

Iran Well-Equipped in Diplomatic and Military Fields



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Under US orders, Banque du Liban demonizes Al-Qard al-Hassan

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT — The Banque du Liban has announced banks and financial institutions subject to its license are prohibited from dealing with Al-Qard al-Hassan, Hezbollah's solidarity association.

U.S. Special Representative Thomas Barrack quickly praised the move, considering it a "step in the right direction". He also claimed that it represents "a gain for the Lebanese and for international efforts to restore confidence in their banking sector."

Banque du Liban's circular was preceded by the U.S. Treasury Department's announcement that the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) had imposed sanctions on seven personalities and one entity for their alleged ties to the Al-Qard al-Hassan.

Michael Falkender, the Treasury undersecretary, stated that "as Hezbollah seeks to rebuild its operations, the Treasury Department remains committed to dismantling its financial structure and preventing it from reconstituting itself" ▶ Page 5

The 'post-Iranian Middle East' proposed by Israel

By Xavier Villar

MADRID — At a time when stability and sovereignty have become almost existential issues countries in West Asia, Amos Yadlin's article "The Post-Iranian Middle East," published in Foreign Affairs, perfectly encapsulates a kind of political arrogance masked as academic analysis. Far from offering a roadmap to peace, the piece by the former Israeli general reads more like an obituary for regional autonomy.

Amos Yadlin, retired general of the Israeli Air Force and former head of military intelligence, is a textbook example of what scholar Sahar Ghumkor calls "the soldier-turned-scholar": ex-military figures who carry their battlefield mentality into political or intellectual spaces, preserving an epistemology rooted in conflict and securitization. This reductionist outlook—typical of a military apparatus that sustains an occupation regime—deeply shapes Yadlin's reading of the region, especially when it comes to Iran, which he portrays as an absolute, irreconcilable enemy. ▶ Page 2

Israel's covert plans against Iran in progress: Report

TEHRAN — Following its failure to create internal unrest or fragment Iran's territorial integrity during the recent 12-day war, the Israeli regime has moved to implement three new psychological and political operations targeting the Islamic Republic.

According to a report by Fars News Agency citing reliable sources, the Israeli regime has issued new directives to its affiliated networks and operatives, instructing them to shift focus toward blaming the Islamic Republic—particularly the policies of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution—for the recent aggression against the country.

This propaganda line was quickly adopted by foreign-based media outlets such as Iran International, and echoed by certain domestic elements reportedly linked to the network, functioning as amplifiers of Israeli narratives.

The second prong of the Zionist regime's agenda follows the failure of the son of the deposed Shah's previous attempt to form a so-called "government-in-exile." Now, under a new label— "Constituent Assembly in Exile"—Pahlavi is planning to stage an event next month in a European capital. ▶ Page 2

China says it backs Iran's sovereignty against Western 'bullying'

TEHRAN — In a high-profile meeting on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed Beijing's unwavering support for Iran during discussions with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Held on the sidelines of the 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tianjin, the consultation highlighted the robust partnership between the two nations, particularly following the U.S.-Israeli 12-day war on Iran.

Wang Yi praised Iran's measured and prudent approach in preventing further escalation in the volatile West Asia.

"We will continue to support Iran in resisting bullying policies and preserving its national sovereignty," he declared, underscoring China's principled stance against unilateralism, coercion, and the use of force.

He emphasized Beijing's commitment to diplomacy and dialogue as the path forward, pledging to work through bilateral and multilateral channels, including the UN Security Council, to de-escalate tensions. ▶ Page 2

Iran's heavy crude price rises 9.2% in June: OPEC

TEHRAN — The price of Iran's heavy crude oil climbed by \$5.88, or 9.2 percent, in June compared to May, reaching \$69.13 per barrel, according to OPEC's latest monthly report.

Citing figures from the OPEC Secretariat, Shana reported that the collective crude oil output of the 12 OPEC member states stood at 27.235 million barrels per day (bpd) in June—up 220,000 bpd from the previous month.

Iran's crude production fell by 62,000 bpd to 3.241 million bpd in June. Despite the drop, Iran retained its position as OPEC's third-largest producer after Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Iran's average daily oil output for 2024 stands at 3.257 million bpd, compared to 2.884 million bpd in 2023.

Saudi Arabia produced 9.356 million bpd in June, followed by Iraq at 3.943 million bpd, with Iran ranking third at 3.241 million bpd.

OPEC+ countries, which include non-OPEC allies, pumped 14.323 million bpd in June, an increase of 129,000 bpd from May. Total crude oil production from OPEC and its partners reached 41.559 million bpd in June, marking a 349,000 bpd increase compared to May's 41.210 million bpd. ▶ Page 4

Tehran ceremony pays tribute to martyr artist Mansoureh Alikhani

TEHRAN — The artistic community and the family of the martyr Mansoureh Alikhani gathered on Tuesday at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization in Tehran to pay tribute to a remarkable artist whose life was tragically cut short in the recent Israeli aggression on Iranian soil.

The ceremony not only celebrated her artistic achievements but also underscored her unwavering faith, bravery, and dedication to social causes, embodying the spirit of a true believer and liberated soul.

The event was attended by prominent figures from the cultural and artistic spheres, as well as artists, friends, and family members of the late artist. The ceremony opened with heartfelt speeches reflecting on her life, her artistic journey, and the profound impact she made on those around her.

Speaking at the ceremony, painter Kazem Chalipa captured the essence of Alikhani's character. He emphasized that everyone's time on earth is limited and that her life was a testament to the importance of cherishing the moments granted to us. ▶ Page 8

Exclusive The story behind Iran's first Paleolithic World Heritage site

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN — In a landmark moment for Iran's cultural heritage, the Prehistoric Sites of the Khorramabad Valley have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, marking the first time Iran's Paleolithic heritage has received such recognition.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Dr. Sonia Shidrang, the visionary archaeologist behind this achievement, discussed the scientific journey, international recognition, and lasting cultural significance of these ancient sites.

She elaborated on the scientific foundations, global significance, and broader cultural and academic impacts of this landmark achievement. ▶ Page 6



Behind the airstrikes: Israel's strategic push to fragment Syria

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Recent weeks have seen Israel intensify its military operations in both Gaza and Syria. The entire international community has been in complete panic since then.

Tel Aviv officials portray the attacks as measures of protection for Israel and minorities, while a closer look shows a vicious hand is at work.

There are growing concerns over Israel's deepening involvement in Syria, where its military actions are increasingly seen not merely as deterrent measures, but as instruments in a broader strategy to reshape the regional strategic landscape. ▶ Page 5

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

Moscow's approach toward Tehran-Washington tensions

In an interview with Qiuomars Yazdanpanah, a professor of geopolitics at the University of Tehran, Etemad examined Moscow's approach toward the tensions between Iran and the United States. He said: Russia and Iran are two countries that have seen many ups and downs in their relations over the years. As two neighbors, they regard each other through a geopolitical and strategic lens. However, one point that should be noted is that Russia is not considered a significant player by other world powers. This is a reality that Iran must fully understand. The Israel-U.S. offensive against Iran (in the 12-day war) is exaggerated in order to convey this idea the Islamic Republic's nuclear activities were a threat and are still a threat. This is a malicious move that could be used a pretext to escalate pressure or even trigger new confrontations with Iran. Therefore, Iran, by relying on official and documented arguments and data, should adopt positions toward any statement or position by Russian officials on issues related to Iran's nuclear program, because the enemy is looking for excuses that can be used to justify actions against Iran.

Shargh: Europe's influence on the negotiation process

Shargh spoke with Mohammad Irani, a senior analyst on Middle East and Arab issues, about possible activation of the snapback sanctions by the European trio (France, Germany and Britain) and Iran's nuclear diplomacy in the coming weeks or months. He said: Tehran has threatened to withdraw from the NPT if this (snapback) mechanism is implemented, which will push tensions to a boiling point. Therefore, Tehran and Washington, aware of the 30-day process for a return of UN sanctions, are probably looking for a temporary agreement through diplomacy to prevent Europe from taking such a step. Some believe that the activation of the snapback mechanism by the Europeans will not have much impact on the course of the Iran-U.S. negotiations, and that both sides will pursue their interests in the new round of negotiations. On the other side, some acknowledge that the activation of the snapback mechanism and the direction of the upcoming negotiations are two issues that are influenced by each other. Whether we like it or not, if the three European countries request the Security Council to activate the snapback mechanism, it will have an impact on the negotiations.

Israel's covert plans against Iran in progress:report



From page 1 ► According to informed sources, the plan involves secret invitations extended to a number of anti-Iran terrorist groups, particularly Kurdish separatist factions, with the goal of fabricating a symbolic assembly to undermine Iran's political legitimacy.

The most alarming aspect of the Israeli regime's new strategy, however, is the formation of a political alliance between remnants of the 2009 riots, monarchists, terrorists, and separatist groups.

Sources confirm that this third project is being coordinated by Ardeshtir Amir Arjomand, a long-time MEK associate and former advisor to one of the leaders of the

Arman-e-Melli: Active diplomacy is a necessity

In an interview with political affairs expert Mehdi Pazoki, Arman-e-Melli dealt with the negotiation and diplomacy as tools to prevent the activation of the snapback sanctions. He said: Obviously, adopting active negotiation and diplomacy are not only a choice but a necessity to preserve Iran's national interests. Any emotional reaction to the issue is playing on the field that Israel has designed, especially as Israeli officials have repeatedly emphasized that now is the best time to activate the snapback mechanism and complete the cycle of sanctions on Iran. Israel is capitalizing on the present conditions to sway U.S. and European support in its favor. Iran, relying on its strategic dominance in terms of international conditions and existing diplomatic capability, can manage the issue in a way that not only will resolve the crisis but also reduce foreign pressure, improve the economic situation, and rebuild the path of international interactions. At this point, there are opportunities for interaction that can be used with intelligence and excitement to benefit the country and prevent Israel's unilateral exploitation of the situation.

Khorasan: Good negotiation, bad negotiation

In a note, Khorasan discussed the quality of possible resumption of negotiations in the future and wrote: The recent 12-day imposed war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, which began amid the negotiations between the United States without any justification, once again showed that hegemonic strategies do not undergo fundamental changes with a change of faces and governments or discourses. The claim of preventing nuclear enrichment is only a cover for strategic pressure and imposing political will on the Iranian nation. But the Iranian nation, by exercising authority over years, given its recent experience, has chosen a strategy that is not emotional or ideological. Rather its logic is based on strategic rationality and Islamic principles. Its strategy is also derived from active resistance. Negotiations are not only permissible but necessary when we want to impose our will on the enemy. However, holding negotiations to please the enemy are by no means in parallel with Islam's political rationality. Based on Islamic teachings, negotiation is an intelligence move.

2009 riots. The initiative, launched in the wake of a controversial statement by one of the figures currently under house arrest, revolves around drafting a "referendum manifesto" to be signed by a coalition of extremist and anti-Iran individuals both inside and outside the country.

In the domestic sphere, individuals identified only as "Mostafa T." and "Abdollah M." have reportedly taken on the task of gathering signatures from like-minded figures. Outside the country, the operation is being led by Reza Alijani, another figure with a long record of subversive activity.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

China says it backs Iran's sovereignty against Western 'bullying'

From page 1 ► Wang also expressed China's readiness to assist Iran in safeguarding its territorial integrity and national security, a statement seen as a direct rebuke to recent aggressions by Israel and the United States.

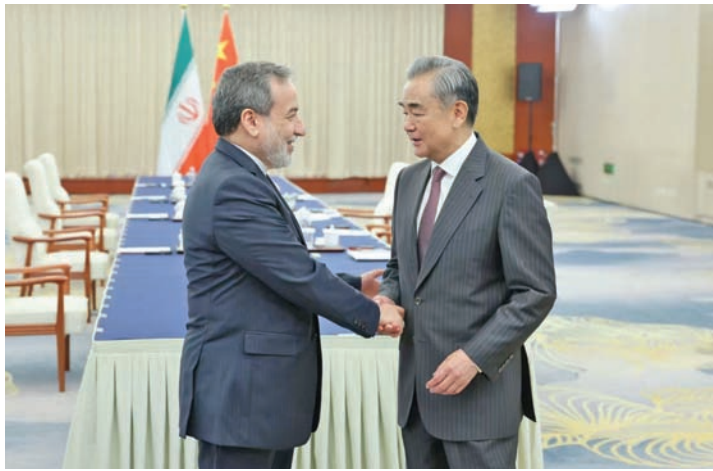
Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi expressed deep appreciation for China's role as host and its forthright condemnation of Israeli and U.S. violations of Iran's sovereignty.

