



Israel Could Drag UAE Back Into War Quagmire

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UAE Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed is seen whispering to then-Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in Abu Dhabi on December 13, 2021.

'Direct trade with China, removing UAE from intermediation necessary'

TEHRAN- An economic expert, emphasizing the necessity of activating land and rail corridors to counter the American naval blockade, said: "The main obstacles to direct connection with the China corridor must be removed, and intermediaries should be cut out of direct trade with Beijing."

Ata Bahrami stated in an interview with IRNA, referring to America's naval blockade of Iran: "In such circumstances, strengthening rail corridors and reducing foreign trade dependence on southern ports is more important than ever, and it seems that this approach can also increase economic resilience."

Referring to China's policy of developing rail corridors, he said: "We must cooperate with China on at least two routes of these corridors."

The economic expert, emphasizing that in today's multipolar world, countries need to have various cards to play in the political and economic arena in order to overcome restrictions and sanctions depending on different conditions and situations, ▶ Page 4

UAE policies premised on realpolitik at cost of morality

TEHRAN — It was a source of pride that the United Arab Emirates succeeded in becoming a highly wealthy state in just a few decades.

Intoxicated with oil money, possessing the world's largest airline connecting all four corners of the globe, coupled with the flow of foreign capital and a regional hub for trade and tourism, the UAE started adopting dangerous policies that extended beyond the Middle East.

It could remain the Singapore of the Middle East with much greater capacity and more opportunities.

The small Arab country lost the path first with a covetous eye on Yemen due to its geostrategic position.

It started putting the Yemenis against each other in 2015 to achieve its regional interests. It has also armed and funded opposition forces in Libya and Sudan.

Extensive evidence from United Nations reports, U.S. intelligence, and international human rights organizations indicates that the UAE has been supplying money, arms, and military support to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, bolstering their position against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). ▶ Page 5

A federation of frayed shards insists on becoming the 'United Hebrew Emirates'

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — There's a special breed of fool who picks fights with giants while sheltered in a glass palace. Abu Dhabi's adventurers, Mohammed and Tahnoon bin Zayed, along with their clique, embody that folly.

For years, they have flung rocks at Iran at its allies: arming separatists in Yemen, sheltering Mossad money launderers in Dubai, and weaving their financial, intelligence, military, and logistical apparatus into the American-Israeli war-crime machine.

Now the ricochets hit home. The small Persian Gulf oligarchy, which many in Iran have labelled the "United Hebrew Emirates", is splintering under the weight of its own hubris, marked by scarred infrastructure and a brutal fiscal drain.

Nothing betrays its fragility quite like the spectacle of Sharjah's loyalty being traded as a speculative commodity. ▶ Page 5

New equation taking shape in Strait of Hormuz: Qalibaf

TEHRAN- Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said a "new equation" is emerging in the Strait of Hormuz, warning that the US and its allies themselves have endangered maritime security and energy transit through their actions.

In a message posted on his X account, Qalibaf said the security of shipping and energy transit has been put at risk by the US and its allies through violation of the ceasefire and the imposition of a naval blockade on Iran.

"Nevertheless, their evil will certainly be reduced," the Iranian speaker added.

Qalibaf further stated that Iran is fully aware that continuation of the current situation is intolerable for the United States, while emphasizing that Iran "has not even started yet." ▶ Page 2

Araghchi labels Trump's 'Project Freedom' a 'project deadlock'

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has taken a jab at US President Donald Trump over his so-called "Project Freedom" campaign, which aims to open the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump announced on Sunday that the United States would "guide" stranded ships through the Strait of Hormuz under the campaign. US Central Command (CENTCOM) also said approximately 15,000 American service members, guided-missile destroyers, and more than 100 aircraft would participate in the operation. ▶ Page 2

US economy feels heat as war on Iran backfires

TEHRAN- Official reports from the United States indicate that the economic consequences of the American-Israeli war on Iran are becoming painfully visible on domestic soil, turning into a major nightmare for Trump and his allies.

While much has been said about the Iran conflict, serious warnings now confirm tangible economic repercussions within the US itself.

Data reveals that one-quarter of American farmers lack the financial means to purchase fertilizer. According to official reports and US Senate communications, the price spike is directly linked to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Approximately one-third of global fertilizer trade passes through this strategic route, and the blockade has choked off exports from the Persian Gulf. Since late February, fertilizer components like urea have risen by 25%, with price increases ranging from 9% to 31% across various products. ▶ Page 4

Iran registers 400 cultural elements linked to Persian Gulf

TEHRAN - Iran has recently registered more than 400 cultural and heritage elements that are connected to the Persian Gulf, a senior official said, underscoring efforts to preserve the historical and cultural significance of one of the world's most strategically important waterways.

Ali Darabi, deputy minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, made the announcement on Monday during a ceremony marking Persian Gulf National Day at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Tehran.

"The Persian Gulf and Iranian heart land are two cultural elements that, through their mutual influence, have attained a special status," Darabi said, according to remarks carried by state media. ▶ Page 6



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Artist transforms war-damaged schools into spiritual landscapes

TEHRAN- Contemporary street artist Mirza Hamid has adorned the walls of Tehran's war-damaged schools with a new series of red-ochre murals titled "Until the Last Drop of the Candle, Until the Last Drop of Blood, Iran."

Following the Ramadan War, Hamid—known for his minimalist work—has turned ruins into canvases. Through his ancient-style iconography, he transforms scarred walls into spiritual memories, offering a sense of human transcendence amidst the echoes of conflict.

Western media narrative on Iran is 'deeply misleading':
Bushra Shaikh ▶ Page 3



Scan this QR code to watch the video.

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Deterrence through punishing the aggressor

Hamshahri, in an article about Iran's power in the Strait of Hormuz, quoted Hossein Ajarlou, a regional affairs expert as saying: After the 40-day war between Iran and the Zionist regime and the United States, the Strait of Hormuz became an advantage in Iran's hands, and the Islamic Republic is trying to pursue the concept of 'deterrence through punishing the aggressor' using this strait. Following this action by Iran and the failure of the Islamabad negotiations, the Americans entered a new phase of their crisis. In its latest strategy, the Islamic Republic has clearly defined the scope of its control over the Strait of Hormuz and its surrounding areas. This move by Iran is aimed at neutralizing the US policy of naval blockade, expanding the range of punishing the enemy as a form of deterrence, and also controlling the UAE.

Kayhan: Disregard for Trump's plan

Kayhan, in a commentary, addressed Iran's powerful sovereignty in the Strait of Hormuz and the disregard shown toward Trump's plan. Following the continued naval dominance of Iran and the world's complete indifference to the White House's deadline, no vessel passed through the Strait of Hormuz. Trump's goal in creating this commotion is clear: he is seeking to make a high-risk gamble in a situation of defeat in hopes of disrupting the game. He wants to dictate a 'forced agreement' to the Iranian people at the negotiating table. Iran has proven that it does not match the intensity of its responses merely to the level of the opponent's strikes; rather, Iran's response will be regret-inducing and destructive. Today, not only is the Strait of Hormuz under the management of our armed forces, but the closure of the Bab al-Mandeb Strait—considered the lifeline of the Zionist regime and the West—is also hanging by a thread, or more accurately, dependent on a single signal.

Shargh: 'Project Freedom' or a war trap

Shargh examined the latest developments in the Strait of Hormuz following Trump's claimed project and wrote: The recent developments surrounding

Trump's 'Project Freedom,' along with Tehran's strong reaction and the events that followed, are a clear sign that the crisis has entered a sensitive and potentially dangerous phase. Washington's emphasis on escorting ships—although presented as a measure to reduce tensions—can in practice be interpreted as a form of active military presence, intensifying Iran's security concerns. In contrast, Iran's firm position that all movements must be coordinated with its armed forces shows the country's determination to exercise full control over this strategic passage. Reports about a confrontation with an American patrol boat—regardless of their accuracy—highlight the risk of sliding toward an unintended military clash. In such circumstances, even a single miscalculation could trigger a chain of reactions with consequences extending far beyond the region.

Siasat-e-Rooz: A thief who pretends to be humanitarian

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicated its editorial to Trump's seemingly humanitarian claim regarding the passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz. According to the editorial, a look at the situation shows that Trump, after failing in three main approaches—war, negotiation, and naval blockade—has now begun a multi-layered game to escape the self-made crisis in the region and within the political landscape of the United States. This supposedly humanitarian claim comes even though he had previously openly admitted that the United States is a 'pirate' that gains significant benefits by seizing ships. Considering Trump's admission, it can be clearly said that the humanitarian vocabulary and talk of service are merely a deception aimed at public opinion and a justification for military movements, especially at sea. These invented terms will not last long, the editorial argues, because the world has become familiar with his violent and criminal nature, especially during the Ramadan War.

South Korea balks at Trump's 'Project Freedom' as ship fire adds to Strait of Hormuz tensions

TEHRAN — As the Trump administration pushes for a new international naval coalition called "Project Freedom" to patrol the Strait of Hormuz, South Korea has signaled clear hesitation, refusing to endorse Washington's version of a recent shipboard fire and stopping short of committing any warships to the mission.

The cautious stance from Seoul, a long-standing US ally, underscores widening cracks in the Trump administration's effort to isolate Iran militarily and economically. While President Donald Trump has characterized the mission as a "humanitarian effort" to keep shipping lanes open, critics — including former Pentagon officials — have called it a propaganda vehicle to justify aggression against Iran.

Speaking to Reuters, South Korea's presidential secretary, Choi Soung-ah, reiterated a formulaic but deliberate position: "The safety of international maritime routes and freedom of navigation should be protected under international law." She added that Seoul is merely "watching President Trump's remark related to this," without endorsing any US-led military action.

That measured language follows an explosion and fire aboard a South Korean-operated vessel, the HMM Co ship, in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. While Trump immediately blamed the incident on an Iranian attack via social media, South Korean authorities have refused to follow suit.

South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that the cause of the fire — which originated in the ship's engine room — will not be determined until the vessel is towed back to port for a full investigation. All 24 crew members, including six South Korean nationals, are safe, with no casualties or in-

juries reported.

Crucially, Seoul convened an emergency meeting with the embassies of Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. This diplomatic move implicitly rejects Trump's unilateral accusation against Tehran. The South Korean government has confirmed only that an explosion occurred and that the fire began on the port side of the engine room.

Announced by President Trump amid rising US gasoline prices, "Project Freedom" is a proposed multinational operation ostensibly aimed at securing navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly a fifth of global oil supply passes. According to the Trump administration, the project would "guide" ships through the strait and deter Iranian military activity.

South Korea's defense ministry has made clear that sending a warship to the strait — now an active warzone — would be a last resort, requiring approval from the National Assembly. Instead, Seoul says it is in discussions with other partners, led by Britain and France, to support the reopening of the strait under international law.

The government is carefully reviewing its position based on four factors: international law, the safety of maritime routes, its alliance with the United States, and — significantly — the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. That last point suggests that Seoul does not wish to divert naval assets away from potential threats posed by North Korea.

South Korea's cautious posture reflects a growing divide between Washington's belligerent rhetoric and the more fact-based, legally grounded approach of key allies.

