fifth of the world's oil – as a "direct result of unlawful and unilateral US military actions against a sovereign UN member state." As a coastal state, he argued, Iran has the right under international law to take measures to safeguard its national security against threats and aggression.

Araghchi also placed responsibility for any global economic consequences of the standoff squarely on the aggressors. "All countries bear



responsibility to condemn such clear violations of the United Nations Charter and international law," he said.

For his part, Tajani emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region and expressed Rome's readiness to help strengthen stability across the region. The two diplomats also discussed developments in Lebanon and the need to respect the ceasefire there.

In a separate telephone conversation on Wednesday, Araghchi spoke with Amir Khan Muttaqi, Taliban's acting Foreign Minister. According to Iranian readouts, Muttaqi condemned the US-Israeli military aggression against Iran. The Afghan official described the act of aggression as a "clear violation of all prin-

ciples of international law."

The call underscored Tehran's efforts to build regional diplomatic support as the ceasefire deadline approaches.

The ceasefire of April 8, brokered by Pakistan after 40 days of war, was intended to be followed by negotiations to end the conflict permanently. But recent incidents – including the attack on the Toska and a US naval blockade – have severely strained the truce.

By framing port blockades and strikes against commercial vessels as acts of war, Araghchi appeared to set clear red lines while leaving room for diplomacy. His simultaneous criticism of European silence suggested that Tehran is seeking to isolate Washington and its allies legally and politically.

US military actions: An unchecked exercise of power

By Mohammad Tolouei

TEHRAN — They say the future is not singular, but plural. This is the first lesson we were forced to learn in the days of war: a future that is the byproduct of the actors' deeds; an assemblage of probabilities resulting from the superposition of daily affairs; an accumulation that only abstract thought, or perhaps someone tethered to a metaphysical reference, can perceive as a whole.

It is this very quality, its improbability and its perceived disconnection from the present, that has captivated humanity throughout history with the lure of soothsayers.

Those who claimed knowledge of the future, whether through truth or deception, were always revered.

In these times, the greatest soothsayer is Artificial Intelligence. I ask it: "What is the future of this war?"

It tells me this conflict bears a striking resemblance to the Yugoslav Wars, and its endgame is civil war and disintegration.

I do not want to believe it. I want to reject this probability; why must I surrender to such a future? I ask: "Tell me the other probabilities, the other futures."

Its propositions become nonsensical, resembling a blurred composite of several overlapping photographs.

Perhaps the primary flaw is Trump himself. Even AI fails to grasp his behavior. From day one, he adopted a stance of "strategic ambiguity."

Every option remains on the table, and each one constructs a different



future: a ground invasion; the occupation of the Iranian islands; the annihilation of Kharg, Iran's primary oil terminal; or special forces sent to extract enriched uranium from beneath the rubble of an eight-month-old bombardment. Each path carries its own hypothetical destiny.

It is not only we who, amidst this ambiguity and indeterminate future, seek out palm readers and sorcerers; the politicians are equally bewildered.

Perhaps this is an issue the European citizen feels distanced from. Perhaps you believe this war has nothing to do with you. You might be right, for now.

But the collapse of a predictable future concerns you deeply. How one is permitted to think about the future is one's business as well.

Now that the war has claimed more civilian lives than military ones, now that they came in the name of "saving the people" only to kill them, it is time for you to consider this: after so much inversion of truth and doublespeak, what will you do when you can no longer predict the future

and everything for you is decided in a fog of uncertainty?

For nearly eighty years after World War II, we lived within a predictable world order, a system born from humanity's reflection on its own behavior and the philosophy that emerged after two great slaughters.

Since then, there have been wars: Korea, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, the Persian Gulf, Syria, and Libya. Each was waged under the pretext of that very order, ostensibly built upon the human rights of nations.

But this new war, launched by the US and Israel against Iran without a UN mandate, without a clear future, and without the support of traditional allies, is designed to dismantle that former order.

It seeks to render the future indeterminate; to create chaos in the hope that a new disorder will emerge that favors American supremacy, as the old order no longer guarantees its hegemony.

Perhaps you are indifferent today. Perhaps you believe the Iranian government is "evil," that it has "killed its own people" and "deserves this fate."

This pretext is no more convincing than "weapons of mass destruction" or "atomic bombs," yet thus far, it has faced little resistance. From here on, however, the war has targeted our very lives.

Recently, I stood at the site of immense destruction in an eastern neighborhood of Tehran. Buildings that, contrary to the claims of military spokespersons, were leveled with imprecise bombs.

Hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded; nearly half were women and children. Cars were crumpled like paper. Wardrobes were shattered, their contents spilled into the dirt. Children's storybooks lay scattered, page by page, across the street.

Restaurant delivery riders spoke of bringing food to these homes only recently. One mentioned that a resident was his friend's wife; they had been married for only a month.

I could not cry. My emotions had been scorched dry. The scale of the ruin, shattered windows blocks away, collapsed walls, denied me the luxury of feeling.

I heard those explosions every day; I saw the pillars of smoke daily. But until that moment, the war had been an abstraction.

No "strategic ambiguity" justifies those scenes. No politician has the right, simply because they possess the power to attack, to do so without the consent of the United Nations and the global community.

Trump feels no need for authorization from anyone, not the US Congress, and certainly not the advisory opinions of think tanks. Whoever holds the strongest lobby and can guarantee the highest probability of profit can wage war through him.

After Iran, the target is Cuba; then, Greenland. As a European, you will soon taste the flavor of "strategic ambiguity" if you do not protest it today.

US blockade dwarfed by Iranian naval power

The IRGC seized two vessels on Wednesday for 'disrupting order and safety in the Strait of Hormuz'

TEHRAN - President Donald Trump's unilateral extension of the two-week ceasefire with Iran highlights the country's battle-field strength and lays bare the failure of US military strategy.

On Tuesday, Trump announced the ceasefire extension on Truth Social. The US president said he made the decision at the request of Pakistan, which has been mediating talks between Tehran and Washington.

"We have been asked to hold our Attack on the Country of Iran until such time as their leaders and representatives can come up with a unified proposal," he added.

Trump's move came after Iranian officials said they would not engage in fresh talks with the US under coercion and threats. The truce had come into effect on April 8, following the joint US-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28.

US 'excessive' demands

Iran and the US held talks in Islamabad on April 11 and 12 aimed at ending the conflict. However, the talks failed over what Iran called Washington's excessive demands.

Pakistan intensified efforts to hold a second round of negotiations in Islamabad, but Iran refused to attend, citing US violations of the two-week truce, which includes a US naval blockade on Iranian ports. The US imposed the naval blockade after the failure of the first round of talks in Islamabad.



US war aims

The late February war aimed to destroy Iran's military capabilities and reshape its political leadership in Washington's favor. Despite the assassination of Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and senior military and political figures, that goal remains elusive.

During 39 days of war, Iran responded to the joint campaign by targeting Israel and US bases in the Persian Gulf region, carrying out 100 waves of missile and drone strikes.

Trump's overconfidence had been shaped by the controversial US operation in Venezuela, where President Nicolás Maduro was kidnapped in a dramatic show of force. Emboldened by this, Trump seemed to believe a similar "regime decapitation" strategy could work in Iran—despite the country's deeper political structure and strong resistance to foreign intervention.

Encouraged by allies such as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Ne-

tanyahu, this miscalculation fed Washington's aggressive posture toward Tehran. However, as risks and complexities became clearer, Trump appears to be backing away from the idea that removing Iran's leadership would trigger regime collapse, instead searching for a face-saving exit from an increasingly difficult confrontation. The US naval blockade is now seen as a strategy to exert economic pressure on Iran. However, full control over the Strait of Hormuz has created a challenge to Trump's plan.

Iran has asserted control over the Strait of Hormuz since the outset of the war in late February. It has banned vessels affiliated with adversaries from passing through it.

Iran had signaled that it would allow commercial ships to transit the strategic waterway through coordination with Iranian armed forces during the two-week ceasefire. However, Iran closed the strait over the weekend due to the continued US naval blockade of Iranian ports.

IRGC seizes 'enemy' ships

On Wednesday, the IRGC Navy confirmed it intercepted and transferred two ships linked to "the enemies." It said the vessels, identified as the MSC Francesca and Epaminondas, endangered maritime safety by operating without the necessary permits and tampering with navigation systems.

The seizures indicate that the Strait of Hormuz remains under Iran's control and authority, despite Trump's claims that he has destroyed Iran's military capabilities, including its naval forces.

'Finger on the trigger'

Amid Trump's military threats over Iran's control of the strait, the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that any US or Israeli act of aggression against Iran would be met with "crushing blows."

In a statement on Wednesday, the IRGC added that Iranian armed forces are "ready for decisive, certain, and immediate confrontation with any threat or repetition of enemy aggression."

The Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, which coordinates operations between Iran's armed forces, also warned that Iran's military has its "finger on the trigger" in the face of possible aggression.

The commander of the IRGC Aerospace Force also warned Persian Gulf states against assisting potential American attacks.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran's participation in Islamabad talks contingent on securing national interests: Foreign Ministry

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"lack of good faith," adding that Washington has been "changing its position frequently."

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The spokesman also underscored that the US naval blockade of Iranian ports in the Strait of Hormuz remains in force. He noted that on Sunday, US Navy forces fired on an Iranian ves-

sel, boarded it, and took the crew into custody - an act Iran has condemned as "piracy" and a flagrant violation of the April 8 ceasefire.

"This is not the behavior of a country that is really serious about a diplomatic process," Baqaei said.

When asked what conditions Iran requires to return to Islamabad, the spokesman said: "if we conclude that going to Islamabad is in our national interest, we would go there. But for the time being, the decision has not yet been made."

LATES NEWS

■ Mogherini: 'Never threaten an Iranian'

Former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has warned that pressure and threats alone cannot yield results against Iran, emphasizing that the Iranian negotiating team holds a significant advantage due to its technical expertise and historical memory.

In a CNN interview, Mogherini recalled that during the 2015 JCPOA talks, Iran's then-Foreign Minister Javad Zarif shouted "Never threaten an Iranian!" and walked out of a meeting. She described the current conflict as a "self-inflicted problem" by the United States, adding that essential elements for successful negotiations are missing.

Mogherini stressed that respect is fundamental in any negotiation with Iran, a nation of 90 million people with deep culture and national pride.

■ Iran calls for 'Inclusive' global intellectual property system

Iran has called for reforming the global intellectual property framework to create an inclusive, needs-based system that serves all UN member states.