He thanked Wang Yi, in his capacity as president of the SCO, for denouncing the aggressions that breached the UN Charter and international law.

"China's principled and effective positions in international forums, especially at the Security Council, have been invaluable," Araghchi said, specifically citing Beijing's criticism of the dangerous attacks on Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities.

He briefed his Chinese counterpart on the latest developments following Tel Aviv's aggression against Iran and the subsequent halt in fighting, stressing that the UN Security Council and all nations bear a responsibility to uphold regional and global peace.

Araghchi highlighted the enduring historical ties between the two



Chinese FM Wang (R) voiced Beijing's support for Tehran during his meeting with Iranian FM Araghchi in Tianjin, China, on July 16, 2025.

ancient civilizations, reaffirming Iran's resolve to advance its comprehensive strategic partnership with China.

He emphasized that this relationship, rooted in mutual respect and trust, remains a cornerstone of Tehran's foreign policy.

The Iranian top diplomat also underscored Tehran's commitment to expanding friendly relations across all domains, leveraging the momentum of existing agreements to deepen economic and trade cooperation.

The meeting provided an oppor-

tunity for both ministers to review the progress of joint projects and explore new avenues for collaboration.

With China currently presiding over the SCO and Iran playing an active role in the organization, both sides discussed how to harness these platforms to strengthen their partnership.

Recent reports indicate that trade between Iran and China has surged in 2025, with bilateral agreements in energy, infrastructure, and technology gaining momentum, reflecting the resilience of their ties despite

Western sanctions.

Some analysts view the Tianjin meeting as a significant milestone in Iran-China relations. Experts suggest that the SCO can offer Iran a strategic platform to not only denounce aggression but also to prevent future violations.

The organization may serve as a tool to deter further aggression and raise the stakes for any renewed adventurism, capitalizing on the SCO's capacity to reinforce collective security mechanisms.

With China's "Five Common Yards" initiative—promoting unity, peace, prosperity, good neighborliness, and justice—experts argue that Iran can align its interests with Beijing's vision to counter U.S.-led containment strategies.

Iran's historical role as a security buffer for China's western frontier adds another layer of significance to this partnership.

Tehran's strategic position has long been a linchpin in thwarting threats to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The country's active participation in the SCO, especially in the wake of recent aggressions, paves the way for stronger Chinese engagement, politically and economically.

The 'post-Iranian Middle East' proposed by Israel

The Israeli outlook requires demolition of regional sovereignty

By Xavier Villar

MADRID – At a time when stability and sovereignty have become almost existential issues countries in West Asia, Amos Yadlin's article "The Post-Iranian Middle East," published in Foreign Affairs, perfectly encapsulates a kind of political arrogance masked as academic analysis. Far from offering a roadmap to peace, the piece by the former Israeli general reads more like an obituary for regional autonomy.

Amos Yadlin, retired general of the Israeli Air Force and former head of military intelligence, is a textbook example of what scholar Sahar Ghumkor calls "the soldier-turned-scholar": ex-military figures who carry their battlefield mentality into political or intellectual spaces, preserving an epistemology rooted in conflict and securitization. This reductionist outlook—typical of a military apparatus that sustains an occupation regime—deeply shapes Yadlin's reading of the region, especially when it comes to Iran, which he portrays as an absolute, irreconcilable enemy.

But the issue goes beyond flawed analysis. His worldview crystallizes a security-obsessed mindset belonging to a state whose foreign policy rests on domination and dispossession, under the permanent pretext of self-defense. In this framework, the region is not viewed as a space inhabited by peoples with legitimate rights, but as a chessboard for power plays, where Israeli hegemony is taken for granted and any actor that challenges it must be neutralized.

The specter of sovereignty

The central axis of Yadlin's discourse is, though never explicitly stated, the negation of regional sovereignty. His proposal for a "new order in the Middle East" does not aim for collective stability but rather for a strategic redesign that privileges Israeli and Western interests—particularly those of the United States. Within this scheme, there is no room for the meaningful recognition of the rights of regional peoples and states to exercise sovereignty or defend their territorial integrity against external interference.

Israel, through its official narrative and military actions, presents itself as the main actor in the systematic delegitimization of the sovereignty of countries like Syria and Lebanon. This

delegitimization is sustained by propaganda, the doctrine of preemptive war, and a recurring practice of unilateral interventions. What is framed as defensive necessity is in fact a policy of regional destabilization aimed at reinforcing Israeli strategic control.

Yadlin ignores the fact that, for millions in the region, sovereignty is not an abstract concept but a matter of survival and dignity. In contexts marked by sanctions, blockades, and military campaigns, the right to determine one's own fate takes on immense political and emotional value. Yet his article proceeds on the premise that the peoples of West Asia passively accept a definition of "security" imposed by Tel Aviv or Washington—an idea that is not only unjust but fundamentally destabilizing.

For Israel, stability exists when no Arab, Iranian, or Turkish state can assert right to national sovereignty

Israel as regional demolition agent

The notion of a "post-Iranian Middle East" does not signal any real resolution of conflict. Rather, it implies a deepening of Israel's long-standing demolition strategy. Yadlin makes no attempt to hide his enthusiasm for military campaigns and covert operations which, according to him, create "opportunities" to expand Israeli projection throughout the region. But these actions, far from fostering peace, directly undermine the sovereignty of states like Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

Over recent decades, Israel has bombed civilian and military infrastructure, imposed suffocating blockades—especially in Gaza, where more than 56,000 people have died—and pursued a systematic policy of territorial occupation. These practices, justified under the guise of "security," have only entrenched a landscape of fragmentation and chronic violence.

Even historically close partners—like Egypt or certain Persian Gulf states—have begun to express growing distrust of an Israel

The Post-Iranian Middle East

America and Israel Can Build a New Regional Order

AMOS YADLIN

July 11, 2025



AMOS YADLIN is Founder and President of MIND Israel. He is a retired Major General in the Israeli Air Force and served as the chief of Israeli's Defense Intelligence from 2006 to 2010.

More by Amos Yadlin →

that acts outside any meaningful international scrutiny. This increasing isolation is in large part due to Israel's refusal to recognize a fundamental right essential to any peace process: the legitimate sovereignty of the Palestinian people and their regional neighbors.

Iran: Defending sovereignty against aggression

Against this logic of demolition, Iran stands as an actor that has, for decades, asserted its right to sovereign defense. Its regional policy cannot be understood outside the context of the constant destabilization efforts it has faced: sanctions, sabotage, covert operations, and even externally backed "regime-change" attempts.

Yadlin depicts Iran as a destabilizing force, but this interpretation erases a fundamental context: Iran has been compelled to develop alliances and defensive capabilities in response to real, ongoing threats. The construction of a strategic balance in the face of Israeli and U.S. pressure is, in this sense, an act of legitimate self-defense—not expansionist aggression.

In both its political discourse and diplomatic initiatives, Iran has consistently emphasized the need to respect the sovereignty of all states as a non-negotiable foundation for regional coexistence. Its vision, far from seeking hegemony, points toward a reconfiguration of the regional order based on mutual respect and self-determination.

The false promise of stability

The Israeli discourse, as embodied by Yadlin, insists that regional stability depends on neutralizing Iran. But the "stability" on offer is merely an imposed "peace," built on permanent asymmetry, structural fear, and military control. In this framework, conflict is naturalized, and occupation is presented as a necessary defensive measure.

Tellingly, Yadlin's article makes

no mention of a ceasefire. This omission is no editorial oversight—it is a political statement. It signals that endless war remains the preferred framework, and that unilateral force continues to be the main instrument of Israeli foreign policy.

At the same time, this denial masks a deeper concern: the gradual erosion of the myth of Israel's military invulnerability. Recent confrontations with Iran and other regional actors have exposed the limits of Israeli military power. The narrative of absolute supremacy, which for decades has underpinned Israel's strategic aggression, is beginning to crack. Rejecting the idea of a ceasefire is also a refusal to face an uncomfortable truth: perpetual war no longer guarantees hegemony.

Sovereignty as the foundation of peace

West Asia will not move toward lasting peace as long as narratives that deny the sovereignty of its peoples prevail, and as long as force remains the dominant tool of imposition. Any serious strategic analysis of the region's future must begin with a basic principle: recognition of the right of all actors to self-determination—without exceptions or hierarchies.

The path to genuine stability lies not in exclusion or fragmentation, but in the restoration of sovereignty, the defense of territorial integrity, and the promotion of inclusive dialogue that gives voice to those historically silenced.

In this context, Iran and its allies play a central role by defending a regional model grounded in autonomy and coexistence—not in submission or external intervention. Only when sovereignty ceases to be seen as a threat, and begins to be recognized as a shared right, will the cycle of violence begin to close—and the real possibility of a just and lasting peace emerge.

Iran well-equipped in diplomatic and military fields: Leader

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran is fully prepared to take the appropriate diplomatic and military measures should the U.S. and Israel decide to once again engage in war with the Islamic Republic.

The Leader made the remarks during a meeting with judiciary officials on Wednesday, less than a month after an Israeli-initiated war against Iran came to a halt at the proposal of Washington. The U.S. also engaged directly in the war at one point, launching strikes against already struck Iranian nuclear sites. Iran responded by attacking the important American military base in the region, the Al Udeid Airbase in Qatar.

During his latest meeting, Ayatollah Khamenei analyzed the Iranian nation's tremendous achievement in the imposed war and highlighted the collapse of the aggressors' calculations and schemes. Referring to the magnificent unity of the Iranian people across various political and ideological spectrums in defense of dear Iran, he emphasized: "Safeguarding this national unity is a responsibility upon all."

Ayatollah Khamenei stated: "The great act of the people in the 12-day war stemmed from national determination, resolve, and self-confidence. The very spirit of readiness to confront a power like America and its rabid dog — the Zionist regime — is immensely valuable." The Leader stressed that both friends and foes must realize that the Iranian nation will never enter any arena as the



Leader meets with judiciary officials in Tehran on July 16, 2025

weaker side. He continued: "We possess all the necessary tools — reasoning, and military capability alike. Therefore, whether in the field of diplomacy or the battlefield, whenever we step in, by God's grace, we will enter with strength."

"Though we deem the Zionist regime a cancer and the U.S. a criminal for backing it, we did not seek war. However, whenever the enemy attacked, our response was firm and crushing," Ayatollah Khamenei stated before citing the Zionist regime's appeal to the United States as clear evidence of the strength of Iran's retaliatory blow. He said: "If the Zionist regime had not been brought to its knees, if it were capable of defending itself, it wouldn't have run to the U.S. for help. But it realized it could not stand against the Islamic Republic."

Regarding Iran's reciprocal strike against American aggression, the Leader described it as "a highly sensitive and strategic blow." He noted:

"The target hit by Iran was one of America's most critical centers in the region. When the media blackout was lifted, it will become evident what a heavy blow was struck. And indeed, an even greater blow could be delivered — against the U.S. or others."

Highlighting the emergence of a national phenomenon during the recent war, Ayatollah Khamenei said this presence foiled the enemy's plans. He explained: "The aggressors assumed that by targeting certain key individuals and centers in Iran, they would weaken the system. They planned to then unleash their dormant proxies — from hypocrites and monarchists to thugs — stirring unrest and dragging people into the streets to overthrow the Islamic system." He continued: "In reality, the opposite of the enemy's design unfolded. It became evident that many of the assumptions of some individuals in political fields and the like were also incorrect."

The Leader emphasized that the mask had fallen from the face of the aggressor, and their hidden goals were exposed to the public. He said: "God nullified their plots and drew the people into the field in support of the government and the Islamic system. Contrary to the enemy's expectations, they provided both financial and life support to the system."