The Tehran Times: A newspaper, a frontline, a global voice

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN - On May 5, 1979, the first edition of the Tehran Times was born into a world of transformation. As we celebrate our 47th anniversary, we aren't just looking back at nearly half a century of archives—we are celebrating a living, breathing mission. With more than 15,300 issues printed, we have transitioned from a local newspaper into a global necessity: the English-language voice of a nation that refuses to be silenced.

The newsroom as a battlefield

For a journalist at the Tehran Times, history isn't something you read about the next morning; it is something you breathe. Our legacy is forged in the fires of the eight-year war of the 1980s, the sharp 12-day conflict of June 2025, and the intense US-Israeli war that began two months ago.

In the course of the 39-day conflict that began on February 28, my colleagues and I did not sleep a wink. The windows of our media building rattled as the vicinity was targeted in the early stages of the war, but the keyboards never stopped clicking. Even during Nowruz, while families across Iran were gathered around the Haft-sin table, our newsroom was alive with the hum of servers and the urgent rush to meet deadlines. We weren't just reporting events; we were living inside them.

New equation taking shape in Strait of Hormuz: Qalibaf

From page 1 ▶ On February 28, the United States and the Israeli regime launched an unprovoked war of aggression against Iran, during which the then Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, and several senior military officials were martyred.

Iranian Armed Forces responded with weeks of missile and drone strikes targeting American and Israeli military positions in the occupied territories and the Persian Gulf region, inflicting heavy damage in 100 waves of counterattacks over a period of 40 days.

Iran's retaliation also featured the country's closing the strategic Strait of Hormuz to vessels belong-



© Tehran Times / Foad Ashiani

In those 39 days leading up to the ceasefire, we learned that journalism is more than a profession—it is a continuous responsibility. We worked day and night—print, online, and social media—to ensure that while the world looked at Iran, they were actually hearing from Iran.

The story the world refuses to see

Western media often paints a picture of a society on the brink of collapse, but from the windows of our newsroom, we saw a different reality. We saw a nation that remained remarkably, stubbornly alive.

While we reported on the human dimension—the hospitals, schools, and neighborhoods under pressure—we also saw the metro stations packed with commuters and the shops stay-

ing open until late. Even in the darkest evenings, people walked the streets of Tehran, maintaining the rhythm of normal life under abnormal conditions. This is the resilience that rarely makes it to the global headlines. In many international media systems, conflict is highlighted, but the continuity of everyday life is made invisible. We are here to make it visible again.

Marking its 47th anniversary, The Tehran Times stands tall with more than 15,300 issues published

Breaking the hegemony

The Tehran Times is not just a newspaper; it is a diplomatic

bridge. Because we speak the global language of English, we reach the corridors of power that other Iranian media cannot. This is why you will find foreign ambassadors and senior officials from across the globe visiting our offices. It is why world leaders and top-tier diplomats choose our pages to publish their articles and state their visions.

We sit at the very heart of Iran's diplomacy, acting as a corrective to an incomplete global picture. For too long, Western institutions have dominated public opinion, filtering the stories of the Global South through their own pre-existing assumptions. This creates a structural imbalance where our voices are interpreted rather than heard.

We believe that the era of media hegemony must end. The Global South is no longer a peripheral audience; we are the narrators of our own destiny. The Tehran Times is dedicated to breaking the monopoly on information, ensuring that our readers abroad and our visitors at home see the full, unvarnished truth of our nation.

As we celebrate 47 years and over 15,300 chapters of our story, we remain committed to the belief that journalism is not just about what happens—it is about whose voice is heard. At the Tehran Times, we ensure your voice is heard.

Araghchi labels Trump's 'Project Freedom' a 'project deadlock'

From page 1 ▶ US naval forces attempted to enforce the campaign on Monday, but Iran kept the Strait of Hormuz closed and did not allow any vessels to transit the strategic waterway. Iranian naval forces fired missiles and drones toward US warships approaching the Strait.

In a message on X on Tuesday, Araghchi said, "Project Freedom is Project Deadlock."

The top Iranian diplomat stressed that "there is no military solution to a political crisis." He warned the US and the UAE to "be wary of being dragged back into a quagmire by ill-wishers."

Iran asserted full control of

the Strait of Hormuz at the start of the US-Israeli war on Iran on February 28. Iran maintained its control after the US imposed a naval blockade in mid-April following a ceasefire that paused the conflict.

Tehran has warned that Tel Aviv is emboldening the US to renew the war. Iranian officials have stated that the country is open to talks but will give a crushing response to any new act of aggression.

In line with Iran's diplomatic approach, Araghchi is now in China, where he is holding high-level talks with Chinese officials to discuss regional and global issues.

Iran rejects Arab League resolution as politically motivated and legally baseless

TEHRAN- Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, has firmly rejected a recent resolution adopted by the League of Arab States, describing it as biased, legally unfounded, and a deliberate attempt to distort the realities surrounding 'US-Israeli aggression against Iran.'

In a letter dated May 4 to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and President of the UN Security Council Fu Cong, Iravani dismissed Arab League Resolution 9245 in its entirety. He said that the document ignores 'unlawful acts of aggression' carried out by the United States and Israel against Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

TEHRAN - In an explosive televised interview, a retired US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and former Pentagon official, Karen Kwiatkowski, has accused the Trump-Hegseth administration of committing war crimes in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, while simultaneously purging senior military commanders who opposed a new war with Iran. Kwiatkowski described the ongoing US-Israeli war against Iran as a complete failure driven by propaganda, not military logic.

Kwiatkowski, a known critic

of US expeditionary warfare, did not mince words about the nature of American military strategy over the past five decades.

"The business of the Pentagon is murder. It's not defense," she stated. "It is oriented to attack others overseas, to threaten others, to coerce others far from our shores — and sometimes closer, like Cuba or Venezuela. Coerce, punish, kill, threaten, bully."

She argued that the current war on Iran follows the same pattern, lacking any credible defensive justification and instead

serving aggressive, unilateral interests.

In a detailed and serious allegation, Kwiatkowski stated that US Navy forces deliberately sank an unarmed Iranian training vessel, the Dena, off the coast of Sri Lanka — an act she explicitly labeled a war crime.

"We were at the same exercise. We knew the ship was unarmed. It was a training ship. And we sunk it — not with one, but two torpedoes — killing a bunch of young Iranian navy guys for no reason. They could not defend themselves. We did

not give them a chance to avoid being hit," she added,

According to Kwiatkowski, the attack was ordered so that Secretary of War Pete Hegseth could boast that it was "the first enemy navy ship sunk by a US torpedo since World War II."

"That is a war crime," she repeated. "And there were people in the submarine who were not pleased with that. Average guys being forced to commit these war crimes at the command of Trump and Hegseth."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel could drag UAE back into war quagmire

TEHRAN – The United Arab Emirates has intensified rhetoric against Iran as the United States attempts to project military strength in the Persian Gulf region amid rising tensions.

On Monday, the United States attempted to enforce what it calls “Project Freedom” to open the Strait of Hormuz. US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that approximately 15,000 American service members, guided-missile destroyers, and more than 100 aircraft are participating in the operation, which was announced by President Donald Trump a day earlier.

The US military claimed that merchant vessels successfully transited the Strait of Hormuz on Monday under the protection of American destroyers. Washington described the operation as part of “Project Freedom,” an initiative aimed at securing maritime navigation and ensuring the passage of commercial shipping through the strategic waterway.

‘Baseless’ claims

Iran, however, rejected the US account, calling the claims “baseless” and “outright lies,” and denied that any commercial vessels or oil tankers had transited the Strait under such conditions.

Iranian military sources also dismissed US allegations regarding attacks on Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) vessels. Iranian media reported that US forces targeted two civilian cargo boats traveling from the Omani coast toward the Iranian shoreline, resulting in casualties.

Amid escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf, the UAE said on Tuesday its defense systems were “actively engaging” missile and drone threats allegedly originating from Iran.

On Monday, the UAE claimed it intercepted 15 missiles and four drones fired from Iran. A fire was also



UAE FM Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed shakes hands with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu as they meet on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, September 26, 2025.

reported at an oil facility in Fujairah following what was described as a suspected drone attack. It marked the first time the UAE had been targeted since the US-Iran ceasefire on April 8. The truce paused the US-Israel war that initially began on February 28.

Iran has not officially confirmed any involvement. However, a military official quoted by Iranian media said there was no plan to target the UAE, and blamed US “military adventurism” for rising tensions.

Nonetheless, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash accused Iran of “dangerous escalation.”

Iran’s right to self-defense

Iran has condemned the UAE for allowing the United States to use its military infrastructure and bases in operations linked to the war that the US and Israel launched against Iran. In response, Iran targeted Israel and the American military bases in the Persian Gulf region during 39 days of war.

Iran says that under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, it retains the right to self-defense in response to armed attacks, including potential responses to hostile military actions

originating from or supported by foreign military facilities in the region.

Iran’s warning to UAE

Iranian officials also blame the UAE for maintaining close security and political ties with Israel. Israel has sought to draw the UAE further into its regional strategic alignment to advance broader containment policies toward Iran.

Iranian officials have issued warnings over the UAE’s enabling role in the US-Israel war on Iran.

In a post on X on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned the United States and the UAE to “be wary of being dragged back into a quagmire by ill-wishers.”

In his Monday press briefing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei also criticized the UAE’s regional conduct, saying: “We have witnessed the UAE’s inappropriate behavior, which has created many problems for the region.”

Iranians in the UAE

Iranian media and various reports have indicated that Iranian nationals in the United Arab Emirates have faced increasing restrictions. These reports suggest that some Irani-

an residents and business figures have encountered visa limitations, increased financial scrutiny, banking restrictions, and in some cases asset freezes.

According to these reports, Iranian-owned companies have also faced tighter regulatory oversight in banking and trade transactions, particularly in sectors connected to re-export activities and regional financial flows.

UAE-Israel ties

The UAE’s expanding political, economic, and security cooperation with Israel, formalized under the Abraham Accords, has significantly reshaped regional alignments in the Middle East. While this cooperation is officially presented as a framework for peace, economic development, and regional integration, Iranian officials argue that it has contributed to deepening mistrust and heightened tensions in the Persian Gulf.

Iranian officials view the UAE’s normalization of relations with Israel as part of a broader regional realignment that includes closer coordination with US strategic objectives. They argue that this alignment has enabled Israel to expand its regional influence and security footprint with destabilizing consequences.

Iran also maintains that Israel’s regional policies, including its military actions and intelligence operations across the Middle East, have contributed significantly to regional insecurity and escalation dynamics.

From Tehran’s perspective, the convergence of UAE-Israel cooperation and US military presence in the Persian Gulf represents an emerging security architecture that increases pressure on Iran and undermines regional stability. Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that continued alignment with “aggressive regional actors” risks further escalation and long-term instability in the Persian Gulf.

Western media narrative on Iran is ‘deeply misleading’: Bushra Shaikh

TEHRAN – Bushra Shaikh, a British media personality, broadcaster, and activist, has described Western media portrayals of Iran as “deeply misleading,” following her recent visit to war-damaged areas in the Islamic Republic as part of a delegation of international journalists.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Shaikh reflected on the scale of destruction she witnessed during her visit to sites struck in the aftermath of the Israeli-U.S. attacks, emphasizing the humanitarian impact on civilians and what she called a major “information gap” in Western reporting.

