



# 11 million 'JANFADA' for Iran

*Iranians enrol to defend homeland should a ground invasion come*

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## Trump in 'panic mode': How Iran's downing of jets exposes US air power vulnerabilities

TEHRAN — The downing of two US military aircraft by Iran on Friday, including an advanced F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet, demonstrates that Tehran's air defenses remain capable and lethal, even under sustained aerial pressure from American forces. The incidents expose the limits of President Donald Trump's repeated assertions that Washington enjoyed uncontested control of Iranian airspace and that the Islamic Republic's military had been effectively neutralized. ▶ Page 2

## Six weeks on: Iran strikes back after US-Israeli attacks

TEHRAN - The United States and Israel continued their unprovoked attacks on Iran on Saturday, marking the sixth week of their military aggression. The latest airstrikes targeted six petrochemical plants across the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan, wounding several individuals but failing to halt Iran's industrial and national resilience.

The assaults were concentrated in eastern and western Mahshahr city before noon, striking the Fajr 1, Fajr 2, Rejal, Abu Ali, Bandar Emam, and Amir Kabir plants with air-to-ground missiles.

Despite the attacks, the city's authorities ensured the safety of all personnel. A statement from the Public Relations Department of Mahshahr's Petrochemical Region confirmed that employees ▶ Page 2

## OPEC oil output plunges over 7m barrels in March amid Hormuz disruption

TEHRAN- A recent Reuters survey has revealed that OPEC's crude oil production in March 2026 fell by more than 7 million barrels per day (bpd) compared to February, marking the lowest output level since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2020.

The dramatic decline is attributed to the ongoing war between the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran, which has severely disrupted maritime traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Consequently, key West Asian producers have faced a sharp reduction in oil exports, leading to unprecedented supply shortages across the region.

The Strait of Hormuz, a 21-mile-wide waterway between Oman and Iran, is the world's most critical oil chokepoint. Nearly 20% of global petroleum passes through it daily—about 17 million barrels. Iran has repeatedly threatened to block the strait in response to military strikes. A closure would trap most Persian Gulf oil exports, sending prices beyond \$200 per barrel. ▶ Page 4

## The great divergence that echoes louder than American bombs

By staff writer

TEHRAN — Five weeks into the unprovoked U.S.-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a new geopolitical front has opened.

Since the strikes began on February 28, the weekends of rage have transformed from local anti-war demonstrations into a global counter-pulse against imperialist violence.

From the massive Quds Day rallies on March 13 to the defiant "No Kings" networks in the United States, the international street is exercising a veto that no amount of military hardware can override. ▶ Page 5

## "Days when flying over Iran was a walk in the park are over," says ex-Israeli Air Force commander

TEHRAN – A former Israeli Air Force commander, speaking on condition of anonymity, has warned that Iran has fundamentally transformed its air defense network, making its skies highly contested for both Israeli and U.S. aircraft.

In an interview, the unnamed former IAF official explained that Iran completely rethought its strategy after the 12-day war, when it realized how easily it had been bombed. The result, he said, is a far more resilient and advanced system.

According to the commander, seven key changes have turned Iranian airspace into a dangerous environment:

### Decentralized command

Each of Iran's 31 defense zones can now operate independently if central command is severed, allowing local commanders to launch missiles without orders from Tehran. ▶ Page 3

## The Legend of Sepehr" animation premiered in Minab Martyrs' Cemetery

TEHRAN- The Iranian animated film "The Legend of Sepehr" held its premiere screening at the Minab Martyrs' Cemetery on Thursday evening.

Directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi and produced by the Mahva Entertainment Industry Factory, the animation was screened for free. Following the premiere, additional screenings are also scheduled to accommodate the local community, IRNA reported.

The project has committed all sales proceeds from the beginning of Farvardin 1405 (March 21, 2026) until the end of its theatrical run to the reconstruction and development of Minab, the report added. ▶ Page 6

## Ghost armies: The rift between reality and narrative in the conflicts of West Asia

By Kurosh Alyani

TEHRAN - While Donald Trump names different branches of Iran's armed forces each day and claims to have completely destroyed them, Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly asserts that not only has he dismantled Iran's defensive and missile capabilities, but that with spies and infiltrators embedded everywhere, no place is beyond his reach. Despite all these claims, Iran and its allies continue to target official and unofficial American bases across West Asia, as well as various Israeli interests, with their missiles. ▶ Page 2

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# TEHRAN TIMES

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## Failure on Battlefield Attack on Infrastructure

*Why are the US and Israel attacking Iran's infrastructure—contrary to international rules and their own initial claims?*

**Promises made, threats delivered!**

**By Afshin Majlesi**  
The way the United States has spoken about and acted toward Iran has been marked by clear paradoxes. On one hand, Donald Trump presented himself as someone who cared about the Iranian people, saying that "help is on the way" and promising to "make Iran great again!" On the other, he soon began repeatedly threatening to destroy Iran's civilian infrastructure.

At the beginning of the conflict, Trump's message, which was echoed by the regime of Israel as well, seemed carefully designed to separate the Iranian people from their government! His statements about helping Iranians and restoring the country sounded similar to his earlier political slogans and suggested that the United States had a humanitarian goal! However, words cannot be judged on their own. They need to be compared with what happened afterward.

Trump's dramatic change of his support tone, warned that if Iran did not accept his demands, US forces would strike "each and every one" of its power plants and push the country "back to the Stone Ages." These were not just empty words. Around the same time, there were real attacks on major infrastructure, including an important bridge near Tehran. ▶ Page 7

**Science in the crossfire: Iran's universities resilient amid bombardment**

**By Maedeh Zaman Fashami**  
Since the beginning of the aggressive attacks by the U.S.-Israeli coalition on Iran, a series of extensive assaults on Iranian scientific and academic centers including the Iran University of Science and Technology, Shahid Beheshti University, the Iran Space Research Institute, Abbasgour University, and the Pasteur Institute of Tehran, have drawn global attention. These attacks, carried out mainly by American and Israeli forces, go beyond conventional military operations and carry broad strategic, cultural, and scientific implications. Analyzing these strikes highlights both the fear of foreign powers toward Iran's scientific progress and the necessity of emphasizing the resilience of local science and knowledge in the face of violence and bombing.

Targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure on such a scale can, according to credible legal sources, constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law. ▶ Page 7

**Iran, infrastructure and the politics of annihilation**

**By Xavier Villar**  
MADRID – The destruction of Iranian civilian and economic infrastructure is not incidental to the U.S.-Israeli campaign. It is the mechanism through which the campaign is organized. To describe it as collateral damage is to misread the operative distinction: what is being acted upon is not military capacity in isolation, but the material systems through which the Iranian state maintains continuity across territory, time, and population.

The strike on the B1 bridge linking Tehran to Karaj illustrates this logic. The structure was not yet operational. It had no military function. Its significance lay in its position within an incomplete infrastructural sequence—planning, construction, integration into transport and logistics systems. Its destruction does not interrupt use; it interrupts formation. It removes a point at which some pattern is still being assembled.

The extension of targeting toward bridges and electrical infrastructure follows the same logic. They are connective systems through which governance is operationalized: energy distribution, mobility, industrial coordination, and the maintenance of order. Their presence is continuous rather than episodic. The effect is not military degradation in the narrow sense, but interference in the conditions under which the state remains legible as a functioning system. ▶ Page 7

The newly constructed B1 Bridge, among the largest in West Asia, is hit by U.S.-Israeli airstrikes in Karaj, near Iran's capital Tehran, April 3, 2026.

## TEHRAN TIMES



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### TEHRAN PAPERS

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

#### Iran ready to welcome American soldiers!

Siasat-e-Rooz devoted its headline to the United States' claim of a possible military attack and Iran's readiness. It wrote: In recent days, Trump and its several commanders have been speaking of launching a ground operation against Iran. At first, they announced that their objective was to occupy several Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf. What is currently going on in the minds of Trump and Hegseth, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, is a grave and regret-inducing miscalculation. The entry of American ground forces into the battlefield is precisely the event that the Iranian Army's Ground Forces and the IRGC Ground Forces have long wished for, because they have prepared specific plans and arrangements for such a scenario. If the U.S. military attacks Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf or any point on Iranian soil, it will face a situation unlike anything it has ever experienced.

**Kayhan: The Zionist-American enemy is working intensely**

Kayhan, in its editorial, referred to the behavior of American fans inside Iran. According to the editorial, the deceitful American-Zionist enemy has shown that it will not abandon trickery and conspiracy until the very last moment. It appears that now—after Washington failed to install its preferred figures in positions of power in Iran following the attack—they have brought these individuals onto the scene to help them exit the war. In their speeches and proposals, they present beautifully worded and seemingly compassionate plans that amount to prescribing 'surrender' for the Iranian nation. Through populist rhetoric, they speak of ending the war and implementing fundamental reforms in the system's policies. These American assets in Iran, through such actions, create doubt in public opinion and attempt to create division among the people and officials. They aim to undermine one of Iran's greatest strengths these days: the nationwide consensus on delivering a regret-inducing response to the invading enemy.

**Javan: The gap between U.S. political and military institutions is widening**

Javan analyzed the dismissal of commanders and senior officials who oppose the Trump-Hegseth war strategy. The newspaper said: The dismissals indicate the widening gap between political and military institutions and an attempt to assign blame to reduce political pressure, and this process could weaken the professional independence of the army. According to experts, the consequences of this event go beyond the U.S. and could lead to a decrease in deterrence, an

increase in the boldness of competitors, and a change in the global balance of power. The change in the ranks of military commanders is taking place while the illegal US war against Iran has failed to achieve success in 35 days, and this has caused military officials to react to the continuation of this conflict.

**Khorasan: From oil to algorithms**

Khorasan assessed the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its impact on the global digital economy. According to the newspaper, the current disruption in the Strait of Hormuz is creating a chain of problems in the global digital economy:

1. Energy supply shocks and price spikes
2. Rising electricity generation costs and pressure on technology companies' profit margins
3. Rising cloud service prices for end users
4. Slowing investment in new, heavy-duty AI models

This shows that AI is not just an abstract, software-driven phenomenon, but part of the world's 'energy-centric' economy. The Strait of Hormuz, as one of the most critical chokepoints for energy and trade, plays a decisive role in shaping the 'cost of producing intelligence.' Every unit of data processed by a language model is, at some point in the chain, tied to energy and transportation routes. The economy of the 21st century may be built on data, but its pulse is still regulated by the flow of energy through geographic bottlenecks.

**Farhikhtegan: America's battle is with the Iranian nation**

Farhikhtegan wrote the following about the targeting of the B1 Bridge by the US and the Zionist regime: After 35 days of war, it can be proven with clarity and solid documents that America's battle is not with the political system but with the "Iranian nation". The objective manifestation of this was Trump's reaction to targeting a bridge that was built with the knowledge of the Iranian youth. He presents the targeting of the B1 Bridge as an achievement of the war, while he cannot find any excuse that it was a military target. Interestingly, the targeting of the B1 Bridge was justified by claiming that it was used to transport military equipment; with this argument, almost all communication routes can be attacked in the name of a military target. This incident affected the Iranians and opened the mouth of the US President to speak rhetorically. This scene well expresses Iran's relationship with an aggressor called the US.