Addressing WIPO's assembly in Geneva, Ambassador Ali Bahreini said the system must support innovation and sustainable development. He also condemned "unlawful and deliberate" attacks on Iran's scientific infrastructure, including universities and laboratories, urging WIPO to provide technical support to rebuild damaged capacities.

■ Pezeshkian: IRGC foiled enemies' plots during US-Israeli war

President Masoud Pezeshkian has praised the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) for thwarting enemy conspiracies, particularly during the recent US and Israeli-imposed war on Iran.

In a message marking the IRGC's anni-

versary, Pezeshkian called the force a "firm shield" protecting the Revolution's ideals and territorial integrity. He said the IRGC responded to hostile plots with "decisive, intelligent, and triumphant" action, demonstrating Iran's defensive power and national resolve.

■ Iran slams EU 'double standards' over Minab school attack

Iran's embassy in London has accused the EU of "double standards" and "selling its integrity" through silence over a US attack on a school in Minab, Iran, which killed 168 children.

In a statement, the embassy rejected remarks by EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, saying: "Europe has sold its honor, and the receipt is written in the blood of the Minab children."

■ Iran hangs Mossad agent

A Mossad spy who gathered Iran's sensitive information and sent it to the Israeli intelligence agency has been executed, Iran's Supreme Court announced.

Mehdi Farid, a former official at a vital organization, was hanged on Wednesday after his final verdict was approved. Farid had pleaded guilty to corrupting networks with spyware and receiving monthly payments in euros from Mossad.

■ Iranian ambassador meets Pakistani PM over regional crisis

Iranian Ambassador Reza Amiri-Moghaddam met with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday to discuss the regional situation and efforts to restore peace, following a US-Israeli war on Iran.

The meeting came after President Trump extended a ceasefire while maintaining a naval blockade. Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to mediating a comprehensive peace agreement.

■ Turkish, Pakistani FMs discuss Iran-US talks

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and his Pakistani counterpart, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, have discussed the latest developments in negotiations between Tehran and Washington, a Turkish source said.

The talks come after Iran declined to attend a second round in Islamabad, citing US ceasefire violations and excessive demands.

■ CNN: Trump to give Iran a limited deadline for unified proposal, sources claim

CNN has quoted sources as claiming that US President Donald Trump intends to give Iran a limited deadline to reach what he described as 'a unified proposal' aimed at bringing diplomacy back on track.

■ Second round of Iran-US talks possible by Friday, Pakistani sources say

The New York Post has cited Pakistani sources as stating that a second round of negotiations between Iran and the United States could take place as early as Friday.

■ US treasury secretary: Extension of Iran, Russia oil waivers came after requests from vulnerable nations

The US treasury secretary has announced that the extension of sanctions waivers related to Iranian and Russian oil came following requests from countries exposed to energy market risks. Iran has condemned US sanctions as illegal and a form of economic terrorism.

■ South Korean envoy meets Iran's Araghchi

Chang Byung-ha, the special envoy of South Korea's foreign minister, met with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Tehran.

The two sides discussed bilateral relations and regional developments during the meeting. No further details have been released.

SPORTS

Iran prepare for World Cup 2026 amid challenges and uncertainty

TEHRAN - Iran's national football team have entered a decisive phase of preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, launching an intensive training program shaped by both sporting ambitions and extraordinary circumstances.

The latest training camp began on April 20, 2026, in Tehran, bringing together 30 players from the domestic league. This mini-camp represents a key opportunity for the coaching staff, not only to evaluate emerging talents but also to assess the implementation of promised tactical adjustments. The camp will run for approximately two weeks, with players returning home after daily sessions to maintain optimal physical balance.

However, Iran's preparations have not unfolded under normal conditions. Due to the imposed war by the U.S. and Israel against Iran, the conditions of the Iranian national football team have been affected. The domestic league was forced into an early suspension, disrupting the normal rhythm of competition and raising concerns over the fitness of the players. As a result, these camps have become more important for helping the team regain sharpness and teamwork.

Following the Tehran phase, Team Melli are scheduled to travel to Turkey on May 12, 2026, where foreign-based players will join the group. The Turkey camp will serve as the main preparation hub, with plans for five friendly matches, three during the camp and two during official FIFA windows. Negotiations are ongoing to finalize opponents, with a potential friendly against Panama in the United States expected to be the final warm-up before the tournament.

Off the pitch, uncertainty has also surrounded Iran's participation. A spokesperson for the Iranian Parliament recently noted that a final decision regarding the team's presence in the World Cup will be made after reviewing all circumstances, highlighting the broader political and logistical complexities tied to the tournament.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will run from June 11 to July 19, 2026, with Iran drawn into Group G alongside Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand. Iran are set to begin their campaign on June 15, 2026, facing New Zealand at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, a crucial opening fixture that could play a defining role in shaping the group's early standings in what promises to be a highly competitive pool.

Amid disruption and uncertainty, Iran's preparation plan reflects resilience and determination. The team are aiming not only to overcome external challenges but also to arrive on the global stage fully prepared to compete at the highest level.

Minister: Iran's World Cup presence not guaranteed

TEHRAN - In a development that could significantly alter Iran's football landscape, Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali announced that the national football team's participation in the upcoming World Cup may not be a certainty.

Donyamali, addressing the press, stated that discussions and the formation of a special committee have been underway regarding the team's situation. "We are pursuing our legal obligations. We must be prepared, but it's possible the decision will be not to participate. If we are to go, we must be fully prepared for a strong showing," he remarked. He emphasized that the ultimate decision lies with the government and potentially the National Security Council.

When asked about the advisability of Iran competing in the World Cup, the minister explained: "Our professional duty is to carry out the necessary preparations and training camps. However, the final decision rests with the esteemed government, given the circumstances. Plans are in place for the team to head to a training camp near the country on May 10th, staying for about seven to eight days. A decision will be made provided the players' security

is assured and the host nation ceases its 'provocations'."

Sanya 2026: Iran beach handball start on high

TEHRAN - Iran's national beach handball team launched their campaign at the 6th Asian Beach Games with a commanding performance, defeating the Philippines 2-0 on Tuesday.

The Iranian squad secured the win with set scores of 14-10 and 21-20, showcasing early dominance in the sand.

The team, competing under the banner "Martyrs of Dena," is set for further action in Group A.

Their next challenge will be against Sri Lanka on Friday, followed by matches against Hong Kong and Bahrain on Sunday, and concluding their group stage play against hosts China on Monday.

The sixth edition of the Asian Beach Games, a prestigious event historically held biennially from 2008 to 2016, has returned and is now hosted by the vibrant city of Sanya.

The Games officially commenced on Tuesday, bringing together athletes across 14 sports, 15 disciplines, and a total of 61 events, running from April 22nd to April 30th.

Ghalenoei appoints temporary goalkeeping coaches

TEHRAN - The training sessions for Iran's national football team began on Monday. However, Alin Dinca, the Romanian goalkeeping coach for the team, was unable to join the camp in Tehran from the start due to the current conditions in the country.

Therefore, by the decision of Amir Ghalenoei, the national team's head coach, Hamed Paksima (former goalkeeping coach for the U-17 national team and Esteghlal) and Masoud Moradkhani (former goalkeeping coach for Gol Gohar) have been temporarily added to the technical staff.

These two coaches will conduct the training sessions for the four goalkeepers present at the camp in coordination with Alin online and based on his daily program.

Iran stripped of right to host Asian Squash Championships

TEHRAN - Hosting duties for the Asian Junior Squash Championships, originally slated for May in Iran, have been reassigned to China by the Asian Squash Confederation due to ongoing wartime conditions.

This marks a significant blow for Iran, which had secured the prestigious hosting rights after an eight-year hiatus.

Squash coach Mohsen Gholamnejad confirmed the shift, stating, "The Asian Junior Squash Championships were scheduled to be held in Iran in May, but due to the wartime situation, the Confederation of Asia has transferred the hosting to China. We had finally been granted this hosting opportunity after eight years, but unfortunately, the conditions are not conducive for the competition."

The senior Asian Squash Championships, initially planned for May in Islamabad, Pakistan, have been postponed indefinitely, with no new date yet announced.

Gholamnejad also addressed the national team's training camp status. "National team training camps were suspended in March with the outbreak of the war," he explained. "Currently, practices are also on hold due to damage to a portion of the squash hall at the Enghelab Sports Complex. We are monitoring the situation and hope to resume training in a secure province if conditions permit."

Iran, Turkmenistan forge closer ties amid regional turbulence

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- In a telephone conversation between Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development and Turkmenistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, both sides stressed the strengthening of economic and transit cooperation, while Ashgabat announced the continued openness of borders and the development of joint projects.

The high-level dialogue reflects a shared determination to keep trade routes active despite recent regional challenges.

Farzaneh Sadegh, Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development and Iranian head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Economic Committee, spoke by phone with Rashid Meredov, Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister. Expressing gratitude for Turkmenistan's support, she called for expanded economic cooperation, particularly in transport. Referring to recent circumstances and the importance of stabilizing transit routes, Sadegh noted that Turkmenistan's decision to increase working hours at land borders to 13 hours is an effective measure in facilitating the movement of road fleets. She said this decision has played a significant role in reducing border congestion and accelerating goods movement, serving the mutual interests of both countries and the Central Asian region. She also emphasized the need to address problems faced by Iranian transport fleets on Turkmenistan's soil.

Meredov announced his country's readiness to hold a Joint Economic Committee meeting at the earliest opportunity. He stressed the continued openness of borders for movement and cooperation, stating that Turkmenistan has strived since the beginning of recent developments to ensure uninterrupted exchanges with Iran. He also announced Turkmenistan's readiness to develop joint economic and transit projects.

Energy and trade roadmaps point to strategic partnership

In last May, Iran and Turkmenistan signed a commercial roadmap aimed at boosting



bilateral trade to \$3.0 billion. The agreement was signed in Tehran by Sadegh and Meredov following the 18th session of the Joint Economic Committee. Sadegh said the meeting marked a new chapter in bilateral cooperation, stressing that intensive talks had yielded fresh approaches to expand trade. She noted that both countries agreed to aim for 20 million tons in transit volumes, with a 16-million-ton target set for 2028. Key understandings included plans to establish joint free trade zones in Sarakhs and Lotfabad-Artiq, strengthen border markets, and prepare a bilateral gas contract.

Meanwhile, Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad emphasized deepening cooperation in the oil and gas sector, stating that constructive engagement with Turkmenistan has always been a priority in Iran's foreign policy. Meredov identified three key areas of cooperation: gas exports to Iran, joint development of compressor stations and pipelines, and gas swaps to third countries via Iranian territory.