She said the destruction on the ground was “beyond comprehension,” noting that entire buildings had been reduced to rubble. “Images present a distorted version of reality. They do not do justice to what is actually on the ground or to the magnitude of the crime that has been committed,” she said.

Shaikh argued that international audiences are not being accurately informed about the types of munitions used, their impact radius, or the full scale of civilian casualties—particularly among women and children. She added that narratives justifying strikes on civilian infrastructure often lack trans-

parency and raise serious legal and moral questions.

“We are witnessing the bombing of cultural and historical heritage sites protected under UNESCO, civilian homes, and even media institutions,” she said, referring to reports of strikes on infrastructure such as the IRIB building. “This is not a single issue—it is a wide and complex pattern. And the silence of the international community is a travesty.”

Recalling her visit to a school in Minab struck during the opening wave of the U.S.-Israeli war of aggression on February 28, Shaikh said she saw “no evidence whatsoever” of military activity at the site. “It was clearly a school—children’s drawings on the walls, broken desks, classrooms where students once sat,” she said, adding that local residents confirmed it had functioned as a school for years.

She questioned claims that the site was a legitimate military target, stating that even if a nearby military facility had existed, “a primary school should never be considered a target zone.” She described the incident as a “grave war crime,” adding that the emotional impact of the visit left her and others in tears.

Commenting on U.S. claims that the strike was a

mistake involving a Tomahawk missile, Shaikh rejected the explanation. “Nothing of this magnitude happens by accident,” she said, describing the attack as deliberate and consistent with psychological warfare intended to instill fear among civilians and pressure the population.

Addressing broader Western narratives about Iran, Shaikh said portrayals of the country as “on the verge of collapse” were inaccurate. She pointed to Iran’s resilience under nearly five decades of sanctions, highlighting its infrastructure, domestic industries, and self-sufficiency in sectors such as pharmaceuticals.

“The idea of a broken Iran is largely rhetorical,” she said. “It is a constructed storyline designed to justify external intervention. In reality, Iran is functioning remarkably well under extreme pressure.”

Concluding her remarks, Shaikh said her key message for Western audiences is the need to “humanize Iranians,” whom she said have been systematically dehumanized in foreign discourse. “The people of Iran have never asked for war or foreign intervention,” she said. “They have never asked to be bombed. That is the reality that must be understood.”

LATES NEWS

Iran is a new superpower standing up to US: Mokhber

An adviser to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Mohammad Mokhber, has said that Iran, as a newly emerged superpower, stands up to the United States on the global stage.

Mokhber emphasized that, “The Strait of Hormuz has been closed and will not be opened except by the will of the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

Mokhber also referred to the claims made by the US President Donald Trump about the Islamic Republic of Iran’s missile capabilities, saying that “Trump talks too much nonsense.”

Any disruption in Hormuz Strait would stir a harsh response

The head of Iran’s Judiciary has warned the US army not to disrupt the Iranian handling of the Strait of Hormuz, as it would stir a harsh response from Iran.

In a post on his social networking website on Tuesday, Gholamhossein Ejei said that “the era of foreign-based order in the waters of the Persian Gulf has ended.”

Russia’s consulate in Isfahan resumes operations

Russia’s Consulate General in the central Iranian city of Isfahan has announced that it resumed operations on Tuesday after part of the building was damaged in a recent attack during the US-Israeli war of aggression on Iran.

In a statement, the Russian consulate in Isfahan said it will reopen and resume its activities on May 6, 2026.

‘No military solution to a political problem’ in ME: professor

Lorenzo Kamel, a professor of history at the University of Turin, says the “outsourcing of militarised stabilisation” by Middle East nations that house US forces is a problem for the region that must be addressed.

“If history is teaching something, it’s that outsourcing security on external countries will never bring lasting peace... What we want to see in this region is a real peace and not armed stability,” Kamel told Al Jazeera.

On US-Iran peace negotiations, he said talks “will not lead to anywhere until there’s a

clear understanding by all parties that there is no military solution to a political problem”.

For hundreds of years, he noted, Western countries have propped up “useful regimes” in the Middle East to maintain “control”.

“This is a structural problem, and negotiations will remain very much on the surface until it is resolved,” said Kamel.

Scott Ritter: US policy on Iran ‘dictated by Israeli appendage’ FDD

Former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter says Washington’s Iran policy is formulated by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), which he called an “appendage of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.” Ritter stated the US has faced “humiliation” and “defeat” in its war against Iran, failing all three goals: regime change, destroying Iran’s missiles, and eliminating its nuclear program. He warned that if US attacks resume, Iran will destroy the Persian Gulf Arab oil infrastructure. Ritter added that Trump has committed “political suicide” and surrounded himself with “the stupidest people on Earth.”

SPORTS

Gholizadeh ruled out of 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran international winger Ali Gholizadeh has missed the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The Lech Poznań player was unable to finish Saturday’s match of the PKO BP Ekstraklasa against Motor Lublin due to injury.

The dynamic winger suffered a devastating knee injury in the PKO BP Ekstraklasa Saturday night and his participation in the 2026 World Cup appears to be in serious jeopardy.

Tests performed on Sunday revealed that the Iranian star had torn his anterior cruciate ligaments and will be sidelined for the rest of the season.

Unfortunately, the injury means the winger will not be able to participate in the upcoming world cup.

Gholizadeh will undergo surgery in the coming days, followed by several months of rehabilitation.

It’s a major blow to Team Melli in the World Cup.

Iran are drawn in Group G along with Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand.

Cheshmi eyes something special in 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran national team midfielder Rouzbeh Cheshmi, one of the most experienced players in Team Melli, has opened up about the team’s preparation for the 2026 World Cup. He believes that Iran can achieve something special in this edition.

Cheshmi addressed his absence from the team’s previous camp in Turkey, the upcoming camp scheduled for May 12, and the challenges awaiting Iran in Group G— alongside Belgium, Egypt, and New Zealand.

“With domestic players having been away from club training for a while, this is one of the most critical phases of our preparations. We’ve practically entered the final stage of the program,” Cheshmi said.

“Training has been precise and disciplined — from high-intensity physical work to tactical rehearsals, the coaching staff has covered every detail. Morale is very high. The experienced players are helping the younger ones integrate quickly. Everyone knows time is short, and that has sharpened our focus. There’s a shared belief that we can achieve something special.”

“These camps are extremely beneficial because the team operates in a completely professional, focused environment. Full concentration on training helps players mentally and physically. Also, the potential friendly matches will improve our coordination. The Turkey camp is a great opportunity to reach full readiness and allows the coaching staff to finalize the lineup and evaluate plans,” he added.

“The World Cup is a stage where even the smallest details matter, so I’m fully focused in training — if I get the chance to represent the team, I want to give my best. There are no easy teams at the World Cup. Any team that reaches this level has very high quality,” Cheshmi said.

“Belgium have been at the top of world football for years, with players in Europe’s best leagues. In terms of experience and individual quality, they’re extremely strong. Egypt always have a cohesive structure. Physically and technically, their players are in good condition — and African football is always unpredictable. And New Zealand might fly under the radar, but they play with organization and high work rate. They can cause problems for any opponent,” the midfielder said.

“For us, the key is to focus on executing our own game plan, regardless of the opponents’ reputations. If we’re mentally and tactically ready, we can compete against any team.”

If named to the final squad, Cheshmi would be making his third World Cup appearance — a milestone that carries deep meaning.

“Playing in the World Cup is a dream for any player, and being able to experience it multiple times — that’s truly special. If it happens and I make my third appearance, it will definitely feel different. I carry more experience now, but also a heavier sense of responsibility.”

And for Iranian fans, his name is forever linked to one of the most iconic moments in the country’s football history: the 98th-minute strike against Wales in the 2022 group stage, a goal that

sparked emotional celebrations across Iran.

“That goal against Wales was one of the most special moments of my football career — the kind of moment every player dreams of. The joy after that goal... it’s not something I can easily put into words. Those memories push me even harder to be useful to the national team at this level again, and to create more good moments for the people,” Cheshmi concluded.

Iran’s junior weightlifting team depart for Egypt

TEHRAN – Iran’s junior weightlifting squad departed for Egypt to compete in the 2026 World Junior Weightlifting Championships — marking the second time the team is led by Olympic and World Champion Sohrab Moradi.

The 2026 Junior World Weightlifting Championships have started on May 2 in Ismailia, Egypt, and will run until May 8.

Iran’s lineup includes Amirmohammad Rahmati and Mohammadamin Davdand in the 88 kg category, Hamidreza Zarei and Mohammadamin Habibi in 94 kg, Abolfazl Zare and Farhad Gholizadeh in 110 kg, and Hamidreza Mohammadi-Tanha alongside Taha Nemati-Moghadam in the +110 kg category.

Iran has recorded seven world titles in junior weightlifting history. The most recent came in Lima, Peru (2025), when Sohrab Moradi, in his first coaching experience, guided Team Iran to victory with an exceptional haul of eight gold, eight silver, and three bronze medals.

Team Iran has previously claimed the world junior title in: 2011 (Kourosh Bagheri), 2016 (Vahid Rabiei and Faraz Ramhormozi), 2017 (Mohammadhossein Barkhah), 2018 (Hamid Rashidi), 2019 (Mohsen Beiranvand), 2023 (Hadi Panzovan) and 2025 (Sohrab Moradi).

Should Iran defend their title this year, Sohrab Moradi would become the first coach in Iranian history to lead the junior national team to back-to-back world championships.

The event in Ismailia marks the 51st edition of the World Junior Championships. The inaugural competition was held in 1975 in Marseille, France, with Iran making its debut under coach Reza Esteki, featuring nine lifters.

Iran’s first ever combined total medal at the junior world level was won by Behnam Azar Majidi in 1982 in São Paulo, Brazil, where she lifted a total of 327.5kg in the 100kg category, earning bronze.

Later, Kourosh Bagheri became the first Iranian to secure a junior world gold medal in total, lifting 352.5kg in the 83kg class at the 1997 Cape Town Championships in South Africa.

To date, Iranian lifters have amassed a remarkable 160 medals at the World Junior Championships — including 42 gold, 58 silver, and 60 bronze.

Potential Yazdani-Sadulaev showdown planned in Russia

TEHRAN — Russian wrestling media are reporting that the country’s federation is looking to stage a series of high-profile exhibition bouts between Iranian and Russian stars on Russian soil.

Several Russian wrestling outlets say the Russian Wrestling Federation is planning marquee matchups between top names from both countries as part of a Professional Wrestling League (PWL) event in Russia.

If finalized, organizers intend to invite Hassan Yazdani to compete at 97 kg, setting up another blockbuster clash with Abdurashid Sadulaev — the eight-time world and Olympic champion known as the «Russian Tank» — in front of a home crowd in Russia.

In addition, with Zaur Uguev, a four-time world and Olympic champion, reportedly targeting a move to 65 kg for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, Russian officials are also planning to invite Rahman Amouzad, world champion and Olympic silver medalist, to face him at 65 kg.

Reports indicate that Russian organizers are aiming to schedule these highly anticipated bouts for the summer season.