He considered the unity formed by individuals of varying religious influence and even opposing political leanings as a "tremendous national cohesion," emphasizing the necessity of preserving this profound unity. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution called on officials to continue their work with full vigor and spirit. Quoting the Quranic verse "Allah will surely help those who help Him," he said: "All should know: God has guaranteed His support for the Iranian nation under the Islamic system and under the banner of the Quran and Islam. This nation will, without doubt, be victorious."

In the latter part of his speech, the Leader underscored the necessity of legal action regarding the war crimes committed by the Zionist regime during the recent conflict. He stated: "The Judiciary must pursue the recent crimes seriously, with precision, and full awareness through both international and domestic courts, taking all aspects into account."

At the beginning of the meeting, Hujjat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen Mohseni Ejei, head of the judiciary, presented a report on the judiciary's recent performance.

Iran slams Israeli strikes on Syria as HTS normalization efforts are put to question

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Ministry issued a condemnation Tuesday of the Israeli regime's intensified military assaults across southern Syria, denouncing the latest airstrikes near Damascus and Sweida as "continuous violations of international law" designed to fracture Syrian sovereignty and empower sectarian militias.

Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei warned that the Security Council's inaction has emboldened Israel's "barbaric murderers," citing the regime's attacks on civilian infrastructure and massacres in Gaza as parallel crimes demanding global intervention.

Baqaei underscored that such atrocities occur amid Israel's ongoing occupation of Syria's Golan Heights, illegally annexed in 1981 in defiance of UN resolutions.

The Israeli regime has intensified its attacks on Syria this week, targeting the entrances of the Presidential Palace and the General Staff Command building of the Armed Forces in Umayyad Square, Damascus, along with coordinated assaults near Sweida—a strategic southern province inhabited by Syria's Druze minority.

minority.

These operations, framed by Israeli War Minister Israel Katz as "pre-emptive security measures," have displaced thousands and reportedly resulted in over a hundred casualties, including civilians executed in field operations by Israeli-backed factions.

Normalization shadows and Druze as pawns

Critically, Tehran's rebuke exposes the hypocrisy of Syria's interim government, led by Abu Mohammad al-Jolani (Ahmed al-Sharaa)—a former U.S.-designated terrorist whose Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) faction now spearheads Damascus's covert normalization talks with Tel Aviv.

Despite "condemning" recent Israeli strikes and directing his violent henchmen to fight the Druze, al-Jolani's regime has engaged in backchannel diplomacy, including reported meetings with Tel Aviv's so-called National Security Council head Tzachi Hanegbi in the UAE and Azerbaijan.

These negotiations, occurring after U.S. President Donald Trump's meeting with al-Jolani and the lifting of sanctions on Syria, allegedly aim



An Israeli airstrike in Damascus, Syria, on July 16, 2025.

to consolidate Israel's dominance in the country and absorb Syria into the Abraham Accords—a move seen by many as eroding Syrian sovereignty, even as the regime has been killing many Syrians.

"The terror regime in Syria must be fought," declared Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli, demanding al-Jolani's assassination even as HTS has been engaged in covert diplomatic talks with Tel Aviv.

Chikli's rhetoric ironically underscores the moral bankruptcy of al-Jolani's collaboration with Israel, which seeks to fragment Syria via proxy militias.

Central to Israeli strategy, analysts note, is the instrumentalization of Syria's Druze minority. The regime has deployed troops deeper into Syrian territory under the pretext of "protecting" Druze communities near Sweida—a move that can be regarded as a thinly veiled occupation campaign.

This tactic mirrors Israel's historical use of sectarian proxies to weaken the territorial integrity of West Asian countries and even balkanize them, with Druze leader Muwaffaq Tarif's plea for Israeli intervention exposing the community's tragic manipulation.

The United States entered the conflict ten days later, targeting nuclear sites previously struck by Israel. On June 24, a pause in fighting was introduced after Iran hit the most strategic American base in West Asia with missiles. The truce proposal was conveyed to Tehran via Qatari mediation.

Despite ongoing provocations, Iran remains committed to the JCPOA and insists that its partial suspension of obligations is a direct response to repeated violations by the United States and European parties.

In the wake of attacks on its nuclear sites, Iran's Parliament passed legislation to suspend cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Nevertheless, Iranian officials have stated that as a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran will continue its interaction with the Agency—but under a revised framework.

All future nuclear cooperation, Tehran said, will be managed by the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)—reflecting a move toward greater strategic oversight of Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

Iran into FIBA Women's Asia Cup 2025 Division B semis

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Thailand 80-62 on Wednesday to book their place in the in FIBA Women's Asia Cup 2025 Division B semifinals.

Negin Rasoulipour and Roxanna Barahman scored 20 and 19 points, respectively. Rattiyakorn Udomsuk led Thailand with 18 points.

Iran had defeated Cook Islands and Mongolia in their previous matches.

Team Melli are one of the most motivated squads in Shenzhen. They've already proven they can beat top-tier Division B teams - now they just need to go one step further.

The team that win the tournament will earn a promotion to Division A.

Iran beat S. Korea in 2025 Asian U16 Volleyball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated South Korea 3-1 (25-21, 27-29, 25-22, 25-20) in the Asian Men's U16 Volleyball Championship Thailand 2025 on Wednesday.

Iran are scheduled to face Pakistan in Pool F on Thursday.

Arash Sadeghian's team had previously defeated Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Kazakhstan in the preliminary stage.

This top-tier continental event is being held from July 12 to 19 in Nakhon Pathom and Ratchaburi, Thailand.

This tournament serves as a qualification tournament for the FIVB Volleyball Boys' U17 World Championship.

The top three teams of the tournament qualified for the 2026 World Championship as the AVC representatives.

Former Iran coach Queiroz takes charge of Oman

TEHRAN – Oman named Carlos Queiroz as their new head coach on Tuesday as the West Asian side bid to reach the FIFA World Cup 2026.

The Portuguese replaces Rashid Jaber, and has been appointed ahead of the AFC Asian Qualifiers - Road to 26 Playoff draw at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

Oman secured their place in the playoffs after finishing fourth in Group B.

Queiroz's wealth of tactical expertise and experience will be pivotal as Oman, chasing a historic FIFA World Cup appearance, are set to face some of the continent's top teams with just tickets available in the playoffs.

"Queiroz has extensive coaching experience, having led the national teams of Portugal, Iran, Colombia, Egypt, and Qatar. He also served as an assistant coach at Manchester United under Sir Alex Ferguson," the Oman FA said on social media platform X.

Oman will be joined by Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates in the draw, with the teams to be divided into two groups.

Esteghlal target Hamrobekov linked with Tractor

TEHRAN – Uzbekistan international midfielder Odiljon Hamrobekov has been linked with a move to Tractor.

The 29-year-old currently plays for Bunyodkor football club. Media reports previously suggested that Esteghlal, another Iranian club, were also interested in signing him.

Persepolis had reportedly shown interest in signing the player.

Tractor will represent Iran in the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Elite.

Mehdi Ghaedi joins Al Nasr

TEHRAN – Iranian international winger Mehdi Ghaedi joined Emirati football club Al Nasr.

The 26-year-old player has joined Al Nasr from Kalba.

Ghaedi has penned a three-year deal for an undisclosed fee.

The player had been also linked with a move to Esteghlal.

Al Nasr is an Emirati professional football club based in Dubai and competes in the UAE Pro League.

Taremi shortlisted for Player of the Third Round

TEHRAN – The third round of the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 concluded on June 10 with Iran, Uzbekistan, Korea Republic, Jordan, Japan and Australia reaching next year's tournament.

The UAE, Qatar, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia also kept their hopes alive by entering the fourth round slated for October.

A total of 12 players from the third round have been shortlisted for the Player of the Round.

Mehdi Taremi again proved that he is among the best forwards in Asia as he turned on the style to help Iran qualify for their fourth successive FIFA World Cup.

The 32-year-old Team Melli striker not only scored five goals to be among the joint top scorers in third round but also bagged four assists.

Yazan Al Naimat (Jordan), Ole Romeny (Indonesia), Takefusa Kubo (Japan), Utkir Yusupov (Uzbekistan), Son Heung-min (Korea Republic), Fabio Lima (UAE), Akram Afif (Qatar), Aziz Behich (Australia), Aymen Hussein (Iraq), Muhsen Al Ghassani (Oman), and Hassan Al Tambakti (Saudi Arabia) are among the other players shortlisted for the accolade.

Iran lose to Lebanon in AFC Women's Asian Cup 2026 Qualifiers

TEHRAN – Iran's hopes suffered a setback after falling to a 3-1 defeat against Lebanon in Group A of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 Qualifiers on Wednesday.

The result leaves Iran on six points, with Jordan their opponents in Saturday's final round of matches. The win was Lebanon's first after having suffered defeat in their earlier two games.

Iran's high pressing game made Lebanon uncomfortable but the West Asian side quickly turned the disadvantage around in the fifth minute to leave the Central Asian side stunned.

Zahwa Arabi gained possession in her own half before delivering a long-range pass to Layla Iskandar, who surged past her marker and set up an unmarked Christy Maalouf for an easy finish.

Lebanon should have doubled their lead in the 15th minute when Maalouf set up Iskandar again with a through pass but Iran closed her movement down through Atefeh Ramezanizadeh while at the other end, Zahra Ghanbari struck her free-kick right into the path of keeper Sinal Breiche.

The Lebanese duo combined again in the 22nd minute with Arabi's free-kick finding Iskandar, who nodded the ball down for Maalouf to finish with aplomb.

Iran came back fighting after the restart and nearly reduced the deficit three minutes in, when Fatemeh Pasandideh's cross found Fatemeh Amineh but the Shahrdari Sirjan defender dragged her effort wide.

The Central Asian side were eventually rewarded in the 58th minute after Negin Zandi powered down the right before supplying a cross for Fatemeh Shaban to score with a simple finish.

Lebanon, however, restored their two-goal cushion in the 71st minute when Iskandar pounced on a poor pass from substitute Atefeh Imani and threaded a through ball to Maalouf, who drilled her shot into the bottom right corner to complete her hat-trick.

NIDC head elaborates on 5-year outlook of Iran's drilling industry

TEHRAN- The managing director of the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) explained the outlook for the development of the drilling industry in the country, and said: "The most important global indicator in the field of drilling is the reduction of unproductive times; so, we have reduced this indicator from 21 percent to about 9.6 percent and set a goal to reach below three percent."

Mehran Makvandi said that in the five-year outlook, the modernization of the onshore and offshore drilling fleet, the development of offshore drilling in the Persian Gulf oil fields, and the upgrading of technical service equipment and their integration are priorities.

Regarding digital developments in the company, he stated: "Digitalization of drilling processes, from design and monitoring to operation analysis and well data management, is one of the main axes of the company's future vision; this approach will lead to reduced errors, faster decision-making, economic savings, and greater safety."

In addition to upgrading equipment, strengthening cooperation with scientific centers and knowledge-based companies, developing human resources, and increasing competitiveness in the international market are also among the company's strategic priorities in the 5-year outlook, the official added.

The NIDC managing director has also referred to the company's move towards domestic production of the equipment, and said: "One of the strategic priorities of the National Iranian Drilling Company is to increase the share of domestic manufacturing."

"In this regard, cooperation has been developed with companies such as Fajr Shiraz Complex, which has experience in manufacturing key components of drilling rigs. The project to build the third drilling rig in the country with a savings of seven million dollars is an example of these measures", Makvandi added.

According to him, prioritization is based on the operational needs of the fields, the type of projects, and domestic capacity, although the lack of some technical infrastructure, the need for technology transfer, and the timely supply of quality parts are some of the challenges on the localization path. However, the company is determined to strengthen domestic manufacturing and reduce dependence.

Makvandi further referred to the NIDC's contracts with knowledge-based companies and added: "Nine one-megawatt generator motors and four drilling fluid purification centrifuges, which were previously imported, will be manufactured inside the country, and the first samples will be delivered by the end of the [current Iranian] year (March 20, 2026)."