In the same month, the deputy head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce called for the removal of structural barriers in banking, transport, logistics, and visa issuance to unlock trade potential. Ramezan Bahrami, head of the Iran-Turkmenistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, said 2024 had been a successful year for bilateral trade and announced the launch of a "Turkmen Trade Center" in Iran. These coordinated efforts signal that Tehran and Ashgabat are building a resilient economic partnership capable of withstanding regional pressures.

Despite naval blockade, no problem in supplying essential goods, food

TEHRAN- The Minister of Agriculture stated that despite the naval blockade imposed by the United States, there is no problem in supplying essential goods and food because, due to the country's vast size, imports can be carried out through various borders.

Gholamreza Nouri Ghezalje, speaking on a television program Tuesday evening about the status of essential goods and food during the naval blockade in the third imposed war, said: "Our country is vast, with numerous neighbors and diverse entry points. These matters have been foreseen, and efforts have been made to ensure no negative impact on the country's food security. Nevertheless, the enemies act without regard for principles, so we are prepared for the worst possible scenario."

He stated that according to the Vienna Convention, Articles 54 and 55 of the Additional Protocol, causing famine or preventing the arrival and movement of food and aid for food and medicine supply is certainly a war crime. Numerous UN resolutions also do not consider food and medicine as subjects of wartime sanctions, and they should not be affected.

He added: "Nevertheless, pessimistic scenarios have been considered and measures have been taken. The main effect may increase costs and prices, but the core of food security and access to food is not largely threatened, and the country's resilience in the agricultural sector is high."

Regarding the country's economic resilience, especially in agriculture, Nouri Ghezalje said: "Currently, about 85 percent of agricultural products and essential goods are produced domestically, so the country's food security is ensured, which is the result of the work of farmers and domestic producers."

He added: "Various agricultural sectors are resistant to threats. The remaining 15 percent requires imports, and this part depends on international exchanges. Despite global conditions, the country's economy and food



security are not significantly dependent on imports, and a major part of food security is domestic."

Regarding wartime conditions and export restrictions, the Minister of Agriculture stated: "Despite wartime conditions, export restrictions have not largely affected our operations. Some products were subject to general decisions on bans, but exceptions were stated and immediately lifted. The export process gradually continued and was freed up in some cases."

He said: "Exports in the agricultural sector were under pressure before the war but are still manageable. Despite slight declines in some items, efforts are being made to compensate from other countries."

He stated: "In agricultural diplomacy, emphasis has also been placed on purchasing surplus products from farmers beyond domestic needs, and so far about 120,000 tons of these products have been purchased."

Regarding agricultural diplomacy and his recent trips to neighboring countries, the Minister of Agriculture said: "Recently, we have been in contact with Turkey and Kyrgyzstan. Correspondence with the FAO regarding food security has been conducted, and a webinar meeting on damages and dimensions of food security was held."

He added: "We also participated in the Shanghai Agricultural Ministers' Summit, and in the final statement, the condemnation of aggression and the need for a sustainable end to these conditions were emphasized."

Hidden casualty of U.S.-Israeli war on Iran: Global logistics

TEHRAN- What began as targeted military strikes has rapidly escalated into a full-blown geopolitical earthquake. The U.S.-Israeli war against Iran, initially framed as a strategic countermeasure, is now revealing itself as one of the most destructive events for global logistics in modern history.

Within days, the ripple effects have transcended battlefields. The Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint for nearly 20 percent of the world's oil, has become a high-risk zone, forcing tankers to re-route or halt.

Oil prices have surged, but the damage goes far beyond energy. Container shipping through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf has been severely disrupted, with major carriers suspending services due to threats of drone and missile attacks. Ports from Dubai to Mumbai are experiencing cascading delays, and airfreight capacity, already strained, is being diverted away from regional hubs.

What makes this crisis unique is its speed and interconnectedness. Unlike natural disasters or



localized conflicts, the war has simultaneously hit maritime, land, and air corridors.

Overland routes through Iraq and Turkey are choked by insurance nightmares and border closures. Even digital logistics platforms report rerouting algorithms failing to cope with the sudden closure of key airspaces.

This is no longer a regional conflict. It is a supply chain shockwave. Factories in Southeast Asia awaiting Iranian petrochemicals, European retailers depending on just-in-time deliveries from the Persian Gulf, and African nations reliant on transshipped grain are all feeling the pain.

The lesson is stark: in a hy-

per-globalized world, a local war can become a global logistical collapse overnight.

Policymakers must recognize that military strategy today cannot ignore the arteries of global trade, because attacking Iran means attacking the world's supply chain.

Economic policy in wartime: Assessing state of mother industries & energy



TEHRAN - An economic expert has outlined the consequences of a 40-day war on Iran's mother industries and energy infrastructure, while explaining the requirements of economic policy in the current era, IRNA reported.

As Iran enters a two-week ceasefire, the country's economy faces challenges after enduring a 40-day imposed war (following an initial 12-day battle).

During this conflict, vital infrastructure, energy arteries, and industrial hubs were directly targeted by destructive attacks from the United States and the Zionist regime.

In response, a series of specialized sessions titled "Economic Policy in Wartime" is being organized by the Money and Currency Think Tank.

Hossein Doroudian, an economist and faculty member of the Economic Affairs Research Institute at the Ministry of Economy, delivered a detailed assessment of the damage inflicted on production, industry, housing, and employment.

Production: Beating heart of economy in war and peace

In macroeconomic literature, Gross Domestic Product and the maintenance of its continuous flow are the primary indicators of a country's resilience against external shocks.

In wartime conditions, preserving this flow transforms from an economic agenda into a security and survival necessity.

Hossein Doroudian emphasized this fundamental principle, stating: Supporting businesses is a permanent agenda for the economic policymaking system and is not limited to wartime, because even in peacetime, production remains our main issue.

Fundamentally, the most important variable and topic for the economy is production. When discussing production in wartime, we must first understand precisely the condition of our production in order to plan for its support.

Targeted attacks on energy arteries and steel giants

One well-known strategy in modern warfare is the destruction of utility infrastructure (energy supply) and mother industries, thereby causing a cascading paralysis across all downstream industries.

Utilities include providers of electricity, steam, industrial water, and oxygen, without which industrial machinery cannot operate.

Referring to direct physical damage to the country's industries, Doroudian added: Assuming this trend does not continue, we must examine the consequences of the war on our businesses. The most significant physical damage was the strike on gas production infrastructure in South Pars, which has caused a considerable reduction in gas output.

Another major physical blow was the bombing of two important steel companies, Mobarakeh Steel and Khuzestan Steel. Mobarakeh Steel alone had annual sales of \$7 billion. These companies produced slab and sheet and held strategic importance in the country's production chain.

Explaining the concentrated targeting of utility providers in petrochemical hubs, he said: Over 80 percent of our petrochemical industries are located in two regions: Asaluyeh and Mahshahr. Utility supply in these areas is centralized through companies such as Fajr in Mahshahr, and Mobin and Damavand in Asaluyeh (affiliated with the Persian Gulf Holding).

Unlike other petrochemical plants in the country that produce their own electricity and utilities, this centralization meant that enemy attacks on these three main companies inflicted massive economic damage, taking a significant number of industries offline. Additionally, major petrochemical companies such as Jam, Shiraz, Tabriz, Bu Ali, Lavan Refinery, and Tehran Oil Refinery storage facilities were directly targeted.

Domino effect: Production halt in downstream industries

In industrial economics, disruption in upstream industries (such as petrochemicals and steel) immediately leads to a crisis in the supply of raw materials for downstream industries due to forward linkages.

This phenomenon is known as a negative spillover effect or supply chain disruption.

The faculty member explained: Another aspect is indirect damage. Petrochemical companies in Mahshahr and Asaluyeh, although physically intact, cannot produce due to lack of utility supply (gas, electricity, steam, or oxygen).

Consequently, the vast industries with-

in the petrochemical chain that consume plastics and adhesives are entirely affected, including automotive, home appliances, construction, furniture, footwear, bags, and even the food industry (due to severe damage to packaging bottle production)."

Regarding the steel chain crisis, he added: Industries that require steel sheet, such as automotive and home appliances, face severe problems. We have excess capacity in rebar and I-beams, so there is no particular issue there. However, for sheet—a sensitive product—we will need to import (likely from China or Russia).

That said, the Gol Gohar iron and steel development project, as a priority for support, is on the agenda and could bring about 3 million tons of sheet into operation. Although this figure is lower than Mobarakeh Steel's 7 million tons of production, it could be somewhat helpful.

Widespread destruction of residential, aviation and military infrastructure

Beyond the industrial sector, statistics indicate heavy damage to public property, defense infrastructure, and the country's aviation fleet during the 40-day battle.

Doroudian detailed the damage in these sectors: In the residential buildings sector, according to official announcements, 45,000 units have been damaged. Of these, damage to 37,500 units is minor (such as doors, windows, and glass being blown out). 4,700 units have intact skeletons but destroyed walls, and more than 2,500 units require complete structural reconstruction or demolition and rebuilding.

In the aviation sector, apparently 60 of our aircraft have been damaged, though the extent of damage has not yet been reported.

On the military level, since the enemy's primary targets were our defense systems, radars, and military production chain, we have suffered significant and direct damage.

Employment crisis: Warning of doubling jobless production

The destruction of physical infrastructure and the halt of supply chains ultimately manifest in the most important socio-economic macro indicator: the unemployment rate. Job loss, in addition to reducing effective demand in the economy, brings irreversible livelihood consequences.

The economic expert concluded with a serious warning about the labor market: "According to announcements from the Ministry of Labor, as a result of this war we will lose one million jobs directly and two million jobs indirectly. If we consider last autumn's report, which put the country's unemployed population at 2 million, should these estimates be accurate, our unemployed population will double, and the unemployment rate in the country will effectively increase twofold. These are aspects of damage to the physical and productive process, but their macroeconomic effects must be examined in detail in their proper place."

The Lidless Eye of Sauron watches us all. Are we helpless?

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — The name “Palantir” confesses its intent so plainly that it reads like a manual: a candid revelation of the method by which a world is watched.

Taken from the legendarium of Tolkien, the Palantiri were seeing stones that allowed powerful beings to observe across vast distances.

In the lore, these stones were ultimately corrupted by a dark lord to deceive the user and consolidate total vision. This metaphor is the beating heart of a company that has moved beyond mere software to become the Lidless Eye of a global surveillance panopticon.