Facilitating business processes necessary to support production: IRICA head



TEHRAN— The head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), emphasizing the vital role of customs in supporting production, trade, and people's livelihoods, stressed the continuation of structural reforms, process digitalization (intelligentization), and facilitating the clearance of essential goods.

According to the Mehr News Agency, Forud Asgari, the IRICA head, stated in the 116th session of the Government and Private Sector Dialogue Council of Hormozgan Province that customs is one of the main pillars of supporting production, trade, and securing people's livelihoods, and emphasized the need to facilitate business processes.

Referring to the formulation of a unified instruction in cooperation with adjacent agencies to facilitate trade, he said: "Our goal is for trade to be conducted with ease and at the lowest cost."

Asgari added: "The revision of trade and customs processes during the emergency conditions and the early days of the holy month of Ramadan during the Imposed War was carried out with the cooperation of competent authorities so that trade procedures could be conducted more smoothly."

According to the customs chief, the 100% clearance of essential goods in minimum time, with the cooperation of adjacent agencies, played a significant role in meeting the country's needs during the 40-day war, to the extent that 3 million tons of essential goods were cleared during that period.

Referring to the round-the-clock operation of the country's customs, especially border customs and ports, including Shahid Rajaei, during holidays, he said: "These efforts have been made to prevent any disruption in the supply of essential goods, food, and medicine."

IRICA has previously announced in a statement that during the 39 days of the imposed

American-Zionist war against the country, customs clearance procedures for 2,874,000 tons of essential goods were completed at the country's customs offices and dispatched.

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

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

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

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

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

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

He believes that based on information from shipping sources, the Strait of Hormuz has been under new management for nearly two months thanks to Iran's will. On a route where more than 100 oil tankers previously passed daily, the International Energy Agency estimates that between 16 and 20 million

Chabahar Port's capacity should be utilized to replace trade route in south

TEHRAN— An expert in global markets has stated that under current circumstances, due to the blockade in the south, the existing capacities of Chabahar Port, northern ports, and rail routes to Central Asian countries can be utilized for trade.

Keyvan Jafari Tehrani said in an interview with ISNA: "The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has had a major impact on bulk carriers. Regarding grain carriers, previously imports arrived at Imam Khomeini Port, but now they are mostly being handled through Chabahar Port. Export shipments are also being loaded in small quantities at Bandar Abbas, involving Iranian vessels and some Chinese ships. However, I do not know exactly whether these ships can pass through the American blockade, but we are seeing them being loaded."

Emphasizing that Iran's export capacity exists through Chabahar Port under the current siege, he continued: "The US is positioned in the Gulf of Oman, from the area of Sohar Port on the Omani side to the opposite point on the Iranian coast near Minab. The width of this point, the mouth of this distance, from the Omani coast to Iran is 280 nautical miles. While the Strait of Hormuz is 22 nautical miles wide and under Iran's control, the US controls 280 nautical miles. Fortunately, Chabahar

Port lies outside this zone and has import and export capacity. However, Chabahar Port is 75 kilometers by air from Pakistan's Gwadar Port, and Pakistan has recently allowed the passage of import container shipments to Iran by unloading at Pakistani ports and transporting them via the land border."

Jafari Tehrani added: "Interestingly, even though Chabahar Port is not within the American blockade zone, some ship owners are currently reluctant to pass through it or load cargo due to uncertainty. Still, I believe Chabahar Port has good potential for export shipments to India and China, both of which have good relations with Iran."

Referring to some challenges that have arisen for production in regional countries and Iran during the recent war, this global markets expert stated: "The events related to the war led to Iran targeting the aluminum industry of Persian Gulf countries, which affected aluminum production in those countries, because one-fifth of the world's aluminum is produced by Persian Gulf countries, especially the UAE and Bahrain. Additionally, the import of aluminum raw materials such as alumina became limited or halted, and these plants even faced feedstock supply problems."

US economy feels heat as war on Iran backfires

TEHRAN— Official reports from the United States indicate that the economic consequences of the American-Israeli war on Iran are becoming painfully visible on domestic soil, turning into a major nightmare for Trump and his allies.

While much has been said about the Iran conflict, serious warnings now confirm tangible economic repercussions within the US itself.

Data reveals that one-quarter of American farmers lack the financial means to purchase fertilizer. According to official reports and US Senate communications, the price spike is directly linked to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Approximately one-third of global fertilizer trade passes through this



strategic route, and the blockade has choked off exports from the Persian Gulf. Since late February, fertilizer components like urea have risen by 25%, with price increases ranging from 9% to 31% across various products.

Meanwhile, gasoline prices in California have surged past \$5 per gallon.

Other industries and production sectors have also suffered severe damage from the war-mongering policy against Iran.

The accumulation of these crises led the New York Times to warn in a detailed report that the United States is, literally, an empire in decline.

This reality is terrifying for Trump and his allies from two perspectives. First, they have no clear plan to escape the swamp of problems they themselves created.

Second, the patience of the American people is running out. Official reports indicate Trump is at his lowest level of public popularity, with his political capital sharply eroded.

The domestic blowback from an overseas conflict now threatens to reshape the US political landscape.

'Oil supply shock with Iran's control of Strait of Hormuz, depletion of US reserves'

TEHRAN— In one of the most tense periods in the history of the energy market, Iran's authority in the Strait of Hormuz and the unprecedented crisis in US oil reserves have plunged the world into a new era of supply shock.

Accordingly, an oil and energy market analyst believes that real control over oil prices has now moved out of Washington's hands and into the hands of the true suppliers: Iran.

Mehrzad Limouchi stated in an interview with IRNA, analyzing the prevailing conditions in the global energy market: "The week ending today — May 4, 2026 — must be considered one of the most complex periods in the energy market's history of the last decade; a period in which three major economic, military, and financial crises have become intertwined simultaneously."

He added: "On the one hand, Iran's authority in the intelligent control of the Strait of Hormuz has been established, and on the other hand, the United States is consuming its last strategic reserves to curb prices. In such circumstances, one can no longer obtain an accurate picture of market reality by merely watching the nominal price of Brent crude, because in the physical market, real oil is changing hands at prices up to twice the official rates."

Limouchi stated that we are no longer in the warning stage but have entered the implementation phase of a full-scale supply shock, emphasizing: "The main spark for the price increase last week began with military developments in the Persian Gulf, where confidential reports about high-level White House consultations on options beyond sanctions against the Islamic Republic shocked the market. This approach showed that Washington has once again preferred confrontation over diplomacy."

He believes that based on information from shipping sources, the Strait of Hormuz has been under new management for nearly two months thanks to Iran's will. On a route where more than 100 oil tankers previously passed daily, the International Energy Agency estimates that between 16 and 20 million

barrels of oil per day have been removed from the global supply circuit — a figure sufficient to disrupt any global balance.

The oil and energy market expert stated: "Another important point relates to data from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). This report indicates a 7-million-barrel reduction in US strategic reserves last week — a drawdown that shows Washington's helplessness in the face of the real crisis. Simultaneously with a lack of increase in domestic production, US oil exports have reached a record 6.4 million barrels per day, a figure achieved largely by opening underground reservoirs in Texas and Louisiana, not from actual production capacity."

According to this energy sector expert, this situation has caused US gasoline reserves to also fall by more than 6 million barrels, reaching their lowest level since 2014, bringing the energy crisis to retail consumers.

Dangerous gap between futures market and physical market

Limouchi explains that the gap between the physical market and the futures market has revealed the depth of America's economic crisis. Physical oil for immediate delivery at Japanese and South Korean ports is now trading between \$145 and \$200, while Brent crude in London is around \$115. This difference of approximately \$40–80 signals the collapse of Western control over prices.

UAE's exit from OPEC has no short-term price effect

He noted: "The UAE's exit from OPEC should be assessed more as a political protest against the organization's worn-out and Western-influenced structure than an economic one. The UAE wants to step out from under OPEC's imposed ceilings, but currently, with Iran's authority in the Strait of Hormuz, it has no way to implement any increase in exports."

This oil and energy market expert emphasized: "This decision has no short-term price effect, but in the medium term, by changing Western behavior and opening export routes, it could create irregular competition among

Washington's former allies. This exit has also placed Saudi Arabia in its weakest coalition position in recent decades."

Improvement of Iran's geoeconomic position

Limouchi believes that Iran has reached a point for the first time where it can impose the most painful pressures on the global economy. Control of the Strait of Hormuz has elevated Iran's bargaining power in any nuclear or sanctions-related negotiations to a new level.

He recalled: "Another advantage of Iran is its uncompetitive production cost. While producing each barrel of oil in Iran costs \$10–30, this figure for US shale oil is \$40–60, and for the UAE it is above \$30. Furthermore, Iran's direct access to the Gulf of Oman and Chabahar Port makes Iran the only reliable exporter in the region, even in the event of a naval blockade."

Three market scenarios for the coming week

This energy market expert continued: "The outlook for the global market in the current week (May 4–11) is influenced by three key variables, including the continued authoritative control of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, the rapid depletion of US strategic reserves, and the collapse of traditional alliances following the UAE's exit from OPEC."

Limouchi outlined and explained three probable scenarios for the near-term market:

- First scenario: Stabilization of Brent crude prices in the range of \$110–125, with continued diplomatic inaction from Washington.
- Second scenario: A sudden jump to the range of \$140–150, in the event of intensified US military action.
- Third scenario: A price drop below \$100, possible only if Washington fully retreats and accepts Iran's terms.

In his view, the first scenario is the most likely, because the world is gradually realizing that the era of US energy dominance has ended — an era that has now given way to Iran's field authority and the physical realities of the market.

'Direct trade with China, removing UAE from intermediation necessary'

TEHRAN— An economic expert, emphasizing the necessity of activating land and rail corridors to counter the American naval blockade, said: "The main obstacles to direct connection with the China corridor must be removed, and intermediaries should be cut out of direct trade with Beijing."

Ata Bahrami stated in an interview with IRNA, referring to America's naval blockade of Iran: "In such circumstances, strengthening rail corridors and reducing foreign trade dependence on southern ports is more important than ever, and it seems that this approach can also increase economic resilience."

Referring to China's policy of developing rail corridors, he said: "We must cooperate with China on at least two routes of these corridors."

The economic expert, emphasizing that in today's multipolar world, countries need to have various cards to play in the political and economic arena in or-

der to overcome restrictions and sanctions depending on different conditions and situations, said: "Global trade can be conducted through various routes, and for a country like Iran, which has access to its neighbors from four geographical directions, playing a role in international transit routes and corridors is not only a shortcut to overcome the naval blockade but also a permanent necessity."

Asked whether the logistical infrastructure is in place to support land trade, he said: "If we set aside internal obstacles, many problems will be solved."

UAE should be removed from intermediating trade with China

Bahrami continued, in response to the question that in recent decades we have seen Iran's trade dependence on UAE ports, but goods entering Iran from these ports are mostly loaded from China; what should be done in the current situation? He said: "In our foreign trade, we do not

need intermediaries; rather, we must develop our trade directly with China, just as many countries have such exchanges and even use China's currency settlement system to enhance these relations."

