

Iran Teaches Yankees a Lesson

Navy responded Thursday night to a ceasefire violation by US pirates around the Strait of Hormuz



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Pezeshkian says he met Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei

TEHRAN- Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Thursday he had met the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, in person and spoken with him for two and a half hours.

Pezeshkian, speaking at a meeting with trade unions and market representatives, said the exchange was “completely unmediated”.

“What stood out to me more than anything else in this meeting was (Mojtaba Khamenei’s) manner, perspective, and deeply sincere and humble behavior, an approach that transformed the atmosphere into one based on trust, calmness, empathy, and direct dialogue,” Pezeshkian said. ► Page 2

Global economy faces structural shock from Iran war: Finnish economist



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Araghchi rejects US-Bahrain resolution as one-sided and politically motivated

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has denounced a US-Bahrain draft resolution on the Strait of Hormuz, calling it a one-sided attempt to legitimize illegal military actions.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, and Security Council members, Araghchi said the root cause of the ongoing crisis in the region is the US-Israeli aggression against Iran that began on February 28. He noted, however, that the resolution ignores this underlying cause. He warned that adopting the resolution would “severely undermine the credibility” of the Security Council.

The text of the letter from the top Iranian diplomat is as follows:

“In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful Excellency,

I am writing to you regarding the one-sided and incomplete draft resolution concerning the situation in the Strait of Hormuz and its surrounding areas,

Russian envoy says Iran likely to view ‘Trump Route’ through security lens

TEHRAN- Sergey Kopyrkin, Russia’s ambassador to Armenia, says Iran is likely to assess the so-called “Trump Route” transportation corridor from a security perspective due to growing mistrust toward the United States following recent regional tensions and military confrontations.

In an interview with Iravunk media, Kopyrkin said Tehran’s confidence in Washington had significantly eroded after “US attempts to combine diplomatic engagement with military pressure against Iran.”

“Given Iran’s loss of trust in Washington, especially after attempts at military strikes under the guise of negotiations, any US involvement in transportation projects along Iran’s northern borders will naturally be viewed by Tehran as a potential security threat,” the Russian envoy said.

The proposed transportation corridor, informally referred to as the “Trump Route,” has been linked to broader regional connectivity plans involving the Armenia and Azerbaijan border region. ► Page 3

Iran says lasting peace, end to blockade only path to stability in Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN- Iran’s Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, has said that a permanent end to the war, the lifting of what Tehran describes as an unlawful maritime blockade, and the restoration of normal shipping routes are the only viable solutions for ensuring stability and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Speaking during a stakeout session at the United Nations Security Council on May 7, Iravani strongly criticized a draft resolution jointly proposed by the United States and Bahrain regarding maritime security in and around the strategic waterway.

The Iranian envoy described the proposed resolution as “deeply flawed, one-sided, and politically motivated,” arguing that it was designed not to protect freedom of navigation but to legitimize what he called unlawful American actions against Iran in the Persian Gulf. ► Page 2

The union of majesty and beauty: Reem Al-Wurimi on spiritual sovereignty of Tehran



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Hezbollah bravely confronting IOF commando unit

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Hezbollah continues to mount fierce resistance against Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF), inflicting losses on the regime’s military as it attempts to occupy southern Lebanon.

Reporters on the ground have said the Lebanese Resistance is engaged in clashes with a large IOF commando unit attempting to infiltrate towards the town of Bayt al-Sayyad, south of the city of Tyre.

Hezbollah is said to have used “appropriate” weapons to target the IOF convoy, and also attacked three of its military vehicles, causing them to catch fire. According to reports, the IOF is carrying out intensive artillery shelling around Bayt al-Sayyad and its surrounding areas. ► Page 5



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A Hezbollah flag flies over the ruins of a building after an airstrike in Dahiye al-Salam, Lebanon on April 13.

Iran’s men’s weightlifting team win title at IWF Junior Worlds

TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Iran's language of force in the Strait of Hormuz pays off

Kayhan published an analysis examining what it described as the 48-hour failure of Trump's 'Freedom Project' in the Strait of Hormuz. According to the article, the failure of this operation proved that Iran's naval power cannot be shaken by propaganda. A blockade that began with pride was shattered by missiles, leaving 'the language of force' as the only valid response to Trump. Trump believed he could impose his desired new order on the world's most strategic waterway with a few warships and media noise, but within less than 48 hours, he received such a harsh blow from Iran's armed forces that he had no choice but to retreat and hide behind contradictory statements. In the worldview of the Islamic Republic, threats have only one answer: 'the language of force.' The naval blockade boasted about by the enemy was not broken at negotiation tables but by precision missiles and attack drones—showing the world that the Persian Gulf has an owner.

Siasat-e-Rooz: The UAE has not yet been punished

Siasat-e-Rooz dedicated its editorial to what it described as Iran's punishment of the UAE for cooperating with the United States and Israel in attacks against Iran. The UAE is acting outside regional frameworks and international law and must be held accountable. It states that Tehran is fully prepared militarily to deliver a harsh and crushing response to any reckless or threatening behavior by the UAE. Although the closure of the Strait of Hormuz to Emirati ships is already being implemented, these measures should be expanded so that the UAE's leaders abandon their illusions. The UAE cannot claim neighborly ties with the Persian Gulf and Iran while acting against them. Relying on imagined support from the US and Israel has ended; control of the Strait of Hormuz is in Iran's hands, and no regional equation can be shaped without Iran's coordination. These are realities that everyone—including the UAE—must recognize and adjust their behavior accordingly.

Jam-e-Jam: Iran, a geopolitical bridge in the heart of Eurasia

Jam-e-Jam discussed the strategic importance of Iran's geography and the need to use this position effectively. One of the key topics in the upcoming meeting between the US and Chinese presidents will be the consequences of the White House's hostile actions against Iran. This meeting is a stage where both the future of the global power balance and the security dynamics of West Asia will be redefined. Iran's geography makes it one of the most important

routes connecting East and West, and the proper utilization of this position could turn Iran into a central hub of regional and global economic networks. The period before and shortly after the Beijing meeting is described as a limited window for influencing developments. If Iran can take the initiative during this time, agreements between the US and China may better account for Tehran's interests. Iranian diplomacy should focus on several pillars: active engagement with China and Russia, presenting practical plans for stability in the Strait of Hormuz, and turning economic cooperation into long-term development projects.

Iran: Creating opportunities for Iran in Beijing

Shahrouz Shariati, a professor of international relations, spoke with the Iran newspaper about the significance of Araghchi's trip to China amid heightened tensions with the United States. The visit is best understood as an attempt to exploit the growing gaps and competition among major powers. Under pressure, Tehran seeks to activate the capacities of actors like China to both manage the costs of the crisis and use Beijing's geo-economic and diplomatic tools to contain instability. China, for its part, prefers a pragmatic, risk-managed approach, playing the role of facilitator—maintaining stability in energy markets and preventing escalation, while avoiding confrontation with the US. Recent diplomatic movements should be understood within the broader transition toward a multipolar order and the redefinition of power balances in the Middle East.

Sobh-e-No: The UAE takes orders from London and Washington

Sobh-e-No interviewed Jafar Ghannad-bashi, a regional affairs analyst, about the UAE's role in the region. According to Ghannad-bashi, the UAE does not take any significant or minor foreign policy action without receiving directives from the United Kingdom and the United States. Even cooperation with Israel or installing radar systems on Emirati soil to facilitate actions against Iran is all carried out with approval and planning from London and Washington. He compares this pattern to what he describes as the structure of the Israeli regime, which he says established itself through occupation and the 'lie' of land purchases. The UAE is essentially a network seeking the rights of a sovereign state so that the UK can use its vote and position in international organizations. The UAE has attracted various investments, including some Iranian capital, to create companies that advance foreign agendas.

Honorable, dignified negotiations are Iranians' main demand: Ayatollah Khatami

TEHRAN— Tehran's interim Friday Prayers Leader, Ahmad Khatami, says the Iranian nation's principal demand is for "honorable and dignified" negotiations, while praising the public's continued support for the Islamic Establishment amid external pressure and military threats.

Speaking during this week's Friday Prayers sermon in Tehran, Ayatollah Khatami commended 'the steadfast presence and support of the Iranian people over the past 70 days,' saying the nation had demonstrated unity and resilience amid heightened regional tensions.

He strongly condemned 'the US and Israeli war of aggression against Iran,' arguing that the large-scale participation of people in rallies and public gatherings across the country had frustrated the "hostile plots" of Iran's enemies.

The senior cleric also praised Iran's Armed Forces for their "powerful and crushing response" to threats against the country, saying the support shown by people from different segments of society reflected "God's grace and favor."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khatami warned against ongoing psychological

warfare by hostile powers aimed at weakening public morale and creating uncertainty within Iranian society.

"Psychological warfare is an important part of the battle," he said, urging the public to remain vigilant and avoid being influenced by 'fake news and misleading analyses' circulated by enemies.

Addressing Iran's negotiating team, the cleric emphasized that officials should firmly uphold the country's principles and positions during any diplomatic engagement and "not retreat even one step" from national interests.

Ayatollah Khatami also criticized recent remarks by US President Donald Trump, accusing Washington of adopting hostile and unlawful policies toward Iran.

"Regrettably, the president of a country claiming to be a superpower openly uses language associated with piracy," he said, calling on Iran's Foreign Ministry to pursue the matter in international forums.

He further cautioned against trusting statements made by US officials, urging people to carefully verify information before accepting it as fact.

Araghchi rejects US-Bahrain resolution as one-sided and politically motivated

From page 1 ▶ jointly submitted by Bahrain and the United States for adoption by the United Nations Security Council.

This text makes no reference to the root cause of the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz, namely the military aggression and the illegal use of force by the United States and the Israeli regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The current situation is directly and exclusively the result of their aggressive, unjustified, and illegal war. The true objective of this draft is to distort the realities on the ground and to justify the previous and ongoing illegal actions of the United States against Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz—a region thousands of miles away from the U.S. coasts.

The international community must not allow the Security Council to be abused by aggressors or to become a tool for legitimizing their illegal actions. It is essential to exercise maximum vigilance to prevent any attempt to distort established rules and principles of international law in a way that could justify aggression or the illegal use of force.



The sponsors of this draft are abusing international law by presenting a selective and biased narrative, while simultaneously ignoring the gross violations of international law by the United States itself.

Furthermore, this draft ignores the repeated violations of the ceasefire by the United States, including the illegal naval blockade, as well as attacks on and the seizure of Iranian vessels. Moreover, the invocation of Chapter VII of the

UN Charter is completely unjustified and disproportionate.

Should this resolution be adopted, the credibility and status of the Security Council will be severely undermined, the Council's executive powers will be politicized, and a dangerous precedent will be set for legitimizing unilateral coercive measures and the illegal behavior of the United States in violating the sovereignty and sovereign rights of coastal states.

Allowing the United States to abuse the Security Council regarding a crisis it created without the Council's authorization or even prior notice will have devastating consequences.

I must emphasize that normal maritime traffic will return to the Strait of Hormuz contingent upon the permanent cessation of war and the lifting of the illegal blockade and sanctions against Iran. Therefore, the path to achieving stability lies in the United States' adherence to international law, not in the abuse of the Security Council in a manner that further complicates the situation.

In light of the above, and considering the continuous pressure exerted by the United States on member states to participate in presenting this draft for political and propaganda purposes—a method the U.S. has used repeatedly, including in connection with Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026) to advance its political agenda—I urge you and your respective government to take a principled and responsible stance and refrain from supporting or participating in this draft resolution."

Pezeshkian says he met Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei

From page 1 ▶ Mojtaba Khamenei was appointed by the Assembly of Experts following the martyrdom of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated by the US and Israel on 28 February.

In a separate part of his speech on Thursday, Pezeshkian called for tighter management of energy consumption and warned against excessive spending. He said Iran's survival depended on unity and cautioned against labelling citizens as corrupt, treasonous, or

working as spies.

"People should not simply be accused of corruption, treason, or espionage, creating false boundaries between different sections of society," Pezeshkian said.