He also noted: "A specific roadmap has been developed for utilizing these technologies, which includes continuous cooperation with science and technology parks, universities, knowledge-based companies, and the formation of specialized working groups to evaluate and implement technologies in field operations."

The NIDC managing director has also stated that purchasing 15 new drilling rigs for the oil and gas industry is on the agenda.

Makvandi said that a plan to purchase 15 onshore drilling rigs with different capacities and a value of over \$800 million has been prepared, which is being implemented with the support of the Ministry of Oil and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

Pointing out that last year, the company was able to drill, repair, and complete 100 oil and gas wells using 62 active drilling rigs and the return of two more rigs to operational lines, he added: "Of this number, 24 were development and exploratory wells and 76 were dedicated to repair and completion operations."

He attributed this success to careful planning, interdepartmental coordination, increased operational efficiency, and strengthened integrated technical services, and noted: "This performance is a significant leap compared to previous years, given the economic and sanctions conditions."

Makvandi stated that the reactivation of idle rigs played an effective role in this success, adding: "Increasing productivity, reducing unproductive times, and relying on domestic capacity are the main pillars of this achievement."

The managing director of the NIDC further emphasized: "These rigs are designed for descriptive and exploratory purposes and will be equipped with the latest technologies. Spe-



cialized technical service equipment including high-pressure pumps, and well testing are also on the purchase list."

He continued: "The convergence of this equipment with the current fleet and the integrated planning management of the National Iranian Oil Company is underway in the form of a joint supervisory working group and in coordination with the Ministry of Oil."

As previously announced by the NIDC deputy managing director for drilling operations, the company has completed the drilling and development of 20 onshore oil and gas wells during the first two months of the current Iranian year (March 20 – May 21).

Hamidreza Shafi'ee Makvandi said the wells included four development and appraisal wells and 16 workover or completion wells.

Of the total wells drilled, 16 were located in oilfields operated by subsidiaries of the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), one in the Central Iranian Oil Fields Company's operational area, one for the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC), one for Pars Oil and Gas Company, and one as part of a project completed and handed over to the client, he added.

Shafi'ee Makvandi said total drilling depth during the period reached 21,773 meters, marking an increase of 1,619 meters compared to the same period last year.

He also noted that 12 drilling rigs were relocated across operational zones during this period.

Also as announced by the NIDC managing director, National Iranian Drilling Company completed the drilling and finalization of 100 oil and gas wells across onshore and offshore fields in the past Iranian calendar year 1403 (ended on March 20).

Mehran Makvandi said the company's primary mission is to provide drilling services and specialized operations for oil and gas producers, describing drilling as "the front line of production" and a vital step in preserving and boosting output.

Of the 100 wells completed in the past year, 24 were development wells and 76 were workovers. A total of 74 wells—14 development and 60 workover wells—were handed over to the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), he said.

Makvandi added that 11 wells were drilled in fields managed by the Central Oil Fields Company, three by the Iranian Offshore Oil Company, seven under development projects run by the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company, and five were completed on a project basis.

He emphasized the strategic role of the National Drilling Company as one of the upstream arms of the National Iranian Oil Company, contributing to hydrocarbon supply and helping reduce Iran's energy imbalance. A portion of the company's resources is currently allocated to drilling gas wells, he said.

The total drilling footage reached 113,520 meters in 1403, up by 28,863 meters from the previous year, which Makvandi attributed to a more than fivefold increase in development well drilling. During the same period, the company carried out 4,538 technical service operations and 1,473 special service operations across more than 20 specialized service categories—marking a significant rise compared to the previous year.

Makvandi also noted that 17 drilling rigs were relocated across operational zones. Of the company's 74 land and offshore rigs, 64 are currently active in 10 provinces, engaged in development, appraisal, exploration, and repair-completion projects.

Iran's heavy crude price rises 9.2% in June: OPEC

TEHRAN – The price of Iran's heavy crude oil climbed by \$5.88, or 9.2 percent, in June compared to May, reaching \$69.13 per barrel, according to OPEC's latest monthly report.

Citing figures from the OPEC Secretariat, Shana reported that the collective crude oil output of the 12 OPEC member states stood at 27.235 million barrels per day (bpd) in June—up 220,000 bpd from the previous month.

Iran's crude production fell by 62,000 bpd to 3.241 million bpd in June. Despite the drop, Iran retained its position as OPEC's third-largest producer after Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Iran's average daily oil output for 2024 stands



at 3.257 million bpd, compared to 2.884 million bpd in 2023.

Saudi Arabia produced 9.356 million bpd in June, followed by

Iraq at 3.943 million bpd, with Iran ranking third at 3.241 million bpd.

OPEC+ countries, which include non-OPEC allies, pumped 14.323

million bpd in June, an increase of 129,000 bpd from May. Total crude oil production from OPEC and its partners reached 41.559 million bpd in June, marking a 349,000 bpd increase compared to May's 41.210 million bpd.

Iran's heavy crude averaged \$63.25 per barrel in May, and its average price for 2024 was \$83.45. The OPEC Reference Basket price also rose in June to \$69.73 per barrel, a \$6.11 or 9.6 percent increase from the previous month.

OPEC's June report also projected that global oil demand will rise by 1.28 million bpd in 2025, with total demand reaching 105.13 million bpd for the year.

Thermal power capacity in Iran surpasses 77,000 MW

TEHRAN – Iran's thermal power generation capacity has exceeded 77,000 megawatts following the addition of new units to the national electricity grid, according to a statement released on Tuesday by the Thermal Power Plant Holding Company (TPPH).

To help ensure a stable electricity supply during this summer's peak consumption period, more than 2,400 megawatts have been added to the country's thermal generation capacity. Of this, 730 megawatts came from

lifting output restrictions at 14 steam power plants, while another 598 megawatts were gained by upgrading gas-fired units.

As part of this summer's peak demand projects, six new gas units were synchronized with the national grid. These units are located in the Sahand, Chadormalu (Ardakan), Golgozar, Rey, Al-Mahdi Aluminum, and Khorramabad power plants. Their integration pushed the total capacity of thermal power plants in Iran beyond 77,000 megawatts.

Currently, 634 thermal power generation units at 147 power plants are responsible for supplying the majority of the country's electricity demand. Roughly 69 percent of this capacity is owned and operated by the private sector.

Iran's thermal power capacity now consists of 35,663 megawatts from combined-cycle units, 25,539 megawatts from gas turbines, and 15,830 megawatts from steam power plants.

Govt. to launch international exchange as free zones signal interest in shareholding



TEHRAN – Iranian government is in the final stages of launching its long-anticipated international exchange, with several free trade zones expressing readiness to become shareholders, according to Reza Masrour, Secretary of the Free Trade and Special Economic Zones High Council.

Speaking after a meeting with Hojjatollah Seyyedi, head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO), Masrour said this was the fourth coordination session on the international exchange project.

He noted that the shareholder structure—comprising both domestic and foreign entities—will be finalized within the next two weeks.

"Preliminary arrangements have already been made with interested companies," he said. "Once the structure is finalized, it will be submitted for review to the Securities and Exchange Organization and the Supreme Council of Free Zones."

Several free zones have already expressed willingness to take equity stakes in the international exchange. Masrour also announced

that the exchange's initial operations will be based on the issuance of foreign currency-denominated sukuk bonds—a tool intended to finance large-scale infrastructure and development projects.

The economic deputy of the council has been tasked with contacting companies registered in free zones to explore their interest in participating. "Any eligible company based in a free zone will be allowed to join the exchange as a shareholder," Masrour said.

As recently stated by the secretary of the Free and Special Economic Zones High Council, Iran is set to implement a major restructuring of its free trade zones in a bid to revive their role in regional commerce and national economic development.

Masrour said that although the zones were designed to drive trade, investment, and transit, they have fallen short of expectations in recent years.

He announced the beginning of a reengineering process, backed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, to redefine the function and governance of these areas.

Iran reaches tech to produce 11,500 strategic refinery equipment items domestically

TEHRAN – Iran has successfully achieved the technology to manufacture more than 11,500 strategic refinery equipment and components, according to the managing director of South Pars Gas Complex, a key player in the country's gas industry.

Speaking to IRIB, Gholamabas Hosseini said that over 120 Iranian firms—including knowledge-based companies, domestic manufacturers, and first-time producers—have contributed to this achievement under the company's domestic production ini-

tiative.

"South Pars is no longer just a gas complex; it represents the reliance of Iran's industry on local expertise and indigenous technology," Hosseini said. He added that for the current year, detailed plans were made to manufacture and supply over 160 key refinery items domestically, with a significant portion already completed.

Hosseini emphasized the pivotal role of innovative and knowledge-based companies, noting that Iran has recently succeeded

in designing and producing advanced control systems that were previously only imported from a limited number of foreign suppliers.

He also highlighted ongoing joint projects with universities and research centers to advance refinery technologies, saying, "Our path is clear—reliance on Iranian know-how, support for innovation, and reducing dependence on foreign sources."

Hosseini said that through this strategic focus on localization in

geoeconomic position—including international trade corridors, regional markets, energy routes, and technology capabilities.

He expressed confidence that with support from the minister of economic affairs, the plans would mark the beginning of a more focused, dynamic, and effective era for Iran's free trade zones.

During a meeting with President Masoud Pezeshkian in last December, Masrour said that Iran's free trade zones collectively offer a bulk capacity of 61 million tons and 1.4 million TEUs, with the ability to handle 12 million passengers annually.

During the session, the official presented a review of the maritime economy and port capacities of key free zones, including Anzali, Kish, Qeshm, Chabahar, Arvand, Bushehr, and Mazandaran.

In that meeting, President Pezeshkian underscored the importance of fully utilizing the existing capacities of free trade zones. He called for the preparation of a strategic roadmap for these zones and emphasized the development of north-south and east-west transit corridors, with input from prominent consultants in the free trade sector.

Iran's free trade zones play a crucial role in facilitating trade, investment, and tourism by offering tax incentives, reduced tariffs, and streamlined regulations. The southern zones, such as Chabahar, Kish, and Qeshm, serve as key gateways for trade with the Indian Ocean, while northern zones like Anzali and Mazandaran provide critical access to the Caspian Sea region.

recent years, the South Pars Gas Complex has managed to domestically source a substantial share of critical and complex parts used in gas refining, transmission, and operation.

"Today, South Pars stands as the beating heart of Iran's gas production, and as a successful model of linking industry with local knowledge and national manufacturing, it can serve as an inspiring blueprint for other sectors across the country," he added.

Behind the airstrikes: Israel’s strategic push to fragment Syria

From page 1 ► **A deadly situation in Syria**

Following the collapse of the ceasefire between Syrian forces and Druze militias in Suwayda, southern Syria has become the fresh front of Israel. Sectional clashes saw over 100 Druze civilians murdered, which was cited as a justification for Israeli interventions. While Israel claims that it seeks to protect the Druze, with reference to ties to the Golan Heights community, analysts contest it, instead pointing to increased civilian casualties and displacement produced in Suwayda and Daraa by Israeli airstrikes.

Nonetheless, with little casualty reporting from either Israeli or Syrian fronts, exact figures remain unclear, but humanitarian agencies do stand to confirm that dozens of people were killed and injured over the past few weeks. They also complain that rather than securing and stabilizing the region, Israel is further sharpening sectarian tensions.

Eradicating Syria's military infrastructure

The broader objective behind Israel's operations in Syria appears increasingly focused on eliminating what remains of Syria's military capacity. Since the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government in late 2024, Israel has launched over 350 airstrikes on Syrian territory. These attacks have targeted key military assets including missile storage facilities, air defense systems, naval infrastructure.

According to regional security experts and multiple independent sources, between 70% and 90% of Syria's former military infrastructure has now been destroyed. This goes far beyond deterring



potential threats; it represents a preemptive dismantling of Syria's ability to reemerge as a strategic actor. Some observers characterize this as a form of warfare aimed not merely at the country's targets but at ensuring the permanent fragmentation and disempowerment of the Syrian state.

Strategic interests disguised as humanitarian concerns

Israel's emphasis on protecting Druze communities in southern Syria has been met with widespread skepticism. The shared ethnic bonds between Israeli Druze and Syrian Druze may hold certain cultural truth, but it is the geopolitical expediency of this narrative that analysts find more compelling.

