

Iran sympathizes with California fires victims, says ready to send aid

International Desk

Iran expressed sympathy for the victims of the huge wildfires in the US state of California, saying the Islamic Republic is ready to send humanitarian aid.

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref in a post on his Instagram account emphasized that in today's world, the pain and suffering of one person is the pain and suffering of all.

Meanwhile, Head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society Pir Hossein Kolivand sent a message to his American counterpart Cliff Holtz and announced the organization's readiness to send relief aid to California.

Kolivand said the extent of the fire shows that tackling the crisis is beyond capabilities of local forces and requires global assistance, and the rapid spread of flames in the heart of nature

due is not only a threat to human life, but also to the future of the earth and the environment.

The Iranian official said that his organization is ready to quickly dispatch its specialized rapid response teams and relief equipment to help victims.

Six simultaneous blazes have ripped across Los Angeles County neighborhoods in California since Tuesday, which have killed at least 11 people and damaged or destroyed 12,000 structures, a term that includes homes, apartment buildings, businesses, out-buildings and vehicles. The toll is expected to mount when firefighters are able to conduct house-to-house searches.

No cause has been identified yet for the fires.

The speed and intensity of the blazes ravaging Los Angeles this week have put its firefighting infrastructure to the

test – and given rise to questions and criticism surrounding preparedness.

Hydrants ran dry in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood as it was ravaged by one of the region's five separate fires, while water shortages additionally hampered efforts elsewhere.

"We need answers to how that happened," California Governor Gavin Newsom wrote in a letter to the heads of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the Los Angeles County Public Works.

Calling the lack of water and water pressure "deeply troubling," Newsom directed state officials to prepare an independent report on the causes.

Los Angeles fire chief Kristin Crowley has also said her city is hampered by a lack of resources.

US President-elect Donald Trump, who returns to the White House in just over a week, has seized upon the



A home is engulfed in flames during a fire in the Altadena area of Los Angeles County, California on January 8, 2025. **JOSH EDELSON/AFP**

drama to attack Democrats, launching a series of evidence-free broadsides

accusing Governor Newsom of a variety of failings.

IRGC unveils new underground 'missile city'



TASNIM

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) unveiled one of its new underground missile bases, described as a "missile city", amid the Israeli regime's heightened escalation in the region and threats against the country.

The sprawling missile base, accommodating advanced Iranian projectiles, was unveiled by IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami and Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Force, according to a report by Tasnim news agency late on Friday.

Broadcast by the national TV, the report on the footage from the subterranean facility said the base lodges such high-tech missiles as Emad, Qadr and Qiam which run on liquid fuel and that 90 percent of the other sections of the missile city were not shown for security reasons.

The advanced projectiles were used

in Iran's stunning missile attacks against Israeli military sites in military operations code-named True Promise 1 and 2 in April and October 2024.

Describing the missile base as a "dormant volcano deep in the heart of mountains," the national TV report said, "The volcano lying under these mountains can erupt in the shortest time possible."

During the tour of the missile facility, Salami praised the IRGC forces involved in the two anti-Israel attacks and rejected the enemy's mistaken belief that Iran's capability to produce missiles had been harmed.

"Every day, the number of systems and missiles is augmented in the far corners of this land. Maybe the enemy thought that our production power has stagnated, but the growth rate of our missile power is up to date," the IRGC chief said. Earlier in the day, Salami asserted

that the Islamic Republic has more missiles than it can store, dismissing the enemy's propaganda about the weakening of Iran's armed forces following attacks by Israel on Iran and its regional allies.

Salami added that the IRGC Aerospace Force would unveil more new missiles and missile facilities in the near future.

The Armed Forces, including the IRGC and the country's Army, have been continuously enhancing their military hardware and combat readiness.

The forces have vowed to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity in the face of the threats by the Iranian nation's enemies.

The Islamic Republic launched some 200 missiles at the Israeli entity's military, and espionage and intelligence bases all over the occupied territories on October 1 as part of Operation True Promise II.

The operation came in response to the regime's assassinations of senior leaders of the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance and a senior IRGC commander.

In the early hours of October 26, Israel targeted two Iranian border provinces, Ilam and Khuzestan, as well as Tehran. The country's integrated air defense system successfully intercepted and countered the aggression.

Iran has said it will respond to the recent Israeli act of aggression against the country and will not abandon its rights.

Iran, Russia discuss arrangements for Pezeshkian's visit to Moscow



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L) shakes hands with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during a meeting in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on October 11, 2024. **president.ir**

National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to visit Russia on January 17 to meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and sign a strategic cooperation agreement. Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali held a meeting with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko to discuss arrangements for Pezeshkian's visit to Moscow.

Both sides called the first official visit by Pezeshkian to the Russian capital a historic event that will take the relations between the two countries to a new stage.

They also pointed to the importance of the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Treaty which is set to be inked between Iran and Russia during the visit as it will enhance the level of interaction between the two countries and facilitate bilateral cooperation.

The country's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in October that Moscow and Tehran intended to sign a deal which would include closer defense cooperation.

In 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a long-term cooperation deal, officially known as the Treaty of the Foundation of Mutual Relations and the Principles of Cooperation. It was initially set for 10 years but was extended up until 2026.

Now, the two capitals are making final arrangements for the comprehensive partnership pact, which may determine their bilateral ties in all fields for the next 20 years. Iran and Russia are both subject to illegal Western sanctions. They have over the past years deepened their cooperation in various fields.

Iran has also signed a long-gestating 25-year cooperation accord with China as both countries remain under United States sanctions.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Shias, Hezbollah cannot ...

What deals do you think have been reached between Aoun, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, and how will this election affect Hezbollah's political future?

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Aoun is widely regarded in Lebanon as an exemplary military figure with a spotless record. He even fought alongside Hezbollah against ISIS and the al-Nusra Front in northeastern Lebanon, leading a military division in operations against these terrorist groups. In southern Lebanon, he previously commanded a brigade responsible for border security and never backed down against the Israeli regime, despite the Lebanese army's capabilities being incomparable to Israel's.

He is a patriot who aims for national unity. While the specifics of the discussions between Hezbollah, the Amal Movement,

and Joseph Aoun in their recent meeting remain undisclosed, speculations suggest that they centered around reconstruction, bolstering Lebanon's security, fostering government cooperation with resistance groups, and potentially cabinet appointments, including the selection of a prime minister. These discussions seem to have culminated in agreements, and subsequently, the representatives of the Amal Movement and Hezbollah in parliament cast their votes for Aoun, allowing him to securing a majority. Mr. Aoun is well aware that without the support of Hezbollah and Amal's MPs, the Christian bloc led by Samir Geagea would have thwarted his bid for the presidency.

What are your thoughts on how the Lebanese government, under Aoun's leadership, will engage with Shia fac-

tions and their supporters in Lebanon?

It's important to note that Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, along with their allied lawmakers, wield a majority in parliament and Muslims make up around 65% of Lebanon's population, of which around 45% are Shia. Aoun cannot afford to overlook this substantial segment of the population. That would be impossible. Ultimately, we hope that with the election of a president and the formation of a cabinet, the challenges faced by the Lebanese people will diminish, as they have endured severe hardships. We aspire for peace, stability, and security to be restored in the country. However, given Lebanon's proximity to Israel, it will always face various issues, including insecurity. Still, we hope that the election of a president will alleviate some of these burdens.