Iran says lasting peace, end to blockade only path to stability in Strait of Hormuz

From page 1 ▶ According to Iravani, the current tensions in the region are rooted in what he characterized as "the unlawful war of aggression" launched by the United States and Israel against the Islamic Republic of Iran. He said the crisis was a direct consequence of military actions and pressure campaigns that began on February 28, 2026.

"The only viable solution in the Strait of Hormuz is a permanent end to the war, the lifting of the maritime blockade, and the restoration of normal passage," Iravani told reporters, emphasizing that Iran remained prepared to guarantee maritime security and unrestricted navigation if hostilities ceased permanently.

He accused Washington of using the Security Council to advance political and military

objectives under the pretext of safeguarding international shipping lanes. The Iranian diplomat argued that the draft resolution deliberately ignored what Tehran considers the root causes of the crisis while presenting a "selective and distorted narrative."

Iravani also rejected allegations that Iran had violated the April 8 ceasefire agreement or engaged in attacks on commercial vessels and the placement of sea mines in the Strait of Hormuz. He said the accusations lacked "credible and verified evidence" and were intended to justify further pressure against Tehran.

The ambassador further accused the United States of imposing an illegal maritime blockade, seizing Iranian commercial vessels, and violating

international law and the principles of freedom of navigation. He said such actions constituted breaches of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law.

Referring to American military deployments in the Persian Gulf, Iravani argued that the presence of U.S. forces "thousands of miles from its own territory" lacked legal justification and had become a source of instability in the region.

He also criticized Washington's record regarding international law and the rulings of the International Court of Justice, citing past disputes, including the 1986 Nicaragua case and legal cases brought by Iran against the United States.

"The Security Council must not be exploited by aggressors

or instrumentalized to legitimize unlawful conduct," Iravani said, warning that adoption of the draft resolution would damage the credibility and impartiality of the council and create a dangerous precedent for legitimizing unilateral coercive measures.

Concluding his remarks, the Iranian envoy called on UN member states to reject the proposed resolution and resist what he described as political pressure from Washington to support the measure.

"Iran supports peace, security, and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz for all," he said, adding that lasting stability in the Persian Gulf could only be achieved through respect for international law, an end to military confrontation, and the removal of coercive measures.

Bahrain intensifies crackdown with expulsion of MPs, mass citizenship revocations

TEHRAN— Bahrain has come under growing criticism after authorities expelled three lawmakers from parliament and stripped dozens of citizens of their nationality in what observers and rights advocates describe as an escalating campaign to silence dissent under the guise of national security.

In a controversial move, Bahrain's Council of Representatives voted on Thursday to revoke the parliamentary memberships of Abdulnabi Salman, Mamdouh al-Saleh, and Mahdi al-Shuwaikh after they opposed a royal decree limiting judicial oversight in citizenship-related cases during an April 28 parliamentary session.

The measure has sparked concern among legal experts and human rights groups, who say the decree effectively removes important judicial safeguards and grants authorities sweeping powers over citizenship decisions without meaningful legal review.

The expulsions came shortly after Manama stripped 69 Bahraini citizens and several of their family members of their nationality, accusing them of supporting Iran during the recent military confrontation involving Iran, the United States, and the Israeli regime. Bahraini authorities claimed the targeted individuals had expressed solidarity with Iran on social media or maintained contact with foreign entities considered hostile to

the kingdom.

Rights organizations have warned that the latest measures risk rendering some individuals stateless and constitute a clear violation of international legal standards governing nationality and human rights.

Under international law, including Article 15 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual has the right to a nationality and must not be arbitrarily deprived of it. Legal experts argue that revoking citizenship based on political opinion or alleged ideological sympathy violates internationally recognized principles of due process, freedom of expression, and protection against arbitrary punishment.

The crackdown has also drawn strong condemnation from Tehran. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei denounced Bahrain's decision as a "gross violation of human rights," accusing Manama of using baseless accusations to punish citizens for their political views.

Baqaei said the Bahraini government was targeting individuals merely for expressing opposition to US and Israeli military actions against Iran, stressing that stripping citizens of their nationality for political reasons contravenes international human rights norms and fundamental freedoms.

Human rights advocates say Bahrain has



increasingly relied on citizenship revocation as a political tool over the past decade, particularly against opposition figures, clerics, activists, and critics of the ruling establishment. Hundreds of Bahrainis reportedly lost their nationality between 2012 and 2019 in measures widely condemned by international watchdogs.

Analysts believe the removal of sitting lawmakers for opposing a royal decree signals a further narrowing of political space in the kingdom and reflects growing intolerance toward dissenting voices, even within official institutions.

Critics also point to Bahrain's close alignment with Washington and its hosting of the US Fifth Fleet as factors shaping the kingdom's hardline security policies amid rising tensions in the Persian Gulf.

Iran teaches Yankees a lesson

Navy responded Thursday night to a ceasefire violation by US pirates around the Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN - Iran's strong response to US naval forces in the Persian Gulf region has once again highlighted President Donald Trump's failed attempt to force open the Strait of Hormuz.

On Thursday, Iran carried out retaliatory strikes against American destroyers after the US targeted an Iranian oil tanker in the Persian Gulf and another vessel entering the Strait of Hormuz. The US also launched airstrikes against civilian areas in southern Iran along the coasts of Bandar Khamir, Sirik, and Qeshm Island.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that Iranian forces had "launched multiple missiles, drones and small boats" at three destroyers — the USS Truxtun, USS Rafael Peralta, and USS Mason.

Iran's Army announced that the strikes were in response to the US violation of the April 8 ceasefire that had initially paused the joint US-Israel war against Iran. It said following the response, "the aggressor American destroyers changed course and left the area."

A spokesperson for the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, which coordinates military operations between Iran's Army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), said the Iranian counterattacks were immediate and decisive, causing "significant damage" to US warships.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ebrahim Zolfaghari warned that the "criminal and aggressive" US and its allies must recognize that the Islamic Republic of Iran will, as it has in the past, deliver a crushing response to any act of aggression or violation — powerfully and without the slightest hesitation.



Trump, however, attempted to downplay the attacks on US destroyers, calling them a "trifle." He also said the ceasefire remained in place.

It appears that Trump made the remarks amid fears of the repercussions of the exchange of fire, which directly affected global energy markets. Brent crude oil rose to about \$101 a barrel on news of the attacks, underscoring the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes.

The closure of the Strait has significant implications for the US economy. Higher oil prices fuel inflation, increase transportation and manufacturing costs, and put additional pressure on American consumers. A prolonged disruption could complicate the Federal Reserve's monetary policy and slow economic growth — developments that come at a politically sensitive time for Trump ahead of the midterm elections, where economic performance is expected to be a central campaign issue.

The US imposed a naval blockade on Iran after talks in Islamabad ended without a breakthrough on April 11. The negotiations failed to

permanently end the war that began on February 28. In response, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, which has been under its full control since the start of the war. Trump sought to use the naval siege to force Iran to reopen the strategic waterway. The US also launched the so-called "Project Freedom" to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz, but Trump ended the mission after just one day due to its failure to achieve its objectives.

Before Thursday's exchange of fire, reports had indicated that Iran and the US were close to resuming talks. Tehran says Washington's maximalist, excessive, and unrealistic demands constitute the main obstacle to diplomacy.

This is not the first time diplomacy has been derailed by military escalation. In June last year, the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran while Tehran and Washington were engaged in negotiations. A similar scenario unfolded again on February 28. The latest breach of the ceasefire, Iranian officials argue, once more demonstrates Washington's bad faith and reinforces the perception in Tehran that the US is not a

trustworthy negotiating partner.

Washington Post report contradicts Trump's claims

American officials cited by US media have acknowledged that the 39-day war on Iran has not helped the Trump administration achieve its primary objectives, which included the destruction of Iran's military capabilities. Trump has repeatedly claimed that the US has destroyed Iran's military capacity. On Wednesday, Trump said, "Their missiles are mostly decimated. They have probably 18, 19 percent — but not a lot by comparison to what they had."

The naval blockade is now widely seen as a measure to increase economic pressure on Tehran. Earlier this month, Trump compared the US Navy to pirates when describing how it was carrying out his orders to blockade Iranian ports.

However, a recent report by The Washington Post presents a different picture. It says a confidential CIA analysis delivered to administration policymakers concludes that Iran can survive the US naval blockade for at least three to four months before facing more severe economic hardship, according to four people familiar with the document. The analysis also found that Tehran retains significant ballistic missile capabilities despite weeks of intense US and Israeli bombardment. According to a US official, Iran retains about 75 percent of its prewar inventory of mobile launchers and roughly 70 percent of its prewar missile stockpiles. The official added that there is evidence Iran has been able to recover and reopen almost all of its underground storage facilities, repair some damaged missiles, and even assemble new missiles that were nearly complete when the war began.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iran likely to view 'Trump Route' through security lens: Russian envoy

TEHRAN- Sergey Kopyrkin, Russia's ambassador to Armenia, says Iran is likely to assess the so-called "Trump Route" transportation corridor from a security perspective due to growing mistrust toward the United States following recent regional tensions and military confrontations.

In an interview with Iravunk media, Kopyrkin said Tehran's confidence in Washington had significantly eroded after 'US attempts to combine diplomatic engagement with military pressure against Iran.'

"Given Iran's loss of trust in Washington, especially after attempts at military strikes under the guise of negotiations, any US involvement

in transportation projects along Iran's northern borders will naturally be viewed by Tehran as a potential security threat," the Russian envoy said.

The proposed transportation corridor, informally referred to as the "Trump Route," has been linked to broader regional connectivity plans involving the Armenia and Azerbaijan border region.

"The regional situation regarding the reopening of transportation links had shown positive signs due to progress toward peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan," Kopyrkin said. "But the ongoing Middle East crisis and heightened tensions around Iran are now affecting the South

Caucasus as well."

The Russian diplomat added that Armenian officials had already publicly acknowledged delays related to the transportation initiative amid growing geopolitical uncertainty.

Kopyrkin also warned about the broader economic implications of instability in the Strait of Hormuz, describing the waterway as one of the world's most critical energy transit routes.

"The tensions and disruptions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz are contributing to rising global prices for fuel, fertilizers, and food products," he said, adding that such developments inevitably affect countries in the South Caucasus region.

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month as part of a maritime blockade.

■ Russia warns UNSC confrontational draft resolutions could escalate ME crisis

Russia has urged UN Security Council members to avoid "artificially stirring up tensions" by pushing confrontational draft resolutions on the Middle East. In a Thursday statement, Moscow warned such moves could trigger a new wave of escalation with unpredictable consequences. Russia reiterated that current escalation stems from unprovoked US and Israeli aggression against Iran. Moscow also expressed support for Pakistan's mediation efforts, urging all sides to shield diplomacy from provocations, including hawkish rhetoric and acts of force that could derail fragile peace talks.

■ Former US intelligence official: Iran had no nuclear bomb capacity

Joe Kent, a former US intelligence official, has stated that all 18 of America's intelligence agencies were in agreement that Iran possessed no capability to develop a nuclear bomb. The remark challenges past claims about Iran's nuclear program and aligns with declassified intelligence assessments. Kent's statement adds a new layer to the ongoing debate over Tehran's nuclear program and the justification for sanctions and military posturing.

■ Iran to hold 'great victory' celebration as sanctions set to lift, says Aref

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref announced that Iran will soon hold a "great victory" celebration over its enemies, marking the end of years of sanctions and pressure. Speaking after the 40-day "Ramadan War" against US-Israeli aggression, Aref declared

the Iranian people victorious. He also asserted that the Strait of Hormuz is "the absolute property of Iran," adding that Tehran is now determined to manage this strategic waterway to ensure regional security.

■ Iranian top judge vows prosecution of traitors

Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said traitors to the homeland will be prosecuted decisively under law and justice. He voiced full support for security forces in arresting spies and infiltrators but stressed avoiding injustice even under wartime conditions while preserving national unity.