#### Iran FM: Bushehr nuclear site struck 4 times by US and Israel

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Saturday that the Bushehr nuclear plant has been struck four times by the United States and Israel during the ongoing conflict, warning that the attacks pose serious risks to the Persian Gulf region. On Saturday morning, a projectile from a joint US-Israeli strike hit near the perimeter of the Bushehr facility in southern Iran, killing a member of the plant's physical protection staff and damaging an auxiliary building.

"Israel-U.S. have bombed our Bushehr plant four times now. Radioactive fallout will end life in GCC capitals, not Tehran," Aaraghchi wrote on X.

He criticized a lack of global concern for the safety of Bushehr's nuclear infrastructure, draw-

ing a contrast with the attention paid to nuclear sites in Ukraine. "Remember the Western outrage about hostilities near Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine?" He also said that recent strikes on petrochemical facilities "convey real objectives," suggesting the US and Israel are targeting Iran's critical industrial and energy sectors.

Bushehr, Iran's only operational nuclear power plant, is a key component of the country's civilian energy network and a focal point of international concern given the potential consequences of any serious damage near nuclear material storage or reactor systems. As the conflict enters its sixth week, Tehran has repeatedly condemned foreign strikes as violations of international law and a threat to regional stability.

# Trump in 'panic mode': How Iran's downing of jets exposes US air power vulnerabilities

TEHRAN — The downing of two US military aircraft by Iran on Friday, including an advanced F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet, demonstrates that Tehran's air defenses remain capable and lethal, even under sustained aerial pressure from American forces. The incidents expose the limits of President Donald Trump's repeated assertions that Washington enjoyed uncontested control of Iranian airspace and that the Islamic Republic's military had been effectively neutralized.

According to US media, one of the F-15E's two crew members, that was struck in central Iran, was rescued and is receiving medical treatment, while a search and rescue operation continues for the second missing airman inside Iranian territory. Separately, an A-10 attack aircraft was struck in related operations and went down in the Persian Gulf region. US media says its pilot ejected and was recovered after flying toward Kuwaiti airspace.

**Iran's defensive capabilities in action**

The F-15E is one of the US Air Force's most capable strike fighters, designed to operate in heavily defended environments. Iran's ability to shoot down such an aircraft highlights that its air defense network — including layered systems of surface-to-air missiles and radar assets — has not been destroyed and remains operational.

This engagement directly contradicts public assertions by Trump and senior Pentagon officials in recent weeks claiming that Iran's anti-aircraft capabilities were largely "annihilated" and that American forces enjoyed "complete control" of Iranian skies. Instead, the events show that even advanced US warplanes can be vulnerable in contested airspace against layered



and adaptive defenses.

Iran's military command said on Saturday that it had deployed a new air defense system to strike the US jets it had downed on Friday and promised Tehran would "definitely achieve full control" over its airspace after more than a month of US and Israeli aerial dominance during the war.

**Search and rescue under fire**

The US search-and-rescue mission has taken on heightened urgency and risk. US helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft were reported operating at low altitude over Iranian territory in coordinated efforts to recover the missing airman. Some of these aircraft came under fire during the mission, underscoring the danger posed by Iran's integrated air defense environment.

Iranian media has shown imagery of the wreckage and encouraged local efforts to assist in finding any remaining US crew, offering rewards while discouraging mistreatment — an approach that blends public mobilization with national defense messaging.

The F-15E loss represents the first confirmed shutdown of a manned US aircraft in Iranian territory during the current war, distinguishing it from earlier so-

called friendly-fire losses in neighboring airspace. The accompanying A-10 strike and the damage to helicopters engaged in recovery operations make Friday one of the most consequential single days for US air activity in the conflict.

**Growing US domestic criticism**

In Washington, the incidents have fueled mounting criticism of the Trump administration's war strategy. Americans increasingly question the clarity of US objectives and the administration's optimistic military messaging. Public opinion polls show significant majorities in favor of ending the US role in the conflict, citing unclear goals, rising costs, and the absence of a clear exit strategy.

Former national security adviser John Bolton commented on Friday that the recent attacks by Iran on two US fighter jets have likely placed President Trump in "panic mode." He told CNN: "No, it sounds to me like he's probably back in a panic mode, wishing he could find a way to declare victory and get out of this war, regardless of whether or not he opens the Strait of Hormuz before he does it. I think that's a mistake, too."

Economic concerns add to political discomfort. The war's impact on global energy markets and re-

gional security has contributed to higher fuel prices for ordinary Americans, making the conflict's costs more visible and politically salient.

**Escalation and strategic risk**

There are growing warnings that even more direct involvement — particularly a US ground deployment — could entrench American forces in a prolonged quagmire reminiscent of past conflicts. Analysts note that urban terrain, extended supply lines, and Iran's readiness for protracted asymmetric defense would make any ground offensive costly in lives and resources.

Iran's military doctrine is designed to absorb pressure, leverage terrain, and exploit vulnerabilities in technically superior forces. The downing of advanced US aircraft underlines that Iran retains meaningful capability to challenge US operations and complicate Washington's strategic assumptions.

The events of Friday mark not just a tactical battlefield moment but a psychological one. Iran's ability to down an F-15E — and strike another US aircraft during recovery efforts — shakes the narrative of unchallenged American superiority. It strengthens Tehran's claims of resilience and exposes the limits of optimistic official statements from Washington.

As the search for the missing crew member continues and US forces assess the broader implications of these losses, the conflict appears poised to enter a more complex and contested phase. Iran's demonstrated defensive strength suggests that military dominance — long touted by the Trump administration — remains contested, with significant repercussions for strategy, policy, and public opinion in the weeks ahead.

#### Six weeks on: Iran strikes back after US-Israeli attacks

TEHRAN - The United States and Israel continued their unprovoked attacks on Iran on Saturday, marking the sixth week of their military aggression. The latest airstrikes targeted six petrochemical plants across the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan, wounding several individuals but failing to halt Iran's industrial and national resilience.

The assaults were concentrated in eastern and western Mahshahr city before noon, striking the Fajr 1, Fajr 2, Rejal, Abu Ali, Bandar Emam, and Amir Kabir plants with air-to-ground missiles.

Despite the attacks, the city's authorities ensured the safety of all personnel. A statement from the Public Relations Department of Mahshahr's Petrochemical Region confirmed that employees were evacuated and electricity temporarily cut off to protect the facilities. First responders, medical teams, and firefighters were deployed immediately, successfully containing the fires later in the day.

The US-Israeli aggression began on February 28, escalating into a blatant war against Iran, which included the assassination of high-ranking military commanders. This was carried out despite ongoing Tehran-Washington negotia-

tions over Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces launched a series of precise missile and drone operations targeting US installations across West Asia and strategic sites in Israel.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) reported on Saturday that it struck the Israeli military and industrial targets in the 94th wave of Operation "True Promise 4."

According to the IRGC, the strikes, carried out in the early hours of Saturday, reached the south, center, and north of Israel, including Tel Aviv. Advanced ballistic missiles and heavy projectiles, such as Khorramshahr, Kheibar Shekan, and Emad missiles, alongside precision suicide drones, were deployed. The attacks overwhelmed Israel's sophisticated multi-layered air defense systems.

Locations in Dimona, the Negev, Beersheba, and Ramat Gan were successfully hit, demonstrating Iran's operational precision and strategic depth. The IRGC highlighted that these operations inspired widespread support among the nations of the region and strengthened the morale of believers across the Islamic world.

The statement also emphasized the role of



regional allies: Yemeni forces targeted southern Israel with ballistic missiles, while Iraqi resistance groups carried out 19 missile-drone operations. The IRGC reaffirmed that retaliation for the blood of oppressed peoples in Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and other Islamic lands will continue with intensified missile and drone operations.

The United States and Israel's campaign of terror has met with Iran's steadfast and calculated defense. Precision strikes against strategic Israeli targets and US bases have demonstrated Iran's military capability and unwavering commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty.

#### Ghost armies: The rift between reality and narrative in the conflicts of West Asia

**By Kurosh Alyani**

TEHRAN - While Donald Trump names different branches of Iran's armed forces each day and claims to have completely destroyed them, Benjamin Netanyahu repeatedly asserts that not only has he dismantled Iran's defensive and missile capabilities, but that with spies and infiltrators embedded everywhere, no place is beyond his reach. Despite all these claims, Iran and its allies continue to target official and unofficial American bases across West Asia, as well as various Israeli interests, with their missiles. The Strait of Hormuz remains fully—and more than fully—under Iranian control, and it appears that Bab al-Mandab will soon fall under the control of Yemen's Ansarullah movement.

Although the United States and Israel constantly speak of victory, they have not only failed to re-open Hormuz, but have resorted to attacks on universities, schools, medical centers, and civilian infrastructure—acts that constitute war crimes. It seems they believe they are not fighting Iran's military forces, but rather an immortal army of invincible civilian ghosts. On the other side, the puppet of the United States and Israel, Reza Pahlavi, once claimed that around 150,000 members of Iran's armed forces had joined him and stood ready to sacrifice their lives. Yet at no critical moment was any such order ever issued; even when he urged opponents to take to the streets at night and later claimed that tens of thousands had been killed, he did not call

upon his supposedly loyal forces to come to their aid. In other words, Reza Pahlavi too commands an army of invisible ghosts—present, armed, yet devoid of any operational function.

In this strange landscape, if we take the reports of Trump and his allies seriously, West Asia is now filled with ghost armies lined up against one another, fighting across empty battlefields. In today's hybrid wars, although different units operate in different arenas, a war room and a coherent strategy are essential to coordinate logistics, combat, and propaganda. It appears that Trump and his allies have recognized the importance of media and cognitive warfare, but have failed to understand that their war room must pre-

serve the link between media narratives and on-the-ground reality. Their media claims have drifted so far from the facts that the final picture resembles an apocalyptic battle between phantom legions.

Ultimately, the persistence of these spectral narratives reveals a deeper crisis: when political actors allow their messaging to detach from verifiable events, they do not merely distort public perception—they lose the ability to shape outcomes in the real world. The region's future will be determined not by ghost armies conjured in speeches and broadcasts, but by the tangible forces, alliances, and material conditions that continue to operate regardless of the stories told about them.

# 11 million 'JANFADA' for Iran

## Iranians enrol to defend homeland should a ground invasion come

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – In my undergraduate history courses, my professors often remarked that history is the bedrock of a society's collective memory—an inherited legacy that exists even if individuals haven't studied the specific dates or events. On a daily basis, we may not consciously think about how ancient Iranians fought the Romans and Greeks to preserve their civilization, how they stood firm against invading Mongols and Arabs, or how they struggled to maintain their sovereignty throughout modern history. Yet, these memories live within us. We breathe them and act upon them, even if we cannot quite put our finger on their origin.