The economic expert stated: "Even before this war, we had no need for the UAE in foreign trade, but some intermediaries and companies registered in the UAE did not allow direct trade. Now that political and economic relations with the UAE have been severed, the best opportunity has arisen to reform our country's trade relations."

He emphasized: "In today's world, intermediation in trade, especially in the form that the UAE had with Iran, has no place. Most of the goods loaded from UAE ports to Iran were made in China, and given the close relations between Tehran and Beijing, one must ask why such intermediation was felt necessary in Iran's foreign trade."

He added: "One of the advan-

tages of direct relations with China is the possibility of direct transportation of goods through land and rail corridors, and in this way, costs such as unloading and reloading goods at ports also become irrelevant."

Joining China's cross-border clearing system will solve the problem

Asked whether Iran joining China's cross-border interbank payment system (CIPS) can save our economy from the grip of the UAE and the dollar, Bahrami replied: "CIPS will solve our problem. More than 100 countries trade with Beijing using this method, and recently Brazil signed a monetary agreement with China."

He concluded: "Developing trade, whether in imports or exports, requires facilitation and removal of obstacles. At the same time, entry and exit points for goods must be diversified so that tactics such as economic blockade cannot succeed."

A federation of frayed shards insists on becoming the 'United Hebrew Emirates'

The Israeli albatross clamped tight around Abu Dhabi's glass neck equals strategic suicide

From page 1 ▶ The talk of secession has leaped from back-room grumbles to the transparent arena of Polymarket, where sixty thousand dollars in active bets have transformed a quiet grievance into a deafening roar. It proves that the "United" in "UAE" is no longer an objective fact, but a question for gamblers, a reality that deals a lethal blow to the state's narrative of internal harmony.

The 'Abraham' albatross clamps tight

Abu Dhabi's architects once hailed the Abraham Accords as a masterstroke of pragmatism. In reality, they walked into a strategic trap.

By rebranding shared hostility toward Iran as "normalization," the UAE transformed from a commercial entrepôt into a forward operating base for a war it cannot control.

Since the last day of February, the consequences have been physical and profound: thousands of missiles and drones have targeted Emirati soil, striking everything from AWS and Oracle data centers to the Emirates Global Aluminium plant.

The Bin Zayed's wagered that American weaponry would provide an impenetrable shield. Instead, they find themselves paying a Washington tax, a \$4.5 billion THAAD radar package that functions as a recurring tribute to Lockheed Martin.

The arithmetic is devastating: for every dollar Tehran spends on a one-way attack drone, Abu Dhabi spends twenty to thirty



on interceptors. This is a fiscal hemorrhage that delivers no genuine security.

The small Persian Gulf oligarchy has become a shock absorber for Israel, absorbing blows meant for others while receiving nothing but subcontracted instability and shattered prestige in return.

Economic arteries clog

The image of effortless prosperity is evaporating. In April, the UAE's non-oil private sector PMI fell to 52.1, its weakest point in over five years.

Foreign sales have recorded their sharpest drop since 2009, reflecting a diversification model that has failed its first real stress test.

The war has triggered a liquidity crisis so severe that the UAE Central Bank, despite its \$270 billion in reserves, quietly sought an emergency currency swap line from the U.S. Federal Reserve.

The dirham's peg to the dollar, once a badge of strength, has become a straitjacket. It tethers the small Persian Gulf

oligarchy to Washington's monetary whims while oil revenues dry up.

The decision to exit OPEC in May appears to be a panicked race to the bottom. Abu Dhabi is now desperately flooding the market with oil to claw back cash, a move that sabotages its relationship with Riyadh and shatters what remains of "unity" among Persian Gulf Arab monarchies.

Sharjah fissure splits wide

The most sensitive crack in the union is the widening chasm between the emirates. Sharjah, the dry emirate of scholars and restraint, has long chafed under Abu Dhabi's centralization and the decadent liberalization of Dubai.

Sharjah's merchant class, which once flourished on a \$28 billion annual trade with Iran, has seen that commerce crater by half to satisfy Abu Dhabi's geopolitical posturing.

In early 2026, the prediction platform Polymarket opened a contract on whether Sharjah would declare independence.

The sheer existence of such a market deals a symbolic blow to the small Persian Gulf oligarchy and proves that the myth of a monolith is dead.

Internal whispers now describe Sharjah and the northern emirates as innocent bystanders being dragged into a fire they did not light.

Fear and shards in the palace

A regime that is confident in its stability does not need to legislate against rumors. Yet, Abu Dhabi has doubled down on Decree-Law No. 34, imposing fines of up to 200,000 dirhams for anyone sharing information that "harms public security," a broad net used to silence talk of strikes, liquidity leaks, and secessionist murmurs.

This is the "sand to shards" reality I warned of in an article in April titled "The rain fell, and the UAE's house on sand is falling:" a union held together not by shared vision, but by the glue of repression.

From the mass deportation of Iranians as well as Shia Muslims from other countries to the imprisonment of domestic dissenters, the UAE is acting like an entity that knows its foundation is shifting.

The stones thrown by Abu Dhabi have finally come home. The glass house is splintering, and as the Washington tax rises and the federation's internal fault lines erupt, the architects of this anti-Iran gamble are finding that their chrome spires offer no protection from a storm of their own making.

UAE policies premised on realpolitik at cost of morality



A general view of destroy planes' wreckages on tarmac at Khartoum Airport, after the Sudanese army deepened its control over the capital Khartoum, from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), in Khartoum, Sudan March 27, 2025.

TEHRAN — It was a source of pride that the United Arab Emirates succeeded in becoming a highly wealthy state in just a few decades.

Intoxicated with oil money, possessing the world's largest airline connecting all four corners of the globe, coupled with the flow of foreign capital and a regional hub for trade and tourism, the UAE started adopting dangerous policies that extended beyond the Middle East.

It could remain the Singapore of the Middle East with much greater capacity and more opportunities.

The small Arab country lost the path first with a covetous eye on Yemen due to its geostrategic position.

It started putting the Yemenis against each other in 2015 to achieve its regional interests. It has also armed and funded opposition forces in Libya and Sudan.

Extensive evidence from United Nations reports, U.S. intelligence, and international human rights organizations indicates that the UAE has been supplying money, arms, and military support to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan, bolstering their position against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF).

Like Netanyahu's project of expanding Israel's borders, MBZ plans to turn his tiny emirate into a "Little Sparta" with a military and financial reach into the Horn of Africa far beyond its size. MBZ modelled his strategy on Israel's.

In fact, the UAE has been following policies based on realpolitik at the cost of morality.

It was also one of only three states that openly opposed the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The UAE leader, Mohammed bin Zayed, referred to as MBZ, put himself on par with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in opposing the JCPOA, which was the product of two years of intensive talks between Iran and the 5+1 countries (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) and Germany.

Several months after the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel prompted Donald Trump to quit the JCPOA in his first term, they provoked him to attack Iran.

It was for such a reason that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif put MBZ in Group B. Other persons in the list were Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), Benjamin Netanyahu, also called Bibi, and John Bolton, who was Trump's national security advisor at the time.

After the UAE normalized ties with Israel within the Abraham Accords in September 2020, Abu Dhabi started intelligence cooperation with Israel against Iran.

It was its own decision to normalize ties with Israel, as Jordan, Egypt, and Moroc-

co have done, but that the UAE has made itself complicit in the current Israeli-U.S. war against Iran is extremely unexpected, shocking, and treasonous.

The UAE also became very angry with Pakistan, a pro-Arab East Asian country, which launched diplomatic efforts to broker a ceasefire between Iran and the United States, with the hope of a peace between Tehran and Washington.

Now that the United States' closest allies in the West and the East, including Japan and South Korea, as well as Australia, have openly opposed the war against Iran and are calling for dialogue to end the war, it is unimaginable that the UAE opposes mediation talks.

By allying with Israel in the war against Iran, the UAE has been deceiving the Palestinians and the Arab world at large because Iran has been subjected to crippling sanctions, assassination of its top military brass and politicians, just because it has been unequivocally backing the legal rights of Palestinians whose lands have been stolen by Israel and are living under the Israeli regime's brutality.

In his speeches and press briefings since the war began, Trump, several times, acknowledged that certain Persian Gulf Arab countries were greatly helpful in the 40-day air raids on Iran.

Writing an article in Middle East Eye (MEE) on May 4, David Hearst quoted an Iranian official who has said the UAE is serving as an advanced platform for Israel's interests in the region.

"Iranian sources told MEE that Iranian intelligence had established the Emirati role in the attacks (against Iran) went beyond hosting U.S. bases," Hearst, the MEE editor-in-chief, wrote.

He added that one official told him Iranian "intelligence believes the UAE also made some of its own air facilities available for operations against Iran."

The Iranian suggested this included "deception operations" - false-flag Israeli attacks on Oman and at least one other country intended to look like Iranian ones, Hearst wrote in his article.

"Iran also believes that cooperation included the use of the AI infrastructure within the UAE to support data collection and analysis for U.S. and Israeli targeting," the top journalist said.

In his article, Hearst also says MBZ "has already done more damage to peace and stability in the Middle East in the last two decades than anyone else I can think of, bar Netanyahu and Mossad."

MBZ, Hearst said, employed mercenary snipers to kill Yemeni figures from civil society.

He has bankrolled the war criminals of Darfur, the Hemedti brothers, and supplied them with arms.

Like Netanyahu's project of expanding Israel's borders, MBZ plans to turn his tiny emirate into a "Little Sparta" with a military and financial reach into the Horn of Africa far beyond its size. MBZ modelled his strategy on Israel's.

Hezbollah ambushes more Israeli infantry

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN — Hezbollah is putting more emphasis on surveillance before taking direct military action against Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF).

Hezbollah has revealed that its resistance fighters fought a close-range battle with an IOF unit positioned north of the Lebanese village of Deir Siryan. According to a statement from the resistance movement, the fighters carefully monitored the IOF unit and opened fire as soon as it came within range of a frontline defensive position.

The occupying regime's unit had been trying to advance from Khallat al-Raj, north of Deir Siryan, toward the eastern Lebanese town of Zawtar. Hezbollah noted that its fighters fired at the hostile force and engaged in a fierce, point-blank battle using light and medium weapons, inflicting confirmed casualties on the enemy.

Hezbollah added that the IOF unit quickly carried out heavy fire cover to evacuate its forces and the wounded, bringing several military vehicles toward the clash zone. In response, Hezbollah artillery targeted the evacuation force with shells and appropriate rockets.

The Lebanese resistance movement also stated that its anti-aircraft machine guns, operated by the air defense unit, intervened to prevent the IOF helicopters from maneuvering or landing near the incident site. This forced the occupying regime's infantry to withdraw the wounded by land toward the Misdav Am settlement, from where they were airlifted to the Israeli regime hospitals.

The IOF acknowledged on Tuesday that it had come under attack from Hezbollah in separate incidents.

Earlier, Hezbollah also monitored and targeted a gathering of IOF soldiers and their vehi-

cles near the reservoir in the town of Al-Qantara with a rocket barrage.

Resistance fighters also struck a newly established IOF command site in Al-Bayyadah using dive drones, accurately hitting their targets.

Hezbollah's military media has released more footage showing the Lebanese resistance targeting an IOF Humvee vehicle in the town of Al-Bayyadah, southern Lebanon, using a dive drone.