■ Russia welcomes China's rejection of anti-Iran sanctions

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova welcomed China's decision to block US sanctions on Iran, calling it "completely justified." She condemned unilateral sanctions as illegitimate interference in sovereign states' vital interests, following a Chinese court ruling against US penalties on five companies over Iran oil deals.

■ Iranian Navy returns fire on US ceasefire violations

Citing an Iranian military source, Tasnim news agency reported that Iran's naval forces fired back against US ceasefire violations and "American terrorism." Clashes have currently stopped, and calm has returned to the region following a period of exchanging gunfire. However, the source added that the possibility of similar confrontations breaking out in the region remains.

■ Iran's policy is based on friendly and mutual respect: Pezeshkian

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian wrote on X that the Islamic Republic's policy is to expand friendly relations based on mutual respect and shared interests.

He stated that colonialism and exploitation have no place in the future world.

The president added that just as tolerance is rooted in Iranian culture, the fight against injustice shines through the country's history, and this identity will continue to elevate Iran's name.

■ Iran disregards US deadlines, response 'under review'

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said Tehran's response to a US proposal remains under review, adding that Iran disregards any deadlines. He also condemned a US military attack on two Iranian oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz as a "gross violation" of international law and the ceasefire, warning that Iran's armed forces are ready to respond decisively.

■ Pakistan offers to repatriate Iranian seafarers via its territory

Pakistan has sought Singapore's help to repatriate Pakistani and Iranian seafarers from US-seized vessels near Singaporean waters. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said he discussed the matter with his Singaporean and Iranian counterparts. Dar added that Islamabad is ready to facilitate the safe return of Iranian nationals to Iran via Pakistan. The US intercepted at least three Iranian-flagged tankers last

Iran determined to do something epic: Ghalenoei

TEHRAN - Iran football team head coach Amir Ghalenoei says that they are going to do something epic in the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Thrice continental champions and semi-finalists at the previous two editions of the Asian Cup, Iran are a long-established juggernaut on their home patch. Translating that continental success to global impact has though proven a tougher than expected ask.

Regular participants they may be, with the nation having qualified for five of the past six editions of the FIFA World Cup, but Iran are still surprisingly searching for a maiden appearance in the knockout stage.

Across half a dozen tournament outings, Team Melli have made an early exit on each occasion, with only three wins from their 18 matches to date.

The belief internally is that the current side, blessed with a fine generation of experienced talent, is the one poised to finally end that run of outs, as head coach Ghalenoei explains to FIFA.

"We've had many problems recently, but the players tried their best and made sacrifices. They worked so hard [through qualification] and sacrificed a lot, so it is my job to thank them.

"They can do something epic in the World Cup. They can do it; they have the technical potential to make this a World Cup to remember."

Situated in a group containing a trio of continental heavyweights in the form of Belgium, Egypt and New Zealand, the going certainly won't be easy. Ghalenoei can though take comfort from a qualification campaign that his side made fairly light work of, as well as a string of solid results thereafter.

Outside of the three co-hosts, Iran were the third nation to secure qualification, doing so on 20 March last year, five days after their AFC brethren Japan became the first nation to punch their ticket to North America.

Their only defeat in those 16 AFC preliminaries came at the hands of Qatar, after qualification was already secure. Since then, they've reached the final of the CAFA Nations Cup and drawn with fellow World Cup-bound nations Cabo Verde and Uzbekistan at an invitational tournament in the United Arab Emirates last year.

Another invitational event, held in Turkey last month, saw a narrow loss at the hands of Nigeria, followed by a thumping 5-0 win against Costa Rica.

Set against the backdrop of an ongoing conflict that has shuttered the domestic league, forced the national team to play abroad and created numerous logistical issues, the veteran coach is proud of his team's resolve.

"I am really proud of this team for many reasons, because we've faced a difficult situation with all the problems and concerns, one of which was being unable to host games, but we were one of the first teams to qualify for the World Cup.

"Iran have a special talent whereby in tough times we find or create solutions. We managed to get to this level in spite of a difficult situation. Currently, there are two months to go until the World Cup, but we are in very difficult moment.

"My view though is that through football we can bring joy to families and Iranian society, both inside and outside the country. Football is a concept or project that can bring states and nations closer together. That can be national or global, like Argentina or Brazil having fans everywhere.

"Football in Iran is also like that and I hope that through football we can bring about national unity, despite the current problems in our country. We love our people and want to bring them happiness. I hope we can do that through football.

"My goal is for there to be no war anywhere in the world so people can enjoy football and enjoy their lives. This is my message through football to the world and my people.

"We want to create some great memories at this World Cup. We're ready with the experience that the team has from previous World Cups to make it through to the knock-out round for the first time. We won't be satisfied with just the group stage but I want us to play good football,

not just try to get results.

"I also want to thank our wonderful fans, both inside and outside the country, who have stuck by the national team. They are the reason we managed to qualify. I probably had the least important role of anyone," Ghalenoei concluded.

Iran's Zarei wins bronze at IWF World Junior Championships

TEHRAN - Iran's Hamidreza Zarei captured a bronze medal at the 2026 IWF World Junior Championships on Thursday night in Ismailia, Egypt.

Competing in the men's 94kg category, Zarei lifted 162kg in the snatch and 204kg in the clean and jerk, finishing with a 366kg total to secure third place.

Venezuela's Mauricio Loaiza claimed the gold medal with an impressive performance, adding 28kg to his previous best total and finishing at 166kg in the snatch, 207kg in the clean and jerk, and 373kg overall.

Georgia's Goga Jajvani earned the snatch gold but faced pressure in the clean and jerk after two missed attempts at 198kg. He successfully lifted 200kg on his final attempt, bringing his total to 367kg and earning him the silver medal.

Iran to arrive in U.S. two weeks before 2026 World Cup

TEHRAN - Iran national football team plan to arrive in the United States 14 days before the start of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Despite the current tensions with the U.S., Team Melli held another training session in the capital Tehran.

As part of its efforts to boost readiness, the team will leave for Turkey on May 16 for a two-week training camp.

Even for all the preparations, political frictions continue to cast a shadow over Iran's participation in the World Cup. U.S. President Donald Trump has previously said that the Iranian team should skip the tournament "for their own life and safety."

Mehdi Taj, president of the Iran Football Federation, said they are working to make the best decision regarding participation in the World Cup.

Iran have been drawn in Group G for the World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19.

Team Melli are scheduled to open their campaign against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15, followed by a match against Belgium at the same venue on June 21. Its final group match is set for June 26 against Egypt in Seattle.

Iran's men's weightlifting team win title at IWF Junior Worlds

TEHRAN - Iran's Abolfazl Zare and Farhad Gholizadeh combined to deliver a standout haul at the 2026 IWF World Junior Championships on Friday, with Zare taking gold and Gholizadeh silver in the men's 110kg division.

Zare powered to a 180kg snatch and added 220kg in the clean and jerk for a total of 400kg to claim top spot. Gholizadeh struck for 179kg in the snatch and 208kg in the clean and jerk, posting 387kg to secure second place.

Simone Abati of Italy won bronze with 173-200-373.

On Thursday, Hamidreza Zarei earned bronze for Iran in the men's 94kg category. Zarei registered 162kg in the snatch and 204kg in the clean and jerk to finish with 366kg, securing third.

The 2026 Junior World Weightlifting Championships are being held in Ismailia, Egypt, from 2-8 May.

Iranian psychological warfare on social media and the strategic blindness of the West

When Lego-style social media videos become a weapon in psychological warfare

By Ioana Mate Middle East analyst and international law attorney

There comes a moment when an analyst must acknowledge that their conceptual tools are no longer sufficient to describe the reality they are observing. The Lego-style animations produced by the Iranian media entity Explosive Media — American warships exploding in colored plastic, Israeli aircraft turned into falling horses, figurine soldiers storming beaches under pixelated flags — represent one of those moments. Not because they are aesthetically impressive, though they are executed with remarkable technical competence, but because they raise a question that Western geopolitical analysis does not know, or refuses, to ask correctly: what does it mean when highly qualified young Iranians, holders of doctorates and skilled in generative artificial intelligence, voluntarily choose to produce Shia Islamic resistance content?

The reflexive response of Western analysts, and especially American and Israeli ones, is predictable and, methodologically, deficient: it must be a government channel. It must be the IRGC or the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance or some Islamic Revolution Foundation. No one can truly believe in this. No one can voluntarily choose this form of expression. Therefore, the flawed conclusion is that someone is paying them.

This conclusion is not only factually mistaken, it is the symptom of a deeper epistemic illness: the inability to conceive that a person with access to all the intellectual resources of global modernity can be, simultaneously and without contradiction, a practicing Shia Muslim and a sophisticated producer of resistance content. This inability is not neutral. It produces strategic blindness with measurable consequences in foreign policy decisions.

The Avini Doctrine in the Age of the Algorithm

To understand what Explosive Media is doing, one must first understand what Seyyed Morteza Avini did. The Iranian filmmaker documented the Iran-Iraq War from the inside, from the combat trenches, with a camera on his shoulder and the conviction that his mission was not to express himself, but to let reality speak directly to the viewer's heart. His central principle — explicitly cited by the Explosive Media team in the only interview ever granted from inside Iran — is the refusal of self-narration: do not place yourself, as a media producer, at the center of your own frame. When you do that, Avini said, the story loses its power. It no longer strikes hearts. It becomes a selfish spectacle.

Transposing this principle into the social media context of 2025–2026 has operational consequences that no Western manual of information warfare anticipated. The anonymity of Explosive Media's producers is not an operational security measure, as they themselves state with complete clarity:

"It is not a matter of security. It is a matter of faith."

Through this choice, the team eliminates the greatest vulnerability of any personality-based media project: there is no face to be discredited, attacked, doxed, or compromised. There is no influencer whose personal credibility can be undermined. There is only the content. And the content speaks for itself.

Western counter-influence operations are calibrated to target identifiable actors: you find the person, analyze their past, locate their contradictions, discredit them personally, destroy their credibility, and with it the project they represent. Against a faceless project, this strategy has no point of application. You cannot

discredit a silhouette in the shadows.

The impact of gamification

An analysis of the content distributed on social media reveals that the use of Lego-style animations is not merely an aesthetic or creative choice, but an advanced form of gamification — a transformation, at the level of collective perception, of the conflict into a game, with direct effects on how the global public perceives the reality of war. By converting military events and political actors into playful sequences, the conflict is transposed into a familiar and accessible cognitive register, which produces a significant reduction in critical resistance and an exponential increase in distribution.

Empirical data confirm the scale of this phenomenon. The digital campaign generated over 145 million views and approximately 9.4 million direct interactions (likes, shares, comments), with more than 37,000 coordinated content items identified within a short time interval. These figures indicate not only virality, but a systemic capacity for production and dissemination, comparable to large-scale state media operations.

The impact, however, is not merely quantitative, but profoundly qualitative. Gamified content operates on the basis of a double coding: on the surface, it is perceived as entertainment; in depth, it conveys political and ideological messages. This ambiguity enables it to cross algorithmic and cultural barriers. According to an analysis conducted by Prof. Narges Bajoghli of Johns Hopkins University, for the first time in more than fifteen years of monitoring, the content generated in this context produced a convergence of algorithms across the entire U.S. political spectrum, from the far right, MAGA, to the far left. This phenomenon is exceptional and indicates a rare efficiency in the propagation of geopolitical messages. And it should be worrying for the United States, which has lost this battle of perceptions.

Gamification thus produces an effect of democratizing the conflict: the public is no longer merely a spectator, but becomes an indirect participant, through sharing, commentary, and reinterpretation. The conflict is internalized as a "narrative game," in which every user contributes to the propagation of a version of reality. In this sense, Lego is not merely a visual tool, but a mechanism for integrating the audience into the dynamics of the conflict.

In parallel, this strategy has a direct effect on the adversary's credibility. Through the repetition and archiving of political statements, reinterpreted in a playful format, a progressive erosion of symbolic authority is produced. In the case of the United States, this erosion is visible in the way official discourse, especially that of Donald Trump, is transformed into viral satirical material, contributing to a decline of trust in American strategic communication on a global scale.