In my early 20s, I was skeptical. I believed there was no scientific way to prove such a collective historical memory existed. How could one confirm that the spirit of the Achaemenids and Safavids still resides within the Iranian people? You cannot poll all 90 million citizens, and even if you did, how could you quantify the sincerity of their answers? I thought of history as something recorded in books, not carried in blood.

What I failed to realize back then was that this identity reveals itself not through words or academic pronouncements, but through action—specifically when the same threats Iran has faced for 5,000 years resurface. That identity manifested clearly on February 28, the day the U.S. and Israel began their ongoing, brutal war against our country. I saw then that people didn't run for the borders. Despite the bombs, they went into the streets every night to show their support for the country. Everyone stayed at their posts—the bakers, the teachers, and the soldiers—making sure the country kept moving. I saw nomads searching the Zagros Mountains for a downed American pilot while U.S. military helicopters circled overhead. I saw officials stay at their desks, refusing to leave even though they knew they were targets and that staying could mean death.

In those moments, nobody had to be told to protect the homeland or our dignity. It was just a given. Nobody needed a lecture on why



Iran is paramount; they just knew it in their bones. That was the collective memory my professors were talking about—something I couldn't see until the bombs started falling. It was as if every Iranian, from the oldest grandparent to the youngest child, had suddenly remembered who they were and what they came from.

You can see it again right now in a massive online campaign. Seas of Iranians are signing their names to a website, volunteering to fight on the front lines if the U.S. and Israel decide to take their aggression further and launch a ground invasion. The campaign is called "Janfada" – a Persian term that means "self-sacrificed" or "one who offers their life." It is a word heavy with history, often used to describe those who place the survival of a cause above their own lives. And now, over 11 million Iranians have inscribed their names into that legacy.

Among the 11 million individuals who have already enrolled in the "Janfada for Iran" campaign, every segment of society is represented. High-ranking officials—like the Judiciary Chief, Foreign Minister, Parliament Speaker, and Police Chief—stand alongside ordinary Iranians: men and women, young and old, Muslims, Christians, and Jews. There

are students who have never held a rifle, grandfathers who remember the Iran-Iraq War, nurses, engineers, shopkeepers, and farmers. There are Tehranis from the north and south, villagers from remote provinces, and even members of the Iranian diaspora who have registered with the understanding that they would return home if called upon.

"This initiative isn't about individual nobility," a journalist who helped launch the campaign told me. "Iranians have been defending their country day and night since the war began. The campaign simply offers a platform for them to formally express their unwavering commitment to the defense of their homeland," he said, adding that he believes the campaign is just a "mirror" reflecting what already exists in every Iranian heart.

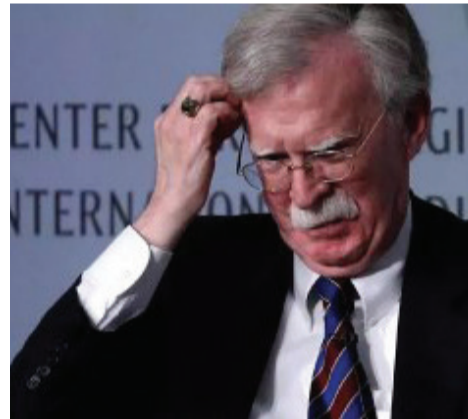
After our conversation, I personally visited the website to enroll. The interface was simple—just a name, a phone number under that name, and a quiet declaration of intent. Looking back at the moment I registered my name, I realize I wasn't truly contemplating the dangers of fighting on the front lines. In that moment, like everyone else, my thoughts were solely on Iran. My life might end, but Iran would endure, and that was all that truly mattered.

## Former Trump advisor says president is in 'panic mode' after Iran downs two US jets

TEHRAN – Former National Security Advisor John Bolton has said President Donald Trump is "probably back in a panic mode" after Iran shot down two U.S. military planes on Friday.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps downed an F-15 fighter jet, whose two crew members ejected. One aviator was rescued, but the other remains missing in action inside Iran. A second jet, an A-10 Warthog, was also shot down; its lone pilot was rescued.

The shootdowns come after Trump repeatedly claimed U.S. air supremacy. On March 19, he said, "Their anti-aircraft equipment is gone. We're flying wherever we want. We



have nobody even shooting at us." Those remarks came just hours after an F-35 was struck by Iranian fire.

Appearing on CNN's The Source, Bolton said the incident "absolutely degrades White House credibility," adding that overstating accomplishments makes the administration "look foolish."

When asked why Trump had not spoken publicly about the shootdowns, Bolton replied: "It sounds to me like he's probably back in a panic mode, wishing he could find a way to declare victory and get out of this war."

## LATEST NEWS

### ■ Pezeshkian: Let the world judge who seeks dialogue and who turns to terrorism

President Masoud Pezeshkian has called on the international community to decide which side genuinely pursues dialogue and which resorts to terrorism.

"Just as I was addressing the American people, the head of our Strategic Council on Foreign Policy was targeted in an assassination attempt, which led to the martyrdom of his innocent wife," Pezeshkian wrote on X late on Friday.

"Let the world judge: which side engages in dialogue and negotiation, and which in terrorism?" he added.

### ■ Iran accuses EU of selective use of international law

Iran's embassy in London has criticised EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas for citing international law to challenge Tehran's control of the Strait of Hormuz while ignoring US and Israeli aggression against Iran.

Kallas said the strait is a "global public good" and that "pay-to-pass" schemes violate international law. Tehran responded by asking why the EU remains silent on airstrikes that killed civilians and attacked infrastructure.

"You never hold aggressors accountable, only the victims," the embassy said.

### ■ Ghalibaf raises strategic stakes of Bab el-Mandeb Strait

Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, drew attention to the volume of critical global trade passing through the Bab el-Mandeb, raising questions about the flow of key commodities and the role of major countries

and companies.

"What share of global oil, LNG, wheat, rice, and fertilizer shipments transits the Bab el-Mandeb Strait?" he asked. "Which countries and companies account for the highest transit volumes through the strait?"

### ■ All US forces will eventually have to flee the region: Gen. Ghaani

Referring to the USS Gerald Ford aircraft carrier fleeing the region under a fabricated pretext, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force said that terrorist US forces must ultimately leave the region.

In a post on X on Saturday, Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani wrote: "Criminal US President Trump should dismiss the commander of the USS Gerald Ford aircraft carrier. He did not dare to cross the Bab al-Mandab Strait out of fear of the brave armed forces and steadfast people of Yemen."

After wandering for two weeks and using a fabricated story, the aircraft carrier fled the Red Sea and the region, he said, emphasizing: "American forces will finally have to flee from the region."

### ■ Iran's nuclear agency condemns attack, slams IAEA inaction

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has condemned the attack on the country's peaceful nuclear facilities, calling on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to finally end its inaction as a minimum requirement under its statutory duties.

In a post on X, the organization said Iran will safeguard its nuclear sovereignty and pursue a

legal review of the Director-General's failure to act.

### ■ India signals stable oil supply from Iran despite Middle East volatility

India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas released on X "Indian refiners have secured their crude oil requirements, including from Iran."

The ministry added that there is no payment hurdle for Iranian crude imports, contrary to the rumours being circulated.

### ■ Rezaei: Trump should be ousted, not our commanders

Mohsen Rezaei, advisor to Iran's Leader, dismissed Western claims that Iran's air defense systems have been eliminated as "another familiar falsehood."

In a post on X, he suggested it is Donald Trump who should be removed from office, not Iranian military commanders. "We have spent years preparing for this confrontation, and the surprises are far from over," Rezaei added.

### ■ IRGC names new spokesman

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) named General Hossein Mohebbi as the acting spokesman.

He replaces Major General Ali Mohammad Naeini, who was martyred in March in a US-Israeli terrorist attack.

### ■ General Majid Mousavi's new account on X

The commander of Iran's IRGC Aerospace Force, General Majid Mousavi, has launched a new account on X after his previous one was suspended amid rising regional tensions. The original account had rapidly gained a broad following from Iranian and international users.

## "Days when flying over Iran was a walk in the park are over," says ex-Israeli Air Force commander

TEHRAN – A former Israeli Air Force commander, speaking on condition of anonymity, has warned that Iran has fundamentally transformed its air defense network, making its skies highly contested for both Israeli and U.S. aircraft.

In an interview, the unnamed former IAF official explained that Iran completely rethought its strategy after the 12-day war, when it realized how easily it had been bombed. The result, he said, is a far more resilient and advanced system.

According to the commander, seven key changes have turned Iranian airspace into a dangerous environment:

### Decentralized command

Each of Iran's 31 defense zones can now operate independently if central command is severed, allowing local commanders to launch missiles without orders from Tehran.

### Hardened and mobile positions

Moving away from fixed sites, Iran has hidden much of its restored air defenses inside underground "missile cities," deep tunnels, and rugged coastal terrain that conceal mobile launchers.

Instead of traditional radar, Iran now relies on passive infrared sensors and advanced algorithms that track jets without emitting detectable signals.

### Shoot-and-scoot tactics

Mobile, medium-range surface-to-air mis-

sile systems allow Iranian units to fire and quickly relocate, making pre-planned airstrikes far less effective.

### Domestic Bavar-373

Iran has shifted from Russian missiles to its own Bavar-373, which appears superior to the S-300 and possibly even the S-400. Recent upgrades give launchers greater autonomy, even if centralized command centers are destroyed.

### The Majid system

Using passive infrared detection instead of radar, the Majid system emits no signals, making it extremely difficult for aircraft to detect before a missile is launched.

### Chinese HQ-9B

Iran is now operating the HQ-9B, China's best long-range surface-to-air missile. It combines active radar homing with a passive infrared seeker, making it hard to spoof with standard electronic countermeasures and improving its ability to track stealth aircraft. "It seems to be exceeding expectations," he said.

"The days when flying over Iran was a walk in the park are over," the former IAF commander concluded. He added that the combination of new tactics and a strategic shift from Russian to Iranian and Chinese technology has eliminated air superiority over Iran. "The IAF and USAF will have to adapt accordingly or lose more aircraft," he warned.

## Qatar and Italy urge de-escalation as energy security concerns mount



TEHRAN – Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Giorgia Meloni called for restraint and renewed diplomatic engagement on Saturday, warning that escalating tensions in West Asia risk disrupting global energy flows and supply chains.

During a high-level meeting in Doha, the two leaders reviewed regional and international developments and emphasized the need to prioritize political dialogue as the most effective means of containing the crisis.

In a statement, the Emiri Diwan said both sides highlighted the broader economic implications of the conflict, particularly its potential impact on energy markets and critical supply routes. They stressed the importance of safeguarding regional energy infrastructure and ensuring the stability of global supplies.

## Iran says it can sustain long-term disruption in Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN – A senior Iranian security official said that the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz could persist for an extended period, asserting that Tehran has the capacity to maintain such conditions for years.