Hassan Hanizadeh, an expert on Arab affairs, contends that Israel is exploiting local sectarian grievances—particularly the recent massacre of over 100 Druze civilians—as a pretext for deepening military operations and advancing its strategic foothold in southern Syria. He asserts that this campaign is partially aimed at pressuring the de facto leadership of Syria under Ahmad Shar'a (Abu Mohammad al-Julani) and encouraging separatist movements among ethnic and sectarian mi-

norities.

Hanizadeh identifies the Druze, Kurds, Turkmen, and Alawites as communities being pulled into a growing project of fragmentation—one that benefits Israeli and American interests by ensuring Syria never returns to its status as a unified, sovereign actor.

A regional plan for fragmentation and control

The analyst further argues that Israel and the United States are jointly pursuing a regional strategy designed to partition Syria into smaller, ethnically and sectarian-based states. This redrawing of borders and destruction of centralized power structures has significant implications—not only for Syria's territorial integrity but for the broader stability of the Levant.

In support of this larger vision, the U.S. is reportedly facilitating the mobilization of 15,000 militants near Lebanon, aimed at provoking Hezbollah and increasing cross-border tensions. Meanwhile, Hanizadeh suggests that Julani may be engaged in confidential negotiations with Israel under frameworks established by the Abraham Accords. In return for financial support and political recognition, Julani may

agree to abandon Syria's historic claim to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, effectively isolating Hezbollah and weakening Iran's influence in the region.

He also notes how the erosion of Syria's traditional military structure—previously loyal to the Assad government—serves to empower Takfiri militias under Julani's control, further shifting the internal power dynamics in ways that suit Israeli strategic interests.

Humanitarian disasters amid strategic war games

Both Gaza and Syria are enduring severe humanitarian crises worsened by ongoing military actions and political manipulation. Israeli airstrikes in Syria, especially around Suwayda, have caused mass displacement and cut off thousands from vital aid. Targeting of displacement centers, hospitals, and key roads has crippled humanitarian efforts, with warnings from international organizations about looming famine and disease if attacks continue. Despite the escalating crisis, many Western governments remain largely silent, effectively enabling Israel's aggressive military strategy. Critics argue that Israel's use of air power and proxy militias to control southern Syria deepens instability and fosters radicalization—the very outcomes Israel seeks to avoid. Israel's operations go beyond immediate security concerns, aiming instead to reshape Syria's internal dynamics and regional alignment through force and alliances with sectarian groups. The burden falls hardest on civilians in Druze-majority areas caught amid Assad's government collapse, Takfiri militias' rise, and persistent foreign intervention.

Israel's raids on Syria spark widespread condemnation, spotlight expansionist ambitions

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN — Israel's recent surge in military strikes against Syria has drawn fierce international condemnation, casting a harsh light on the regime's dangerous designs on the Arab nation.

On Wednesday, Israel targeted key sites in Damascus — including the Syrian Ministry of Defense headquarters and areas near the presidential palace — under the stated justification of protecting Syria's Druze minority. Israel views this minority, which has clashed with Syrian HTS forces in the Druze heartland of Suwayda, as a potential ally. However, the Druze community itself has historically rejected Israeli intervention.

The backlash against Israel's aggression has been swift and united. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), representing six Persian Gulf states, condemned the strikes in the “strongest terms.” GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi branded the air campaign a “flagrant violation” of Syrian sovereignty, a breach of international law, and a severe threat to regional security and stability. He called for urgent international intervention to halt these “irresponsible escalations” and hold the perpetrators accountable, urging protection of Syria's sovereignty in line with the United Nations Charter.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun also condemned the attacks as a “blatant violation of the sovereignty of a brotherly Arab state”. He warned that continued Israeli aggression only fuels further tension and instability across the region. Lebanon expressed full solidarity with Syria and called on the global community to exert pressure to end these violations.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry accused Israel of attempting to sabotage Syria's quest for peace and security through these strikes, which targeted vital military infrastructure in Damascus.

Yemen's Ansarullah described the attacks as clear infringements on Syria's territorial integrity and part of Israel's broader strategy to fragment Islamic countries and expand its dominance.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad condemned



the strikes as aggressive moves aimed at territorial expansion through force and terror.

These recent assaults recall Israel's December offensive. Following the fall of President Bashar al-Assad on December 8, the Israeli military launched over 600 airstrikes across Syria. Targets included air defense systems, missile depots, and the naval base in Tartous. Concurrently, Israeli forces violated a UN-monitored buffer zone on the Golan Heights — occupied since 1967 — damaging infrastructure and escalating tensions. At the time, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced plans to increase settler presence in the region, underscoring Israel's expansionist ambitions.

The fresh wave of attacks signals Israel's determination to assert itself as the dominant regional power, pursuing its long-standing dream of a “Greater Israel”. This controversial vision, advocated by hardline figures like far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, envisions extending Israeli sovereignty over Palestinian and neighboring Arab territories — including Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. Smotrich openly called for this “Jewish state” expansion as recently as October 2024.

Critics also view Israel's bombing campaign in Syria as a calculated distraction from its brutal military actions in Gaza.

In sum, Israel's intensified strikes against Syria not only threaten regional stability but also expose the underlying ambitions driving its military aggression — ambitions that continue to unsettle the Middle East and complicate prospects for lasting peace.

UN-backed body: Ten children a day losing a limb in Gaza

Ten children a day are losing one or both limbs in Gaza due to Israel's assault on the Palestinian enclave.

According to an update by the UN-sponsored Global Protection Cluster, Israeli attacks on Gaza have “destroyed the protection environment” of the disabled and newly disabled in the enclave, Middle East Eye reported.

The report said 134,105 people including over 40,500 children have suffered new war-related injuries since the war began in October 2023.

Twenty-five percent are estimated to have new disabilities requiring acute and ongoing rehabilitation.

“There is no safe space in Gaza. Twenty months of intense hostilities have destroyed the protection environment for persons with disabilities and older persons,” it said.

“Over 35,000 people are believed to have significant hearing damage due to explosions. Ten children per day lose one or both of their legs.”

According to the report, Gaza's only limb reconstruction and rehabilitation center became non-functional in December 2023 due to a lack of supplies and specialized health workers, and was severely damaged in air strikes in February 2024, depriving children and adults of life-saving services.

Rights groups and NGOs say the war on Gaza has had a devastating effect on the children of the enclave.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health says that more than 17,000 of the 58,500 Palestinians killed since October 2023 are chil-

dren and that they account for 30 percent of the total injuries.

An average of 15 children per day acquire potentially life-altering disabilities, the ministry said.

In December, the UN reported that Gaza had the highest number of child amputees per capita globally.

“Gaza now has the highest number of child amputees per capita anywhere in the world - many losing limbs and undergoing surgeries without even anesthesia,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said.

Last week, the UN agency for children, UNICEF, warned that children experiencing acute malnutrition are particularly vulnerable and face a greater “likelihood of dying from simple causes by 10 times”.

Spokesperson James Elder said that access to hospitals in Gaza was no longer safe for ill or malnourished children.

Separately on Tuesday, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said one in ten children screened at UN-run health clinics in Gaza is now malnourished.

“Our health teams are confirming that malnutrition rates are increasing in Gaza, especially since the [Israeli] siege was tightened more than four months ago on the second of March,” UNRWA's director of communications, Juliette Touma, told journalists in Geneva during a briefing via video link from Amman.

Aid agencies have warned repeatedly that famine is looming in parts of Gaza, particularly in the north, where access remains limited.

Yemen hits “significant” Israeli targets

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemeni forces launch dual military operation targeting Negev and Eilat Port.

Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, has announced the execution of a dual military operation carried out by the Drone Air Force.

The operation targeted an Israeli military site in the Negev as well as the port of Eilat (Umm al-Rashrash) in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Saree explained that the operation was conducted simultaneously using three drones.

Two of the drones struck a “significant” Israeli military target in the Negev region, while the third “targeted the port of Umm al-Rashrash.”

He confirmed that the operation successfully achieved its objectives and emphasized that the Yemeni Armed Forces will continue their

operations until the aggression on Gaza ends and the blockade is lifted.

General Saree reaffirmed Yemen's stance that the Arab country is fulfilling its duty in retaliation to the Israeli genocide in Gaza, its blockade of coastal strip, and in standing against any violation of Arab or Islamic nations.

Below is the statement in full issued by the Yemeni Armed Forces:

“Triumphing for the oppressed Palestinian people and their mujahideen, and in rejection of the crime of genocide perpetrated by the Zionist enemy against our brothers in the Gaza Strip.

The UAV force of the Yemeni Armed Forces carried out a simultaneous, dual military operation using three drones.

Two of these drones targeted a significant military target of the Zionist enemy in the Negev region, while the other targeted the Umm al-Rashrash port in occupied Palestine.

The operation has successfully achieved its objectives.

The criminal enemy is committing more brutal massacres against our people in Gaza, killing children and women in full view of the entire world, destroying homes, bombing tents, and preventing the delivery of food and medicine.

The genocide committed against our people in Gaza places the entire Islamic world before a religious, moral, and historical responsibility. Silence and inaction will only encourage this enemy to implement its expansionist plans and subjugate and violate all peoples and countries.

Beloved Yemen is fulfilling its role according to its capabilities and potential, rejecting the aggression and siege on Gaza, and rejecting the aggression against Arab and Islamic countries.

Our operations will continue until the aggression against Gaza stops and the siege is lifted.”

Under US orders, Banque du Liban demonizes Al-Qard al-Hassan

From page 1 ► “Given that the action plan required of Lebanon by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) requires addressing the situation of the unlicensed financial sector... and to avoid the possibility of imposing additional stringent measures against the financial and economic sectors in Lebanon [...] banks, financial institutions, and other institutions licensed by the Banque du Liban, as well as financial intermediary institutions and collective investment funds, are prohibited from engaging in any direct or indirect dealings, in whole or in part, with exchange institutions, money transfer companies, associations, and unlicensed entities such as Al-Qard Al-Hassan,” a circular published by the Banque du Liban stated.

Banque du Liban threatened that failure to comply with the decision could expose those it called “perpetrators” to legal prosecution, warning of measures that could include suspension or withdrawal of licenses; freezing of accounts and assets; and referral to the

Special Investigation Commission.

The move by Banque du Liban's governor, Karim Saeid is not unusual as he is part of the anti-Resistance team. Rather, it represents a practical commitment to the demands of the U.S. spy den (embassy) in Beirut, which had a major hand in his appointment.

For its part, Hezbollah was not surprised as Saeid had previously paved the way for the move, justifying it by claiming that the Lebanese banking system cannot contravene Washington's decisions.

Experts are reassured that the goal is to intimidate the Resistance's popular base as the Qard al-Hassan is not affiliated with any of the financial institutions or banks licensed by Banque du Liban.

In any case, the Qard al-Hassan is not a financial institution, but rather a developmental solidarity program; it does not charge any interest on what people deposit. Rather it serves as collateral for the loan (personal deposits, whether cash or gold).

This means that the loan is free, except for the cost of storing the gold and administrative procedures.

During the intensive September-November U.S.-led Israeli aggression against Lebanon, the Wall Street Journal quoted Israeli officials as saying that “the raids on the branches of the Al-Qard al-Hassan Foundation were aimed at weakening Hezbollah's ties with its community,” after targeting several locations, allegedly Hezbollah's fund storage centers.

Then, anti-Resistance media (the U.S. embassy's mercenaries) launched a hostile camping, allegedly searching for Hezbollah's money storage facility under the Sahel Hospital building. This was in addition to the bombing of exchange offices, allegedly facilitating the transfer of funds to Hezbollah.

In parallel, several figures suspected by the enemy of transferring funds to the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance front have been liquidated from April 2024 to

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – In a landmark moment for Iran's cultural heritage, the Prehistoric Sites of the Khorramabad Valley have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, marking the first time Iran's Paleolithic heritage has received such recognition.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, Dr. Sonia Shidrang, the visionary archaeologist behind this achievement, discussed the scientific journey, international recognition, and lasting cultural significance of these ancient sites.