Similarly, Hezbollah's military media published footage of resistance forces targeting an IOF engineering vehicle in the city of Bint Jbeil, with a dive drone.

Hezbollah continues to carry out its operations to defend Lebanon and its people. It is also responding to the Zionist regime's violations of the ceasefire and to attacks on villages in southern Lebanon that have killed and wounded civilians.

The Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sheikh Naim Qassem, said on Monday that there is no ceasefire in Lebanon, but rather an ongoing American-Israeli aggression. He added that words are not enough to condemn the targeting of civilians, villages, towns, the destruction of homes, and the killing of children, women, men, and the elderly.

Sheikh Qassem stated that this aggression aims to steal rights, occupy land, and control the future by force, while the Resistance seeks to liberate land and achieve justice. He concluded that the enemy cannot achieve its goals against the Resistance, no matter how powerful or arrogant it becomes.

In other operations on Tuesday, Hezbollah targeted an IOF Merkava tank in the town of Al-Bayyadah with a guided missile, "achieving a confirmed hit



and it was seen burning."

Another IOF Merkava tank was targeted in the town of Al-Qawzah, "using an attack drone, achieving a direct hit." A third was struck with a guided missile and an IOF helicopter was over the town of Al-Bayyadah with a "surface-to-air missile, achieving a direct hit."

Hezbollah fighters targeted a gathering of IOF vehicles and soldiers in the town of Al-Bayyadah while striking two Israeli regime D9 bulldozers with attack drones, achieving a direct hit. The bulldozers were targeted while demolishing civilian homes in southern Lebanese villages.

An IOF Namer vehicle in Deir Siryan was also targeted "with an attack drone, achieving a direct hit."

Hezbollah's use of fiber-optic guided drones has proven very effective on the battlefield. Hebrew newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported that "most of the losses suffered by the (IOF) in southern Lebanon in recent weeks are due to booby-trapped drones, fiber-optic guided booby-trapped drones, or drones that dropped bombs."

Meanwhile, the regime's Channel 13 has reported growing frustration within the IOF over the lack of a solution to the threat posed by explosive-laden drones and small unmanned aircraft.

According to military corre-

spondent Or Heller, the level of frustration is high among both soldiers and commanders. He noted that "the cheapest, simplest, and perhaps most rudimentary weapon to operate" caused three IOF deaths and more than 20 injuries over the past week.

There is severe Israeli media censorship on the IOF war casualties.

Heller added that senior IOF officers believe addressing the threat from Hezbollah's drones cannot rely on defense alone, but also requires offensive action, targeting areas up to 20 kilometers beyond the so-called "yellow line," meaning north of the Litani River.

Senior IOF officers have reportedly acknowledged that there is still no effective technological solution to counter this threat. This comes despite recent tests conducted about two weeks ago by the regime's ministry of war, military, and defense industries on interception systems that are not yet fully developed.

This gap reportedly coincides with a reduction of the IOF in Lebanon. Units have been redeployed elsewhere, including the Paratroopers Brigade to Gaza, the Nahal Brigade to the West Bank, and the withdrawal of a Commando Brigade, potentially signaling a tactical shift amid heavy regime casualties.

Warnings raised over threats to UNESCO-listed Sassanid landscape in southern Iran

TEHRAN – Iranian cultural heritage authorities have issued a warning over a series of escalating threats facing the UNESCO-listed Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region, citing structural decay, incomplete excavations, and ongoing legal and management challenges that risk undermining one of the country's most significant historical ensembles.

Afshin Ebrahimi, director of the Sassanid archaeological landscape base in Fars province, said in remarks published by ISNA that erosion of architectural and decorative elements, abandoned excavation projects, and unresolved legal disputes over site boundaries are among the most pressing concerns. He added that tourism infrastructure remains incomplete in several areas, limiting both visitor access and effective site management.

The Sassanid Archaeological Landscape of Fars Region comprises eight sites spread across three key zones, Firuzabad, Bishapur, and Sarvestan, and dates from the rise to the fall of the Sassanid Empire between 224 and 651 CE. The complex includes fortified structures, palaces, urban layouts, rock reliefs, and early examples of domed architecture that influenced later Islamic building traditions.

Ebrahimi pointed to unfinished and abandoned excavations in the ancient city of Gor in Firuzabad as a major issue, alongside the continued burial of the dead within the protected zones of Ardashir Palace and the historic city of Bishapur. He also highlighted delays in preparing restoration and structural reinforcement plans for the Qal'eh Dokhtar fortress in Firuzabad.

"Some of the most visible damage can be seen in Bishapur," Ebrahimi said, noting significant erosion affecting plaster decorations and architectural surfaces. Weathering has also impacted several rock reliefs carved into cliffs in the region, while sedimentary stone blocks at the Anahita Temple in Bishapur show signs of deterioration requiring urgent conservation measures.

In addition to physical degradation, Ebrahimi cited incomplete visitor pathways and unresolved legal complications concerning the boundaries and buffer zones of the heritage sites as ongoing administrative challenges.

Despite these issues, authorities say a series of conservation and development measures have been implemented over the past two years using national and provincial funding, as well as contributions from Iran's Oil Ministry under corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Efforts have focused on improving visitor access and site organization in parts of Bishapur, Tang-e Chogan valley, and the Sassanian Palace of Sarvestan. According to Ebrahimi, these interventions have already contributed to an increase in visitor engagement.

Glimpses of World Heritage sites: Tikal National Park

Tikal National Park is located in Northern Guatemala's Petén province within a large forest region often referred to as the Maya Forest, which extends into neighboring Mexico and Belize.

Embedded within the much larger Maya Biosphere Reserve, exceeding two million hectares and contiguous with additional conservation areas, Tikal National Park is one of the few World Heritage properties inscribed according to both natural and cultural criteria for its extraordinary biodiversity and archaeological importance. It comprises 57,600 hectares of wetlands, savannah, tropical broadleaf and palm forests with thousands of architectural and artistic remains of the Mayan civilization from the Preclassic Period (600 BC) to the decline and eventual collapse of the urban center around 900 AD. The diverse ecosystems and habitats harbor a wide spectrum of neotropical fauna and flora. Five cats, including Jaguar and Puma, several species of monkeys and anteaters and more than 300 species of birds are among the notable wildlife. The forests comprise more than 200 tree species and over 2000 higher plants have been recorded across the diverse habitats.



Several restoration and protection projects have also been completed or are underway. These include lighting installations at Ardashir Palace in Firuzabad, conservation work at both Ardashir Palace and Sarvestan Palace, and emergency stabilization of three major rock reliefs in Tang-e Chogan. New sanitation facilities have also been added at Sarvestan Palace and Ardashir Palace to improve visitor amenities.

On the research front, archaeological work has resumed at key locations. The first excavation season at a structure believed to be associated with the Palace of Valerian in Bishapur has been conducted, alongside initial excavations in the northern courtyard of Ardashir Palace in Firuzabad.

The Sassanid landscape is widely regarded as a cornerstone of Iran's cultural heritage, reflecting a synthesis of Achaemenid, Parthian, and Roman influences. The urban planning of sites demonstrates early innovations that later shaped both Sassanid and Islamic cities.

Architectural features across the sites include early dome construction using squinches, particularly in chahar-taq structures—square chambers with four arched openings that became a defining element of Sassanid religious architecture. These forms are closely linked to the expansion of Zoroastrianism during the Sassanid era and continued to influence mosque and tomb design in the Islamic period.

Ebrahimi said ongoing administrative correspondence and specialized studies are being conducted to address current threats, with the aim of implementing comprehensive conservation and restoration strategies.

"The ultimate goal is to move toward integrated management of this World Heritage property, improve the visitor experience, and ensure sustainable protection of its historical assets," he said.

Experts warn that without coordinated and timely interventions, the combination of natural erosion, human activity, and administrative delays could pose long-term risks to the integrity of the site, which remains a vital testament to one of the ancient world's most influential empires.

(Source: UNESCO)

A living museum: The cultural and natural wonders of West Azarbaijan province



A view of the UNESCO-listed Takht-e Soleyman, which is a unique archaeological site in a mountainous area of West Azarbaijan province, with aspects that remain mysterious even after more than 3,000 years.

Situated in the northwest of Iran, West Azarbaijan province is a region where history, culture, and nature converge to create one of the country's most compelling tourist destinations. Bordering several countries and shaped by centuries of interaction among civilizations, the province has long served as a crossroads of cultural exchange and human settlement.

At the heart of the province lies Urmia, a vibrant city that reflects both modern life and deep historical roots. Beyond its urban centers, however, the province reveals a rich archaeological landscape. Excavations at sites such as Hasanlu, Kul Tepe Selmas, and Qalaichi Bukan, along with numerous other ancient mounds, offer valuable insights into early civilizations. These sites bear witness to the presence of powerful cultures such as the Urartians, Mannaeans, Assyrians, and Persians, making the region a cradle of civilization during the first millennium BCE.

The province's historical narrative is further enriched by re-

mains from later periods. Intricately carved inscriptions from the Sassanid era and the ruins of fire temples associated with Zoroastrianism illustrate the enduring spiritual and cultural traditions of the region. Together, these elements transform West Azarbaijan into a living museum, where layers of conquest, belief, and artistic expression are preserved in stone.

Among the most significant cultural landmarks are two UNESCO-listed sites that attract visitors and pilgrims alike. The Qara Kelisa, also known as the Monastery of Saint Thaddeus, holds immense importance for Christians worldwide. Believed to be the burial site of one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, the monastery is distinguished by its unique architecture, combining early black stone construction with later white limestone additions. Each year, it hosts the "Badarak" ritual, drawing pilgrims from across the globe and reinforcing its role as a center of spiritual continuity.

Equally remarkable is the

Takht-e Soleyman complex, a site steeped in Sassanid history and legend. Known in ancient times as Shiz or Ganjak, it once housed one of the most important fire temples of Zoroastrianism. Today, its ruins—set around a mysterious lake—continue to captivate visitors, offering a glimpse into the grandeur of pre-Islamic Iran and the architectural ingenuity of the Sassanid period.

Beyond its cultural heritage, West Azarbaijan is equally renowned for its diverse and striking natural landscapes. The province experiences four distinct seasons, creating a dynamic environment where lush green plains give way to snow-covered mountains in winter. Abundant rainfall has formed numerous rivers, springs, and wetlands, many of which are recognized under the Ramsar Convention for their ecological importance.

At the center of this natural richness lies Lake Urmia, the largest inland lake in Iran. Despite environmental challenges in recent years, the lake remains a vital

habitat for migratory birds and wildlife. Species such as rams, wild goats, wolves, and even the rare Iranian yellow deer, found on Ashk Island, highlight the biodiversity of the region and the importance of conservation efforts.

The province's natural attractions extend beyond the lake. Scenic orchards of apples and grapes contribute to the rural charm, while the Shlamash Waterfall in Sardasht offers a dramatic display of cascading waterfall amid forested surroundings. Dense woodlands around Sardasht and Piranshahr further enhance the appeal for nature enthusiasts, hikers, and eco-tourists.

West Azarbaijan's appeal lies in its versatility as a destination for all seasons. In spring and summer, visitors can explore archaeological sites and enjoy the region's greenery, while autumn brings vibrant colors to its landscapes. Winter, with its snow-covered terrain, offers a different but equally captivating experience.