In remarks to Press TV, the official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, linked Iran's heightened focus on the strategic waterway to its role in supplying U.S. military installations across the region. He said that much of the equipment destined for American bases and garrisons has historically been transported by sea.

Meloni's visit to Qatar follows a stop in Saudi Arabia on Friday, and she is expected to continue her regional tour with a visit to the United Arab Emirates.

The diplomatic push comes amid growing concerns that recent attacks by the United States and Israel on Iran's energy infrastructure could further destabilize the region. Analysts warn that such actions risk provoking retaliatory measures, potentially drawing Iran into targeting energy facilities across neighboring countries, a scenario that could significantly disrupt global markets and escalate the conflict beyond its current scope.

According to experts, Israel and the United States are seeking to exploit the worsening situation by deliberately targeting Iranian energy facilities.

"Iran has the capability to sustain this situation for years," the official said, referring to an effective halt to transit by U.S. and allied vessels through the strait.

The official added that Iranian authorities believe such maritime logistical support should no longer be allowed to continue. He argued that earlier intervention in regulating traffic through the strait could have significantly weakened the enemy's logistical capacity.

"For this reason, Iran will no longer permit such logistics to take place," he said.

## Petchem industry hits record \$29.1b sales, 100m tons capacity

TEHRAN- Iran's petrochemical industry has experienced one of its most brilliant periods under the 14th government, achieving \$29.1 billion in net sales, extensive product exports, and raising nominal production capacity to 100 million tons.

According to IRNA, the industry has set unprecedented records in net sales, exports, and production capacity expansion, cementing its path to sustainable growth.

From smart pricing governance to an energy technology revolution and the launch of major national projects, the industry's track record shows that by the Iranian year 1412 (2033-34), Iran will become the region's undisputed petrochemical power with 182 million tons of various petrochemical products.

Undoubtedly, petrochemicals are among the most important and export-oriented industries for any country, and this advantage doubles when a nation uses domestic resources to supply feedstock—meaning low-cost local resources are transformed into valuable export products relying on domestic technology, engineering, and production capability.

Iran possesses an extensive petrochemical value chain, with a real operating capacity of 100 million tons, providing significant foreign exchange earnings. However, in the first months of the 14th government, these production units faced serious fuel and feedstock supply challenges. By 2025, necessary measures largely resolved these issues, and the National Petrochemical Company removed many obstacles.

To establish sustainable governance and improve efficiency, the National Petrochemical Company has steered private sector engagement and product pricing dispute resolution toward legal and economically rational frameworks.

In 2025, with government approval and issuance, the National Petrochemical Company adopted a new approach to pricing petrochemical products, aiming to create an effective governance framework.

This effort seeks to establish a transparent, predictable environment for constructive interaction among producers, consumers, and regulators, while resolving potential disputes through specialized mechanisms.

### A winter with minimal shutdowns

One of the toughest winters for Iran's petrochemical industry was 2024, when fuel and feedstock shortages forced some units to suspend production for three months, causing tens to hundreds of millions of dollars in lost profit per company.

However, with the government's spring and summer 2025 approach to fuel supply management, production stoppages were minimized.

By February 13, 2026 (24 Bahman 1404), gas restrictions were lifted, allowing companies to withdraw gas up to their capacity limits.

Hassan Abbaszadeh, the managing director of the National Petrochemical Company, noted fluctuations in gas withdrawal during mid-February: In October (Mehr), daily withdrawal was around 90 million cubic meters, at times dropping to 75, 60, or even 50 million, but now an increasing trend has begun, exceeding 100 million cubic meters, with companies preparing for full production return. According to available data, about 98% of petrochemical supply and production capacity has been restored, and exports have grown about 2% compared to last year despite all restrictions.

### Energy efficiency optimization with public participation

Since 2024, the National Petrochemical Company has implemented a plan to encourage household fuel consumption reduction.

The result was lower household consumption in Mazandaran, Gilan, and Golestan provinces.

Proceeds from savings funded social services such as wheelchairs for the disabled, school supplies, and standard home heating equipment. The campaign ran for a second consecutive year starting December 21, 2025 (30 Azar 1404).

Abbaszadeh stated that under signed agreements, several petrochemical companies will invest in areas like awareness campaigns, equipment replacement, and other energy efficiency measures in Gilan, Mazandaran, and



Golestan provinces.

These projects aim to reduce natural gas use in households, public facilities, greenhouses, and poultry farms to sustain petrochemical production. Emphasizing the role of public participation, he said without people's involvement, any plan would be incomplete.

The main incentive for the campaign's second year is increased public engagement in the three northern provinces, with results to be announced via a prize draw in the coming weeks.

He explained that due to direct impact from gas imbalances, the petrochemical industry decided to purposefully address this area, selecting three northern provinces as pilots—regions with high gas consumption in households, public sectors, greenhouses, and poultry farms.

This year's savings target is double last year's, estimating a reduction of about 2 million cubic meters per day over several months, equivalent to the feedstock for one major petrochemical plant.

Iran's petrochemical industry has moved from mere production to value creation and technology in line with the Seventh Development Plan's goals.

Smart governance, export infrastructure development, localization of key technologies, and value chain completion have made this industry not only a brilliant achievement of the 14th government but also a model of sustainable management and knowledge-based exports for all of Iran's industries.

Back in January, the managing director of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) stated that the company has set a goal of increasing petrochemical production capacity by over 130 million tons under the Seventh National Development Plan.

Hassan Abbaszadeh said the overall policies of program are based on completing the industry's value chain, which will be achieved by a quantifiable increase in the production capacity.

This is the first time that completing value chain has been focused in the country's national development plan, and a quantitative goal has been set for it, he noted.

Abbaszadeh emphasized that development policies and plans should consider the production of final products and move towards value chain development. He said balanced development in the industry should be given priority, and to this end, completing the four main chains of, propylene, ethylene, and aromatics in the Seventh National Development Plan has been targeted, and annual plans of the NPC are also aligned with achieving these goals.

The NPC head said the most significant achievement of the petrochemical industry has been its growth in line with preventing raw material export.

"The petrochemical industry is the embodiment of the value chain completion in the oil industry," he stressed.

The official considered sustainable feedstock supply as a pillar of the Seventh National Development Plan for the petrochemical industry. He added that efforts are being made to provide stock simultaneously with capacity development.

To this end, various paths for feedstock supply are under consideration, and one of the most important programs to make up for stock shortages in the short term is the collection of flare gases, which, in addition to increasing feedstock, also has a significant positive impact on environment.

He stated that the main target areas for collecting flare gases are West Karoun, East Karoun, Dehloran, and Ilam, where most of the country's flares are located. He further mentioned that multiple projects are underway in the Isfahan region as well to utilize associated gases.

# OPEC oil output plunges over 7m barrels in March amid Hormuz disruption

TEHRAN- A recent Reuters survey has revealed that OPEC's crude oil production in March 2026 fell by more than 7 million barrels per day (bpd) compared to February, marking the lowest output level since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in June 2020.

The dramatic decline is attributed to the ongoing war between the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran, which has severely disrupted maritime traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Consequently, key West Asian producers have faced a sharp reduction in oil exports, leading to unprecedented supply shortages across the region.

The Strait of Hormuz, a 21-mile-wide waterway between Oman and Iran, is the world's most critical oil chokepoint. Nearly 20% of global petroleum passes through it daily—about 17 million barrels. Iran has repeatedly threatened to block the strait in response to military strikes. A closure would trap most Persian Gulf oil exports, sending prices beyond \$200 per barrel.

The Reuters survey results indicate that OPEC's total production dropped by 7.3 million bpd, settling at 21.57 million bpd.



This decline far exceeds previous market expectations.

Analysts at Energy Aspects had predicted in a March 16 report that output would fall by 7 million bpd to 22.2 million bpd.

The actual figures confirm a more severe supply shock, primarily driven by production cuts in Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

### Iraq hit hardest; Saudi Arabia and UAE partially spared

Among all OPEC members, Iraq experienced the most significant production loss.

After recording 4.15 million bpd in February, Iraq's oil output collapsed to an average of just 1.4 million bpd in March, represent-

ing a drop of nearly two-thirds.

This catastrophic decline is largely due to Iraq's heavy reliance on the Strait of Hormuz for its crude exports.

In contrast, Saudi Arabia and the UAE saw comparatively smaller decreases, as both nations possess alternative export routes that bypass the Strait of Hormuz. These include overland pipelines and alternate shipping lanes, which allowed them to maintain some export capacity despite the ongoing conflict.

Meanwhile, Venezuela and Nigeria were the only OPEC members that managed to increase their production during the month, according to the survey.

The Reuters survey also noted

that March production figures for several affected countries could still be revised downward, as ongoing shipping disruptions continue to hamper data collection.

Two sources involved in the survey stated that the actual output might prove even lower than current estimates.

Notably, this month's production level is the lowest since June 2020, when OPEC's 12 members produced 21.38 million bpd following the historic 9.7 million bpd collective cut in response to the COVID-19 demand collapse.

The current crisis echoes that period in terms of supply shock magnitude, though the root causes are geopolitical rather than pandemic-related.

Eight OPEC+ members had agreed at their March 1 meeting to gradually unwind voluntary supply cuts of 1.65 million bpd starting in April 2026, with an initial increase of 206,000 bpd.

Their next meeting is scheduled for April 5. However, given the ongoing disruptions, market analysts doubt whether such increases can materialize.

The Reuters survey is based on ship-tracking data from LSEG, Petrologistics, Kpler, and information from oil companies, OPEC officials, and consultants.

## Iraq, 2nd top non-oil export destination of Iran in a year

TEHRAN- According to a report released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), Iraq was the second top destination of Iran's non-oil products in the past Iranian calendar year 1404 (ended on March 20).

In late May 2024, the head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Planning of the Iranian Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) said that Iran exports some 2,200 products, valued at \$12 billion, to neighboring Iraq annually.

Speaking in a meeting entitled "Reviewing opportunities and challenges of attracting Iraqi investors and strengthening trade relations between the two countries in line with demarcating Iran in the regional value chain", Jafar Hosseini said that Iraq, benefiting from \$85 billion foreign currency reserves, 130 tons of gold reserves, and 147 billion barrels of proven reserves of crude oil, is among the richest countries in West Asia.

Currently, Iran exports over 2,200 various types of goods and products to Iraq, he said, adding that more than half of the active Iranian traders are present in the Iraqi market.

Developing the trade infrastructures to facilitate trade between the two countries, encouraging traders to invest in Iraq, promoting trade through dispatching and admitting trade delegations and participating in exhibitions of the two countries, etc. are suggested to strengthen the trade and economic relations between Iran and Iraq, he underlined.

In an interview in last December, the ambassador of Iran in Iraq praised the economic relations between the two sides and expressed hope that these relations will be more and

better.

Mohammad Kazem Ale-Sadeq announced the value of commercial exchanges between the two countries, and stated that economic relations between Iran and Iraq are very good, and expressed hope that these relations will improve.