She elaborated on the scientific foundations, global significance, and broader cultural and academic impacts of this landmark achievement. Her extensive fieldwork and research across key Zagros Paleolithic sites provided the empirical core for the nomination, integrating decades of archaeological data from sites such as Yafteh, Ghamari, Kunji, Gilvaran, Kaldar, and Gar Arjeneh.

Scientific foundations of the nomination

The strength of the nomination dossier, as Shidrang detailed, was deeply rooted in more than half a century of archaeological excavations and research in the candidate cave sites. In addition, her doctoral research at the University of Bordeaux and longstanding collaborations with the National Museum of Iran's Paleolithic Department formed a critical base for the preparation of the dossier.

"My contact with Paleolithic archaeology of Luristan began with the 2005 and 2008 excavation seasons at Yafteh Cave in Lorestan, conducted in collaboration with the Paleolithic Department of the National Museum of Iran and Liège University. These investigations uncovered substantial cultural remains from the Baradostian culture, the earliest Upper Paleolithic tradition known in the Zagros. The findings, subsequently published in leading international journals and forming integral chapters of my doctoral thesis, included comprehensive typological and technological analyses of lithic assemblages from Yafteh Cave and Pa Sangar Rock Shelter. Additionally, we discovered symbolic artifacts such as ornaments made from marine shells and perforated deer canines. These represent the earliest evidence of symbolic behavior by modern humans within Iran's present borders. Such discoveries not only expanded the understanding of the region's prehistory but also elevated the Khorramabad Valley's significance within global archaeological discourse.

Demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value

A crucial element in the nomination was the demonstration of the Khorramabad Valley's compliance with UNESCO's Criterion (iii), which recognizes sites that bear exceptional testimony to cultural traditions.

"These artifacts represent the primary cultural manifestation of complex human behavior in the Zagros Paleolithic, ex-

pressed materially through the Baradostian culture. This extraordinary evidence forms the basis of the Khorramabad Valley's universal significance."

Through her research, Shidrang redefined the cultural sequence of the Baradostian (circa 40,000–25,000 BP), with the rare discovery of personal ornaments providing tangible proof of early cognitive sophistication and symbolic communication. This line of evidence was instrumental in substantiating the valley's Outstanding Universal Value.

Global contextualization and comparative significance

Positioning the valley within the broader archaeological context was a strategic imperative:

"By situating the Khorramabad archaeological record within global debates on modern human origins and dispersal, we showcased its scientific indispensability and alignment with UNESCO's thresholds for Outstanding Universal Value. The valley offers a critical perspective on Homo Sapiens-Neanderthal interactions and the emergence of symbolic behavior in Southwest Asia." Shidrang emphasized that Khorramabad's inscription places it alongside an exclusive cadre of Asian Paleolithic World Heritage sites:

"While Asia is home to many significant Paleolithic locales, only Zhoukoudian, Sangiran, Mount Carmel, Bhimbetka, and Gobustan previously held UNESCO World Heritage status. The inclusion of the Khorramabad Valley integrates Iran into this distinguished group, while contributing a much-needed highland perspective to the study of human evolution."

Yafteh Cave: A cornerstone of the Upper Paleolithic of Iran

Among the nominated sites, Yafteh Cave, located about 12 kilometers west of Khorramabad, holds particular importance. "Our excavations at Yafteh in 2005 and 2008 revealed an exceptionally rich Upper Paleolithic sequence, with evidence of continuous human activity between 29,000 and 39,000 years ago," Shidrang noted.

Key finds included finely made Arjeneh points, scrapers, and burins, along with bone tools like awls and needles, suggesting early clothing production — potentially the oldest in Iran. The symbolic dimension of Yafteh was equally striking, with beads and pendants made from deer teeth, marine shells, and hematite. "The shells likely came from the Persian Gulf, indicating long-distance connections and early exchange networks," she explained.

Faunal remains that were studied by Dr. Marjan Mashkour of Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle at Paris, showed that hunter-gatherers specialized in ibex hunting, while also targeting red deer, gazelle, and boar. Remains of carnivores such as leopards, bears, and foxes suggest skin exploitation, likely for garments or bedding.

"Yafteh likely served as a base camp for these Upper Paleolithic groups," Shidrang added.

"Altogether, Yafteh and its neighboring shelters were crucial in demonstrating the valley's long-term human presence, symbolic culture, and adaptation strategies — all central to the UNESCO nomination," she concluded.

Recent excavations at Ghamari Cave: A project guided by ICOMOS recommendations

Among the significant efforts bolstering the nomination was the targeted excavation at Ghamari Cave in 2025, carried out in direct response to ICOMOS recommendations. "This project was initiated specifically to address ICOMOS's request for deeper investigation into the cultural sequence of Ghamari Cave, which had remained less explored compared to other sites in the valley," Shidrang explained.

Conducted jointly by Shidrang and Fereidoun Biglari of the National Museum of Iran, the excavation spanned late February to early April and yielded findings of considerable scientific importance.

"We uncovered well-preserved Neanderthal occupation layers, complete with lithic assemblages and faunal remains of ibex and red deer, which showed clear signs of butchery and thermal alteration," she noted. "The presence of charcoal concentrations within these layers provided direct evidence of controlled fire use by Neanderthals." Later strata revealed Chalcolithic-period pastoral activity, alongside painted pottery that exhibited stylistic parallels with contemporaneous ceramics from Khuzestan, suggesting potential cultural exchanges between highland and lowland communities.

"The excavation not only addressed ICOMOS's queries but also added substantial depth to our understanding of prehistoric occupation in the valley. The project attracted significant international media attention, underscoring the global relevance of the findings and reinforcing Ghamari Cave's position within the UNESCO dossier."

Multiperiod continuity and cultural transformation

The prehistoric sites of the Khorramabad Valley demonstrate an extraordinary continuity of human presence, spanning from the Middle Paleolithic to historical periods. "Yafteh Cave reveals the earliest symbolic behaviors by Homo sapiens, while Ghamari Cave contains Neanderthal occupation layers later succeeded by Chalcolithic pastoral evidence. Kunji Cave preserves Middle Paleolithic lithics alongside Chalcolithic and Bronze Age burials. Kunji, in particular, exemplifies the valley's significance beyond the Paleolithic, as its stratigraphy captures both remains of mobile foraging bands to settled agro-pastoralism. This enables us to study socio-cultural transformations within a compact and dynamic ecological niche."

Shidrang underscored that this multiperiod sequence makes the valley an exceptional setting for investigating long-term patterns of human settlement, evolution, and adaptation.

"Human occupation in the region did

The story behind Iran's first Paleolithic World Heritage site



Iranian archaeologist Sonia Shidrang speaks during an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times on July 15, 2025.

not end with the Paleolithic period. During the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze Age, and subsequent eras, settlement patterns gradually shifted from caves to the valley floor—particularly around karst springs and the area surrounding the present-day Falak-ol-Aflak Citadel. However, these later prehistoric communities continued to use caves seasonally, both for shelter and for managing their herds. This long-term continuity offers valuable insight into the evolutionary trajectory of humans, as well as the broader environmental and cultural adaptations that unfolded over tens of thousands of years."

Challenges and collaborative achievements

Shidrang also reflected on the collective efforts that culminated in the successful inscription:

"What was most inspiring was the national unity, determination, and cooperation that facilitated this achievement. The collaboration among various organizations, institutions, and the communities of Khorramabad and Lorestan province was unparalleled."

She added: "The will, perseverance, and effective management of Dr. Ata Hassanpour, the director-general of Lorestan's cultural heritage department, were particularly crucial. The registration of Iran's first Paleolithic cave sites on the World Heritage list, among the few such sites in Asia, came with its own challenges."

"We had to devise ways to prepare these archaeological sites and their findings for global presentation and future visitation." She further remarked on the strategic advantage of presenting a cohesive nomination dossier:

"I believe that World Heritage nomination files comprising multiple interconnected sites — unified by period, theme, and content, as in the case of the prehistoric sites of Khorramabad Valley — stand a stronger chance of demon-

strating their Outstanding Universal Value. Yet, preparing such comprehensive dossiers requires significant funding, time, and well-coordinated organizational measures."

UNESCO's response and international recognition

When asked which aspect of the nomination most captivated UNESCO evaluators, Shidrang responded:

"UNESCO was particularly impressed by the long-standing history of Paleolithic research in the Khorramabad Valley and the remarkable evidence of the Baradostian culture. This clear demonstration of symbolic behavior among modern humans — a phenomenon rarely seen elsewhere in Iran — drew significant attention.

Moreover, the evaluators commended the coherence, thorough preparation, and professional presentation of the dossier.

The Khorramabad Valley dossier received the highest scores in most evaluation areas and, unlike some nominations from other countries, it was accepted without any objections or extensive supplementary queries."

Research potential and future directions

Shidrang noted that despite multiple excavation campaigns, large portions of the valley's caves archaeological deposits remain untouched and remarkably well-preserved.

"This presents an exciting opportunity for future research, particularly through new interdisciplinary approaches such as advanced dating techniques, paleogenetics, and residue analysis.

We hope that the World Heritage inscription will stimulate more systematic and collaborative research efforts."

Global heritage stewardship and Iran's place in human history

Shidrang framed the inscription within the broader context of global heritage

stewardship, saying "This recognition places Iran alongside countries like France, with its Vézère Valley, and Spain, with the Altamira Cave, in safeguarding Paleolithic heritage as part of humanity's shared legacy. Khorramabad now stands as a global benchmark for researching and conserving early human landscapes. It affirms Iran's leadership in archaeological scholarship and heritage management." She further emphasized: "For the scientific community, this achievement underscores the centrality of the Zagros in understanding early human history and promotes international collaboration. For the broader public, it reaffirms Iran's essential place in the story of humanity. I sincerely hope that this recognition brings greater visibility and protection to these sites, and that it inspires younger generations — in Iran and beyond — to engage with, study, and appreciate our collective past." Shidrang concluded with a reflection on the personal significance of this accomplishment:

"It has been an honor to contribute to this process. This UNESCO inscription is not just a milestone for archaeology but also a tribute to the many Iranian and international scholars who have worked in the Khorramabad Valley since 1950s. I am proud to have been part of a team that brought this extraordinary heritage to global attention, and I eagerly anticipate the future research and preservation initiatives that will build on this foundation."

Shidrang, an Associate Professor in the Department of Archaeology at Shahid Beheshti University (SBU) and a specialist in Paleolithic Archaeology with a degree from the University of Bordeaux, served as the lead scientific author of the nomination dossier that successfully secured UNESCO status for the Prehistoric Sites of the Khorramabad Valley.

Iran among world's best-performing destinations in Q1, deputy minister

TEHRAN—The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) in its latest report in social media, named Iran among top countries in terms of performance in tourism sector during the first quarter of 2025, said the deputy tourism minister, Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpei, in a meeting of policymaking council of VisitIran website which was held at Persian Gulf Hall of Tourism Ministry in July 15 with participation of private and state sectors.

Given this achievement, the marketing activities, introduction of Iran's tourism potentials and special attention to VisitIran website with an aim to restore the country's tourism image have been put on agenda.

According to Public Relations Office of Tourism Ministry, Mohseni Bandpei added that the report shows that Iran has had the best performance in the first quarter of the year and before 12-day Israeli-imposed war.

serais, mosques, shrines, bathhouses and bridges across the province during current Iranian year.

He said that Mirfatah Icehouse, Hamadan Jame' Mosque, Asadabad Safavid Reservoir, Salehabad Heydari House, Zarrabi House and Kabudarahang Bazaar to undergo restoration projects.

In addition, Lotfalian Mansion in Ma-

8m pilgrims cross Mehran border in year

TEHRAN—Over eight million pilgrims travel via the Mehran border crossing to Iraq in a year, said Ahmad Karami, Ilam Governor-General, in a meeting with High Advisor of the Interior Minister Ahmadali Mouhebat, Representative of Astan-e Qods-e Razavi Zolqadr, and several local officials on July 16.