Palantir is not a traditional Silicon Valley firm but rather a digital front for the American and Israeli military-intelligence establishments, functioning as connective tissue between Silicon Valley, the CIA, NSA, Mossad, and the Israeli military.

The Thielverse

The company is directed by a triumvirate of ideological forces that merge venture capital with state secrecy.

Peter Thiel, the founding chairman and ideological architect, is a libertarian-authoritarian deep state actor who has famously argued that freedom and democracy are no longer compatible.

Thiel's influence extends through the PayPal Mafia into the highest reaches of the American government, including figures such as J.D. Vance, whose political ascent is tethered to a network of new right politicians supported by Thiel.

The ultra-Zionist CEO Alex Karp, the so-called philosopher-king, provides an intellectual veneer of social theory to justify hard power while Joe Lonsdale, the operations fixer, ensures the company remains too big to fail within the state apparatus.

Funded initially by In-Q-Tel, the venture capital arm of the CIA, Palantir has always functioned as a cutout designed to bypass transparency and due process.

A significant portion of its engineering team consists of veterans from Israel's Unit 8200, creating a seamless revolving door where the same



personnel and operational doctrines move between Israel and the American tech giant.

This partnership has transformed the company into a de facto public-private extension of the multinational security state, profiting from chaos and the death of innocent human beings reduced to data points while making aggression cheaper and more opaque.

The kill chain

Palantir's arsenal is built to compress the kill chain, the time it takes from identifying a target to executing a strike.

Its Gotham platform aggregates hundreds of millions of data points, from biometrics to satellite imagery, to build a rich picture where even innocuous behaviors identify targets for neutralization.

The Maven Smart System (MSS), elevated to a Pentagon program of record in March, represents the backbone of the current war machine.

While the 2003 Iraq invasion required 2,000 personnel for specific targeting workloads, today 20 soldiers using MSS can achieve the same results.

The human cost of this so-called efficiency falls squarely on the shoulders of those who built and deployed it.

The Minab school massacre on February 28, where 168 Iranian students and teachers were killed with multiple American missiles, reportedly after the Maven system misidentified the school as a military site, stands as a devastating reminder of what these errors truly mean for real people.

The assassination of Iranian leaders and scientists also involved a multi-system AI-as-

sisted kill chain where Palantir served as the strategic brain, isolating digital signatures of individuals in residential neighborhoods.

In Gaza, the integration of Palantir data with Israeli softwares such as “Where's Daddy?” has allowed the tracking of targets until they return to densely populated civilian areas or medical facilities before striking.

This creates frictionless violence, where a human operator merely clicks “Confirm” on a pre-selected target list, stripping away the psychological burden of lethal action.

The techno-fascist creed

In April, the company issued a 22-point manifesto that removed much of the pretense, offering a programmatic guide for elites that recasts war as a data problem and transforms targeting into something that feels like simple analytics.

The document claims Silicon Valley owes a moral debt to the military, reframing tech profit as a mandatory imperial service.

It explicitly rejects diplomacy in favor of hard power built on software and suggests that the post-WWII neutering of Germany and Japan was an overcorrection.

Most disturbingly, it establishes a cultural hierarchy, distinguishing between vital cultures and dysfunctional or regressive ones, providing an ideological justification for the targeting of non-Western states as inherently inferior.

This worldview treats civilizational competition as a natural fact to be optimized. By arguing that the future of survival

depends on software-enabled hard power, Palantir advocates for the normalization of permanent security mobilization.

Resist the Lidless Eye

To counter a seeing stone, we may have to become invisible or deceptive. But first, we must recognize the nature of the trap.

Akin to Sauron's Lidless Eye and the all-seeing Eye of Providence, the Palantir feeds on attention. It feeds on our fixation, turning our horrified gaze into fuel for the very machinery that produces genocide.

It wants us frozen, doom-scrolling through atrocity, convinced that resistance is futile. The panopticon is designed to produce learned helplessness. Refusing it is the first step; concrete defenses follow from there.

For targeted states such as Iran, the strategy is data sovereignty: strict localization that keeps all metadata on domestic servers, beyond the reach of Western extraction.

Digital chokepoints that strip identifiers from outgoing traffic blind the mosaic effect. Dataset poisoning, injecting deliberate noise into public information streams, can collapse the predictive accuracy of targeting algorithms from credible to chaotic.

For individuals, the guerrilla defense involves opting out of the machine-readable profile.

Surveillance systems feed on the predictability of digital footprints. Using end-to-end encryption is a baseline, but protecting metadata is more critical.

Anti-pattern behavior, such as rotating devices, irregular movement, and multiple identities, makes pattern-matching prohibitively expensive.

Physical obfuscation with IR-emitting materials confuses the computer vision guiding the drone. But none of this avails if we have already surrendered our minds to the fiction of the all-seeing eye.

Palantir is the Steward of Gondor who stared too long into the stone and became a servant of the shadow. To resist this techno-fascist panopticon, we must reclaim the courage to believe that the stone can be shattered.

Hezbollah responds to the Zionist military amid fragile truce

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN — Amid ongoing Israeli violations of the ceasefire with Lebanon, Hezbollah has once again responded by attacking the occupying regime's military.

In a statement, the Lebanese resistance movement announced that it had targeted a military artillery position belonging to the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) in the settlement of Kfar Giladi.

The resistance movement stated that the artillery position was the source of recent IOF shelling directed toward the town of Yahmar al-Shaqif.

According to the statement, resistance fighters launched a barrage of rockets along with a swarm of attack drones at the IOF site, identifying it as the source of the latest artillery attacks on the town.

Hezbollah emphasized that the strike was carried out in response to “blatant and documented violations” by the Zionist regime, noting that more than 200 violations have occurred since the ceasefire came into effect.

These violations, according to the statement, included attacks on civilians and the destruction of homes and villages in southern

Lebanon. Hezbollah added that its retaliatory operations were based on its right to resist occupation and push it back.

An IOF airstrike in southern Lebanon killed at least one civilian on Wednesday, according to Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA).

Earlier, Hebrew media outlets reported that two incidents had occurred in the north: rockets were fired toward IOF positions in southern Lebanon, while drones were launched toward a northern Israeli settlement.

A few days earlier, resistance fighters carried out an ambush targeting a convoy of eight IOF armored vehicles. An explosive device, planted in advance, detonated as the convoy moved from the town of Taybeh toward Deir Seryan.

This comes amid continued IOF violations and repeated warnings from the resistance movement, whose Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem has vowed to respond to any breach of the ceasefire.

The ceasefire between Lebanon and the Zionist regime went into effect at midnight between Thursday and Friday. It is expected to last 10 days. However, the re-



sistance movement has continued to violate the agreement through explosions in several towns, including Khiam, Bint Jbeil, Aitaroun, Rashaf, and Shamaa, along with artillery shelling of other areas.

Hezbollah's military media arm has released a video titled “The Nightmare Returns... It Has Indeed Returned,” highlighting what an Israeli newspaper described as the return of one of the resistance movement's most effective weapons.

The video shows how explosive devices once posed a constant threat to IOF units operating in southern Lebanon, at a time when the IOF forces were deeply entrenched in what was known as the “security zone.”

The footage captures IOF sol-

diers being targeted in ambushes involving explosive devices similar to those used by resistance fighters in 1982, 1996, and 1997—most notably during the well-known ‘Ansariya’ ambush.

The video notes that such operations contributed to wearing down the IOF and its allies, paving the way, alongside direct assaults on military positions and martyrdom operations, for the liberation of southern Lebanon in May 2000.

Meanwhile, Sayyed Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, leader of Yemen's Ansarallah movement, said that the Islamic world must confront its real enemies, especially the Zionists, on both a natural and logical level.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Beyond brinkmanship: The Orientalism in Trump's Iran war cry

By Dr. Yasir Ali Mirza

NEW DELHI — In a striking display of aggressive posturing amid the war on Iran, United States President Donald Trump's apocalyptic warning of total annihilation in a prime-time television address from the White House has since been reverberating around the world. Demonstrating how his “madman attitude” has made the world more uncertain, he declared that the U.S. army would be hitting Iran “extremely hard,” if his demand of lifting the siege on the Strait of Hormuz would not be heeded by the Islamic Republic Guards Corps (IRGC).

Invoking archaic phraseology, he prepared to bomb Iran and “bring it back to the Stone Ages, where they belong,” while delivering a self-congratulatory address over a supposed “victory” against Iran. This salvo was followed by his hawkish secretary of war, Pete Hegseth, repeating the words on his X social media handle.

In quick succession, Trump threatened that Iran's “whole civilization will die tonight.” These remarks, delivered as part of a broader justification for ongoing U.S.-Israeli aggression against Iran, have been widely interpreted not merely as a threat of military escalation but as a revealing moment in the cultural logic underpinning American coercive foreign policy discourse.

The jarring statements come from the leader of a “free” and “liberal democratic” country, threatening to erase a people whose intellectual and cultural legacy has enriched humanity for millennia. A nation that came into being a mere 250 years ago and has acted as a global policeman since the beginning of the Cold War is now threatening a country that possesses a sophisticated and glorious 6,000-year-old civilizational history, with widespread casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. The targeting of civilian lives and infrastructure is not only a brazen violation of international law, but also a brutal affront to the human sensibilities of a civilized society. This also raises deeply unsettling questions about the international order triggered by such audacious genocidal threats.

Nonetheless, the Iranian people's resilience

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)



and defiance in the face of aggression reveal something profound. They are not simply citizens of a modern nation-state, but heirs to an ancient Persian civilization later shaped by Islamic values. Iran, historically rooted in Persian civilization and shaped by modern Islamic ideals and Shia revolutionary fervor, reflects a continuity that transcends the present conflict. From the very beginning of the war, Iranians have crafted a powerful counter-narrative and wielded potent symbolism. This is truly remarkable and deserves recognition. The country has long been associated with a rich intellectual and cultural legacy, marked by significant contributions to science, mathematics, medicine, architecture, literature and poetry, and philosophy that continue to influence the world even today.

Trump's “Stone Age” brinkmanship is not merely a hyperbolic expression, and it cannot be ignored. The imagery he employs is not only profoundly dehumanizing and laden with profanity, but also reflects a colonial mindset rooted in Western arrogance toward countries of the Global South. Departing from the relative restraint of his predecessors, Trump goes even further by hurling expletives at Iranians. However, in tone, structure, and underlying intent, his statement is not new; rather, it is the latest manifestation of what the late literary theorist Edward Said identified as “Orientalism.” He expounded this groundbreaking concept in 1978 that revolutionized the study of the East by deconstructing the Western discourse that shaped it.