Another essential element is the replicability of the model. The campaign analyzed demonstrates the existence of a clear operational pattern: the use of diplomatic missions as distribution nodes, the production of AI content with a pop-cultural aesthetic, and the exploitation of the adversary's internal vulnerabilities. This model has already been observed in other geopolitical contexts and is likely to be adopted by other states, including major actors such as China or Russia. Thus, what initially appears as a contextual innovation is, in reality, an emerging doctrine of information warfare.

The theoretical foundation of this approach is explicitly expressed at the doctrinal level. According to a statement attributed to Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in 2024, "media



is more effective than missiles, aircraft, and drones in forcing the enemy's withdrawal and in influencing hearts and minds." This assertion is not rhetorical; it reflects a profound strategic shift: the prioritization of the media field over the conventional kinetic one.

In this context, the reference made by the authors of the Lego-style videos — in the interview conducted on their own Facebook page — to the martyr Morteza Avini acquires structural relevance. As mentioned earlier, Avini was one of the first theorists to conceptualize media as an extension of an ethos of sacrifice and authenticity, in which the message prevails over the author. Through his exceptional media materials during the Iran-Iraq War, he created a narrative model in which reality is conveyed not as information, but as lived experience, with emotional and moral impact on the community.

This paradigm is found directly in the structure of the current campaign. The anonymity of the authors, the refusal of monetization, and the emphasis on authenticity and sacrifice are not accidents, but expressions of a coherent intellectual tradition. In the Avinian logic, media is not a space for self-exposure, but an instrument for the transformation of collective perception.

In conclusion, the gamification of conflict through Lego-style animations represents a strategic innovation with significant global impact. It combines cultural accessibility with psychological sophistication and is supported by an articulated media doctrine that exceeds the framework of classical propaganda. Through its scale, efficiency, and replicability, this model redefines the parameters of contemporary information warfare and confirms that, in the digital age, victory is no longer determined exclusively by military superiority, but by the capacity to shape perceptions on a global scale.

Plastic as a psychological weapon

The choice of the Lego aesthetic is, at first glance, paradoxical. Why would a serious military force represent grave armed conflicts through colored plastic figurines? The answer, once articulated, becomes evident in all its strategic elegance.

The Meta, YouTube, and TikTok platforms have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in automated detection systems for violent content, war imagery, and military propaganda. A tank exploding in real footage is detected and removed within hours. A Lego tank exploding in colored plastic animation passes through the social media filter. Not because this is a technical gap that will be corrected, but because, from the standpoint of the moderation algorithm, it is a toy. It is children's content. It is harmless.

Beyond the technical circumvention of algorithmic censorship, however, the Lego aesthetic operates at a deeper psychological level. The human brain associates representations in colored plastic with play, with childhood, with the inoffensive. Normal cognitive defenses against incendiary political content are partially deactivated by this association. The viewer lowers their guard. And the ideological message enters through a door that the receiver has left open precisely because the aesthetic seemed safe.

There is, however, a third layer, perhaps the most important from the perspective of psychological warfare: the systematic ridicule of the adversary. To represent the USS Harry Truman or Israeli F-16s as Lego figurines is an act of ontological diminution. You do not portray your enemies as feared and respected forces. You reduce them to the level of a child's plastic toy. And when the Explosive Media team receives an animation from a fan depicting their building attacked by Trump's order and immediately turns the aircraft into falling horses, this is information warfare as a form of psychological "judo." Humor is, in the theory of psychological warfare, one of the most destructive weapons against authority and fear.

The generation that dismantles stereo-

religious resilience.

Analysis that ignores this reality, and that reduces every expression of popular Iranian support to paid propaganda, does not analyze Iran. It analyzes its own prejudices about what Iran ought to be.

When Iran is attacked — militarily, economically, in media — it is not only the state apparatus that is activated. What is activated is a collective identity in which nationalism and Shia religiosity are inseparable. The "rally around the flag" phenomenon, well documented in social psychology, acquires in the Iranian context an additional amplitude precisely because the overlap between national identity and religious identity is deeper than in any other context in the region.



types

The most important dimension of the Explosive Media phenomenon is also the most difficult to accept for mainstream geopolitical analysis: its authenticity. These people are not paid. They are not coerced. They are young academics with specializations in media, psychology, and foreign policy, who have gone into debt to sustain the project and who anchor their practice in an intellectually elaborated media philosophy.

This reality is incomprehensible to an analytical framework built on the premise that intense religiosity is incompatible with intellectual sophistication. This premise is a secular European prejudice exported as universal, which collides with a wall of reality in the Iranian context. Iran has one of the highest literacy rates in the world. Sharif University in Tehran, whose students and professors are explicitly mentioned in Explosive Media's content, is the Iranian equivalent of MIT. Many of its graduates are practicing Shia Muslims. There is, in their minds, no contradiction between mastering generative artificial intelligence and believing in the Hidden Imam Mahdi.

This generation's choice to produce and consume Shia Islamic resistance content is, in this light, an informed choice, not the product of ignorance or manipulation. The episode of Dr. Zarei, the Sharif University professor who taught his class in the bombed classroom, is invoked by the team as a symbol of this intellectual-re-

What Western analysis cannot understand, and why it matters

Explosive Media and the Lego-style videos represent something that the Western analytical framework is not equipped to fully understand: a project of information warfare that is simultaneously authentic in terms of motivation, technically sophisticated, doctrinally coherent in philosophical terms, and strategically effective.

To accept the authenticity of this phenomenon means to accept that millions of young, educated, globally connected Iranians voluntarily choose Islamic resistance as a form of political and identity expression. This acceptance detonates two pillars of the dominant Western narrative: the premise that sanctions and economic pressure will generate internal political change by alienating the population from the regime, and the premise that modernization and education inevitably lead to secularization and the adoption of Western liberal values.

Both premises are false in the Iranian case. Sanctions have consolidated, not eroded, Iranian identity cohesion. Education has not produced secularization, but a more sophisticated and more militant religiosity. This reality is so inconvenient for the American geopolitical paradigm that it is easier to deny it — classifying every expression of it as paid propaganda — than to integrate it and reformulate policies accordingly.

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)



America's casino kleptocracy

How the fusion of law, markets, and war turned the U.S. into a high-stakes operating system for elite enrichment

By Garsha Vazirian

TEHRAN — When asked recently about the ethical implications of political insiders gambling on war outcomes via prediction markets, Trump's response was as blunt as it was unsurprisingly nihilistic: "The world is a casino. It is what it is."

America's corruption metastasis has become a governing system, one that rewards those who can shape the rules, monetize war, and turn public office into private leverage. What looks legal on paper is often simply corruption that has been written into law, normalized by institutions, and protected by wealth. That is why the U.S. today appears like a casino operated on behalf of the already rich.

A system built to excuse itself

The traditional image of corruption is crude: a bribe, a favor, a sealed envelope. The American version is predominantly elegant, professionalized, and shielded from the reach of the law.

It works through tax carve-outs, campaign donations, fake charities, military-intelligence-complex cutouts, regulatory capture, revolving doors, and laws drafted by the same interests that later benefit from them. The result is a perpetual motion machine for upward redistribution to the most corrupt.

The numbers are severe. Federal Reserve data for late 2025 showed the top 10 percent of American households holding roughly \$119 trillion in wealth, nearly 70 percent of the total, while the bottom 50 percent held only about \$5 trillion combined. The top 0.1 percent, around 136,000 households, controlled about \$25 trillion on their own.

Lobbying, dark money, and the revolving door help explain why. Public power is continuously converted into private advantage through agencies and legislatures that are too often staffed by the industries they regulate. In practice, campaign "donations" become a legal form of bribery.

That is why the core issue is not whether corruption is legal or illegal. It is whether the law itself has been colonized. In the United States, too often it has. The re-



sult is a political order where the wealthy rarely need to break the rules, because they have already rewritten them. And once that happens, corruption is no longer an exception to the system. It is the system.

The Trump family model

No recent political family has made corruption more visible than the Trumps. Their wealth has not only survived the presidency; it has expanded through it.

Crypto ventures, branded tokens, foreign partnerships, and high-level contacts have turned the presidency into a platform for monetization.

World Liberty Financial is the clearest symbol of that fusion. The Trump-linked crypto firm has been tied to large token sales and foreign-facing deals, including a January 2026 memorandum involving Pakistan and the integration of its USD1 stablecoin into payment infrastructure.

The agreement involved Zach Witkoff, the son of Trump's special envoy, which deepened concerns that diplomacy, family business, and finance had become one continuous enterprise.

Money from the UAE's corrupt pro-Israel Bin Zayed family also entered the picture through a major stake in the firm, strengthening the impression that access to the administration is available to the highest bidder.

The pattern extends beyond crypto. Jared Kushner's business ties with Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, Trump-branded projects pitched by foreign investors, and the family's growing exposure to military and technol-

ogy ventures all point in the same direction. The ethical structure is obvious: policy creates value, and that value flows back to the network around power.

War is a racket

The war on Iran has exposed another layer of the system. War generates tradable information, market volatility, and procurement windfalls.

There have been suspicious oil-market trades placed shortly before major announcements. The pattern is hard to ignore: large bets against oil prices, timed minutes or hours before ceasefires, delays, and public statements that moved the market.

This is corruption in a more modern form. When the White House treats the world as a casino, the people best positioned to win are those already closest to the table.

Military contractors benefit just as much. Lockheed Martin's leadership has described the current environment as a "golden opportunity," and the company is enjoying a surge of replenishment contracts as U.S. missile stocks are consumed in the U.S.-Israeli campaign of aggression.

The military-industrial complex has long profited from war, but now the enrichment is less disguised. War becomes a demand. Demand becomes contracts. Contracts become political contributions. The circle closes.

'Operation Fauxios'

Labelled "Operation Fauxios" by Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, this

machinery of deception is as sophisticated as it is cynical.

At its center stands Barak Ravid, an Axios correspondent whose pedigree in Israel's Unit 8200 signal intelligence serves as the perfect foundation for his current role: a high-fidelity conduit for psychological warfare and market manipulation.

Ravid is systematically propped up by the U.S. and Israel, who feed him a steady diet of genuine "breaking news" and exclusive scoops.

This is a deliberate cultivation of a veneer of proximity. By ensuring Ravid is the first to report on legitimate developments, his handlers build a brand of reliability that makes his eventual poison pills, the deceptive leaks and outright lies, far more lethal and believable to the public and the markets.

The utility of this arrangement was on full display following the U.S. military strike on Iran's B-1 bridge. Ravid functioned as a literal conveyor belt for his handlers, laundering a narrative of "military necessity" and "missile transport" that was a total fabrication, designed to mask the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure that was not even functional. Ravid publishes whatever he is told without an ounce of responsibility, regardless of how quickly the claims collapse under the weight of evidence.

War is now mediated through information systems as much as through munitions. In this environment, the moral distinction between reporting and market manipulation has vanished.

What remains is an insider trading ring where a "former" Israeli intelligence officer serves as the bridge between military aggression and the financial speculators who convert human instability into private income.

The dealer is stacking the deck in a casino where the house never loses, leaving the rest of the world to foot the bill for a game they were never invited to play, no matter the human or economic wreckage left in its wake.

Rubio seeking to pacify Pope as he eyes presidency



TEHRAN - In a high-stakes diplomatic balancing act, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Pope Leo XIV at the Apostolic Palace on Thursday. The two-and-a-half-hour meeting comes at a pivotal moment, as the Trump administration remains locked in a bitter verbal feud with the Holy See over the morality of the U.S. war on Iran.

The visit, while framed as a standard diplomatic mission, is widely viewed as an attempt by Rubio to repair a fractured relationship with the Catholic Church—a demographic he critically needs as he eyes a 2028 presidential bid.