The meeting was held by Astan-e Qods-e Razavi for rendering services to

Arbaeen pilgrims including launching Mookebs (service centers with a religious nature where Shia Muslims come together and conduct religious rituals) and distributing votive meals among pilgrims during Arbaeen, ISNA reported.

During the meeting, Karami emphasized visiting Martyr Soleimani Terminal in Mehran Border and locating the Mookebs and Recreational Complex of Astan-e Qods-e Razavi.

form of joint projects with supervision of Cultural Heritage Development.

Since last Iranian year, Hamedan Cultural Heritage Department has held over 50 technical committees and three specialized councils with presence of reliable professors who play a key role in studying and ratifying the restoration projects, he said.

60 restoration projects underway for Hamedan historical monuments

TEHRAN—Deputy Head of Hamedan Cultural Heritage Department Hamidreza Heydari gave news of 60 restoration projects being conducted across Hamedan province with a credit worth 480 billion rials (\$533,333).

According to IRIB, he also said that projects include restoring and organizing historical monuments, caravan-

layer, Haj Aqa Torab Bathhouse in Nahavand, Sa'adat Caravanserai, Dargazin Bathhouse, and tombs of Avicenna and Baba Taher are the other restoration projects, he mentioned.

He continued that a number of projects such as Ahmadi Mansion, Nouri-Moqaddam Mansion, Saberion Mansion and Salehan School are restored in

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Iran marking national welfare week

TEHRAN –National welfare week is being held across the country from July 16 to 22. This year, the week is observed with the theme ‘together for well-being; participating today, empowering tomorrow’.

The head of the Welfare Organization, Seyed Javad Hosseini, said that 10,566 housing, employment, social, and rehabilitation projects with a total investment of 520 billion rials (some 580,000 dollars) will be inaugurated on the occasion of the 54th anniversary of national welfare week, IRNA reported.

About 77 percent of the projects focus on employment, 21 percent on housing, and the remaining two percent on social and rehabilitation sector, the official noted. Moreover, 359 projects will be started, most of them will be implemented in Kerman, Lorestan, and Isfahan provinces.

Over the past year, 14,000 housing units were provided to beneficiaries and people with disabilities. 45,966 houses are under construction. And 1,942 housing units will be handed over to people with disabilities during the week, Hosseini highlighted.

The official went on to announce the launch of a job support fund. “Thanks to welfare services, nearly 200,000 beneficiaries and individuals with disabilities were employed, and the service sector accounts for 62 percent of the employment.

Welfare Organization’s services

The Welfare Organization also



supports and contributes to improving the quality of life for the elderly, children living in child-care centers, and women heads of households.

The Welfare Organization is planning to implement a forty-day training program for old people to improve their quality of life.

The program will include 240 different educational subjects such as health, life skills, arts, communication skills, digital and entrepreneurship, music, sports, games, and other leisure activities, IRNA quoted Ahmad Delbari, an official with the Welfare Organization, as saying.

It will be implemented as a pilot program in Tehran. Each individual will register to participate in the program for forty days within the three-month duration, he said.

Participants will be divided into two groups to attend the sessions either on odd or even days, with educational programs provided daily in two different parts. The first 15 minutes will be

dedicated to physical workout, the next 45 minutes will focus on specialized training, and 90 minutes will be allocated to recreational programs.

During the educational courses, each person will receive detailed pieces of training that are essential for self-care and improving their quality of life, the official noted.

Some short-term educational programs will be accessible through particular websites introduced by centers, Delbari added.

Empowering children

Currently, there are 635 child-care centers, of which 33 are nurseries. Five thousand people work in these centers and nine thousand children are benefiting from services in these centers, IRNA quoted Hamid-Reza Alvand, an official with Welfare Organization, as saying.

The Welfare Organization is planning to empower the children by training them to respect social values, and learn social

skills, strengthening their faith, and helping them to be independent, the official added.

Child adoption has surged by 2.5 times compared to ten years ago, as around 2,500 children are adopted annually.

For adoption, criteria like mental health, the ability to take care of a child, no addiction, no criminal record, and bad reputation, as well as proper income must be achieved. The approach is the result of studying the adoption process in 10 countries around the world.

Supporting women heads of household

According to a recent report by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), the number of female heads of households supported by Welfare Organization has increased from 180,120 individuals in 2017 to 278,353 in 2023.

The majority of women heads of households are widowed, divorced, or women in families where the man does not have any income due to illness or disability; but they are not necessarily the oldest member of the families, Mehr news agency reported.

The increase in the number of female-headed households in the world has resulted in many economic, health, and social challenges.

Empowering women is one of the key components of sustainable development, and women heads of households are no exception.

Conservation of sharks contributes to protection of oceans

TEHRAN –Protecting sharks will help maintain the ecological balance and healthy marine ecosystems, as well as sustain the livelihoods of coastal communities, leading ultimately to protecting entire oceans.

Sharks Awareness Day is observed every year on July 14 to celebrate sharks as one of the ocean’s wondrous creatures.

The day provides an opportunity to focus on the critical situation of these valuable marine species, which face serious threats such as illegal fishing, pollution, and habitat loss.

Sharks and rays, which have lived in the oceans for millions of years, have become highly vulnerable due to slow growth and low reproduction rates.

More than 45 species of sharks and 58 species of rays have been identified in the regional waters, some of which are on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Red List.

Sharks Awareness Day is observed every year on July 14 to celebrate sharks as one of the ocean’s wondrous creatures.

To address the challenge, the Department of Environment (DOE), in collaboration with local communities, government agencies, and scientific centers, has developed an action plan for the preservation of sharks and rays by monitoring their populations, raising fishermen’s awareness, and empowering them.

According to Shahram Fadakar, an official with the DOE, the action plan is a national document, and its implementation will be mandatory for the related organizations.

Referring to the key role of cartilaginous fish in marine ecosystems, Fadakar said sharks and rays sit at the top of the ocean food web; they play a vital role in maintaining biological balance. The decline in the population of sharks and rays impacts the survival of marine communities.

Unfortunately, overexploitation and illegal fishing, their late maturity, and low breeding have threatened these species with extinction.

More than a third of cartilaginous fish species are on the IUCN Red List; among them, rays

are critically endangered.

Adopting a participatory approach, the action plan aims to identify threats, reduce conflicts, promote preservation culture, and determine priority actions for a five-year period, the official stressed.

Fadakar went on to say the DOE has so far conducted 48 educational and participatory workshops in coastal provinces.

The latest workshop was held with the participation of representatives from Iran Fisheries Organization, the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade, Iran’s Customs Administration, and the National Planning and Budget Organization, to strengthen collaborations among these institutions.

Rays or skates are an order of cartilaginous fish that includes various types of rays, skates, and some other similar fish. They mostly feed on smaller fish, invertebrates, and benthic organisms, searching for food at the bottom of the seas, and with their mouth located on the underside of their bodies, they easily catch the prey and eat them.

Overfishing, marine pollution, and habitat loss are among their main threats. Conservation efforts include restricting hunting and protecting their habitat.

Sharks are a large group of cartilaginous fish, half of which are listed in the IUCN Red List as endangered species. There are 7 types of sharks in the Persian Gulf, including the basking shark, the basking shark, the whale shark, the thresher shark, the bull shark, the shark catfish, and the zebra shark. Four species of sharks in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman are now critically endangered, and 13 species are on the IUCN Red List.

Overfishing, inappropriate fishing methods, and habitat loss are among the factors responsible for the extinction of sharks in the Persian Gulf.

Action plans to conserve species

The DOE has developed action plans for the conservation of 23 endangered species, and the plans are being implemented in the country.

The plans intend to address species such as cheetah, brown bear, leopard, black bear, Persian yellow deer, Persian zebra, and hunting birds from among 86 endangered species.

According to the DOE’s latest report, 86 species in the country are in danger of dying out.

The DOE is planning to create action plans for 20 more endangered species.

‘Active diplomacy prerequisite for addressing transboundary SDSs’

TEHRAN – Referring to the fact that the sources of the sand and dust storms impacting Iran are located outside the country, an official with the Department of Environment (DOE) has underlined the role of environmental diplomacy in managing climatic crises, particularly sand and dust storms.

Air pollution, sand and dust storms are global issues that need international cooperation to be addressed because their solutions transcend national borders, IRIB quoted Arman Khorsand as saying.

Underscoring the need for national and international cooperation, the official said Persian Gulf states are collaborating to mitigate and deal with water pollution, climate change, and sand and dust storms. More collaborative efforts are also shaping.

“Although the negative effects of climate change are increasing at rates faster than the effectiveness of measures taken to solve the problem, we should not refrain from playing a more effective and responsible role,” Khorsand noted.

Attributing dust phenomenon to the drought and reduced water resources, he said the drying of the Aral Sea, the Karakum Desert in Central Asia, and the deserts of China and Mongolia have turned them into hotspot sources of sand and dust storms, which are spreading to countries such as Korea and Japan.

Ad hoc working group to deal with sand and dust storms

President Masoud Pezeshkian has issued an order calling for the establishment of a spe-

cialized working group to address SDSs, which have turned into a significant public health concern in the country.

During a meeting held on Sunday, the Department of Environment (DOE) presented a report on the hazards of SDSs, as a comprehensive and growing threat, and enumerated the national plans and strategies to mitigate the impacts of SDSs, IRNA reported.

Dust storms are major environmental challenges that adversely impact food security and human health.

Highlighting the significance of preserving the environment, as a critical issue of the country, the president ordered the establishment of a working group, consisting of experts, academics, representatives of ministries and executive agencies, to prepare and implement operational plans to combat the dust phenomenon, drawing on successful international experiences.

Dust storms are major environmental challenges that adversely impact food security, human health, and the sustainable development process at national and regional levels.

Some 111 earthquakes hit Iran per week on average

TEHRAN – A total of 111 earthquakes were recorded across the country on average each week from June 21 to July 11, according to the seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

From June 21 to 27, 95 earthquakes were recorded in the country. Of the total quakes recorded in the first week, one had a magnitude of 4.6 on the Richter scale, which occurred on June 24 in Semnan province.

Statistically, 86 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 6 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and 3 earthquakes with a magnitude between 4 and 5 occurred in the country.

Among the provinces of the country, Semnan, with 30, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Khorasan Razavi and Kerman with 19 and 10 earthquakes, respectively.

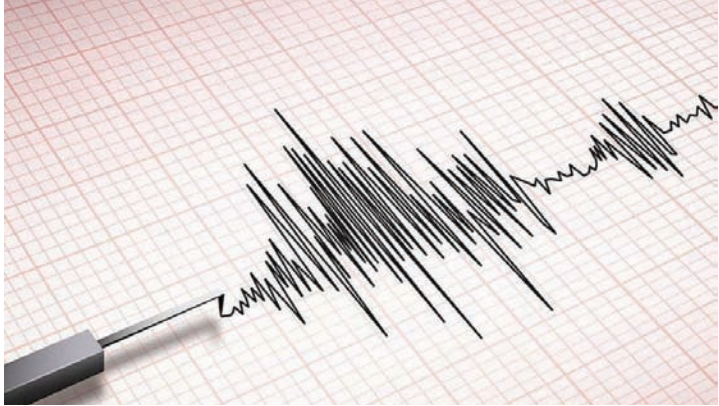
From June 28 to July 4, a total of 115 earthquakes were recorded in the country. The

biggest earthquake with a magnitude of 4.6 occurred on July 1 at the border of Iran and Turkmenistan.

Statistically, 101 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 12 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and 2 earthquakes with a magnitude between 4 and 5 occurred in the country.

Among the provinces of the country, Khuzestan, with 14, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Semnan and Kerman with 12 and 11 earthquakes, respectively. During the same period, two earthquakes hit Tehran province.

From July 5 to 11, some 124 earthquakes hit the country. Among the provinces of the country, Mazandaran, with 14, experienced the highest number of earthquakes, followed by Khuzestan and Gilan with 12 and 10 earthquakes, respectively. In the third week, three earthquakes were recorded in Tehran province.



Statistically, 108 earthquakes with magnitudes smaller than 3; 15 earthquakes with magnitudes between 3 and 4; and 1 earthquake with a magnitude between 4 and 5 occurred in the country.