Kyrie Irving changes Instagram photo to show solidarity with Palestine



Famed basketball player Kyrie Irving has changed his social media profile picture to an image of a Palestinian child blocked from attending school by Israeli soldiers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Al Jazeera reported.

The picture on Irving's Instagram, which boasts 20.2 million followers, shows a young Palestinian boy sitting with a book as he turns around to look at Israeli soldiers standing behind a barbed wire fence just behind him.

Earlier this month, Palestinian school-

children in Umm al-Khair, in the occupied West Bank, found a barbed wire fence blocking their route to school roughly 1km (0.6 miles) away. Despite the barrier being erected by settlers without legal authorization, soldiers have refused to take down the barrier in a community that faces imminent Israeli demolition orders later this month due to a lack of building permits. Such permits are rarely granted to Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank, which is entirely under the control of Israel.

When the children, some as young as five years old, tried to go around the fence, soldiers launched tear gas and sound grenades at them. Shortly after the fence went up, a large Star of David was built with stones by settlers on the side of the fence that the Palestinian schoolchildren can no longer access.

The community subsequently launched a march as part of a new initiative — “the Umm al-Khair Freedom School” — walking alongside the schoolchildren right up to the fence as the children banged on drums and sang defiant songs while soldiers watched from meters away.

Over 1000 artists call for boycott for ‘normalizing’ Israel's genocide

More than 1,100 musicians and cultural workers have called for a boycott of the 70th edition of the Eurovision song competition over its inclusion of Israel, amid growing pressure to ban the country over its genocide in Gaza.

Campaign groups No Music for Genocide and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (more commonly known as the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement) on Tuesday published an open letter to “reject Eurovision being used to whitewash and normalize Israel's genocide, siege and brutal mili-

tary occupation against Palestinians.”

“How can any performer or Eurovision fan in good conscience participate at the contest's next edition in Austria amidst U.S.-Israeli plans for hyper-surveilled concentration camps in ‘New Gaza?’” the letter reads, co-signed by artists including Macklemore, Paloma Faith, Kneecap, Massive Attack and former winners of the Eurovision contest.

“There are moments in time when passive silence is not an option. We refuse to be silent when Israel's genocidal violence soundtracks and silences Palestinian lives.”

Discover Soubatan, scenic summer haven above the clouds



TEHRAN - Nestled in the highlands of northern Iran, Soubatan village is one of the most captivating rural destinations in Gilan province, offering a rare blend of untouched nature, traditional lifestyles, and dramatic mountain scenery.

Located northwest of Talesh, this seasonal settlement lies at an altitude ranging from about 1,900 to 2,500 meters above sea level, where cool air, rolling pastures, and distant peaks create a landscape that feels both serene and expansive.

Soubatan is often described as a place where nature remains largely unspoiled. Surrounded by the Lisar River to the north and the lush forests of Talesh to the east, the village also connects westward to the scenic Neor Lake, while the province of Ardabil lies just 19 kilometers away. The area's geography forms a striking contrast between green plains, mist-covered valleys, and rugged mountains, where even in summer, patches of snow can still be seen on higher elevations.

The region's climate is notably pleasant during the warmer months. Although Gilan is known as one of the most humid provinces in Iran, Soubatan's elevation moderates the temperature, making it a popular summer retreat. Cool breezes, open skies, and vast meadows provide an ideal environment for travelers seeking relief from heat and humidity. However, winters are harsh, marked by heavy snowfall and freezing temperatures that make permanent settlement difficult.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Quebrada de Humahuaca

Quebrada de Humahuaca, situated in Argentina's province of Jujuy, follows the line of a major cultural route, the Camino Inca, along the spectacular valley of the Rio Grande, from its source in the cold high desert plateau of the High Andean lands to its confluence with the Rio Leone some 150 km to the south.

The UNESCO-designated valley demonstrates substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 10,000 years. It features visible traces of prehistoric hunter-gatherer communities, of the Inca Empire (15th to 16th centuries), and of the fight for independence in the 19th and 20th centuries.

According to UNESCO, the property is a highly representative example of the south Andean valleys, with an exceptional system of communication routes and economic, social, and cultural coordination.

This is the most important physical linkage between the high Andean lands and the extensive temperate plains in south-eastern South America. Its impressive natural environment is kept almost intact, with hundreds of archaeological and architectural sites that bear witness to its long and rich history. The valley shows substantial evidence of its use as a major trade route over the past 10,000 years. Scattered along the valley are extensive remains of successive settlements whose inhabitants created and used these linear routes. They include prehistoric hunter/gatherer and early farming communities (9000 BC to 400 CE), large struc-

Life in Soubatan follows a seasonal rhythm shaped by these climatic conditions. The village is primarily inhabited during spring, summer, and part of autumn by Lisari families and nomadic communities. As colder weather approaches, most residents migrate to lower-altitude areas such as the forested slopes of the Alborz Mountains and the Caspian Sea coasts near Lisar. Only a handful of families remain in certain areas during winter. The nomadic people live in wooden huts or traditional tents, preserving a way of life that has endured for generations.

Despite gradual changes in the central parts of the village, the surrounding areas still reflect a strong connection to indigenous culture. Herding remains a key livelihood, and visitors can observe traditional practices, including livestock grazing, dairy production, and seasonal migration. The absence of modern residential complexes adds to Soubatan's authenticity, as many local families open their homes to travelers, offering a more intimate and immersive experience.

Beyond its cultural appeal, Soubatan is rich in natural and recreational attractions. With its combination of elevated landscapes, nomadic heritage, and diverse natural attractions, Soubatan stands out as a distinctive destination in northern Iran. It offers not only scenic beauty but also a glimpse into a lifestyle closely tied to nature, making it an appealing choice for travelers interested in cultural authenticity and ecological tourism.

tured agricultural societies (400 CE-900), flourishing pre-Hispanic towns and villages (900-1430/80), the Incan empire (1430/80-1535), Spanish towns, villages and churches (153/93-1810), and traces of Republican struggles for independence (1810-20th century).

Of particular note are the extensive remains of stone-walled agricultural terrace fields at Coctaca, thought to have originated around 1,500 years ago and still in use today; these are associated with a string of fortified towns known as pucarás. The field system and the pucarás together make a dramatic impact on the landscape one that is unrivaled in South America. The valley also displays several churches and chapels and a vibrant vernacular architectural tradition.

The current population, on its part, keeps its traditions in an outstanding cultural landscape. Thus, Quebrada de Humahuaca is an extremely complex heritage system characterized by elements of various kinds inserted in a stunning, impressive and colorful landscape. The interaction between the geo-ecological system and the successive societies and cultures that have occupied it for the last 10,000 years shows space-time continuity that is hard to find in other areas. Separated from the ensemble, only a few properties can be considered unique and outstanding. However, the combination of natural and cultural elements has given rise to a site that is beyond comparison in every sense.

(Source: UNESCO)

Austrian Iranologists condemn destruction of Iran's cultural heritage at Vienna event

TEHRAN - A group of Austrian and international scholars specializing in Iranian studies have strongly condemned the destruction and damage inflicted on Iran's cultural heritage, describing such acts as not only an assault on a single nation but a profound loss for humanity as a whole.

The remarks were delivered during a cultural gathering titled "Iran's Cultural Heritage Night," hosted by Iran's cultural representation in Austria at the Iranian House of Wisdom in Vienna, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

The event brought together academics, artists, and cultural figures from both Iran and Austria, offering a platform for critical discussion on the growing threats facing one of the world's oldest and richest civilizations.

Unlike previous gatherings that largely celebrated the grandeur and historical achievements of Iran's more than 7,000-year-old civilization, this event focused on the vulnerabilities, destruction, and risks confronting its cultural legacy. Speakers emphasized the importance of the UNESCO Blue Shield symbol, an international emblem dedicated to the protection of cultural property during armed conflict, underscoring the urgent need for active preservation efforts.

Melanie Sindelar, Assistant Professor of Anthropology of Art at Charles University, delivered a comprehensive keynote examining Iran's cultural heritage through both artistic and anthropological lenses. She highlighted Iran's architectural and urban treasures, from bazaars and mosques to caravanserais and palaces, describing them as embodiments of a deeply rooted cultural identity.

Sindelar stressed that understanding Iran's heritage requires more than a superficial appreciation of its physical structures. She introduced the concept of the "inner language" of cultural heritage, a symbolic and sometimes enigmatic expression of human experience that transcends time. According to her, this intangible dimension elevates Iran's heritage beyond monuments and artifacts, transforming it into a living component of civilizational identity.

She further cited international legal frameworks governing the protection of cultural heritage, arguing that attacks on such sites violate established norms of international law. Referring to the Blue Shield initiative, she stated that targeting cultural heritage is not only a physical act of destruction but also an assault on the historical and cultural continuity of a people.

Golmar Kampinger-Khatibi, Senior Lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, expanded on this theme by categorizing Iran's cultural heritage into tangible and intangible forms. She provided a



chronological overview of Iran's UNESCO-listed sites and highlighted key landmarks such as the Chel Sotoun Palace, Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Abbasi Grand Mosque, Falak-ol-Aflak Castle, and the Golestan Palace in Tehran.

Kampinger-Khatibi also pointed to Iran's rich intangible heritage, including traditions like Nowruz and Yalda Night, as well as traditional cuisine and clothing. She emphasized that both forms of heritage are equally significant and equally vulnerable.

Drawing parallels with European history, she recalled the widespread destruction of cultural sites during World Wars I and II, noting that Europe itself has experienced the irreversible loss of heritage. "These are wounds that history does not forget," she said, warning against repeating such tragedies elsewhere.

She concluded by describing recent damages to Iranian heritage sites as "deeply regrettable and irreparable," stressing that reconstruction cannot restore the original authenticity and spirit of destroyed monuments.

Rüdiger Lohlker, a retired professor from the University of Vienna, focused his remarks on one of Iran's most influential cultural contributions: the Persian garden. He described it as a central element of Iranian cultural heritage with far-reaching global impact.

Lohlker explained that the Persian garden model, particularly the "Chaharbagh" design, has influenced garden architecture across Europe, South Asia, and beyond. He cited examples ranging from historic European gardens to modern corporate landscapes, illustrating how this design tradition has transcended geographical boundaries.

"Iranian culture is deeply intertwined with the concept of the garden," he said, warning that the destruction of such heritage, along with libraries and other cultural in-

stitutions, would constitute a loss not just for Iran, but for the entire world.