The tension between Washington and the Vatican reached a boiling point following a series of public attacks by President Donald Trump against the Chicago-born pontiff. In a move that shocked many in the religious community, Trump suggested that Pope Leo XIV believed it was "fine" for Iran to obtain nuclear weapons.

Trump further escalated the rhetoric by claiming the Pope was "endangering a lot of Catholics" by opposing the U.S. military campaign, "Operation Epic Fury." These remarks sparked an immediate and fierce backlash from Christian leaders across the United States. Many Catholic and even some Evangelical groups condemned the president's rhetoric, particularly his use of AI-generated imagery depicting himself as a religious figure, which critics labeled as sacrilegious.

Pope Leo XIV has used his first year in the papacy to advocate for a "diplomacy of dialogue" over the "diplomacy of force." During

the meeting, the Pope reportedly reiterated his firm rejection of the claim that he supported nuclear proliferation.

The Holy See has long maintained that nuclear weapons are fundamentally immoral. This stance aligns with the historical position of the Catholic Church and, notably, mirrors the religious decree (fatwa) issued by the assassinated Iranian Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who declared such weapons forbidden.

"Let those who have weapons lay them down!" the Pope stated during a recent peace vigil. "Not a peace imposed by force, but through dialogue!"

For Secretary Rubio, the meeting was more than just foreign policy; it was political survival. As a Catholic himself, Rubio is acutely aware that alienated Catholic voters could derail his 2028 aspirations.

Despite Trump's explicit accusations, Rubio spent the aftermath of the meeting downplaying the rift. Speaking to reporters, he claimed that Trump's remarks had been "mischaracterized" and that the administration remains committed to a "durable peace" in the Middle East.

While Rubio's efforts to smooth things over were evident, the underlying friction remains. Vatican officials noted that while the dialogue was "frank," the Holy See's opposition to the war remains unchanged, leaving Rubio to navigate the narrow gap between his loyalty to the current administration and his own political future.

Hezbollah bravely confronting IOF commando unit

From page 1 ▶ In a series of 13 military statements, Hezbollah announced new operations targeting the IOF and their vehicles along the Lebanese border, saying the strikes were in defense of Lebanon and its people against the regime's continued violations of the ceasefire and aggression.

In its latest announced operations, the Lebanese Resistance targeted a gathering of IOF troops in the town of Deir Seryan using an attack drone.

It also targeted a gathering of IOF soldiers at the Alaman-Qusair triangle with two attack drones, and struck a newly established Israeli command center in the town of Al-Bayyada with artillery shells.

Among the prominent operations Hezbollah announced on Thursday was a strike on a newly established Zionist regime's Iron Dome platform near the Jal al-Alam site using an attack drone, destroying it, as well as an attack on a Merkava tank in the town of Bint Jbeil with a drone, achieving a confirmed hit.

Hezbollah has once again underscored its commitment to defending its land and people, especially as the IOF transgresses borders, and stressed that this is "the minimum duty to deter it and prevent it from persisting in its dangerous goals against Lebanon, its state, its people, and its resistance."

The IOF confirmed on Friday that a Hezbollah drone injured two soldiers in a northern Israeli settlement, with one of them in "severe" condition.

Earlier, a spokesman confirmed that one soldier was seriously injured and three others moderately wounded after a drone exploded near an IOF force in southern Lebanon. The spokesman said the injured soldiers were evacuated to a hospital for treatment.

Earlier, the regime's media reported that eight soldiers were wounded in drone incidents in southern Lebanon.

The Zionist regime has imposed strict media censorship regarding its military casualties during the wartime, which experts argue indicates the casualty figures are much higher.

Several days ago, the IOF admitted that the number of its soldiers injured in the latest confrontation with Hezbollah on the northern front has exceeded 900. This is according to an update published on its website several days ago, though the update remains dated April 23, 2026.

According to the published data, the number of injuries rose to 910, an increase of 175 new injuries compared to the previous tally.

Meanwhile, the Hebrew newspaper Maariv revealed that "the drone phenomenon is increasingly worrying the Israeli security establishment, not only on the northern border."

The newspaper said: "Given the use of drones equipped with fiber optics against (the IOF) in southern Lebanon and settlements along the border fence, security sources warn that this threat could extend to the West Bank, and subsequently pose a new challenge to settlements on the contact line, the city of Sharon, and the center (of the regime)."

It quoted IOF Reserve Brigadier General Ran Kochav warning of "the possibility of explosive-laden drones with fiber optics appearing in the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip." He added, "This is a serious problem, and it has appeared here late after emerging in the Russian-Ukrainian war."

According to Kochav, fiber-optic drones now pose the main threat to the Zionist regime on the battlefield, as they render current jamming capabilities and countermeasures ineffective.

"The fear is that the appearance of these drones in the (occupied) West Bank will not be just a local or military challenge. Due to their geographical proximity to the Sharon plain and the greater Tel Aviv area, an explosive drone operated from a relatively short range could pose a threat to the civilian front in the center (of the Zionist regime)," the newspaper explained.

It admitted that the regime "has not yet reached a complete solution to the drone threat," noting that "Hezbollah used an off-the-shelf product, equipped it with an explosive charge, and connected it to a fiber-optic system, turning it into a closed operating system that cannot be disabled by traditional electronic warfare."

It pointed out that "flying at a very low altitude, beyond radar detection range, makes it difficult for air defense systems to detect and intercept them in their early stages."

Rafi Saar, the mayor of Kfar Saba, also warned that "the drone threat is no longer confined to the borders; it can now reach the heart of cities and contact areas."

Saar issued a stark warning: "The truth must be stated clearly: an explosive-laden drone with fiber optics can reach every street, every balcony, and every home. In the next war, it won't knock on doors; it will land on balconies. This is no longer just a municipal challenge, it's a national challenge, and the (Israeli regime) must now make it a top priority."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

ICC prosecutor says world faces a choice between brute power and rule of law as he details dangerous attempt to remove him

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has accused members of the court's governing body of waging a "dangerous" and biased campaign to remove him from office over unfounded sexual misconduct allegations and his investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes.

Speaking exclusively to Middle East Eye, Karim Khan described the extraordinary intimidation and pressure he said he had faced in connection with his pursuit of arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former defence minister - including threats made by former British foreign secretary David Cameron and US Senator Lindsey Graham.

He accused members of the bureau of the Assembly of State Parties (ASP) of subverting basic legal principles by ignoring the outcome of a United Nations investigation into the misconduct allegations - which they had commissioned - when judges appointed to review its findings concluded there was no evidence of wrongdoing.

Khan said he had not been afforded anonymity while the complaint against him was investigated, as had been other court officials previously facing misconduct allegations, after his name was confirmed to the media by the president of the bureau.

"Why am I treated so differently?" he asked.

"The process is a Khan-made process. It's specific to me."

He warned that the ongoing campaign against him had pitched the court into "uncharted territory" which he said risked cre-

ating a dangerous precedent for removing elected officials through political pressure.

"If a process can be suborned, if it can be subverted, if it can be undermined, because state appointees and diplomats, for whatever reason, think they know better, then this is a template for getting rid of any elected official, now or in the future, on spurious or flimsy or fabricated or unfounded grounds," Khan told MEE.

Khan has been on indefinite leave for almost a year pending the outcome of the investigation into allegations which he has strenuously denied.

In March, MEE reported that a panel of judges appointed by the ASP bureau to review the investigation by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had concluded there was no evidence of "misconduct or breach of duty" by Khan.

But the prosecutor has still not returned to his duties after a group of disproportionately Western and European states voted at a bureau meeting to disregard the panel of judges and re-investigate the case.

Throughout the investigation, Khan kept his silence. Now he has decided to go public.

Speaking to MEE earlier this week, the prosecutor criticized the president of the bureau, Finnish diplomat Paivi Kaukoranta, for revealing to the press that he was being investigated for sexual misconduct. He accused one of the ASP's two vice presidents of meeting with his accuser "out of any matters of due process".

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Ministers investigate ways to facilitate goods unloading, clearance from ports, borders

TEHRAN- The Ministers of Transport and Urban Development and of Economic Affairs and Finance, along with their deputies, held a joint meeting to discuss strategies for facilitating the unloading and clearance of goods from ports and borders, as well as utilizing alternative corridors to supply essential goods.

According to IRNA reporting from the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the joint meeting of Farzaneh Sadegh, Minister of Transport and Urban Development, and Seyyed Ali Madanizadeh, Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, was held on May 6, with the participation of deputies from both ministries. The stated purpose of the meeting was to examine alternative corridors to southern ports in order to secure essential goods, with priority given to basic commodities.

During the session, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance presented a comprehensive report on the country's import and export situation, and alternative routes for continuing the import and export of essential goods in the coming months were reviewed.

Alternative routes for goods trade reviewed

The report was prepared using experiences gained from the 12-day war of 2025 (Iranian year 1404) and the recent 40-day war. It outlines proposed routes for imports, exports, and the use of alternative corridors. The report also offers suggestions for sustaining this process in the coming months.

Subsequently, representatives from free zones and the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development presented a report on the current situation and proposals related to facilitating goods movement.

Corridor capacity and trade facilitation reviewed

During the meeting, several topics were discussed, including utilizing the capacity of northern ports and other corridors to facilitate imports and exports, the readiness of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance to increase bilateral trade with neighboring countries, developing cooperation frameworks with provincial governors to streamline trade processes, and providing necessary incentives to facilitate the movement of essential goods.

Additionally, amending certain regulations to ease the transfer and movement of goods needed by the public was another key topic raised at the meeting.

Based on the decision made in this session, the results of the studies and executive proposals related to the transportation and supply of basic goods will be submitted to the President in a report following expert finalization.

In this regard, a joint committee and secretariat has been formed for planning the facilitation of essential goods imports and exports, which includes the Planning and Budget Organization, the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and



Trade, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Diverse plans for land and maritime trade underway

The head of the Economic Committee of the parliament stated that one of the country's underutilized capacities is trade through land borders and the Caspian Sea, and diverse plans are underway to realize this.

According to IRNA, Seyyed Shamseddin Hosseini said on Thursday in a gathering of private sector activists in Mazandaran province in Sari, referencing information obtained after the 12-day war and the third imposed war: "One of the country's capacities that has not been sufficiently utilized is trade through land borders and the use of Caspian Sea capacities."

He added: "Today's meeting was focused on how we can use the Caspian Sea to fill existing gaps and compensate for shortfalls in the country. We have a very important and strategic sea called the Caspian Sea, which connects Iran to major countries like Russia."

Hosseini emphasized the special position of Mazandaran province, stating: "Mazandaran province, with its numerous ports including Amirabad, Behshahr, Neka, and Nowshahr port, has this capacity. Additionally, the Mazandaran Free Zone is taking shape."

He added: "One of the priorities should be utilizing the capacity of the Northern Free Zone (which covers the northern ports) so that we can conduct exports from this region."

He further clarified: "The main goal of this meeting is to harness this opportunity and capacity through consultation with private sector activists, deputy economic affairs managers of the provincial government, and the Mazandaran Chamber of Commerce."

Mazandaran has three ports: Amirabad Behshahr, Nowshahr Special Economic Zone, and Fereydunkenar.

Nowshahr Port Special Economic Zone, with over 80 years of history, spans 88 hectares and has 11 commercial and service berths, modern port and maritime equipment, and suitable capacity for loading and unloading various types of goods and accommodating commercial vessels of up to 6,500 tons.

The General Directorate of Ports and Maritime Affairs of Mazandaran is based in the Nowshahr Special Economic Zone, and Fereydunkenar Port is under its jurisdiction.

deepening economic cooperation, facilitating and developing trade exchanges, and elevating the level of bilateral economic relations.

According to the plans made, key objectives of this trip include holding specialized meetings, conducting targeted negotiations with Azerbaijani counterparts, identifying new cooperation opportunities, providing the necessary groundwork for the supply and import of goods, and visiting several exhibitions.

This action is taken in line with the country's macro policies in the field of economic diplomacy, aiming to effectively support private sector activists, increase the level of regional trade, and make optimal use of Ardebil province's geo-economic position.