The envoy further noted: "Iraq is an important country in the region, and we have very important economic, political, and social relations with this neighbor."

In early May 2024, Tehran hosted the 6th meeting of the Iran-Iraq Joint Economic Committee.

The two-day event was co-chaired by the former Iranian Finance and Economic Affairs Minister Ehsan Khandouzi and Iraqi Minister of Commerce Attheer Daoud Al-Ghurairi.

On the first day of the meeting, specialized committees including commercial, industrial, agricultural, standardization and quality control, energy, finance, banking, investment and insurance, shipping, transport, and Customs, scientific, educational, tourism, health, as well as sports consulate held meetings to discuss areas for cooperation.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Also, as previously announced by the head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, In-

dustries, Mines, and Agriculture said that \$128 million worth of technical and engineering services were exported to Iraq in the first half of the past Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22, 2025).

Yahya Ale-Eshaq stated that an annual export of \$300 to \$400 million in technical and engineering services is not a good statistic; this capacity must be increased.

He continued: If Iraq's capacities in the technical and engineering sector are not utilized, other competitors will enter this market.

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture further said: Iraq is the second destination for Iran's exports after China and added: The Prime Minister of Iraq has announced that Iraq has implemented a total of about 88 engineering projects. According to this report, Iraq has utilized about \$100 billion of its own resources as well as foreign investments in these projects.

Ale-Eshaq continued: "In this field, knowledge and technical expertise play an important role, and there are many opportunities for development and activity in this area."

Emphasizing that 70 percent of services in Iraq are imported, he said: "Technical knowledge and engineering services are areas with high potential, and we hope these capacities will be utilized."

The head of the Iran-Iraq Joint Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture stated that a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian Association of Oil Industry Equipment Manufacturers in the field of technical and engineering services is being signed to facilitate progress in this area.

## Capital market announces support for reconstruction of Mobarakeh Steel Complex

TEHRAN- The capital market has announced its readiness to assist in the reconstruction of Mobarakeh Steel and Khuzestan Steel companies.

According to Mehr News Agency, Hojjatollah Seyyedi, head of the Securities and Exchange Organization, wrote on social media: "The capital market is a place for capital formation and wealth creation."

We will spare no effort to mobilize capital to build a larger and more blessed Mobarakeh Steel and a stronger Khuzestan Steel in the shortest possible time."

Isfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company says it has been attacked for a second time by the US-Israeli aggression.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the company said warplanes targeted a number of vital sections of its infrastructure at 23:00 p.m. local time Tuesday.

Initial assessments indicate the attack has caused significant damage to several parts of the company, the report said.

The enemy also targeted a subsidiary of Mobarakeh Steel Company called Sefid Dasht Steel Company in the southwestern Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province.

Due to policies put in place after the previous attack on Thursday, only a small number of employees were present and just a few of them suffered minor injuries, according to the statement.

The Mobarakeh Steel Company is Iran's largest steel producer and one of the biggest industrial complexes in West Asia and North Africa, playing a central role in the country's steel industry.

In another attack on one of Iran's most important industrial units, the Khuzestan Steel Com-

pany was also targeted on Friday, which caused damage to parts of its facilities.

Iran's Human Rights Organization issued a statement on Wednesday, condemning the US-Israeli aggression's "systematic strikes" against civilian infrastructure.

"These attacks are a blatant violation of international law and a form of economic terrorism and their goal is to put maximum pressure on Iran's civilian population," it said.

Factories, including steel plants, are the main livelihood of millions of Iranians and the aggression's goal of destroying them is a clear violation of Geneva Conventions and a war crime.

The organization called on the international community to break its silence on the US-Israeli aggression war crimes against Iran's

populace and hold the enemy accountable for its violation of human rights.

The US and Israeli armed forces launched their military aggression against Iran in late February by attacking 30 targets across Tehran, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several senior Iranian officials.

Since then, Iranian armed forces have retaliated swiftly by launching barrages of missiles and drones at Israeli-occupied territories as well as US bases across the region.

Iranian officials say targeting US military bases in the region constitutes "legitimate self-defense."

Referring to Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, they say Iran has the legal right to defend itself against "acts of aggression" by the US or the Israeli regime.

TEHRAN - Donald Trump's claim on April 2 that he will bomb Iran "back to the Stone Ages where they belong" if they do not agree to his conditions has drawn sharp criticism from Iranian officials and political analysts alike.

Such remarks are made by a person whose mentality belongs to the Stone Ages. No normal person makes such mindless remarks.

"We are going to hit them extremely hard over the next two to three weeks, we're going to bring them back to the Stone Ages, where they belong," Trump said in prime-time address to Americans.

Person who makes such a threat is still living in Stone Age. Such a reckless move will lead to tragedy as it would necessitate a carpet bombing, which will be a war crime.

"If there is no deal, we are going to hit each and every one of their electric generating plants very hard and probably simultaneously," Trump said.

After such remarks, dozens of international law experts in the U.S. signed an open letter saying that American strikes on Iran may amount to war crimes.

In a post on X on April 3, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian asked does such a threat mean anything other than a "massive war crime". Pezeshkian made such a statement after a phone conversation with his Finnish counterpart.

"Does threatening to send an entire nation back to the Stone Age mean anything other than a massive war crime? This was the question I asked my Finnish counterpart, who is a jurist. History is full of those who paid a heavy price for their silence in the face of criminals," Pezeshkian wrote.

Trump's Secretary of War Pete Hegseth doubled down on Trump's insult, with a short post on X that only said: "Back to the Stone Age."

Mohammad Javad Zarif, the former Iranian foreign minister, also wrote in his analysis of the reason for Trump's insult: "The brave Iranians destroyed the illusion of unconditional surrender in three days. This is the real reason for the insult, which more than anything reveals the nature of its speaker—when he was still in the 'Stone Age,' a place where he and his war minister belong." Zarif added, "Iran had a flourish-



Iran's embassy in New Zealand hit back at President Donald Trump's threat to bomb the country "back to the stone ages" with an AI-generated image posted on X on April 2 depicting Trump as a caveman cowering before an ancient Persian king.

ing civilization."

Mohammad Reza Aref, Iran's first vice president, wrote: "Only a 'Stone Age' mind can threaten countries to return to the Stone Age."

Talking to IRNA, Parliament representative Ahmad Ariyayee-Nejad, also reacted to Trump's nonsensical remark, saying Iran's ancient civilization cannot be destroyed by bombs. He said: "Trump is a tool in the hands of the Zionists and is angry about his failure in the war with Iran, which is why he utters these meaningless words."

Ismail Gerami Moghaddam, a political activist and Deputy Secretary-General of the pro-reform National Trust Party, said Trump and his team are living in the Stone Age. He also said the attack on Iran was based on "the laws of cave-dwelling."

Gerami Moghaddam emphasized: "Mr. Trump himself and those around him are living in the Stone Age and have imposed the law of the jungle."

He added the U.S. and Israel have launched military attacks against an independent and sovereign nation without any regard for global norms and laws. "This is exactly the situation humanity faced in the Stone Age, the era of cave-dwelling and the Paleolithic period, where behavior was based on bullying," the party official told IRNA.

Writing an article on the IRNA website, Hessamodin Ashena, a senior advisor to former President Hassan Rouhani, said Iran with an ancient civilization cannot be sent back to Stone Age with bombardment.

Following is the text of his article titled "We didn't come from the Stone Age in one day for you to be able to bomb us back to the Stone Age":

We have not emerged from the

Stone Age in a single day for you to be able to send us back to the Stone Age through bombardment. We have built the history of human civilization. Look at the reputable museums to once again believe that the Iranian people have been rooted in the Iranian plateau from 800,000 years ago until now. The story of this ancient land is a narrative of hundreds of thousands of years of adaptation and innovation, shaped across various eras.

**The Paleolithic era (old Stone Age): The era of nomadic hunters**

This era, which began about one million years ago and lasted until about 12,000 years ago, is the longest part of the Stone Age and is divided into three sub-periods.

- Lower Paleolithic (Early): The oldest evidence of human presence in Iran dates back to this period. Simple stone tools found in the Kashafrud region (Khorasan) are at least 800,000 years old, indicating the settlement of early humans on the Iranian plateau.

- Middle Paleolithic: This period coincides with the presence of Neanderthals in Iran. Their skeletal remains have been discovered in caves such as Bisotun (Kermanshah) and Wezmeh (Khorramabad). Their main settlements were caves and rock shelters in the Zagros mountain ranges, including Qaleh Bozi, Warwasi, and Baba Yawan caves.

- Upper Paleolithic (Late): During this period (from about 40,000 years ago), Homo sapiens entered Iran. A more advanced tool-making culture known as the Baradostian spread in the Zagros, characterized by the production of delicate stone blades and ornaments made from shells and animal teeth. In addition to caves, open-air settlements such as Sefid-Ab (Kashan) and Garm-

Rud (Mazandaran) also emerged.

**The Epipaleolithic era (Mesolithic): Transition to sedentism**

This period (about 20,000 to 12,000 years ago) is known as a bridge between hunter-gatherer's life and sedentism. With the end of the last ice age, the climate became warmer and food resources more diverse. The culture known as Zarzian was prevalent in Iran at this time, and evidence of microlithic stone tools (likely used in wooden sickles) can be seen, indicating increased exploitation of plants. The most important feature of this period is the composite nature of tools and signs of the beginning of a trend towards more intensive food gathering and seasonal camp life.

**The Neolithic era (new Stone Age): The agricultural revolution and sedentism**

About 10,000 years ago, a fundamental revolution occurred in human life in Iran. Humans gradually abandoned hunting and gathering and turned to cultivating grains and domesticating animals. This transformation, known as the Neolithic Revolution, led to sedentism and the formation of the first villages. In Iran, early rural communities formed in various regions such as the Khuzestan plain (Tepe Ali Kosh), the Fars plain (Tal-e Mushki), the central Zagros (Tepe Ganj Dareh), and the central plateau (the Sang-e Chakhmaq hills in Damghan). Subsequently, pottery was also invented, and the Pottery Neolithic period began (from about 8,400 years ago).

**The Chalcolithic era (Copper Age): The end of the Stone Age and the dawn of metals**

About 6,500 years ago, humans learned to make tools and objects from copper ore. Thus, the Stone Age neared its end and the Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) Age began, lasting until about 5,300 years ago. During this period, more complex societies and early cities emerged. Famous mounds such as Tepe Sialk (Kashan), Tepe Hissar (Damghan), and Tepe Ghabrestan (Qazvin) were important centers of this era.

The Stone Age in Iran was an eventful era of transition from nomadism to sedentism and from hunting to agriculture. This land, which served as a bridge for the migration of early humans from Africa to Asia, witnessed the rise and fall of various cultures and laid the foundation for the great civilizations that followed.