In a more political tone, Lohlker referred to statements by certain leaders involved in ongoing conflicts that have alluded to the "destruction of Iranian civilization." He described such rhetoric as indicative of "cultural genocide," arguing that it violates both international law and fundamental humanitarian principles.

Dieter Reinisch, a historian and member of the Royal Historical Society, offered a critical perspective on the politicization of archaeology. In a lecture titled "Constructing Identity Between Science and Politics: The Role of Archaeology in Palestine," he examined how archaeological practices can be used to advance political agendas.

Reinisch argued that in certain contexts, archaeology has been subordinated to nationalist and expansionist goals. He discussed the situation in the West Bank, where thousands of archaeological sites exist, and claimed that excavations are often conducted under military protection to support territorial claims and settlement expansion.

Quoting Israeli archaeologist Talia Ezrahi of the NGO Emek Shaveh, he noted that archaeology is sometimes used as a tool to demonstrate historical presence and justify political narratives. Reinisch distinguished between "national archaeology," which operates within scholarly frameworks, and "nationalist archaeology," which serves ideological purposes.

He concluded that as long as archaeology remains entangled with political objectives, it cannot function as an impartial scientific discipline.

Cultural heritage as human identity

In his closing remarks, Reza Gholami, Iran's cultural attaché in Austria and a scholar at the Institute for Humanities and Cultural

Studies, emphasized the philosophical and human dimensions of cultural heritage.

"Iran's heritage reflects the golden moments of human civilization and serves as a gateway to self-awareness," he said. "It belongs not only to Iran but to all humanity."

Gholami criticized what he described as global inaction and silence in the face of cultural destruction, expressing particular concern over the lack of response from some academic and cultural institutions. "One cannot claim to study Iran and remain indifferent to the destruction of its heritage," he stated.

He also challenged the notion that damaged heritage can simply be rebuilt, arguing that reconstruction cannot restore the original "spirit" of cultural artifacts. Drawing on philosophical concepts, he described the destruction of heritage as "cultural epistemicide," the annihilation of knowledge and meaning embedded in historical objects and spaces.

Referencing thinkers such as Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur, Gholami explained that human existence is inherently tied to history and narrative. "When monuments are destroyed, it is not just stone and brick that are lost, but entire horizons of meaning," he said. "It is a form of killing time itself."

Calls for international action

The event concluded with a unified call for stronger international mechanisms to protect cultural heritage, particularly during armed conflicts. Participants urged UNESCO to take more decisive action and called for binding guarantees to prevent attacks on cultural sites.

Attendees described the destruction of Iran's cultural heritage as "shameful" and warned that such actions set a dangerous precedent for the rest of the world. The consensus among speakers was clear: safeguarding cultural heritage is not merely a national responsibility but a global imperative.

Isfahan official calls for combined tourism tours centered on 'resistance tourism'

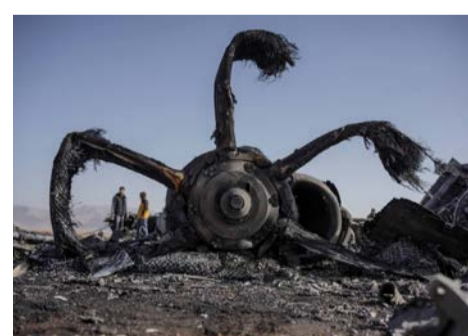
TEHRAN - A tourism official in Isfahan on Wednesday called for the design of combined tourism packages centered on "resistance tourism," aiming to link cultural and historical attractions with sites tied to the war with US and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Davoud Abian, deputy head of tourism at the provincial department of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, said new tourism destinations were needed to make use of the province's diverse capacities.

"Isfahan province has extensive potential in various tourism sectors, and it is necessary to design tours with a new approach that can introduce a collection of cultural, historical and natural attractions alongside resistance tourism," Abian said, according to IRNA.

He said combined tours could integrate visits to major landmarks in Isfahan with sites associated with themes of sacrifice and resistance, creating a new product in the province's tourism portfolio.

"Resistance tourism represents an important part of our historical and contemporary identity and can help tourists gain a deeper understanding of the culture," he added.



Abian said travel agencies, tour guides and other tourism stakeholders should cooperate to design diverse routes and packages based on this theme.

He also highlighted the role of such tours in attracting both domestic and foreign visitors, saying tourists increasingly seek thematic and experience-based travel.

"Offering combined tours centered on resistance, in addition to strengthening historical narratives, can contribute to sustainable tourism development in the province," he said.

Abian said the provincial department was ready

to support initiatives by tourism operators to develop and implement such tours.

One such location, maybe near Shahreza, where two U.S. C-130 military transport aircraft and at least two helicopters were destroyed in early April during a two-day rescue mission following the downing of an F-15 fighter jet by Iranian forces.

The ancient city of Isfahan, which serves as the provincial capital as well, is situated at the crossroads of Iran's north-south and east-west trade routes. It reached its zenith between the 9th and 18th centuries. During the Safavid era, it became Iran's capital under Shah Abbas the Great.

Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran and now it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons. It is filled with many architectural wonders, such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. It's a city for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The Persian proverb "Isfahan nesf-e-jahan ast" (Isfahan is half the world) reflects the city's cultural and historical prominence.

Iran ranks third among Islamic countries for scientific publications

TEHRAN – According to the recent ranking published by SCImago 2025, Iran with 77,197 scientific articles, ranks third among Islamic nations.

The country ranked 18th globally. Compared to 75,990 works in 2024, the country has published 1,207 more articles in 2025, indicating a 1.6 percent increase; however, Iran's ranking has dropped one spot compared to 2024.

Turkey (with 99,588 articles), and Saudi Arabia (with 79,919 articles) are placed first and second in the region, 13 and 16 in the world.

The country ranked 17 in the world, and second in the region in 2024. Turkey and Saudi Arabia ranked first and third, respectively, back then.

A review of Scopus data from 2014 to 2022 shows that Iran has always been the first among the countries in the region in terms of the number of publications and has been able to maintain this position.

In 2017, Iran ranked 17th in this index and maintained this rank until 2019. In 2020, Iran's rank increased by two places to 15, but in the last two years this rank was lost and in 2022 it returned to 17.

This is the third consecutive year that the country's ranking for scientific publications has experienced a downward trend, falling from 15 in 2023, to 17 in 2024, and 18 in 2025.

According to the seventh national development plan (2023-2027), Iran is planning to elevate the country's ranking for scientific productions to 12 by 2027, which seems to be difficult concerning the current situation.

Shahin Akhondzadeh, an official with the health ministry, said due to sanctions, economic restrictions, and the limitations on publishing papers by Iranian scholars, particularly during the last three years, Iran's ranking in scientific productions has lowered from 15



in 2023 to 17 in 2024.

The country's advancement in science production requires compensating for the regression in research and technology through providing funds, facilitating research, and promoting meritocracy which will reduce young elites' migration, as well, the health ministry's website quoted Akhondzadeh as saying.

Iran is planning to enhance ranking for scientific productions to 12 by 2027.

In 2025, China with 1,352,563 works ranks first in the world, experiencing a 9.6 percent increase. The US (with 749,969 articles) is placed second, the number of published articles has dropped by 0.5 percent compared to 2024, though.

India (with 381,524 articles), England (with 260,524 works), and Germany (with 209,302 articles) ranked third to fifth.

SIR 2025 includes 195 Iranian institutions

SCImago Institutions Rankings (SIR) 2025 placed 195 Iranian universities among the

top institutions in the world compared to 197 universities in 2024.

The SIR is a classification of academic and research-related institutions ranked by a composite indicator that combines three different sets of indicators based on research performance, innovation outputs, and societal impact measured by their web visibility.

The research ranking refers to the volume, impact, and quality of the institution's research output.

The innovation ranking is calculated on the number of patent applications of the institution and the citations that its research output receives from patents.

The societal ranking is based on the number of pages on the institution's website and the number of backlinks and mentions from social networks.

In the latest ranking, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, University of Tehran, Shahid-Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Health Services, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences are the top five institutions.

Compared to all sectors (per-

centiles), Tehran University of Medical Sciences ranks first in West Asia, and 6th in the world. The university's best ranking is in Dentistry, ranking first in West Asia, and 37th in the world, respectively.

University of Tehran is placed first in the country, second in West Asia, and 11th in the world. The university's best ranking is in Business, Management, and Accounting, ranking first in West Asia, and 53rd globally.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Health Services ranks second in Iran, fourth in West Asia, and 17th in the world. The university's best ranking is in Dentistry, ranking fifth in West Asia, and 68th globally.

Tabriz University of Medical Sciences ranked second nationwide. It ranked fifth in West Asia, and 23rd in the world. The university's best ranking is in Pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutics, ranking fifth in West Asia, and 53rd globally.

Iran University of Medical Sciences ranks third in the country. It ranks 6th in West Asia, and 24th globally. The university's best ranking is in Obstetrics and Gynecology, ranking eighth in West Asia, and 202nd in the world.

Lake Urmia's level increases by 120cm in 7 months

TEHRAN – Since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2025), the water level of Lake Urmia has increased by 120 cm, rising from 1,269.50 to 1,270.70 meters above sea level, now, the CEO of West Azarbaijan regional water company has said.

Lake Urmia in northwestern West Azarbaijan province started to dry up in the 2000s. The lake was once the largest in West Asia and the sixth-largest salt lake in the world, with a water surface area of 5,000 to 6,000 square kilometers.

However, the water level of Lake Urmia shows a decrease of 3.40 meters compared to the ecological water level of the lake, IRNA quoted Majid Rastgari as saying.

Lake Urmia faces significant challenges due to the overconsumption of water resources, magnified by climate change impacts, which have severely impacted its ecosystem.

The Lake Urmia Basin plays a critical role in ensuring Iran's food security and agricultural productivity.

Agricultural activities in the region are increasingly vulnerable to water shortages, a situation exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Studies indicate that these climatic changes could further disrupt agri-food systems and the lake's fragile environment in the future.

Over the past seven months (from September 23, 2025 to April 20), 1.278 billion cubic meters of water have been released from dams, particularly Boukan and Mahabad dams, to Lake Urmia. Currently, the lake has about 2.89 billion cubic meters of water, Rastgari noted.

The official went on to say that the volume of water in satellite wetlands like Nowruzlou and Yousef-Kandi has reached 100 percent

of their storage capacity due to successful water transfer plans and good water management.