A total of 6,272 earthquakes were recorded across the country over the past calendar year (March 2024 –March 2025) according to the Seismological networks of the Institute of Geophysics of the University of Tehran.

Out of registered earthquakes, 150 were more than 4 on the Richter scale; at least five earth-

quakes with a magnitude of more than 4.5 occurred monthly in the country.

The Iranian plateau is located in a very seismically active region of the world and is known not only for its major catastrophic earthquakes but also for the disasters relating to natural hazards, especially earthquakes.

About 2 percent of the earthquakes in the world occur in Iran, but more than 6 percent of the victims of the world’s earthquakes during the 20th century are reported from Iranian earthquakes.

ENGLISH IN USE

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Education, labor ministries ink MOU on out-of-school children

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare have signed a memorandum of understanding aiming to bring out-of-school children back to school.

The memorandum of understanding will pave the way for future steps, ISNA news agency quoted Education Minister Mohammad Bat’haei as saying on Sunday.

He made the remarks over the 8th session of council meeting for improving educational standards in underprivileged and underdeveloped areas at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.“The meeting is aiming to live up to educational standards, however, the current conditions are unjustifiable, and we should move faster,” he added.

تفاهم وزراء برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل به مدارس

وزارت آموزش و پرورش تفاهم نامه مشترکی با وزارت رفاه برای بازگرداندن کودکان بازمانده از تحصیل امضا کردند.

به گزارش روز یکشنبه ایسنا، محمد بطحایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش گفت: امروز تفاهم نامه ای امضا می شود که نقشه کار برای ادامه مسیر کاملاً مشخص شود.

بطحایی در هشتمین جلسه شورای هماهنگی بهبود و ارتقای شاخص های آموزشی و پرورشی مناطق محروم و کمتر توسعه یافته که در وزارت رفاه برگزار شد گفت: هدف اصلی این برنامه و شورای هماهنگی ارتقای شاخص ها بود، هر چند این روند قابل قبول نیست و باید با سرعت بیشتری حرکت کنیم.



JULY 17, 2025

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

One who says unpleasant things about others, will himself quickly become a target of their scandal.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:11 Evening: 19:40 Dawn: 3:20 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:02 (tomorrow)

Tehran cultural center screens “How to Train Your Dragon”

TEHRAN – Canadian filmmaker Dean DeBlois's 2025 movie “How to Train Your Dragon” was screened during a session at the Arasbaran Cultural Center in Tehran on Wednesday.

Iranian film critic Amir Qaderi attended a screening of the film followed by a review session.

“How to Train Your Dragon” is a live-action remake of the 2010 animated film with the same name. The film brings the enchanting story to life with stunning visual effects and a talented cast, offering both nostalgia and new excitement for audiences around the world.

The film features Mason Thames, Nico Parker, Gabriel Howell, Julian Dennison, Bronwyn James, Harry Trevaldwy, Peter Serafinowicz, and Nick Frost. Gerard Butler reprises his role as Stoick the Vast, the proud Viking chieftain. This marks DreamWorks' first foray into live-action filmmaking, blending their signature storytelling style with realistic visual effects.

The remake premiered at CinemaCon in April, drawing praise from critics and fans alike. Critics lauded the film's breathtaking visuals, heartfelt performances, and faithful adaptation of the original story. Commercially, it was a major success, earning over \$563 million worldwide, making it one of the highest-grossing films of 2025. Its popularity has led to the announcement of a sequel, scheduled for release in 2027, promising to continue the adventures of Hiccup and Toothless.

Set in the Viking village of Berk, the story follows Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, a young and physically weaker Viking, son of the

fierce chief Stoick. Unlike other Vikings, Hiccup struggles to meet expectations as a warrior but dreams of proving himself. He spends his time inventing mechanical devices to overcome his limitations.

During a raid, Hiccup shoots down a rare dragon called the Night Fury with a bolas launcher. The villagers dismiss his success, but Hiccup's curiosity leads him to search for the fallen dragon. When he finds the injured creature, he chooses compassion and releases it, surprising everyone when Toothless, the dragon, spares his life. This marks the beginning of a special bond between them.

Meanwhile, Stoick plans to destroy the dragons' nest, and Hiccup is sent to a dragon-fighting class along with other young Vikings, including Fishlegs and Snotlout. Hiccup struggles at first and is mocked by peers, but he finds solace in the forest, where he discovers Toothless trapped and injured with a severed tail fin. Using his ingenuity, Hiccup creates a prosthetic fin and a saddle, allowing Toothless to fly again. Their friendship deepens as Hiccup learns about dragon behavior, helping him tame and train other dragons, which impresses the villagers.

The climax involves a confrontation with the Red Death, a giant destructive dragon threatening Berk and its inhabitants. Hiccup's leadership and bravery unite Vikings and dragons to face the threat. Despite setbacks, they manage to defeat the Red Death, saving their home. Hiccup loses his foot in the battle but earns the respect of his people and the love of Astrid, his fellow Viking and friend.

Tehran ceremony pays tribute to martyr artist Mansoureh Alikhani

TEHRAN – The artistic community and the family of the martyr Mansoureh Alikhani gathered on Tuesday at the Art Bureau of the Islamic Ideology Dissemination Organization in Tehran to pay tribute to a remarkable artist whose life was tragically cut short in the recent Israeli aggression on Iranian soil.

The ceremony not only celebrated her artistic achievements but also underscored her unwavering faith, bravery, and dedication to social causes, embodying the spirit of a true believer and liberated soul.

The event was attended by prominent figures from the cultural and artistic spheres, as well as artists, friends, and family members of the late artist. The ceremony opened with heartfelt speeches reflecting on her life, her artistic journey, and the profound impact she made on those around her.

Speaking at the ceremony, painter Kazem Chalipa captured the essence of Alikhani's character.

He emphasized that everyone's time on earth is limited and that her life was a testament to the importance of cherishing the moments granted to us.

“Alikhani was a person of distinctive personality—she did not waste her time and created meaningful works that reflected her quest for self-discovery.”

He further highlighted her dedication to her craft, noting her seriousness and commitment.

Her last work, a depiction of Ashura, was presented as an example of her pursuit of meaningful art. Chalipa underscored that Alikhani was a meaning-seeker and a believer.

Chalipa expressed his hope that more efforts are made to publish a comprehensive book on her works, including analyses and insights about her artistic approach.

“We must value the living artists among us, and I believe that her legacy should serve as an example for future generations,” he concluded.

For his part, Seyyed Amir Javid, the deputy director of the Art Bureau, stated that unlike other forms of recognition, which require human effort and planning, the selection and recognition of martyrs are divine acts.

“God Himself chooses martyrs, and through this divine choice, their voices are amplified across a broader spectrum of audiences,” Javid explained.

He emphasized that the efforts to introduce Martyr Alikhani to



the public are merely the beginning of a divine plan, and her memory will continue to be honored through ongoing initiatives.

Following Javid, the acclaimed artist and journalist Seyyed Ali Mirfattah analyzed the evolving cultural perception of martyrdom in Iran.

He pointed out that during the 1980s, the culture surrounding martyrdom was different—families celebrated the martyr's sacrifice with pride, viewing it as an honor. However, this perspective has faded over time.

Mansoureh Alikhani was killed during Israeli attacks on Tehran's residential areas after the Zionist regime's assault on Iran.

Mirfattah highlighted the recent 12-day war as a turning point that rekindled the collective consciousness about the enduring spirit of martyrs and their spiritual presence.

He referred to Iran's missile defense systems, which were developed under the leadership of martyrs, as a testament to their lasting influence on national security.

He also underscored the role of martyrs in shaping Iran's social and media landscape.

“Today, when global students rally around the Palestinian flag in support of resistance, they are echoing the bloodshed and sacrifices of our martyrs,” he said.

He urged artists and cultural figures to harness their talents

to craft narratives that honor these sacrifices and bolster national unity.

Deputy for Artistic Affairs at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance Nadereh Rezai highlighted the importance of investing in creative talents.

She pointed out that over 40 artists affiliated with the ministry have been martyred, along with several women, children, and soldiers defending the nation's security.

“Creating art is a way to continue life and memory. The sacrifices of these individuals must inspire us to foster a vibrant cultural scene that honors their legacy,” she said.

She also referenced the importance of narrating Iran's defense history through art.

“In the 1980s, the narrative of the eight-year war was rooted in the efforts of artists and storytellers. Today, this narrative must evolve, and artists must play a pivotal role in shaping a truthful account of our history,” she urged.

“History testifies that we have not initiated any war in history; however, wherever we were attacked, we stood firm, and it is our right to have the upper hand in shaping this narrative,” she added.

“The enemy spends millions of dollars to distort our story, and I call on all artists to use every tool at their disposal to create narratives and bring the voice of Iran's innocence to the world. I also ask artists to help strengthen national unity.”

Following the ceremony, Sediqeh Salman, a fellow artist and friend of the martyr's family, spoke about her character and artistic journey.

“Throughout the years, I saw

her grow into a compassionate, sincere, and dedicated artist. She actively participated in numerous exhibitions and collaborated with prominent figures.

Her work reflected her social concerns and love for Iranian culture, especially her focus on women and children.”

In closing, Mansoureh Alikhani's sister, Mojgan Alikhani, expressed her deep admiration and love for her sister.

“Mansoureh was more than an artist; she was a source of inspiration for our family. Her creativity and passion never waned, even during her illness.

She believed that art was a lifelong journey, and her sketches and paintings always reflected her love for life and her homeland.”

The event culminated with the opening of an exhibition showcasing 25 of Alikhani's paintings at the Art Bureau's Abolfazl Aali Gallery.

The exhibition, which will be open to the public until August 6, offers a glimpse into her artistic evolution, featuring works that explore Iranian culture, social issues, and the sacrifices of martyrs.

Following the Zionist regime's aggressive assault on Iran, Mansoureh Alikhani lost her life during Israeli attacks on residential areas in Tehran.

Alikhani was a student of master Kazem Chalipa and a prominent figure in the field of painting who was involved in training and research as well.

She was creating a painting about Ashura, the day Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE, which remained unfinished due to her martyrdom.

Cartoon of Day



Justice

Cartoonist: Kamal Sharaf from Yemen

“You’ve Reached Sam” at Iranian bookstores

TEHRAN – A Persian translation of Vietnamese American writer Dustin Thao's “You’ve Reached Sam” has recently been published by Peydayesh Publications in Tehran.

The book has been translated into Persian by Fatemeh Sabeti.

“You’ve Reached Sam” tells the story of seventeen-year-old Julie, whose life is shattered when her friend, Sam, tragically dies. With dreams of leaving their small town together, attending college, and spending a summer in Japan now dashed, Julie finds herself engulfed in grief.

In her attempt to cope, she skips Sam's funeral and discards his belongings, desperately trying to erase the painful memories of their time together.

However, a message Sam left in her yearbook pulls her back into the past, reigniting her longing for him. In a moment of desperation, Julie calls Sam's cellphone, hoping to hear his voice one last time.

To her astonishment, Sam answers, and in that miraculous moment, she is granted a second chance to say goodbye. Their conversations become a lifeline for Julie, allowing her to reconnect with Sam in a way she never

thought possible.

As their calls continue, Julie finds herself falling for Sam all over again. The emotional pull of their connection complicates her grieving process, as she grapples with the reality of his absence while simultaneously cherishing their conversations.

However, keeping this supernatural link a secret proves increasingly difficult. Julie witnesses the pain that Sam's family endures after his death, which weighs heavily on her conscience.

Caught between the desire to reveal the truth about her calls and the fear of losing Sam forever, Julie faces an emotional dilemma. She feels compelled to alleviate the suffering of those around her, including Sam's family, but doing so may sever her connection with the boy she loves.

This internal conflict drives the narrative forward as Julie navigates her grief and the complexities of love and loss.

Through heartfelt moments and difficult choices, “You’ve Reached Sam” explores themes of love, remembrance, and the struggle to move on after tragedy.



Julie's journey is one of self-discovery and acceptance as she learns to honor Sam's memory while finding her own path forward.

Ultimately, the story captures the bitter-sweet nature of love that transcends even death, reminding readers of the enduring bonds that shape our lives.