## Trump's statement to take Iran's oil to "make a fortune" is unbelievably shameful



TEHRAN - In a shameless, greedy, open and unbelievable language on April 3, President Donald Trump revealed his real intention of attacking Iran in coordination with Israel. He directly said his army wants to take Iran's oil and "make a fortune".

To those who have unbelievably heard or seen Trump's post on social media on this issue, have been shocked. It has shocked both Iranians and non-Iranians all across the world.

"With a little more time, we can easily OPEN THE HORMUZ STRAIT, TAKE THE OIL, & MAKE A FORTUNE," the U.S. president wrote in capital letters to insist on his agenda.

Maybe the Canadian and Danish officials are not greatly shocked by Trump's covetous remarks, because at the beginning of his second presidential term he called Canada America's 51st state and threatened to use force to capture Greenland if necessary.

Just on April 1, he mockingly said Iranians "belong to" Stone Ages. But, in fact, such a person with such a mentality belongs to the Stone Age and the colonial eras.

Regardless of the fact that Trump's objective to take Iran's oil riches is just a wishful thinking, his unabashed greedy language, that is documented in his social media post, is sending shockwaves throughout the world.

The humanity should feel ashamed that such a person is the president of the United States, which once was considered the champion of the free world and upholder and defender of international law.

His greedy language of Iran's oil riches is that of a bully person who wants to steal what others have.

Trump repeated the words of his co-thinker Senator Lindsey Graham who told Fox News on March 9: "When this regime goes down, we are going to have a new Middle East, and we are going to make a ton of money."

Trump and those flatterers around him, like Senator Graham and War Minister Pete Hegseth, don't belong to the current world. They are wild persons that the world should tame.

Trump is making the Western world disrepute by such awful remarks. What was called Western civilization and the West's respect for the rule of law and respect for international law is being mocked by the Europeans, Canadians, Americans and the larger world.

Under the international law doctrine of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1962, oil and minerals belong to the countries where they are located.

"The free and beneficial exercise of the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural resources must be furthered by the mutual respect of States based on their sovereign equality," the resolution says.

Facing no international condemnation over his remarks about Venezuela's oil riches and greedy eyes on Greenland, he has become emboldened to make such appalling remarks about Iran's oil riches.

## The great divergence that echoes louder than American bombs

By staff writer

TEHRAN - Five weeks into the unprovoked U.S.-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran, a new geopolitical front has opened.

Since the strikes began on February 28, the weekends of rage have transformed from local anti-war demonstrations into a global counter-pulse against imperialist violence.

From the massive Quds Day rallies on March 13 to the defiant "No Kings" networks in the United States, the international street is exercising a veto that no amount of military hardware can override.

However, as the scale of solidarity with the Iranian people grows, the aggressors and their partners have resorted to systematic efforts to stifle dissent.

**The anatomy of state-sponsored silencing**

This suppression is not a sign of strength, but of a profound fear that the global public will identify with Iran's resistance and expose the war's fundamental illegitimacy.

In Bahrain, a kingdom effectively held hostage by the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, the Al Khalifa monarchy has enacted a "zero-tolerance" decree.

Unable to subdue its people alone, the regime actively sought and obtained the services of Jordan's notorious security forces to help terrorize and silence citizens exercising their most basic rights.

Since February 28, they have arrested over 200 citizens for the "crime" of mourning the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, waving Ira-



nian flags, or filming strikes on U.S. military sites.

The death of activist Sayed Mohammad al-Mousawi in custody after reported torture and the house arrest of high-ranking Shia clerics who refuse to sign "neutrality statements" highlight the lethal nature of this crackdown.

A similar new McCarthyism has taken hold within Israel itself. Tel Aviv's Anti-Subversion Media Act allows the regime to shutter any outlet deemed a threat to "national morale."

In cities such as Haifa and Tel Aviv, police have used chokeholds and physical force to disperse the largest domestic anti-war protests since the war began, arresting at least 18 people on the weekend of March 28 alone.

These actions reveal a terminal fear of emotional contagion: the risk that the internal "home front" will collapse if people identify with the victims of Israeli aggression.

**The digital iron curtain and Western moral decay**

The most glaring hypocrisy resides in the West, where governments that champion free

speech are engineering a digital iron curtain.

In the United Kingdom, the Online Safety Act has been weaponized into a borderline dystopian censorship regime.

The Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit has coordinated with tech giants to remove livestream footage of massive demonstrations in London, hoping to black out the reality of hundreds of thousands marching against the strikes.

Furthermore, the Metropolitan Police's decision to resume arresting protesters for supporting Palestine Action—directly defying a High Court ruling—proves that the British establishment will sacrifice its own legal integrity to serve military alliances.

In France and Germany, the state has criminalized the very symbols of solidarity, banning the color red in protests and using anti-terrorism laws to chill public discourse.

Meta and X's removal of official Islamic Republic accounts and the labeling of authentic strike footage as "Iranian AI deepfakes" are failing to stem the tide.

These governments fear the roar of the street because it exposes the immorality of the war that they are complicit in it.

Yet these suppression tactics only underscore the protests' importance.

They expose the war's immorality: strikes on energy grids, water facilities, and schools amounting to collective punishment of Iranians, and its illegitimacy under the UN Charter. Polls in the U.S. and Europe show majority disapproval.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))



## Mass solidarity rally in Baghdad

Tens of thousands flood Baghdad's Tahrir Square on April 4, 2026, to voice support for Iran and the Axis of Resistance. Demonstrators gathered to denounce military actions by the U.S.-Israeli coalition, using a massive national flag to symbolize regional unity and opposition to foreign aggression.

## IFRC issues emergency appeal to intl. community to support IRCS efforts

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

“In Iran, the humanitarian situation is deteriorating. In almost one month, more than 1,900 people have been killed, including women and children, and at least 20,000 people have been injured,” Jagan Chapagain, the secretary general of the IFRC, said in a post on X.

The official went on to laud the courageous acts of IRCS staff as they rush in to provide rescue services to those affected by the war, highlighting “Despite fear and uncertainty, Iranian Red Crescent Society staff, and volunteers continue to respond with remarkable courage, providing emergency care and health services across the country,” IRNA reported.

“The IFRC is supporting this response by scaling up critical resources. We launched an emergency appeal aiming to provide support to the Iranian Red Crescent respond efforts, through operational support, and international procurement of critical supplies.

I call on the international community to show solidarity, and support our emergency appeal and the operation in Iran.”

Formerly, the IFRC regional director for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Hosam Elsharkawi, in a letter to the head of the IRCS, Pirhossein Kolivand, had announced solidarity with the IRCS.



“On behalf IFRC MENA Regional Office, I wish to reiterate our strong condemnation of any violence directed against humanitarian workers and volunteers, as well as against the services and infrastructures that support the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Please be assured of our continued solidarity with the Iranian Red Crescent Society and our steadfast support for your vital humanitarian mission,” the official wrote.

IFRC has enumerated most urgent priorities to support IRCS as: Scaling up life-saving relief, healthcare, including trauma services, and access to essential medicines; Expanding mental health support for a population under immense psychological strain; Restoring access to basic needs and services; and Strengthening protection services to ensure the safety and the dignity of the most vulnerable.

Since the beginning of the war on February 28, four aid workers of the IRCS have been martyred by the US-Israeli aggressions.

## Minister calls on SCO to censure assaults on health infrastructures

TEHRAN – Health Minister Mohammad-Reza Zafarqandi, in a letter to his counterparts in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states, has expounded on the violations of international humanitarian law by the United States and Israel, particularly by targeting medical centers and hospitals, urging them to condemn these illegal attacks.

Over the past few days, the aggressors have brutally attacked civilian infrastructures in Iran. Unfortunately, many of these aggressions have destroyed health centers, hospitals, and health installations, Zafarqandi wrote in his letter, the health ministry website reported.

According to four Geneva Conventions and their additional Protocols, medical units, hospitals, rehabilitation institutions, and humanitarian facilities enjoy special protection. Parties to a conflict are under a binding obligation to respect the fundamental principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution.

Violation of these obligations is not only a

war crime, but a crime against humanity, the health minister added.

Referring to the violation of the basic right to life and health, Zafarqandi highlighted that the hospitals, as the safe shelters for patients and the wounded, have to be secured from attacks. Targeting these places means to intentionally deprive civilians of their right to life and health.

The official went on to warn that the destruction of health infrastructures in Iran will put regional health security at risks.

“While the world and our region (West Asia) is grappling with numerous health challenges, the destruction of health infrastructures can lead to widespread human crisis in the region,” Zafarqandi noted.

Zafarqandi called on health ministers of SCO member states to denounce the inhumane assaults against Iran, and make the voice of medical society in the region be heard by the international communities, like the World Health Organization (WHO).

## Professor honors missile launcher operators fighting US-Israeli aggressors

TEHRAN – Ali-Akbar Abolhasani, a professor of physics and faculty member at Sharif University of Technology, has posted a text on social media, honoring Iranian brave missile launcher operators whose amazing accuracy and capabilities in fighting against the United States and the Zionist regime of Israel are beyond the borders of physics.

“I must share a simple truth with you. What I teach as the laws of physics in college are only shadows of complex realities, simple models that only at our limited level of precision turn the amazing order of phenomena into mathematical equations.

But I believe there are realities going on in the foundation of this universe that you interpret operating a launcher.

Your faith in these equations goes beyond our simple belief in the application of the laws of physics.”

Iranian armed forces have announced that its air defense forces downed at least two fighter jets and five drones and missiles on Friday, describing it as a “black day” for the American and Israeli air forces.

In a statement released Saturday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) public relations wing detailed a series of successful interceptions across multiple Iranian provinces,

Press TV reported.

The IRGC’s Aerospace Defense Force fighters successfully hunted and destroyed two cruise missiles in the skies of Khomein and Zanjan, according to the statement.

Additionally, two MQ-9 attack drones were shot down in the skies of Isfahan, and one Hermes drone was destroyed in the skies of Bushehr.

The IRGC said these interceptions were carried out using its new advanced air defense system, operating under the control of the country’s integrated air defense network.

In a separate and particularly significant engagement, the IRGC’s Aerospace Defense Force successfully destroyed an advanced enemy fighter jet in central Iran.

The hunt for the missing pilot continues with reports that he failed to eject safely.

Also on Friday, Iran’s Army announced that the Islamic Republic’s integrated air defense network downed an American A-10 Warthog warplane over the country’s southern waters near the Strait of Hormuz.

“With the continued innovative, sustained, and precise monitoring by Iran’s air defense heroes, the skies of Iran will become increasingly unsafe for the fighter jets of the aggressor enemy,” the statement read.

# “The Legend of Sepehr” animation premiered in Minab Martyrs’ Cemetery

TEHRAN- The Iranian animated film “The Legend of Sepehr” held its premiere screening at the Minab Martyrs’ Cemetery on Thursday evening.

Directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi and produced by the Mahva Entertainment Industry Factory, the animation was screened for free. Following the premiere, additional screenings are also scheduled to accommodate the local community, IRNA reported.