Iran registers 400 cultural elements linked to Persian Gulf



TEHRAN – Iran has recently registered more than 400 cultural and heritage elements that are connected to the Persian Gulf, a senior official said, underscoring efforts to preserve the historical and cultural significance of one of the world's most strategically important waterways.

Ali Darabi, deputy minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts, made the announcement on Monday during a ceremony marking Persian Gulf National Day at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Tehran.

"The Persian Gulf and Iranian heart land are two cultural elements that, through their mutual influence, have attained a special status," Darabi said, according to remarks carried by state media.

Each year, Iran commemorates Persian Gulf National Day on the 10th day of Ordibehesht in the Iranian calendar, April 30 this year, highlighting the geological, cultural, and historical importance of the waterway. The occasion also marks the 1622

victory in which forces of the Safavid Empire, alongside the British East India Company, expelled Portuguese forces from the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz.

Darabi described the Persian Gulf as a "key geopolitical and strategic axis," noting its long-standing role as a cradle of civilization and a hub for cultural exchanges.

Darabi underlined that the sensitivity of Iranians toward the name of the Persian Gulf stems from its deep roots in historical memory.

"When we examine the Persian Gulf's history, we see that matter has been firmly inscribed in the collective memory of Iranians," he said.

Highlighting historical defiance of the waterway, Darabi pointed to the role of Imam Qoli Khan, a prominent commander of the Safavid era, who led efforts to end more than a century of Portuguese dominance in the region. "If the Strait of Hormuz is important to us today, it has been important for centuries," he

said.

From ancient times, it functioned as a maritime crossroads linking East and West, shaping the destinies of empires from the Mesopotamian civilizations to the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanian dynasties.

Today, cities such as Bandar Abbas and islands including Qeshm Island and Hormuz Island reflect a blend of tradition and modernity. Coastal communities continue to rely on the sea for trade, sustenance, and cultural exchange, maintaining practices that date back centuries.

While widely known for vast reserves of oil and natural gas, the Persian Gulf is also recognized for its environmental and tourism potential. Its coastline features preserved beaches, mangrove forests, and coral reefs, attracting eco-tourism and adventure travel.

Darabi said the Ministry of Cultural Heritage has undertaken a range of initiatives to safeguard this legacy. These include establishing a "chain base" for coordinated management of Persian Gulf heritage sites and planning for the registration of additional locations, including the historic port of Siraf.

He also pointed to ongoing efforts to organize and develop the Makran coastal regions, where cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts sectors are being integrated into broader development plans. The Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism is expected to play a key role in these initiatives.

In addition, Darabi highlighted recent institutional developments, including the approval of a national museum and museology document by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution. He noted that a national cultural heritage document had also been adopted in recent years, reflecting a broader policy focus on heritage preservation.

At the event, officials unveiled 11 new books described as primary and reliable sources documenting the history of Iran's sovereignty over the Persian Gulf. Authorities said the publications aim to reinforce historical evidence and support cultural diplomacy efforts.

The Persian Gulf remains a mosaic of ethnic and cultural diversity, home to Persians, Arabs, Baloch, and other communities. Over centuries, migration and trade have fostered a rich cultural fabric evident in local architecture, cuisine, music, and oral traditions.

In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the region continues to hold global significance due to its proximity to major energy routes and its role in international commerce and security. Some of its islands have also featured in diplomatic discussions, reflecting their enduring strategic importance.

Iran's observance of Persian Gulf National Day, officials said, is not only a commemoration of a geographic entity but also a recognition of a shared cultural legacy shaped by resilience, exchange, and historical continuity.

Tehran, Ankara highlight utilizing global capacities to support civilians in wars

TEHRAN – Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Zahra Behrouz-Azar, and Turkish Minister of Family and Social Services Mahinur Ozdemir Goktas, have discussed ways to utilize regional and global capacities to support civilians, particularly women and children, during wars, especially the US-Israeli war against Iran.

Holding a phone conversation on Sunday, the Turkish official expressed sympathy with Iran over the martyrdom of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, commanders, civilians, students, and teachers.

She said the US-Israeli attacks on civilians, educational and religious centers are unacceptable and are a violation of international humanitarian law, IRNA reported.

She also announced Turkey's readiness to finalize a memorandum of understanding to promote ties in women's and family affairs between the two nations.

For her part, Behrouz-Azar lauded the Turkish government and people's stance in supporting Iran and condemning the imposed war against the country.

Expounding on war impacts on civilians as the first defenceless victims of the violence in conflicts, and the martyrdom of hundreds of women, students, and teachers, the official said the Islamic world has witnessed large-scale crimes against women and children.

She called it essential to use all available mechanisms and capacities in international forums to protect human rights, global security, and ensure that no one will remain silent and indifferent in the face of such huge criminal acts anymore.

Martyrs: 45 percent civilians

An Iranian official said on April 26 that civilians comprised nearly half of those killed in the US-Israeli war on Iran, a grim reality that starkly contradicts Presi-



dent Donald Trump's repeated assertions that the conflict was intended to help the Iranian people and protect innocent lives.

Jamshid Nazmi, an advisor at Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veterans Affairs, put the death toll at 3,468. Speaking at a press conference, he said 1,460 of the victims — around 45 percent — have been identified as civilians.

The United States and Israel launched a joint war on Iran on February 28. The conflict lasted nearly 40 days. During the war, not only military sites but also hospitals, schools, energy facilities, and development infrastructure were targeted across the country.

On the first day of the war, a US Tomahawk missile struck a school in the southern Iranian city of Minab in Hormuzgan Province. Nearly 170 people, most of them schoolchildren, lost their lives in the attack on Shajareh Tayyebeh School.

On April 9, Ebrahim Taheri, the general prosecutor in Minab, said 120 students were killed in the strike — 73 boys and 47 girls. Among the other victims were 26 teachers, all women — one of them six months pregnant — as well as seven parents, a school bus driver.

Forensic experts identified all the bodies, many of them torn apart by the devastating force of the explosions. However, they could find no trace of seven-year-old Makan Nasiri, even after extensive DNA testing.

Makan's parents remain the only family unable to bury the remains of their child.

In mid-March, a three-day-old infant and his two-year-old sister were among those killed in a US-Israeli strike that hit their home in the city of Arak in central Iran. These tragic deaths are only the tip of the iceberg.

More than a dozen hospitals and other health facilities were also hit during the US-Israeli attacks on Iran. On March 5, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the organization had "verified 13 attacks on health care in Iran." Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated, "Under international humanitarian law, health care must be protected and not attacked."

The Pasteur Institute of Iran — the oldest and most prestigious research and public health center in the country and the wider Middle East — was also bombed. Founded in 1920 through an agreement between the Pasteur

Institute of Paris and the Iranian government, the institute conducts research on infectious diseases, produces vaccines and biological products, and provides advanced diagnostics. It has played a central role in combating endemic diseases such as smallpox and cholera.

Universities, fuel depots, bridges, and railway lines were also bombed during the conflict.

Trump had framed the war as a necessary operation to neutralize Iran's military capabilities and support the Iranian population. In public remarks before and during the conflict, he repeatedly claimed that the United States was acting in the interest of the Iranian people.

Yet his own statements have cast doubt on those claims. When the war began, it became clear that the airstrikes were not acts of assistance but acts of aggression. Bombs fell not in defense of civilians, but on their homes, schools, and workplaces.

Before the two-week ceasefire on April 8, Trump threatened that Iran's "whole civilization will die tonight" if Tehran did not comply with his demands. He also warned of the mass destruction of Iranian power plants and bridges in the absence of a deal.

Life-giving rains recover Shadegan wetland



TEHRAN – The recent increase in precipitation in southwestern Khuzestan province has restored 92 percent of the Shadegan wetland, which is thriving as an ecosystem benefiting flora and fauna, as well as local communities.

Shadegan wetland covers an area of over 500,000 hectares. Registered as one of the largest wetlands in the Ramsar Convention, Shadegan is a wetland of national and international importance due to its vast area and rich biodiversity, IRNA quoted Mosa Modhaji, the head of the provincial department of environment, as saying.

The wetland is one of the most valuable wetlands of the country, which plays an integral role in the ecological sustainability of the region, he noted.

Over the past few years, the wetland faced severe water shortage because of heavy water withdrawal and reduced river flows. Water level dropped sharply in some parts, posing serious threats to the wetland's vegetation and animal species.

However, recent rainfall in the province and the upstream watersheds has noticeably improved Shadegan wetland's condition, filled it with water, and revived it, making people and environmentalists hopeful about the wetland's future.

The wetland's revival has also brought great joy to the local community whose livelihoods have long depended on fishing, reed harvesting, livestock farming, and tourism. Some 100,000 people rely on the wetland for their livelihood.

Currently, the water level of the wetland is close to its optimal level. The natural flow of water has contributed to the restoration of some habitats in the central and southern parts of the wetland.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was signed in the city of Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. This intergovernmental treaty provides the framework for international cooperation on wetland conservation. The convention officially came into force in 1975. Since then, many countries have become Contracting Parties to the convention.

The conservation and sustainable management of wetlands and their associated aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, the protection of migratory birds and wetland-dependent species, international cooperation on the exchange of knowledge and joint management of wetlands, especially transboundary wetlands, are among the main objectives of the Ramsar Convention.

In Iran, 141 wetlands with ecological value, with an area of over 3 million hectares, have been identified, 27 of which were listed in the Ramsar Convention.

Water management needed

Although the increase in precipitation has in-

creased hope to secure water rights for wetlands, it does not obviate the need for water management, the head of the Department of Environment has said.

Without sustainable management of water resources and consumption patterns, the temporary rise in water supply cannot prevent environmental crises, IRNA quoted Shina Ansari as saying.

Iran is an arid and semi-arid country that is always affected by climate change. Heavy rainfall this spring should not result in discarding the implementation of water management plans, Ansari noted.

To handle climate change impacts mid-term and long-term plans to reduce water consumption in agriculture and industry sectors, as well as manage water consumption, water recycling, and wastewater treatment systems, should be put on the agenda, she added.

Moreover, current rainfalls increase greenery and vegetation growth, which in turn enhances the possible frequency of fires in summer. Therefore, it is essential to be ready for any difficult situations in the future, the official highlighted.

Precipitation in the first month of the spring contributed to compensating for the lack of rainfall; currently, the recorded average rainfall is seven percent above the normal figure, the head of the Meteorological Organization has said.

Rainfall in spring significantly increased. Compared to the last year, the amount of rainfall doubled in most areas located in the northwest and west of the country, IRIB quoted Ahad Vazifeh as saying.

"Overall, the country has received 13 mm more rain in comparison to the long-term period of 30 years, the distribution of precipitation has been unequal, though," Vazifeh noted.

Despite light snowfall in winter, low temperatures along with abundant rainfall increased the amount of snow in Alborz and Zagros heights, as well as the amount of water saved in dams.

Precipitation in the last month of winter and the first two weeks of spring was unprecedented in some provinces; in Ilam province, the recorded rainfall was the highest amount recorded over the past 76 years. The rainfall has been above normal in South Khorasan, Kerman, Hormozgan, south of Fars, and Bushehr provinces, he added.