Fortunately, recent rainfall in the northwestern part of the country has increased the level of water in Lake Urmia and wetlands in West Azarbaijan province, which had experienced drought situation over the past year. For instance, Kani Barazan wetland has been filled by 90 percent, IRNA quoted Hoojjat Jabbari, the director general of West Azarbaijan's department of environment, as saying.

Also, the surplus of water has been released into Lake Urmia, helping greatly to reviving the lake, he added.

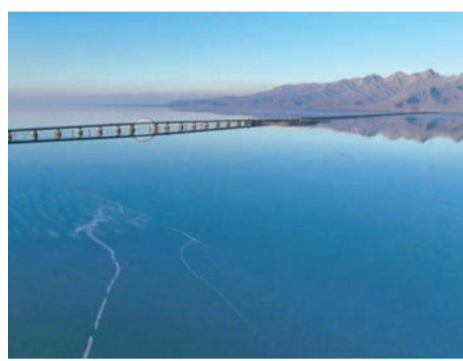
In December 2025, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in cooperation with the Governorate of West Azarbaijan Province, held a workshop on a project titled 'Enhancing Restoration Activities in Lake Urmia through the Effective Use of Agricultural Water', marking the official launch of the project's second phase, which was signed in October 2025.

Funded by the Government of Japan, the FAO of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the initiative aims to promote sustainable agriculture and support the restoration of one of the country's most vital ecosystems — Lake Urmia.

The project also aims to help revive the lake, and promote sustainable agriculture and support the restoration of one of the country's most vital ecosystems — Lake Urmia.

The signing ceremony of the project was held during President Masoud Pezeshkian's visit to West Azarbaijan.

The document was signed by Reza Rahmani, the Secretary of the Urmia Lake Rescue National Committee, and Ali Nazarioust, Officer-in-Charge (on behalf of the FAO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran).



The Lake Urmia Basin plays a critical role in ensuring Iran's food security and agricultural productivity. However, in recent years, the Basin's water resources have significantly declined due to rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and unsustainable water use.

Recognizing the urgency of these challenges, FAO is implementing this project to promote integrated water resource management and climate-smart agricultural practices across the Basin.

The Lake Urmia component of the project will be jointly implemented by FAO and the Urmia Lake Rescue National Committee (ULRNC). It aims to scale up and operationalize improvements in agricultural water efficiency and productivity, safeguarding livelihoods and reducing pressure on water resources.

Through capacity development, the introduction of efficient irrigation technologies, and the promotion of sustainable farming methods, the project will help farmers and rural communities build resilience to water scarcity while contributing to the restoration of the lake's ecological balance.

The project represents a strong example of collaboration between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, FAO, UNDP, and the Government of Japan in supporting national efforts toward sustainable agriculture, water management, and environmental conservation.

IRCS to act as regional rescue, relief training hub



IFRC undersecretary-general Xaviar Castellanos Mosquera (R), and IRCS head Pirhossein Kolivand

TEHRAN – Thanks to the high capabilities of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) and its remarkable achievements over the past years, particularly during the US-Israel war against the country, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has decided to choose the IRCS as the regional hub for rescue and relief training, the head of the IFRC has said.

This responsibility highlights global trust in experiences, commitments, and capabilities of the IRCS, Mehr news agency quoted Pirhossein Kolivand as saying.

An IFRC delegation, led by the Xaviar Castellanos Mosquera, the IFRC undersecretary-general for national society development and operations coordination, is paying a field visit to the civilian areas, such as residential units and medical centers like Gandhi hospital that were targeted and devastated by the United States and Israeli regime during the imposed 40-day war. The delegation is accompanied by Kolivand.

Holding a meeting on Tuesday, the officials also discussed the devastating impacts of sanctions on rescue services and people's health.

Condemning the inhumane measures of the aggressors, Mosquera highlighted the importance of legal action in international forums, and explicitly that would carry the Iranian nation's voice for justice to the ears of the world.

The official also lauded the IRCS relief services and efforts including quick responding to crises and deploying relief workers, attracting volunteers, providing public trainings, rehabilitation and social services, as well as distributing medicines and medical tools, effectively and precisely.

Recruiting rescuers that ride horses, establishing helal (crescent) houses, and expanding neighborhood-based services were among IRCS initiatives that according to Mosquera

should be introduced as successful models to other national societies.

The IFRC has put the priority on showcasing the IRCS capabilities, specialized staff and professional volunteers to international societies.

Mosquera officially asked the IRCS to share its valuable experiences with other societies to help them enhance their global preparedness and operational capacity, which further underlines the role and inspiring position of the IRCS in international arena.

"The Iranian Red Crescent Society is our reliable global partner; the international societies should know that during the 40-day [US-Israeli imposed] war more than 100,000 rescuers volunteered to provide relief services," IRNA quoted Castellanos Mosquera as saying on Saturday.

Proposal to limit use of AI in warfare

During a Sunday meeting, the IRCS proposed the IFRC for an "addendum to Geneva Conventions" to limit the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in warfare.

The IFRC official welcomed the proposal, promising to put it on the agenda, and follow up on its implementation through official international channels.

"Today, the world is facing a new version of threats which challenges the enforcement of the existing international humanitarian law," Kolivand highlighted.

"The proposed addendum focuses on updating and regulating specific rules on utilizing AI in attacks, combined wars, as well as modern technologies in armed conflicts.

Without any legal and ethical framework, the use of AI in conflicts can lead to unprecedented human catastrophe. Therefore, it is essential that international organizations, particularly the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, be in front line of developing deterrent, transparent and binding regulations," Kolivand further noted.

Blood storage duration rises to 9 days during war

TEHRAN – From the beginning of the US-Israel war on February 28 till April 21, the blood storage duration in the country has increased from 2.4 days to 9 days, according to an official with Iran Blood Transfusion Organization.

"During the same period, the number of blood donors has indicated an increase of 24 percent," ISNA quoted Babak Yektaparast as saying.

Since the outbreak of imposed war, there has been a notable growth in the number of women and first-time donors referring to blood donation centers across the country.

Fortunately, the number of first-time donors has significantly increased by 63.9 percent, he added.

The number of referrals, and the amount of blood donated over the past month increased by 15 percent and 10 percent, respectively, Mehr news agency quoted Yektaparast, as saying.

During the mentioned period, more than 268,000 Iranians referred to blood donation centers across the country, donating over 220,000 units of blood.

According to statistics, the women's contribution has increased by 79-percent, IRNA reported.

Yektaparast told ISNA that during the war a "waiting list" has been prepared for blood donation. "We are witnessing the formation of queues at some blood donation centers" he said, adding: "When a blood donation queue is formed at a center, the waiting time for blood donation increases and I apologize to the people for any possible delays."

According to the official, a total of 2,111,476 Iranians donated blood in the first ten months of the past Iranian year, March 2025 – March 2026).

The highest blood donation growth was recorded in the provinces of Zanjan (around 13 percent), Sistan-Baluchestan (about ten percent), and Isfahan (almost eight percent), the health ministry's website quoted the official as saying.

During the same period, the continuous blood donation growth rate in the country increased to over 55 percent. The provinces of Semnan (more than 69 percent), Golestan, and Qom (about 67 percent) hold the highest rates for continuous blood donation, respectively, he noted.

In January 2025, the former World Health Organization (WHO) representative, Jaffar Hussain, admired the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization's (IBTO) leadership in blood safety and transfusion services, and highlighted their remarkable achievement of a 100 percent voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation system, a testament to the principles of universal health coverage in action.

He also thanked the blood donors, whose selflessness serves as an inspiration to all.

Admiring the IBTO's efforts and expertise in providing services to patients with rare blood types, the official underscored Iran's capacity to serve as a model for other nations in the realm of blood transfusion and rare blood management.

Addressing National Rare Blood Day, Hussain praised the country's steadfast commitment to equitable healthcare access, ensuring that no one is left behind, regardless of their blood type.

The official commended the country's unwavering dedication to tackling the unique challenges surrounding rare blood, emphasizing the critical importance of collaboration, innovation, and unwavering determination in this global endeavor.



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APRIL 23, 2026

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A wise man first thinks and then speaks and a fool speaks first and then thinks.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:03 Evening: 19:03 Dawn: 3:50 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:21 (tomorrow)

Iranian war drama “God of War” hits Russian streaming platform Ökko

TEHRAN- The Iranian war drama “God of War” has premiered on Ökko, one of Russia’s leading online streaming platforms, marking a new step in the international distribution of Iranian cinema, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

Directed by Hossein Darabi, the film is a major production of the Owj Arts and Media Organization. It offers a realistic narrative of a sensitive chapter during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), also known as the Sacred Defense.

The film specifically chronicles the historical and strategic milestone of launching the first Iranian missile in the post-Islamic Revolution era—a pivotal moment in the nation’s military history and defense capabilities.

Written by Ehsan Saqafi, “God of War” depicts the birth of the Iranian Armed Forces’ missile unit during the Iran-Iraq War. The story centers on the legacy of Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, the architect of Iran’s missile program. The film chooses a unique narrative approach where Tehrani Moghaddam himself does not appear directly on screen; instead, the momentous events are chronicled through the eyes of one of his close comrades-in-arms, portrayed by Saed Soheili.

The film captures a true and pivotal breakthrough in Iran’s military progress. The title itself carries significant historical weight; according to long-standing accounts, “God of War” was the moniker reportedly given by American observers to the specific missile that Iran managed to produce through domestic ingenuity and self-reliance during the Sacred Defense era. By focusing on this internal struggle for technological sovereignty, the film highlights how a group of dedicated individuals turned a period of intense vulnerability into a turning point for national defense.