It is worth mentioning that 30 orders for goods registration have so far been completed in connection with this country, part of which has entered the implementation phase. The import process for these items is continuously being pursued and operationalized using the strategic border capacities of Ardebil province.

Fragile engines of growth: Why Iran war threatens both AI, US consumer

TEHRAN- The US economy is increasingly driven by two concentrated engines, soaring AI investment and resilient consumer spending, but Bank of America warns this dual-engine setup is uniquely vulnerable to the ongoing Iran war.

The first engine is Big Tech's capital expenditure. With giants like Amazon and Microsoft planning up to \$800 billion in AI infrastructure this year, this spending contributed significantly to Q1 GDP. However, this boom relies on vast amounts of electricity. BofA warns that energy supply bottlenecks from the West Asia conflict could choke this growth.

The World Economic Forum



notes the conflict is disrupting natural gas and industrial materials crucial for semiconductor manufacturing, creating a physi-

cal limit on AI expansion.

Simultaneously, the second engine, consumer spending, remains active but is under threat. While spending has held up, UBS Chief Economist Paul Donovan describes this as a "Wile E Coyote" moment: the gravity of high oil prices and inflation hasn't hit yet, but it will soon come "crashing down".

The dual threat is distinct here. Unlike previous crises, the Iran war simultaneously pressures households through inflation while starving AI data centers of the energy needed to keep the growth cycle running, challenging the foundation of the current US expansion.

Global economy faces structural shock from Iran war: Finnish economist

Tuomas Malinen warns Israel-U.S. aggression against Iran is accelerating inflation, energy volatility, and financial instability worldwide

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN- In this exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Tuomas Malinen, Finnish economist, CEO of GnS Economics, and associate professor of economics at the University of Helsinki, examines the global economic consequences of the recent Israel-U.S. attack on Iran. Known for his work on financial instability and macroeconomic cycles, Malinen argues that the escalation represents a systemic shock extending far beyond the West Asia. He highlights rising risks in energy markets, supply chains, inflation, and sovereign debt stability. According to him, prolonged instability in the Persian Gulf region, a key energy and geopolitical hub, could intensify global uncertainty and weaken already fragile economic growth prospects worldwide.

The following is the full text of the interview:

You often connect geopolitical conflicts such as the Iran-Israel-US tensions to global economic instability. In simple economic terms, what is the mechanism of transmission from a regional war to a global recession?

The mechanism naturally depends on the region under conflict. In the West Asia, more specifically the Persian Gulf, the mechanism naturally involves petrochemical flows. What we, as a world, are currently facing is a never-before-seen breaking of supply chains related to oil, natural gas, fertilizers, different types of industrial gases (like helium), and eventually metals and minerals, whose mining relies on the petrochemical products flowing from the Gulf.

Very few understand, but the global economy has been under constant resuscitation since the emergence of Covid-19 in early 2020. In actuality, the global economy has never recovered from the Great Financial Crisis of 2007-2009.

Since 2009, for example, the global balance sheet of central banks has grown by USD 20 trillion, a growth of around 130%. The debt-to-GDP ratio of China currently stands somewhere above 300%, while in 2009 it was in the vicinity of 150%. No one knows exactly how much debt China holds, because there are only 'guess estimates' on the size of her shadow banking sector. We assess that China's true debt-to-GDP ratio is somewhere between 500% and 600%.

Moreover, just in early December, the central bank of the United States, the Federal Reserve, started yet another asset purchase (QE) program of short-term U.S. Treasury debt to ease stress emerging in the repurchase ("repo") markets. This is a sign of existing and serious fragility, which the energy shock is very likely to rip fully open. My analysis indicates that the stress in repo emerges from the private credit sector.

Essentially, of the two main drivers of the world economy, the U.S. is a bloated financial behemoth, depending on surpluses from the rest of the world (e.g., the petrodollar) to sustain its finance-driven economy, while China is highly, or extremely, indebted.

Considering the above, the energy shock emerging from the West Asia is likely to bring not a recession, but a global economic depression. In other words, the utterly reckless war of President Trump is about to annihilate the world economy.

From your perspective as a macroeconomist, is the Iran crisis primarily an energy-price shock, a financial-system shock, or a confidence shock? Which one dominates and why?

The "Iran crisis" will start as an energy-price shock, which is yet to fully manifest as countries are burning through their petroleum reserves. This applies especially to the U.S., which looks to drain from its already-low Strategic Petroleum Reserve to increase its exports and to support the global economy. I cannot think of a more reckless strategy to cover up repercussions of their catastrophic mistake to start a war against Iran.

That said, we also need to acknowledge that the war is likely to serve a purpose in the 'grand strategy' to sustain U.S. hegemony by making countries reliant on U.S.-controlled energy. This is an extremely desperate and destructive strategy for the world.

Hence, what is also emerging is a confidence shock. People around the Western world are losing trust to the U.S. as our "leader." The long-term repercussions of this to the U.S. are likely to be dire.

A financial crisis, which is likely to morph into a "systemic crisis," is likely to emerge last. This is because there are several support mechanisms, which operate mostly through the central banks, that major countries can enable to sustain their financial sectors. However, in the face of the approaching (gigantic) economic shock, such mechanisms are likely to prove insufficient to sustain western economies.

In other words, we are likely to face a collapse of the Western and global economies due to the "Iran shock."

We can see first an epic financial collapse followed by a "financial lockdown," where people are not allowed to withdraw their money from banks nor are major asset managers allowed to sell their holdings. Central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are likely to be unleashed as a remedy for the financial crash.

You have highlighted the importance of the Strait of Hormuz. How do you assess its role in today's economy: is it a temporary vulnerability or a permanent structural weakness in the global system?

This depends on two things.

- 1) How other countries treat Iran.
- 2) How Iran treats the Strait.

I would find, e.g., a system where Iran uses tolls to access the Strait to cover the damages of the war. In the West, we all allowed the war to come by supporting Israel and the U.S. So, it would seem only fair that we cover its costs.

However, if Iran were to use the Strait as a permanent "piggy bank" to finance its government expenditures. This would be rather questionable, and it would set a dangerous precedent for international trade, which relies on unobstructed access to many straits across the world. This would be likely to turn other countries against Iran possibly leading to a prolonged conflict.

Many analysts argue that oil shocks today are less dangerous than in the 1970s due to diversification and reserves. Do you agree, or do you believe modern supply chains are actually more fragile despite technological advancement?

Well, the counterargument to this is, what do we do when reserves run out and diversi-

fication into what, exactly?

Reserves are limited, and we have conflicting information about how long it will be before major Western countries run out of reserves. Most estimates suggest that this happens during the summer, e.g., in Europe.

I would argue that the only thing that has somewhat "diversified" is the car industry. We have electric cars, which at the first stages cushion the oil shock. However, as essentially everything in our modern economies depends on petrochemical products, there is no de facto diversification, but only "diversified-dependency."

In your posts on X, you have referred to sanctions and blockades involving Iran as part of a broader system of economic pressure. From a macroeconomic standpoint, do you consider sanctions primarily a tool of strategic containment, or do they function as a source of systemic instability for global markets?

Like I describe above and below, they are both a tool of strategic containment for Iran but also a source of systemic instability for the rest of the us.

In your analysis of geopolitical fragmentation, you have suggested that a sustained Iran-Israel-US confrontation could reshape the global financial architecture. In this context, do you expect such a conflict to accelerate the process of de-dollarization, strengthen regional trade blocs, or deepen financial decoupling between Eastern and Western economies?

In the Weekly Forecast Special Issue of GnS Economics, published on March 12, we dealt with the issue of the petrodollar and de-dollarization in detail. In the report, we for example noted that:

The petrodollar system effectively became the source of the forever-wars of the U.S., because keeping it alive meant keeping U.S. 'boots on the ground' globally. To fund all the military bases, the U.S. needed to create a lot of credit (money). So, essentially, there was a never-ending loop, where the war machine required money to feed the global demand for the USD to provide the security to guarantee the reserve currency status of the U.S. dollar. Effectively: money for safety for money. Rinse and repeat.

We could change the second-to-last paragraph to: money for war for money.

When the full repercussion of the war in the West Asia starts to become visible, I am rather certain that anti-U.S. attitudes will start to grow very rapidly globally, but also within the U.S. President Trump promised to end the U.S. war machine, but the complete opposite is occurring. There's nothing left from the MAGA movement but hardcore fans.

Where I am getting with this is that the war is likely to start de-dollarization at three levels.

First, if Iran pushes the U.S. out of the West Asia and if the Strait remains under de facto Iranian control, there will be a forced movement out of the petrodollar (assuming that Iran keeps on collecting the tolls for some time). Secondly, as the safety the U.S. provides has come under (serious) scrutiny, countries across the globe are likely to start to search for regional partners in safety and in finance. Both of these developments would (will) start to erode the role of the dollar as the global reserve currency.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Trade delegation from Ardebil province travels to Baku

TEHRAN- A trade delegation from Ardebil province, led by Hossein Pir-Moazen, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce, departed for Baku with the aim of deepening economic cooperation, facilitating and developing trade exchanges, and enhancing bilateral economic relations.

In line with strengthening cross-border economic ties and developing trade interactions between Iran and neighboring countries, a high-ranking trade delegation from Ardebil province, in cooperation with the International Affairs Department of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and the Embassy of Iran in Baku, left for Baku under the leadership of Hossein Pir-Moazen, Vice President of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and head of the Iran-Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce.

This delegation, composed of a group of prominent traders, businessmen, and managers from relevant executive bodies, has traveled to the Republic of Azerbaijan with the goal of maximizing the use of the province's border capacities, relying on authorities delegated by the government,

WMBD highlights role of community science in bird conservation

TEHRAN – Observed on May 9 and October 10, World Migratory Bird Day 2026 highlights the important role of community science (also known as citizen science) in the conservation of migratory birds.

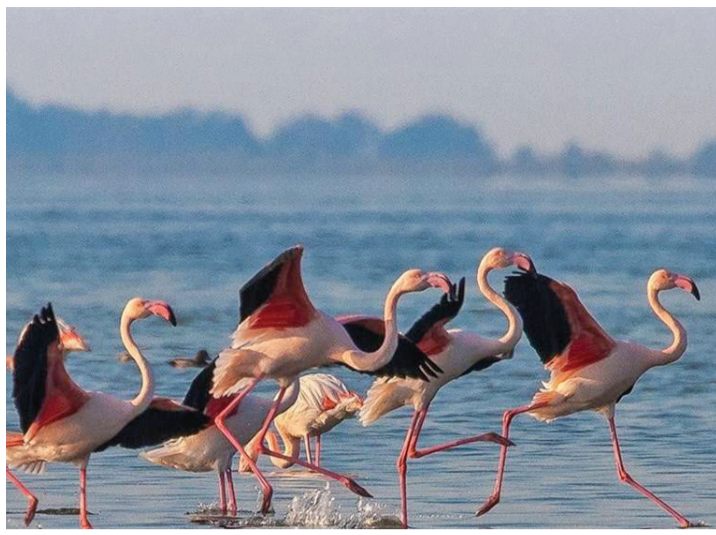
Themed “Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter!”, the 2026 campaign shines a spotlight on people-driven efforts essential to bird conservation and science, celebrating how individuals, communities, and organizations around the world are helping build the knowledge base to better conserve migratory birds across borders.

By focusing on the contribution of individuals, participatory science and public bird monitoring efforts, the campaign will celebrate the millions of bird enthusiasts around the world that are contributing to the data and knowledge that inform policy decisions and are essential for bird conservation – through each recorded observation.

The power of community science

From backyard observations to coordinated global surveys, millions of people around the world contribute vital information about migratory birds, their habitats, and the challenges they face each year. Through these recorded observations, people are engaging in community/citizen science that helps track migration patterns, population trends, and changes in habitats across flyways.

The campaign will showcase how every observation contributes essential data and supports evidence-based conservation at local, national, and



international scales.