In Tehran province, the lack of rainfall has dropped from -55 percent to -35 percent.

Rainfall is forecast to restart in the second month of the spring, particularly in the western half of the country.

Upper age limit for blood donation lifted

TEHRAN – The upper age limit for blood donation in the country has been lifted; therefore, there is no longer a limit for people over 65 years of age to donate blood, an official with the Iran Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) has said.

The organization's new guidelines have been developed based on the latest reliable scientific sources, and this decision has been made according to the criterion that blood donation is related to the donor's health, not the donor's age, IRNA quoted Shahram Shekarchi as saying on Monday.

Now, all people over 18 years of age can donate blood without any restrictions or age limits, Shekarchi clarified.

Emphasizing the importance of maintaining the quality of donated blood, he said: "There will be no change in the quality and health of blood of people over 65 years old because all donors are examined before donating blood."

"Donors over 65 years old are examined by doctors. Only if their health is confirmed, they will be allowed to enter the blood donation process."

On April 23, Babak Yektaparast, an IBTO official, said that from the beginning of the US-Israeli war on February 28 till April 21, the blood storage duration in the country had increased from 2.4 days to 9 days.

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

Since the outbreak of the 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.



Measles, mumps, and rubella vaccination underway

The health ministry has launched the supplementary round of measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination in four high-risk provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Kerman.

The supplementary immunization program kicked off on May 3 and will run for two weeks, covering 1.05 million children.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Allah has made a measure for everything and for every measure an end.
Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:01 Evening: 18:15 Dawn: 03:31 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 05:06 (tomorrow)

Iranian film critic to serve on FIPRESCI jury at 79th Cannes Film Festival

TEHRAN – Iranian screenwriter, editor, and film critic Pouya Aghelizadeh will serve as a juror in the FIPRESCI jury at the upcoming 79th Cannes Film Festival.

The jury's traditional role is to recognize outstanding achievements across the festival's key sections. As in previous years, the jury will present three awards: one to a film in the Main Competition, one to a film in the Un Certain Regard section, and a third to a debut feature selected from the parallel sections, Directors' Fortnight and Critics' Week. This scope reflects FIPRESCI's commitment to both established auteurs and emerging voices in contemporary cinema.

Aghelizadeh will be accompanied by critics from across the globe including Renaud Baronian from France, Elvira Del Guercio from Italy, Thierry Méranger from France, Ivonete Medianeira Pinto from Brazil, Edin Čusto from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tilda Sixue Li from China, and Mohamed Allal from Algeria. The 2026 jury will be presided over by Pamela Jahn from the UK.

Pouya Aghelizadeh holds a master's degree in dramatic literature. He is one of the six Iranian members of FIPRESCI.

In Iran, he has been an active movie session holder and festival director for more than 10 years. He is also a cinema teacher and holds workshops about the "Theory of Acting in Cinema" and "Art of Editing" all around the world.

His movie analysis articles are focused on modern cinema and the theory of Lacan's "Gaze" in cinema, which include articles about great filmmakers like Bergman, Buñuel, Antonioni, Tarkovsky, Andrei Zvyagintsev, etc.

Aghelizadeh has been active as a critic at international festivals like Busan International Film Festival, Berlinale, Helsinki, etc. He has also served as a consultant in many documentary films about the prominent characters of the history of Iran and some English documentaries.



He was one of the jurors at the 17th DMZ International Documentary Film Festival in Gyeonggi, South Korea, last September.

Beyond its jury activities, FIPRESCI will also take part in the festival's professional program. On May 15, the Egyptian Pavilion will host a roundtable featuring FIPRESCI speakers titled "The State of Critique Today, in the Arab World & Beyond". The discussion will address the evolving landscape of film criticism in the MENA region and internationally, examining how the field responds to economic, digital, and cultural pressures, and questioning its audiences, functions, and accessibility.

The FIPRESCI Award Ceremony is scheduled for May 23 at 15:30 at Les Ambassadeurs, within the Palais des Festivals.

Cartoon of Day



Hormuz and Trump
Cartoonist: Simon Regis from Tanzania

"Iran" section added to Resistance Theater Festival to honor Ramadan War heroes

TEHRAN- The 20th edition of the International Resistance Theater Festival has introduced a new specialized category titled "Iran" to its playwriting competition to highlight the nation's recent era of national defense, the festival's secretariat has announced.

The "Iran" category is specifically designed to foster the creation of dramatic literature centered on the Ramadan War and the 12-Day War, Mehr reported on Tuesday.

This initiative follows previous efforts by the festival to document the recent military and social upheavals through performing arts, the report added.

Moreover, the deadline for submitting works to the playwriting section has been extended until August 10.

Under the motto "Iran, An Eternal Stage of Resistance," the 20th edition of the festival aims to expand the discourse of resistance and promote the culture of sacrifice, steadfastness, and justice across Iran.

The event seeks to harness the experience of nineteen previous editions to identify and support talented resistance theater artists nationwide and internationally.

The festival will be held across six main categories, Playwriting Competition, Stage Theater, Street Theater, Scientific-Research Seminar, Workshops and



International.

Organized by the Theater of Revolution and Sacred Defense Association and the Cultural Foundation for Revayat-e Fat'h, the festival began its nationwide activities in late 2025 and is scheduled to be held in Tehran and various cities across the country during the Sacred Defense Week (September 22 to 29, 2026).

The inclusion of these themes comes at a sensitive time, as the nation continues to reflect on the legacy of the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. His martyr-

dom during the initial stages of the conflict became a rallying cry for the resistance, transforming the theater of war into a spiritual mission for the Iranian people. Artists participating in the festival are expected to explore the profound impact of his leadership and the unwavering national spirit that emerged following his sacrifice.

The Ramadan War, which defined the early months of 2026, has already become a cornerstone of contemporary Iranian identity. The conflict, characterized by the 12-Day War and the eventual repulsion of foreign

aggression, showcased a unique blend of modern tactical warfare and grassroots mobilization. By documenting these events, the Resistance Theater Festival aims to preserve the narrative of a nation that stood its ground against the joint aggression of the Zionist regime and the US, ensuring that the heroism of the defenders remains etched in the collective memory of the world.

The 20th International Resistance Theater Festival, directed by Mohammad Kazemtabar, will be hosted throughout Iran, welcoming audiences and artists from across the nation.

Three Iranian films to open 14th Diaspora Film Festival in South Korea

TEHRAN – Three Iranian films have been selected to open the 14th Diaspora Film Festival, set to be held from May 22 to 26 in Incheon, South Korea.

"Alone in Tehran" directed by Amen Sahraei, "Like Friends, Like Deer" by Malek Eghbali, and Mohammad Hormozi's "Sash Window," also known as "Orosi" are the three films from Iran, which will be screened in the opening ceremony of the festival, Mehr reported.

A 2025 production, "Alone in Tehran" is a 15-minute documentary, experimental film about the 12-day War in Iran.

In June 2025, as Israel bombs Iran, director Amen Sahraei finds herself left alone in an apartment in Tehran. The emergency bag ready at home speaks to a daily life where states of emergency have become the norm. However, the conflict feels as though it will make everything vanish, just as she said.

She begins to record with the smartphone in her hand. Thus, the short film "Alone in Tehran," a blend of video diary and impromptu monodrama, witnesses the psychological isolation, frustration, and yearning for human connection in the midst of war through the most candid tone and grammar.



"Like Friends, Like Deer" is a 13-minute animation made in 2025. It evokes Albert Camus's "The Guest," a short story from his 1957 collection. Camus's work deals with the moral dilemma of a schoolteacher on a high plateau who is assigned to hand over an Arab prisoner during the Algerian War, exploring themes of human frailty and freedom. While the basic framework is similar, the focus is distinctly different. Whereas Camus poses questions by drawing on real-life events, "Like Friend, Like Deer" introduces a being with the face of a deer to reveal the absurd triangle between humanity and nature, hu-

mans and institutions, and institutions and nature in a fantastic and surreal manner.

"Sash Window" is a joint production of Iran and Spain produced in 2025. In the 15-minute fiction, a female musician, apprehended by police while attempting to cross the border, finds herself perched upon just such a threshold. In this state of suspended movement, instead of pushing outward, she begins to listen slowly to the sensations seeping within. She, perhaps unknowingly, begins to translate her violent reality into the language of art.

Ancient Gaza artefacts meet contemporary Palestinian stories in Turin exhibition

A new exhibition in Turin, Italy is bringing ancient artefacts from Palestine into dialogue with contemporary works by Levantine artists, in an effort to draw attention to the need to protect Palestinian history and heritage.

Titled "Gaza, The Future Has an Ancient Heart," the show at Fondazione Merz has been assembled by a team from Merz Foundation, Egizio archaeology museum and the MAH – Museum of Art and History Geneva.

"With what has been happening in Gaza over the last two years, we felt we had to do something, and as an arts museum, we can do our job," co-curator and Fondazione Merz founder Beatrice Merz tells The National.

"We found out about these artefacts in Geneva and thought we should highlight them, add comprehension to them and about the situation in Gaza for the public here in Italy.

"As a contemporary art muse-

um, we also felt it was necessary to draw the relation between the contemporary and antiquity, so we selected artists from the Levant who all have a research-driven approach, or deal with archaeology, history and memory," she adds. "The works are spread throughout the exhibition, and really go hand in hand with the artefacts."

The exhibition presents more than 80 archaeological objects from MAH – Museum of Art and History Geneva, where they are held on behalf of the state of Palestine, as well as from the Egizio museum in Turin.

Dating from the Bronze Age to the Ottoman period, the objects are part of a 500-piece collection temporarily held at MAH. They were originally intended for the creation of an archaeological museum in Palestine, a project that remains unrealized because of conflict. First loaned in 2007 for a major exhibition at MAH, the pie-

es were not returned to Palestine due to concerns about their safety and other complications.

Contemporary works by Mirna Bamieh, Samaa Emad, Khalil Rabah, Vivien Sansour, Wael Shawky, Dima Srouji and Akram Zaatari bring those histories into the present. The exhibition also includes photographs of Gaza drawn from the Unrwa archive.

Spread across four thematic chapters, the show presents Gaza as an ancient crossroads of trade, cultures and beliefs. It explores cultural ties between Gaza and other regions, particularly Egypt and Greece, using the artefacts to trace a long history of exchange.

In one section, domestic objects such as a pestle used to grind food, spices or medicinal ingredients are shown alongside Palestinian artist Emad's Genocide Kitchen. Begun while Emad was in Gaza, the project has continued since she left for Paris six months ago.

The series of 17 collages documents recipes created or adapted during the Israeli war on Gaza over the past two years. Presented in a scrapbook style, the work examines how Gazans have continued to prepare meals amid starvation, shortages, the destruction of bakeries, and restrictions on food and aid supplies.

"We had no cooking gas and many food supplies, especially flour, were hard to find, so it was hard to prepare a meal for each day. It was a collective experience and I felt the need to document it, because between the killing, bombing and displacement, these little details can be forgotten," Emad says.

"I started collecting recipes that people invented to be alternatives to the original recipes, replacing ingredients like flour with bird seed, or eating weeds like milk thistle.