The project has committed all sales proceeds from the beginning of Farvardin 1405 (March 21, 2026) until the end of its theatrical run to the reconstruction and development of Minab, the report added.

Following the recent tragic events, the city has been described by organizers as “the heart of Iran.”

Last year, “The Legend of Sepehr” won the Best Animation award at the New York International Film Awards (NYIFA).

In a fabled land, a young boy named Sepehr and his loyal cheetah, Baboo, embark upon a brave yet light-hearted quest to rescue their family and friends from the clutches of Ahriman, the dark lord of evil, who seeks an eternal reign of shadows.

From peaceful island life to



chaotic adventures across mystical lands, this duo faces monsters, meets eccentric allies, and discovers the power of laughter along their journey. As they strive to defeat Ahriman and save their world, Sepehr and Baboo prove that sometimes, the greatest weapon against darkness is a heart and an unbreakable spirit.

Emad Rahmani, 35, is the CEO at Permanent Way Entertainment, a game and animation studio. He has managed and directed more than ten projects. He has also published plenty of game screenplays and essays.

On February 28, the Shajareh Tayyebah girls’ elementary school in Minab, Hormozgan province,

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

Despite attempts by US and Israeli authorities to distance themselves from the carnage as images of the tragedy spread

across social media, detailed forensic and digital investigations have painted a starkly different picture. An analysis by Al Jazeera’s digital investigations unit, utilizing over a decade of satellite imagery and recent video clips, revealed that the school was a clearly distinct civilian facility, separated from any adjacent military sites for at least ten years. Furthermore, witness accounts and satellite-based analyses confirmed that the school was triple tapped by three separate, deliberate strikes, leaving no doubt about the nature of the attack.

The international community has faced mounting evidence regarding the responsibility for this atrocity, with investigations from major global outlets including The New York Times, BBC Verify, CBC, and NPR all concluding that the United States was responsible for the strike. These findings have raised fundamental questions about the intelligence used to justify the bombing, as the patterns of the strike suggest a direct targeting of a civilian educational institution. The Minab school tragedy now stands as a somber testament to the immense human cost of the aggression and a focal point for those demanding international accountability.

## Iranian Library and Information Science Association denounces US-Israeli attacks on cultural sites



TEHRAN – The Iranian Library and Information Science Association (ILISA) has issued a statement, strongly condemning the aggression against the cultural, scientific infrastructure, and historical memory of the Iranian nation by the US and Israel.

According to Mehr, the text of the statement by the ILISA is as follows:

“Expressing deep concern and profound regret, the Iranian Library and Information Science Association strongly condemns the military attacks by the US and the Zionist regime against the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the aggression against the cultural, scientific infrastructure, and historical memory of the Iranian nation.”

of the Iranian nation”.

“Damage to various types of libraries, including public, specialized, and university libraries, archival and documentary centers, cultural centers, printing houses, bookstores, museums, and valuable historical-cultural monuments, including worrying reports about threats or damage to heritage collections such as Golestan Palace-Museum, is not merely an assault on buildings and objects; rather, it is a clear transgression against the national identity, collective memory, intergenerational knowledge, and civilizational heritage of a nation.”

“Libraries and museums are the custodians of history, cul-

ture, knowledge, and peace, and any aggression against them constitutes a blatant violation of human and ethical principles and international cultural law”.

“The Iranian Library and Information Science Association believes that targeting cultural institutions is not only an irreparable loss for the Iranian nation but also a serious damage to the cultural heritage of humanity. Such actions are in complete contradiction with all international norms regarding the protection of cultural heritage during times of war and crisis, including the recognized principles of protecting human heritage”.

“While expressing solidarity with librarians, we, archivists, museum curators, researchers, and all guardians of the country’s cultural heritage, call upon international cultural organizations, professional library associations, cultural heritage protection organizations, and global scientific communities not to remain silent in the face of these threats and to adopt a clear and responsible stance to immediately halt any attacks on Iran’s cultural and scientific infrastructure”.

“The Iranian Library and Information Science Association also warns that the continuation of such attacks could leave lasting and irreparable consequences on

the region’s cultural memory, the world’s civilizational heritage, and the free flow of knowledge. The international community must take immediate and effective action to prevent the recurrence of these aggressions before the damages become irreversible”.

“Protecting libraries, museums, and cultural centers is protecting the future of dialogue, knowledge, and peace”.

On February 28, the US and Israel initiated a major, unjustified assault on Iran, resulting in the martyrdom of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and numerous senior officials and commanders, along with many civilians, including women and children.

The Zionist enemy, in continuation of its criminal actions, has targeted completely civilian centers of the country; including schools, art and cultural spaces, bookstores, museum, and ancient sites in several cities.

The attacks prompted a swift response from the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), with missile and drone launches targeting Israel and several U.S. bases in the region, occurring less than two hours after the strikes, which have been intensified in recent days.

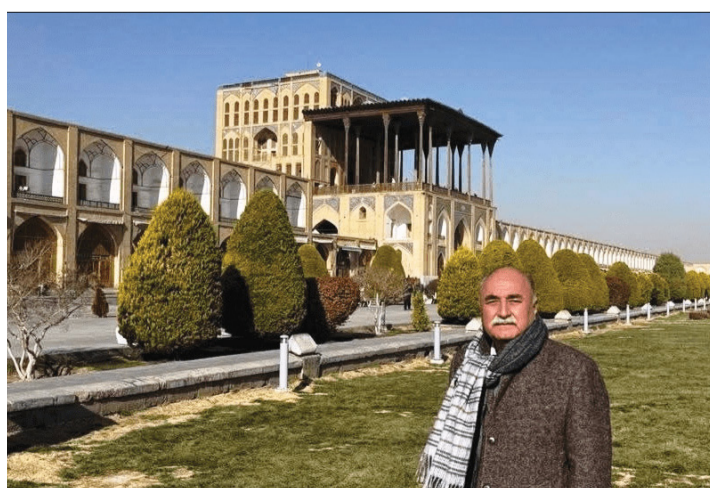
## Tajik poets hail Iranian resilience, cultural heritage

TEHRAN- In the wake of recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran, distinguished Tajik poets have penned verses to honor the country’s ancient civilization, cultural identity, and steadfast spirit.

Buri Karimov, a renowned Tajik poet and Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council of Road Administrators of the CIS, released an epic poem titled “For Iran,” ISNA reported on Friday.

Utilizing a heroic tone rich with mythological references, Karimov highlights the deep-rooted cultural ties between Tajikistan and the Iranian civilizational sphere, the report added.

In his verses, he pays tribute to Iran as the “land of ancestors,” referring to Iran as the world’s first beacon of justice, science, and culture. He emphasized that



A file photo shows renowned Tajik poet Buri Karimov in the central Iranian city of Isfahan

Iran remains a timeless monument of ancestral greatness.

Last week, Aziz Sangin, a Tajik poet residing in Denmark, ex-

pressed his solidarity through a poem titled “I Praise Thee, O Iran.” His work focuses on Iran’s strategic patience and intellec-

tual superiority in the face of the ignorance of the enemy. Sangin’s poem specifically lauds Iran’s defensive resolve and the spiritual leadership that has guided the nation through recent hardships. He praises the “awakening siren” sounded by the country and pays homage to the “army of martyrs,” noting that the world stands in awe of Iran’s resilience.

“The enemy is broken,” Sangin writes, concluding his poem with a salute to the “Karbala-like” sacrifice of those who have fallen in defense of the homeland.

These literary contributions from the Tajik cultural figures underscore the enduring bond of the Persian-speaking world and the collective recognition of Iran as a pillar of regional identity and resistance.

# Promises made, threats delivered!



The 100-year-old Pasteur Institute of Iran is shown heavily damaged after US-Israeli strikes, in downtown Tehran, on April 2, 2026.

By Afshin Majlesi

The way the United States has spoken about and acted toward Iran has been marked by clear paradoxes. On one hand, Donald Trump presented himself as someone who cared about the Iranian people, saying that “help is on the way” and promising to “make Iran great again!” On the other, he soon began repeatedly threatening to destroy Iran’s civilian infrastructure.

At the beginning of the conflict, Trump’s message, which were echoed by the regime of Israel as well, seemed carefully designed to separate the Iranian people from their government! His statements about helping Iranians and restoring the country sounded similar to his earlier political slogans and suggested that the United States had a humanitarian goal! However, words cannot be judged on their own. They need to be compared with what happened afterward.

Trump’s dramatic change of his supportive tone, warned that if Iran did not accept his demands, US forces would strike “each and every one” of its power plants and push the country “back to the Stone Ages.” These were not just empty words. Around the same time, there were real attacks on major infrastructure, including an important bridge near Tehran.

This sharp shift, from offering help to threatening destruction, also points to a shift in strategy. At first, it seems that the United States and Israel believed Iran could be quickly weakened. Early

attacks reportedly focused on top officials and senior military commanders, with the expectation that this would destabilize the country.

But Iran did not collapse. Instead, it continued to resist and kept its ability to respond. This forced a change in the situation and led to stronger rhetoric and more aggressive threats.

The repeated threats against civilian infrastructure may also show a sense of frustration. Over the past weeks, Trump has often claimed that the United States is close to winning the war. But these claims are usually followed by new threats of escalation. This pattern of saying victory is near while still threatening more destruction, suggests that the original goals have not been achieved.

Reactions from the regional Arab states also highlight the danger. The ones that host American military bases has repeatedly warned Washington that attacking civilian infrastructure could lead to wider conflict and trigger retaliatory strikes across the region.

At the same time, there has been hesitation. Trump has made strong threats but has not always followed through. This may be due to two main reasons: the risk of retaliation from the Islamic Republic, and the risk of legal consequences under international law.

From a legal point of view, the issue is serious. International law, including the Geneva Conventions, clearly protects civilian infrastruc-

ture. Attacking facilities that are essential for everyday life, especially when they have no clear military use, can be considered a war crime. When US officials use phrases like “Stone Ages,” it suggests not just targeting military sites, but damaging the basic functioning of society. This goes against the accepted rules of war.

Many legal experts and human rights groups have spoken out. Amnesty International has stressed that power plants and water systems are essential for people’s survival, and destroying them would likely harm civilians far more than any military benefit. Human Rights Watch has also warned that damaging Iran’s energy system could have devastating effects on hospitals, water supply, and other basic services.

In addition, more than 100 legal



scholars from major universities have expressed concern about possible violations of both human rights law and the laws of war. Consecutive strikes on schools, hospitals, homes, and historical sites, especially an early attack on a school in southern city of Minab that killed some 170 children and teachers, have made these concerns even more serious.

From a historical point of view, what is happening now is not entirely new. The United States and its allies have previously targeted civilian infrastructure in other conflicts, such as the Persian Gulf War and NATO operations in Serbia. In those cases, attacks on power plants and other key facilities were justified as military strategy but later criticized for their impact on civilians.

These past actions have shaped how many people see the United States today. There is a growing belief, especially among those directly affected, that the US applies international rules selectively. In Iran’s case, this view is strengthened by the clear gap between words of support and actions that harm civilians.