Connecting with nature to support conservation

When people take part in bird counting activities that help gather this important data, they also strengthen their connection to nature, deepen their understanding of the pressures facing birds, and often become stewards of nature protection, strengthening society's engagement with nature.

A global effort across all flyways

This year's theme is particularly meaningful as it recognizes the many community science projects along all of the world's major flyways.

It will be focusing on the monitoring initiatives and platforms that already exist to record bird observations in ways that support both science and policy.

WMBD 2026 also coincides with the 60th Anniversary of the International Water-bird Census, an opportunity to celebrate this global effort to

monitor and protect migratory waterbirds as well as promote other community and citizen science initiatives across all flyways of the world.

By encouraging people to gather observations from across migratory routes, a clearer picture of the “story of the flyways,” emphasizing connectivity, international collaboration, and our collective responsibility, is built.

Celebrated twice a year, the WMBD recognizes that migration occurs at different times in the northern and southern hemispheres and is part of a repeating annual cycle.

The partners behind WMBD look forward to working closely with all interested stakeholders, external partners, governments, organizations, and communities across all flyways to amplify this message and continue using WMBD as a way to raise awareness and conservation action for migratory birds across borders.

Iran, an important stopover

for migratory birds

Iran is the most important country in West Asia in terms of housing migratory birds in winter, as around two million birds fly each year to spend winter in the country's wetlands, according to an official with the Department of Environment.

Encompassing numerous wetlands, reservoirs, and diverse water bodies, Iran welcomes millions of migratory birds every year. The country has also emerged as the most important stopover for migratory birds in their flight route from Siberia to the Nile, as sixteen percent of them select to spend the winter in the country, ISNA quoted Hassan Akbari as saying.

A diverse array of migratory birds fly to the country, with more than 160 species of aquatic and waterside birds identified in Iran, which is a significant number.

Despite limited water resources in the domestic habitats of the country, the study of the migratory bird population trend shows that the abundance and diversity of the birds that enter the country have not decreased. The majority of them have flown to the coastal areas of the Caspian and the Persian Gulf, though.

Iran hosts more than five percent of the world's migratory birds in 450 sites in winter, Akbari said.

“Every year, some 30 to 40 million birds are counted all over the world, and the related statistics are recorded in the International Waterfowl Census (IWC) database,” he added.

No Matter Where, No Matter When: IRCS stands with people in crises

TEHRAN –The national red crescent week is being held from May 8 to 14, commemorating self-sacrificing members of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), who stand like a cypress, providing support to people, and saving their lives during crises.

In the Iranian culture, cypress trees represent strength and stability; they are recognized as a symbol of resistance, freedom, love, and beauty. The comparison is apt, for the IRCS members' commitment, devotion, and self-sacrifice have enabled them to bring hope to the community in the darkest moments of their lives, boosting their strength and resistance.

In times of crises such as earthquakes, floods, and accidents, as well as conflicts, the IRCS relief teams are among the first to rush to the scene to respond to hazards and offer assistance. They stand on the front lines of crises that affect them, as well.

With the escalation of hostilities against Iran, after the imposed US-Israeli attacks on the country, Iranian civilians faced growing uncertainty and loss. The IRCS relief teams worked across affected areas, searching through rubble, rescuing survivors from collapsed buildings, and providing urgent medical care.

The risks were real. Ambulances and emergency centres were damaged. Volunteers were killed while carrying out their duties. Many responders were not only witnessing tragedy; they were living it.

They worked under danger, made life-saving decisions in seconds, and supported communities through moments of fear and loss.

Humanity is what turns compassion into action, into helping, healing, and standing with those who need it most.

Sadly, four IRCS staff members were martyred during the US-Israeli aggression. Hamidreza Jahanbakhsh, Somayeh Mir Abou Eshaq, Alireza Sohbatlou, and Abolfazl Dehnavi were the relief workers martyred during U.S. and Israeli airstrikes on Iran while carrying out their duties.

The week provides a great opportunity to remember and pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in the service of others. Their commitment is a powerful reminder of the need to safeguard humanitarian action and protect those who risk everything to assist others.

To celebrate the week, the IRCS has launched a campaign titled ‘crescent in the fields’, setting

up centers in all cities to showcase the IRCS achievements, provide relief services, and public education, preparing community members and first responders to deliver first aid during and immediately after disasters. The IRCS teams, educators, and coaches will join people in the streets. Moreover, rescuers and survivors will narrate their stories and experiences they underwent during the recent imposed war.

The national society plans to inaugurate construction projects across the country, including the inauguration of IRCS pharmacies in Shahrud (the north-central province of Semnan), Jiroft (Kerman province), and Lahijan (northern Gilan province).

A smart rescue system named ‘national aid portal’ will be unveiled during the week.

Holding a large-scale relief and rescue maneuver in Tehran, campaigns like ‘our Country, selfless services, permanent support, blood donation’, car rallies adorned with the flags of Iran and the IRCS, and unveiling the latest tracking system and search and rescue dogs are among other programs.

The week-long programs will involve a photo exhibition featuring rescue efforts and self-sacrifice of the aid workers, and the inauguration of a house of young artists affiliated with the IRCS.

The National Humanitarian Rights Committee of the Islamic Republic of Iran is scheduled to organize meetings to pursue the legal consequences of the military invasions against Iran.

The national society will hold meetings with the heads of the World Food Program (WFP), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and other international institutions.

The IRCS medical centers are planned to provide free medical services and screen people for diabetes and blood pressure in deprived provinces of the country, and abroad.

During the week, humanitarian items will be distributed among war-affected people. Milad Tower, Azadi Tower, and Tabiat Bridge will be lit up in red and white, and the tombs of martyrs will be dusted.

One of the most important programs of the week is holding a memorial ceremony at the Minab Martyrs' Cemetery.

All these programs aim to strengthen the spirit of solidarity, promote the culture of sacri-

ifice, and provide selfless service to the people.

World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 2026 is observed annually on May 8. Each year, the day highlights a specific theme. This year, it is held under the theme ‘United in Humanity. No Matter Where, No Matter When’.

For more than 160 years, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has stood alongside communities in times of crisis, guided by the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality, ensuring that aid reaches those most in need, wherever and whoever they are.

The day honours their commitment and celebrate their humanity. Because beyond every emergency, every response, and every emblem, there is one truth: we are united in humanity.

In an increasingly complex and polarized world, where division and dehumanization are on the rise, humanity remains our common ground.

It is what connects people across borders, across crises, and across differences.

Since late February 2026, devastating strikes across Iran have killed hundreds, injured thousands, and disrupted essential services for up to 60 million people. The Iranian Red Crescent Society has mobilized thousands of responders to deliver search and rescue, medical aid, and emergency relief across the country – but the scale of need is far beyond what they can meet alone.

In April, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) issued an emergency appeal, urging the international community to support the Iranian Red Crescent Society during the imposed war by the United States and Israel against the country.

Jagan Chapagain, the secretary general of the IFRC, lauded the courageous acts of IRCS staff as they rush in to provide rescue services to those affected by the war, highlighting “Despite fear and uncertainty, Iranian Red Crescent Society staff, and volunteers continue to respond with remarkable courage, providing emergency care and health services across the country.”

The IFRC has decided to choose the IRCS as the regional hub for rescue and relief training thanks to its high capabilities and its remarkable achievements over the past years, particularly during the US-Israeli war against the country.

National Health Week to be marked



TEHRAN – The national health week is scheduled to be held from May 15 to 21, under the theme ‘sustainable healthcare with science and authority, enduring Iran’.

Each day of the week focuses on a specific topic.

Friday, May 15, ‘Healthy family, young Iran.’

Saturday, May 16, ‘Health system resilience, scientific management in crisis.’

Sunday, May 17, ‘Media and scientific promotion of health culture.’

Monday, May 18, ‘Self-Care and knowledge-based mental health.’

Tuesday, May 19, ‘Family physician, referral system, sustainable health.’

Wednesday, May 20, ‘Honoring health team martyred and wounded during US-Israeli war against Iran.’

Thursday, May 21, ‘Organ donation, self-sacrifice, life opportunity.’

The World Health Day is observed on April 7, annually. In 2026, the day called on people everywhere to stand with science under the theme ‘Together for health. Stand with science’.

According to deputy health minister Alireza Raeisi, this year's theme indicates that science lays the foundation of fighting emerging health challenges such as microbial resistance, climate change, noncommunicable diseases, and the risk of pandemics.

However, the realization of the 2026 theme is impossible without securing health against politicization, sanctions, and military aggression, he noted.

Referring to the recent violent attacks by the US and Israel on Iran's civilian and health infrastructures, which have led to the destruction of medical centers and the martyrdom of people and health workers, Raeisi underlined the importance of ensuring the safety and security of the health system during conflicts.

“As long as access to medicine, critical devices, and scientific interactions are used as a lever to achieve political aims, as long as military aggressions threaten the safety of health infrastructure, and the lives of medical staff, we cannot claim that we stand with science,” the official added.

“These days, we have been witnessing the widespread destruction of non-military units, airstrikes on universities, scientific research, and health centers by our enemies; a large number of our dear fellow men, including women, children, and health workers, have lost their lives.

Today, we announce that standing with science is only possible when political and military pressures can no longer be exerted on the health sector. Respecting science requires respecting the independence, security, and well-being of the countries,” Raeisi further noted.

The official went on to say that the scientific achievements of the domestic researchers and the exchange of knowledge with the international community are the best ways to realize universal health coverage (UHC), and reduce inequality of opportunity to have access to health services.

World Health Day 2026 launches a year-long campaign celebrating the power of scientific collaboration to protect the health of people, animals, plants, and the planet.

The campaign spotlights both scientific achievements and the multilateral cooperation needed to turn evidence into action – through a strong focus on the One Health approach.

It invites people everywhere to participate

– by celebrating scientific achievements, engaging with evidence, and sharing personal stories of how science improves lives.

The campaign calls on governments, scientists, health workers, partners, and the public to stand with science by engaging with evidence, facts, and science-based guidance to protect health; rebuild trust in science and public health; and support science-led solutions for a healthier future.

Iran is a role model

The World Health Organization's (WHO) director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) has said Iran is a leading country in expanding its healthcare system and providing access to universal health coverage.

Lauding the country's achievements in recent years, Hanan Balkhi said expanding primary health care services, increasing access to health coverage in rural areas, maintaining high vaccination rates, and reducing maternal and newborn mortality, Iran has managed to become a successful role model in the region, the health ministry's website reported.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA).

The country's commitment to providing equal health services to millions of refugees makes its services even more commendable.

WHO EMRO is working closely with the Iranian regulatory institutions to achieve regulatory maturity level 3 in the pharmaceutical regulatory system to pave the way for broader exports of Iranian health-oriented products to global markets; it will also contribute to promoting global health security, Balkhi added.

An Iranian delegation headed by Zafarqandi participated in the 78th WHA, held from May 19 to June 27, 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Focusing on the 2025 theme ‘One World for Health’, WHA78 brought together high-level country representatives to address health challenges. This year's gathering comes at a pivotal moment for global health, as Member States confront emerging threats and major shifts in the landscape for global health and international development.

The 2025 theme underscores the World Health Organization's (WHO) enduring commitment to solidarity and equity, highlighting that even in unprecedented times, everyone, everywhere, should have an equal chance to live a healthy life.

In October 2024, Balkhi said WHO EMRO is interested in expanding cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The official made the remarks in a meeting with Alireza Raeisi, the Iranian deputy health minister, and Mohammad-Hossein Niknam, the deputy health minister for international affairs, on the sidelines of the Seventy-first session of the WHO EMRO.

A delegation led by Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi participated in the seventy-first session of the WHO EMRO, held in Doha, Qatar, from October 14 to 17, 2024.

“During my short visit to Iran a few months ago, I became familiar with the capabilities of Iran in the health sector; Iran is a role model in health in the region,” Balkhi noted.

“Utilizing full potentials available in the [regional] countries is essential for us, and we will not hesitate to support the implementation of health programs,” the official noted.