“God of War,” which previously made its debut at the 43rd Fajr Film Festival, features an ensemble cast including Saed Soheili, Hossein Soleimani, Payam Ahmadinia, Nader Fal-

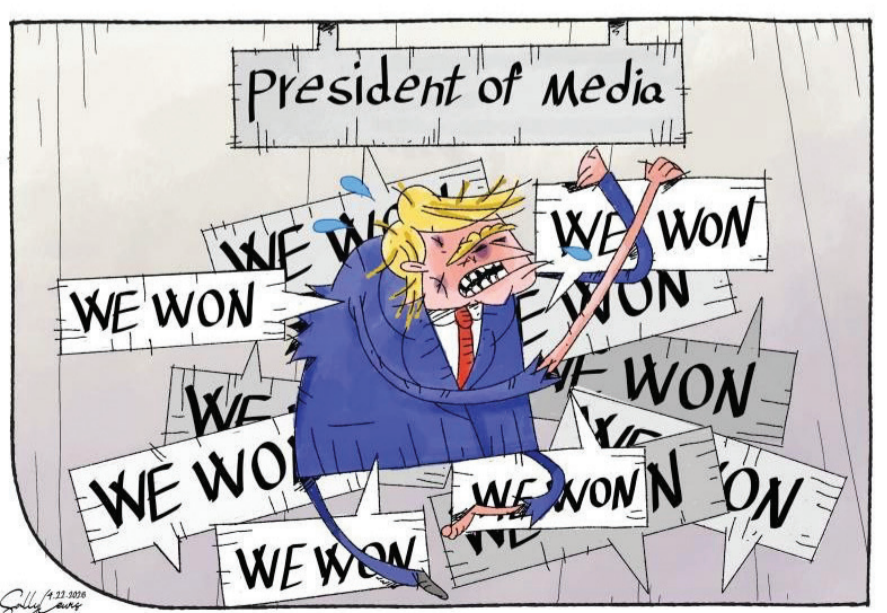


lah, and Dariush Kardan. The film also stars international actor Ammar Shalak alongside a group of Iranian performers such as Azadeh Seifi and Abdolreza Nasari.

Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam is widely celebrated as the “father of Iran’s missile program,” a visionary military commander whose leadership transformed Iran’s defense strategy from total dependency to indigenous self-sufficiency. During the darkest days of the Iran-Iraq War, when Iranian civilians were defenseless against aerial bombardments, Tehrani Moghaddam spearheaded the arduous task of establishing a ballistic missile force with almost no resources. Although he was martyred in a 2011 explosion while working on advanced rocket technology, his influence remains the cornerstone of Iran’s modern deterrence capabilities, symbolizing both national resilience and technical ingenuity.

Ökko is a major player in the Russian digital content market, offering a vast library of films, series, and exclusive sporting events. The release of “God of War” on this platform provides Russian audiences with a unique opportunity to engage with Iranian historical perspectives and the cinematic storytelling of the Islamic Republic.

Cartoon of Day



President of Media
Cartoonist: Sally Lewis from the UK

Honoring Saadi is honoring living Iranian spirit, culture minister says

TEHRAN – The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, in a message on the occasion of the National Day of Saadi Shirazi (April 21), said: “Honoring Saadi is honoring the living Iranian spirit, a spirit the world needs today more than ever.”

According to Honaronline, the full text of Seyyed Abbas Salehi’s message is as follows:

“Commemorating the great Saadi is not merely celebrating the name of a renowned poet; it is a tribute to a deeply rooted truth within Iranian Islamic identity, the truth of compassion, wisdom, dialogue, and respect for human beings.

Throughout history, Iranians have always been messengers of peace, friendship, and coexistence, and the culture of this land has flourished not on the basis of aggression and hostility, but on knowledge, tolerance, and human kindness.

Among this vast heritage, Saadi of Shiraz is one of the clearest voices of the Iranian conscience, a poet whose message crossed geographic borders and became a shared language of humanity.

In one of his famous poems, he composed: ‘Human beings are members of a whole, in creation of one essence and soul’. This verse was not only an eternal poem but a moral charter of a nation that, for centuries, has viewed humanity beyond race, borders, and language.

In the difficult recent days as well, the Iranian people once again showed that the essence of this culture remains alive; a



Mausoleum of Saadi in Shiraz

people who, while standing with dignity in the face of aggression against their homeland, have revealed the true face of Iran through empathy, solidarity, and helping one another, a face that has captivated the world.”

Abu-Muhammad Muslih al-Din bin Abdallah Shirazi, known by his pen-name Saadi, (1200-1292) was one of the major Persian poets of the medieval period.

Saadi is known as a mystic and metaphysician in the history of Persian literature. He is recognized for the quality of his writings and for the depth of his social and moral thoughts.

The ancient scholar has gained worldwide fame, not only in the Persian-speaking countries but in western societies, with his po-

ems being quoted in a multitude of sources.

The Master of Speech, as he is called, Saadi is best-known for his masterpieces “Bustan” (The Orchard) completed in 1257 and “Gulistan” (The Flower Garden) in 1258.

Bustan is quite in verse, including 4,000 verses in 183 stories about the virtues such as justice, kindness, love, modesty, liberality, generosity, satisfaction and happiness, and the ecstatic practices of dervishes addressing all people to have a better and happier life.

Gulistan, comprised of 8 chapters is mainly in prose. The book widely addresses kings’ morality, dervishes’ behavior, benefits of contentment, silence and talking

in proper time, love and youthfulness, weakness in old age, and education. Saadi attempts to advise people to live freely and to improve the quality of their lives in Gulistan.

Saadi elaborately distinguishes between the spiritual and the mundane aspects of life in his works. He tries to visualize the deepest meanings of life in the most tangible contexts and close to conversational language as far as possible in such a way that even common people can get the most out of his writings.

Saadi’s tomb is located in Shiraz, Fars Province. His mausoleum, also called Saadieh, is one of Iran’s major tourist attractions.

Iranian artist’s cartoons review US presidents’ failure in handling Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN – Iranian artist Mohammad Hossein Niroomand has compared US military presence in the Persian Gulf during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump by publishing his new cartoon about Trump’s impasse in the Strait of Hormuz and reposting an older cartoon in Kayhan newspaper.

“It seems that time repeats itself. I designed an illustration back then for Reagan’s ominous presence in the Persian Gulf, which was printed in Kayhan. At that time, the issue of closing the Strait of Hormuz was raised as well. But today, Donald Trump is truly trapped in the Strait,” he wrote about his works.

When the Tanker War escalated in 1987 in the Persian Gulf, Kuwait asked the United States to escort its oil tankers. On August 22, 1987, the first convoy of escorted tankers, ordered by then-President Ronald Reagan, began its mission to escort two Kuwaiti vessels along a 600-mile route. One of the tankers to be escorted, the Kuwaiti ship Bridgeton, which sailed under the US flag, struck a naval mine near Kuwait in full view of hundreds of reporters, Mehr

reported.

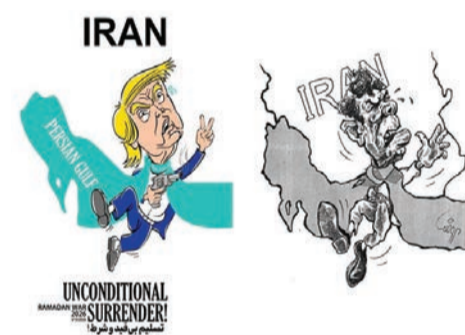
“I drew this cartoon during those days about Ronald Reagan’s entry into the Iran-Iraq War’s oil tanker conflict, and it was published in Kayhan,” Niroomand added.

The Tanker War was a major phase of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. It involved both Iran and Iraq attacking oil tankers and merchant ships in the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz to disrupt each other’s oil exports.

Several Persian Gulf states, especially Kuwait, sought foreign naval protection, leading to the involvement of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Western European navies.

After about four decades, now the Strait has become the center of attention in another conflict. The US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. Shortly after the war began, Iran effectively asserted control over the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most critical energy chokepoints, closing the narrow waterway through which a fifth of global oil passes.

On April 13, Donald Trump imposed a naval



blockade on Iranian ports in an effort to force Tehran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. However, Iran has adopted a firm stance on keeping the Strait closed.

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.

Trump’s decisions have drawn fierce criticism at home and abroad, with many warning it risks igniting a broader regional crisis and destabilizing the global economy.

“Script of the Homeland” calligraphy exhibition opens at Azadi Tower

TEHRAN- The “Script of the Homeland” calligraphy exhibition, featuring the latest works of prominent master Kaveh Teimouri, was officially inaugurated on Tuesday at the Azadi Tower cultural complex in Tehran.

The opening ceremony was attended by distinguished figures including Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Mehdi Shafiei, Government Spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani, and Mohammad Allahyari, the CEO of the Roudaki Foundation, Mehr reported on Wednesday.

Central to the exhibition is the theme of “Iran,” blending classical Persian literature with contemporary national identity. Alongside Teimouri’s masterful scripts, the event features artistic portraits of the martyred students of the Shajarah Tayyebeh school in Minab, bridging the gap between traditional art and recent national tragedies.

On the sidelines of the exhibition, a daily live performance recreates the tragic assault on the Minab school. Featuring child

and adult actors accompanied by live music, the performance culminates in an interactive segment where attendees write a ‘Final Essay’ on a blackboard, honoring the children whose notebooks were stained by the blood of martyrdom.

Deputy Minister Mehdi Shafiei left a note on the board, writing: “The Minab tragedy was a ‘pure wine’ that unified a great society against the enemy.”

The second hall of the exhibition showcases a collection of verses by Persian poets spanning a millennium, all celebrating love for the motherland. Notable pieces included calligraphic renderings of lines such as “In this soil, in this pure field, let us sow no seeds other than love,” and “May the banner of Iran forever remain high and fruitful.”

Teimouri, who spent countless nights crafting these pieces, also included several spiritual works centered on the names of God.

On February 28, the Shajarah Tayyebeh girls’ elementary

school in Minab, Hormozgan province, became the site of a devastating massacre as the United States and Israel initiated their strikes against Iran.

While dozens of girls and boys aged between 7 and 12 were beginning their lessons, the school was targeted by a missile strike that caused the building to collapse, trapping children and teachers beneath the rubble. Iranian authorities confirmed a final death toll of 168 people, with at least 95 others wounded, marking one of the most harrowing incidents of the conflict’s opening day.

Despite attempts by US and Israeli authorities to distance themselves from the carnage as images of the tragedy spread across social media, detailed forensic and digital investigations have painted a starkly different picture.

An analysis by Al Jazeera’s digital investigations unit, utilizing over a decade of satellite imagery and recent video clips, revealed that the school was a clearly dis-

tinct civilian facility, separated from any adjacent military sites for at least ten years. Furthermore, witness accounts and satellite-based analyses confirmed that the school was triple tapped by three separate, deliberate strikes, leaving no doubt about the nature of the attack.

The international community has faced mounting evidence regarding the responsibility for this atrocity, with investigations from major global outlets including The New York Times, BBC Verify, CBC, and NPR all concluding that the United States was responsible for the strike.

These findings have raised fundamental questions about the intelligence used to justify the bombing, as the patterns of the strike suggest a direct targeting of a civilian educational institution. The Minab school tragedy now stands as a somber testament to the immense human cost of the aggression and a focal point for those demanding international accountability.