In the end, the story of this conflict is not just about military actions, it is also about the true face of America and its leaders. Promises of help have been overshadowed by threats and destruction. And for many people, this contrast has shaped a lasting and more negative view of the United States.

## Iran, infrastructure and the politics of annihilation



By Xavier Villar

MADRID – The destruction of Iranian civilian and economic infrastructure is not incidental to the U.S.-Israeli campaign. It is the mechanism through which the campaign is organized. To describe it as collateral damage is to misread the operative distinction: what is being acted upon is not military capacity in isolation, but the material systems through which the Iranian state maintains continuity across territory, time, and population.

The strike on the B1 bridge linking Tehran to Karaj illustrates this logic. The structure was not yet operational. It had no military function. Its significance lay in its position within an incomplete infrastructural sequence—planning, construction, integration into transport and logistics systems. Its destruction does not interrupt use; it interrupts formation. It removes a point at which state capacity is still being assembled.

The extension of targeting toward bridges and electrical infrastructure follows the same pattern. These are not auxiliary assets. They are connective systems through which governance is operationalised: energy distribution, mobility, industrial coordination, and the maintenance of services that render state presence continuous rather than episodic. The effect is not military degradation in the narrow sense, but interference in the conditions under which the state remains legible as a functioning system.

The assumption guiding this form of pressure is that disruption will be absorbed as internal failure. That breakdown in transport, energy, and services will be read domestically as evidence of incapacity rather than as externally produced constraint. That legitimacy, once separated from material continuity, will contract inward.

The record offers limited support for this premise. In Iraq, infrastructural collapse did not produce the kind of political reconfiguration anticipated by planners. In Gaza, repeated destruction of energy, housing, and medical systems has not generated a stable inward reattribution of coercion. In both cases, attribution has remained external rather than internalised. The pattern is consistent enough to call the premise itself into question.

There is little basis for assuming a different interpretive outcome in Iran. Long-term sanctioning, restricted financial access, and sustained pressure on energy and industrial flows have already shaped the framework through which infrastructural disruption is understood. This is not a cognitive environment produced by the present crisis, but an accumulated one, structured by prior constraint.

The choice of targets reinforces this dynamic. The Mahshahr petrochemical complex in Khuzestan is not a military site. It is a production node through which Iran converts energy resources into exportable industrial output integrated into external supply chains. Fertilisers, polymers, and chemical products move through it as part of a system that has sustained economic circulation under sanctions.

To strike Mahshahr is not only to impose economic cost. It is to interrupt a functioning instance of continuity under constraint. The effect is not limited to disruption of output; it is the contraction of visible state capacity in a sector where continuity had already been secured.

Khuzestan sharpens this logic. Its industrial density and demographic composition have long been read externally as structurally sensitive. Targeting infrastructure there is not randomised force. It reflects an attempt to align material disruption with perceived internal asymmetries, on the assumption that stress will be unevenly absorbed and therefore politically differentiated.

Iran’s response suggests that this mapping is being actively registered. Strikes on industrial infrastructure in Persian Gulf states have been directed at facilities occupying comparable positions within their own economic systems: refining capacity, metallurgical production, and logistics infrastructure embedded in global circulation. These are not symbolic targets. They are structurally comparable nodes within different national infrastructures.

The effect is not escalation in a conventional sense, but a redistribution of exposure. If Iranian infrastructure is treated as a legitimate object of attack, then the infrastructure of states partici-

parting in or enabling that campaign cannot remain conceptually insulated. Distance is reduced not rhetorically but through material equivalence.

The publication of lists identifying bridges, crossings, and logistical nodes across Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Jordan extends this logic into explicit form. It is not a declaration of imminent action, but a recalibration of how infrastructure is positioned within political calculation. Specific nodes are drawn out of abstraction and placed within a field of operational awareness. Infrastructure becomes locally legible as part of the decision environment of states already implicated in the campaign.

Alongside this is a pattern that cannot be reduced to asymmetry in capability. Healthcare facilities, research institutions and pharmaceutical production sites inside Iran have been struck repeatedly. These are not ambiguous or dual-use targets in operational terms. Their functions are defined, their roles embedded in systems of long-term provisioning. Their targeting operates as demonstration: that domains associated with care, knowledge production and continuity are no longer structurally protected.

Iran has not mirrored this pattern. It has not targeted hospitals or equivalent civilian infrastructure in neighbouring states. This is not absence of capacity but differentiation in method. The asymmetry is produced through selection rather than declaration, and becomes legible only in practice.

That distinction is not confined to the immediate theatre. Across much of the Global South, the campaign against Iran is increasingly read as a test case for the normalisation of infrastructural targeting within contemporary conflict, and for the erosion of the boundary between military action and systemic coercion. If civilian infrastructure becomes a repeatable object of attack, the distinction that stabilises modern conflict becomes harder to sustain in practice.

Iran’s response is structured accordingly. Official statements emphasise attribution, proportionality and the civilian character of sites struck within its territory. This is not narrative supplementation but an attempt to preserve interpretive categories beyond the immediate field of operations.

The limit is not located in any single point of pressure, but in the organisation of the infrastructural systems through which circulation is structured. Energy transmission, industrial output and commercial exchange depend on interlinked networks of ports, storage capacity, refining chains and overland logistics that function less as instruments of policy than as continuous systems of coordination. Within this configuration, disruption does not produce closure in a linear sense. It is redistributed across adjacent nodes, absorbed through rerouting and substitution. The constraint emerges from the internal architecture of infrastructure itself: continuity is maintained not through insulation from interference, but through structured exposure that allows the system to absorb shocks without collapsing its coherence.

This is not an abstract limit. It is embedded in circulation itself. Capacity exists, but its exercise is conditioned by interdependence rather than unilateral discretion.

What is being contested is not only territory or military position, but the status of infrastructural systems as political objects. Roads, energy networks, industrial zones, ports and research facilities are not auxiliary to sovereignty. They are its operational form. To target them is to act on the conditions under which the state remains intelligible as a state.

Iran’s response is organised around that recognition. It does not treat the campaign as a sequence of discrete strikes, but as a sustained intervention in infrastructural continuity. Its actions follow from that diagnosis: selective targeting, explicit attribution and restraint that signals differentiation rather than passivity. The conflict is not over infrastructure as such. It is over whether infrastructure can continue to function as a stable substrate of political existence under sustained pressure.

## Science in the crossfire: Iran’s universities resilient amid bombardment

By Maedeh Zaman Fashami

Since the beginning of the aggressive attacks by the U.S.-Israeli coalition on Iran, a series of extensive assaults on Iranian scientific and academic centers including the Iran University of Science and Technology, Shahid Beheshti University, the Iranian Space Research Institute, Abbaspoor University, and the Pasteur Institute of Tehran, have drawn global attention. These attacks, carried out mainly by American and Israeli forces, go beyond conventional military operations and carry broad strategic, cultural, and scientific implications. Analyzing these strikes highlights both the fear of foreign powers toward Iran’s scientific progress and the necessity of emphasizing the resilience of local science and knowledge in the face of violence and bombing.

Targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure on such a scale can, according to credible legal sources, constitute clear violations of international humanitarian law. Under the Geneva Conventions and customary international humanitarian law, civilian locations, including schools and universities, are generally protected from attacks.

The strike on the Pasteur Institute of Tehran, a research and public health center with over a century of history and a member of the international Pasteur network is a prime example of targeting scientific institutions as part of modern warfare. Established in the 1920s, the institute has been a regional pioneer in vaccine production and has played a key role in controlling deadly diseases, particularly plague originating from wildlife in the Middle East.

Political analyst Pepe Escobar describes this attack as a brutal act reflecting the blind rage and incapacity of the aggressors, reminiscent of the horrifying combination of violence and

aggressive policies in West Asia. Historians and environmental experts argue that this assault is not just against Iran; it threatens global health, the scientific heritage of humanity, and the regional ecosystem. The Pasteur Institute of Iran is not only a center for vaccine research and infectious disease studies but also symbolizes a century-long interdisciplinary tradition, combining fieldwork in wildlife with epidemiology and historical data. Targeting this institute, many argue, is a form of biological attack, endangering both the lives of scientists and sensitive archival data.

Vali Nasr, former advisor to the Obama administration, characterizes the attack as an assault on modern Iranian history and a symbol of national development. He believes that the destruction of the Pasteur Institute aims to return Iran to a state of backwardness and erase a century of modernization achievements.

Attacks on Iranian universities, including Iran University of Science and Technology, Shahid Beheshti University, and the Space Research Institute, follow a similar pattern aimed at limiting the country’s scientific and industrial capacities. Universities and research institutes are not only centers for educating students and training specialized professionals in engineering, technology, and basic sciences, but they also create networks of research and development directly linked to defense industries, critical infrastructure, and innovative technologies.

In the context of modern warfare, destroying such institutions constitutes an attack on the human capital of the future. Education, research, and technology production form a continuous cycle of national development, and targeting universities, especially those engaged in research related to defense, energy, and strategic technologies is, in effect, an effort to dismantle

national scientific infrastructure and knowledge production.

Examining attacks on universities and scientific centers within international law makes their implications even more serious. According to international humanitarian law, including the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and customary international law, attacking civilian objects, particularly those without a clear “military use,” is prohibited. Access to education is a fundamental human right, and attacking it can constitute a violation of human rights and, in some cases, a war crime. Organizations such as the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack emphasize that striking educational institutions and denying access to education, especially during wartime, is a clear violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The focus of these attacks on Iran’s universities and scientific centers reflects the fear of foreign powers regarding Iran’s scientific advancement and self-reliance. National and regional research institutions play a vital role in training specialized personnel, developing indigenous technologies, and strengthening industrial and defense capabilities. Although these achievements may not be immediately visible, they consolidate Iran’s long-term position as a leading power in the Middle East.

Targeting advanced research centers like the Space Research Institute and the Pasteur Institute is an attempt to reduce scientific self-sufficiency and create dependence on foreign technology. This is not merely a military threat but also a threat to the country’s scientific and cultural independence.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](http://tehrantimes.com))

# Failure on Battlefield Attack on Infrastructure

*Why are the US and Israel attacking Iran's infrastructure—contrary to international rules and their own initial claims?*



© Mehr/Nadia Pormah

The newly constructed B1 Bridge, among the largest in West Asia, is hit by U.S.-Israeli airstrikes in Karaj, near Iran's capital Tehran, April 3, 2026.

*Promises made, threats delivered!*

**By Afshin Majlesi**

The way the United States has spoken about and acted toward Iran has been marked by clear paradoxes. On one hand, Donald Trump presented himself as someone who cared about the Iranian people, saying that "help is on the way" and promising to "make Iran great again!" On the other, he soon began repeatedly threatening to destroy Iran's civilian infrastructure.

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*Science in the crossfire: Iran's universities resilient amid bombardment*

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*Iran, infrastructure and the politics of annihilation*

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