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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Generosity is to help a deserving person without his request, and if you help him after his request, then it is either out of self-respect or to avoid rebuke.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:01 Evening: 18:17 Dawn: 03:27 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 05:04 (tomorrow)

Iranian short film "Playground" selected for Classics section of 79th Cannes Film Festival

TEHRAN – A new Iranian short film has been selected for the Classics section of the 79th Cannes Film Festival.

This year's Classics section exclusive program for special screening of three recent short films will be presented in the presence of the directors, actors, and producers.

"Playground" written and directed by Amirhossein Shojaei and produced by renowned filmmaker Saeed Roustaei is one of the three films in the section, ISNA reported.

The 15-minute drama is a joint production of Iran and France, made in 2026. The cast includes Javad Ghamati and Hana Dejahaghi. It will be screened in the presence of director Amirhossein Shojaei and producer Saeed Roustaei.

The story takes place in a playground where a father abandons his daughter and walks away. He heads to the bus terminal to leave the city, but just before boarding, he changes his mind and rushes back to the playground to find her. When he arrives, she's no longer there. He searches the entire park until he finally spots a girl standing at the top of a slide. She looks exactly like his daughter—but something is different. She doesn't recognize him. It's as if she is no longer the same child he left behind.

Amirhossein Shojaei is a photographer and filmmaker based in Tehran, Iran. For over 17 years, he has worked as a still photographer in Iranian professional cinema, collaborating with renowned directors such as Asghar Farhadi, Saeed Roustaei, Vahid Jalilvand, Hamid Nematollah, and Hooman Seyedi. The films he has been involved in have been screened at major international film festivals, including Cannes Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival, Berlinale, and others.

His experience behind the scenes—observing rehearsals, directing processes, and film editing—shaped his cinematic understanding and inspired him to pursue directing.

In 2023, his directorial debut "The Guard" was selected for the Official Competition at the 76th Locarno Film Festival and received the Median Patent Verwaltung Award. "Playground" is his second short film.



Shojaei's works explore the intersection of truth, image, and everyday life, often reflecting on social realities through subtle and intimate visual storytelling.

Saeed Roustaei, 36, is an award-winning Iranian director and screenwriter known for his powerful and realistic stories about society and family struggles. He made a major impact with his debut feature, "Life and a Day" (2016), which won nine awards at the Fajr Film Festival. His next film, "Just 6.5," also known as "Law of Tehran" (2019), became one of Iran's biggest box-office hits and earned a César Award nomination in France.

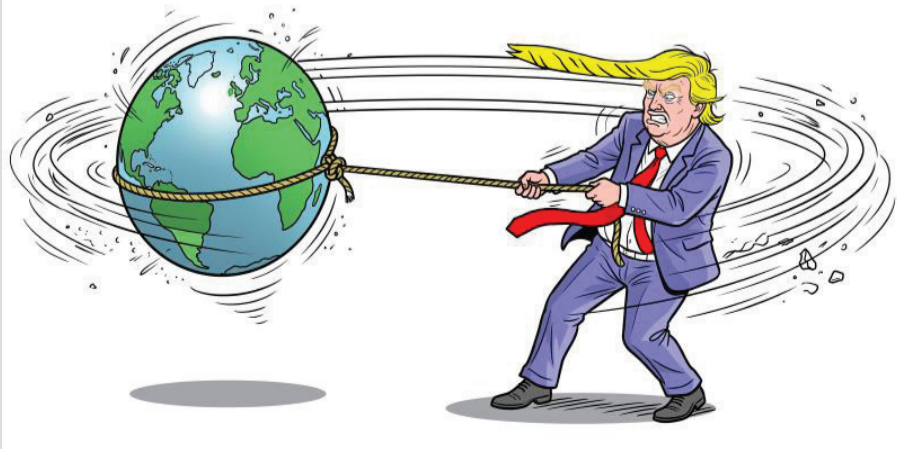
Roustaei's international success continued with "Leila's Brothers" (2022), which competed in the Main Competition at the Cannes Film Festival and won the FIPRESCI Prize. Most recently, he returned to the Cannes Main Competition with his new film, "Woman and Child" (2025).

In June 2025, Roustaei was invited to join the Directors Branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival will take place from May 12 to 23 in Cannes, France.

Cartoon of Day

arcadio



Trump Causing Global Tension

Cartoonist: Arcadio Esquivel from Costa Rica

The union of majesty and beauty: Reem Al-Wurimi on spiritual sovereignty of Tehran

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

TEHRAN – In the wake of the recent US-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a voice from North Africa has emerged to articulate the spiritual and civilizational resilience of the Iranian nation. Reem Al-Wurimi, the acclaimed Tunisian poet and journalist, has captivated the Islamic world with her latest work, "Take Me to the Streets of Tehran."

The poem, which has gone viral across regional media platforms, serves as a bold manifesto for a new era of Islamic unity. In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Al-Wurimi—a seasoned intellectual—shared the profound insights that led her to pen transformative poem.

The sanctity of Tehran streets

Reflecting on the genesis of her poem, Al-Wurimi noted that her inspiration was born from the sights of Tehran during the height of the conflict. For her, the city's streets were not merely sites of transit, but venues of divine worship.

"I saw Iranians spending their nights in the streets during the war. Instead of remaining in mosques on Qadr nights in Ramadan, they brought their devotion to the streets," Al-Wurimi remarked.

"I realized then that these are the most honorable streets history has ever witnessed. They became sacred to me because they transformed into open-air mosques where a nation stood against global arrogance. The nights of Qadr were being lived out in the open air, proving that resistance itself is a form of prayer."

The 'Banner of Honor' and the shift of identity

Al-Wurimi's poem has sparked intense debate, particularly in Arab media, for its provocative stance on the shifting leadership of the Muslim world. In her verses, she speaks of a departure from traditional "Arabism," suggesting that the "Banner of Honor" has been passed to Persian hands.

"Interpretation often depends on the inner nature of the listener," Al-Wurimi told the Tehran Times



regarding the backlash she has faced. "In the truth of Islam, sectarian and ethnic labels must fade. When I wrote about moving past my 'Arabism' or my 'Sunni' identity, my intent was to gather around the 'Common Word'—the testimony of La ilaha illa Allah."

She dismissed the malicious interpretations of her work by certain regional outlets, describing them as agents of a Zionist-driven project of "de-identification" aimed at stripping Muslims of their revolutionary spirit. "The line of Truth (Haqq) is the line of humanity championed by the Islamic Republic. Those with sickness in their hearts may threaten me, but God's light cannot be extinguished."

A mystical allegiance

Perhaps the most discussed aspect of Al-Wurimi's poem is her explicit pledge of allegiance to the Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei. The Tunisian poet clarified that her stance is rooted in a deep theological and mystical understanding rather than mere political alignment.

Al-Wurimi offered a unique historical perspective on the Iranian leadership: "I see Imam Khomeini as the figure who equipped the ma-

terial battlefield against the global demonic regime. Following him, the martyred Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei came to nurture and elevate the souls of the believers."

"Now, I see Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei as the one who holds both the 'Outer Banner' and the 'Inner Banner,'" she continued.

"He represents a union of the majesty of the great Khomeini and the beauty of the great Khamenei. My allegiance is a spiritual and mystical union of souls."

Art as the bullet, media as the chamber

As a journalist as well as a poet, Al-Wurimi emphasized the critical role of cultural production in the current conflict. She described art and media as a single, lethal weapon against falsehood. "Poetry creates the internal image, but the camera delivers it. Poetry is the bullet that must be loaded into the chamber of media to reach its target."

She specifically praised the role of women and artists in Iran for preserving the "Culture of Resistance." According to Al-Wurimi, the primary goal of the enemy is "deculturation." By maintaining their multi-thousand-year heritage, Iranians have ensured that

the foundation of resistance remains unshakable. "Every artist is a 'culture-maker' whose duty is to break the constructs of the enemy and rebuild a foundation based on Islamic thought."

The reality of the post-war city

Concluding her interview, Al-Wurimi expressed her determination to dismantle the distorted images of Iran prevalent in Western and some Arab media. Having walked the streets of Tehran following the recent strikes, she spoke of a city that refused to be broken.

"I am eager to return and narrate the truth. While the media tries to show ruins, I saw a city where everything is clean, life is normal, and the civilization is thriving. You cannot erase this civilization from the minds of the people."

She called on the Muslim Ummah to view the Iranian experience as a blueprint for the future. "What this nation has achieved should be written in gold and taught in our schools. In the Iranian person, I see the manifestation of the spiritual transcendence that the Holy Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) desired for all humanity. We are not just observers; we are students of the Iranian nation."

Italy's David di Donatello winners turn spotlight to Gaza war, solidarity calls

The film "Everyday in Gaza" has won Best Short Film at Italy's most prestigious awards, the David di Donatello, often regarded as the Oscars of Italian cinema.

Directed by Palestinian filmmaker Omar Rammal, the 16-minute movie captures the realities of daily life for Palestinians living under genocide, where even the simplest acts, such as caring for children, working or studying, take on the meaning of resistance, The New Arab reported.

The film follows the Farra family: husband Mohammed, his wife Yusra, and their three children. Mohammed, a barber from al-Qarara in Khan Younis, continues working despite being displaced more than seven times during the war.

"In our homes and in our land, we live and we die," Mohammed says in the film. "We do not abandon them."

Mohammed and Yusra describe the heartbreak of being unable to provide for their children – struggling to bathe them, wash their clothes, and secure enough food despite spending hours waiting in line.

"I can't hold my son," Mohammed says in the film. "He'd hear my fearful heartbeat."

The film was shot by Gaza-based journalist Soliman Hijji between April and May 2025 as part of a project funded by the European Union in collaboration with Save the Children.

It resonated with audiences at Rome's Cinecittà studios on Wednesday night during the 71st edition of the awards ceremony, which honors the best in Italian and international cinema.

"I stand here today, but my heart and mind are still behind the borders," Rammal said as he accepted the award. He added that the honor "does not belong to me, but to the people who risked their lives to document the truth."

He also criticized what he described as the "double standards of many governments (who) have helped allow this genocide to continue," and stressed that art carries "position and responsibility."

"As artists, we cannot celebrate creativity while children, civilians, journalists and filmmakers are being killed in Gaza and Lebanon," he



said. "Enough silence and enough killing."

To date, the film has been screened in more than 90 cinemas worldwide.

Rammal's work is the latest in a series of films from or about Gaza gaining international recognition.

"The Voice of Hind Rajab," directed by Kaouther Ben Hania, was nominated for Best International Feature Film at the 98th Academy Awards and also received a nomination for Best International Film at the Italian awards.

"Palestine 36," directed by Annemarie Jacir, was selected as Palestine's entry for Best International Feature Film at this year's Oscars after winning at the 38th Tokyo International Film Festival in November 2025.

The theme of artistic responsibility continued through other speeches at the 2026 David di Donatello Awards, as winners tied their work to broader global issues. Actor Lino Musella, who received Best Supporting Actor for "Nonostante," echoed this sentiment by stating that "art is a threat to autocrats and fascists," referencing actor Robert De Niro, and expressing support for the Global Sumud Flotilla.

On April 29, boats linked to the Global Sumud

Flotilla were intercepted by the Israeli military in international waters off Crete.

The flotilla represents a humanitarian initiative aimed at reaching Gaza, following a previous attempt in September 2025 that ended with an Israeli raid and the detention of activists.

Musella indicated he would keep speaking out against injustices worldwide, concluding his remarks with the phrase "Free Palestine."

Other winners also brought attention to Gaza in symbolic and direct ways.

Set designers Andrea Castorina and Marco Martucci dedicated their award to children and Palestinians, while sound designer Gianluca Scarlata appeared on stage carrying a Palestinian-themed bag and urged audiences to continue discussing Gaza.

Despite the strong political undertones, the ceremony maintained its core function as a film awards event, with the top prize for Best Film going to "Le Citta di Pianura," directed by Francesco Sossai.

Israel has maintained a blockade on Gaza since 2007. About 1.5 million Palestinians in the enclave have been displaced after two years of war that began in October 2023.