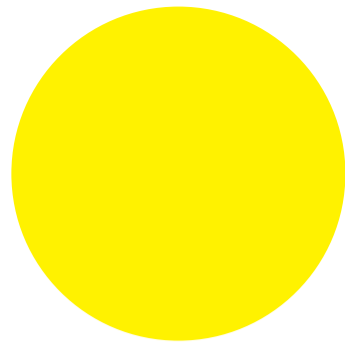


Iran's oil exports to China hit new high despite US sanctions

3 >



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Pezeshkian: Iran favors dialogue 'on equal footing'

2 >

All Iranians to fight back any US aggression

OPINION

A group of Iranian academics, lawyers, human rights defenders, journalists, and independent political activists have spoken out in a strongly worded letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, warning that any US military action against Iran over its nuclear program would set off "great chaos" in the Middle East and unite the whole nation to confront aggression.

The letter, released 5 April and signed by more than 300 individuals, directly addressed US President Donald Trump's recent threat to "bomb" Iran should diplomatic efforts to strike a nuclear deal fall through.

The signatories described the threat as "a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a threat to global peace," urging the international community not to turn a blind eye to such rhetoric. The full text of the letter follows.

This statement has been drafted by hundreds of university professors, lawyers, human rights advocates, journalists, and independent political activists, including critics of the Establishment's policies, some of whom have felt the sting of imprisonment or various forms of deprivation. The addressees of this letter are first the secretary-general, the General Assembly, and the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations, and then the US statesmen, the American people, and the global public opinion.

Iran's historical experience with war

We have experienced 8 years of war waged by Saddam Hussein's regime, which was supported by all global powers even when it resorted to chemical attacks. Many still suffer from the aftermath of those chemical attacks, for which the German government was the supplier. This war was not solely with Saddam's regime, as he was the proxy force of both Eastern and Western powers and received military and political support.

We have witnessed the miseries of war and do not wish for it again. In the last century, Iran never initiated any war, but past experiences have shown that when faced with foreign aggression, the nation stands united and strong in its defense.

Nuclear issue and JCPOA

The West's double standards, which portray Iran's peaceful nuclear program - despite being under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) - as a threat, while remaining silent about Israel's nuclear arsenal, which is neither a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty nor under any international supervision, have not only imposed unjust pressure on Iran but also fueled extremism. In this regard, after years of tough negotiations with the P5+1 group, Iran reached an agreement with the US and Europe known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Despite Iran's adherence to the deal, the Trump administration unilaterally walked out of it without offering any justification. Furthermore, the US imposed the harshest sanctions on the Iranian people, leading to shortages in medicines, vital goods, and industrial resources.

Page 2 >

Trump's global tariffs trigger outrage, bear heavily on Wall Street

2 >



A demonstrator holds a T-shirt bearing a slogan in several languages during the nationwide "Hands Off!" protests against US President Donald Trump and his advisor, Tesla CEO Elon Musk, in Washington, DC, US, on April 5, 2025. **AMID FARAH/AFP**



Non-oil exports set new record while Iran trade deficit reaches \$14.6 billion

3 >



2025 Beach Soccer World Cup: **Iran given Portuguese test in group stage**

6 >



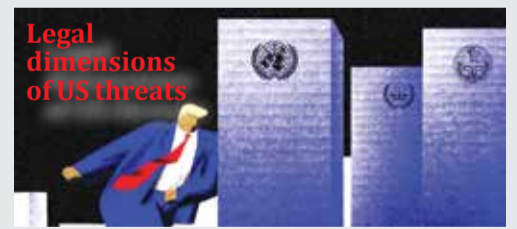
Timeless elegance of historical houses in Shiraz

7 >



Nowruz tourism booms in Iran Over 35m hit roads, 4.8m visit historical sites

8 >



OPINION

Legal dimensions of US threats In the intricate realm of diplomacy, the line between pressure tactics and violations of international law is increasingly blurred. Recent remarks from US officials have raised eyebrows, hinting at military action against Iran, which could be seen as a breach of the UN Charter. The ongoing economic sanctions imposed on Iran also spark debate—are they a covert form of aggression? As the situation unfolds, the potential legal ramifications loom large, with Iran possibly seeking justice through international courts. The stakes are high: threats that stray from legal boundaries could destabilize not just regional security but the very fabric of global order itself. What does this mean for the global order and rule of law? For more on this, check out page 4.

See page 4 >

Pezeshkian: Iran favors dialogue 'on equal footing'

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the Islamic Republic is willing to engage in nuclear talks with the United States "on an equal footing." Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with the country's state and military officials on Saturday.

"If you want negotiations, then what is the point of threatening?" Pezeshkian asked.

"Today, America is not only humiliating Iran, but also the world," he added, in an apparent reference to recent policies adopted by Washington, including the imposition of tariffs on imported goods from other countries to the US.

Pezeshkian's remarks came after US President Donald Trump, who has called on Tehran to hold direct negotiations on its nuclear program, has repeatedly threatened to bomb Iran if diplomacy fails to resolve issues related to its nuclear program.

Trump said last month he had written to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to call for nuclear negotiations and warn of possible military action if Tehran refused.

Ayatollah Khamenei responded to Trump's threats by saying that US threats "will get them nowhere," and warned of reciprocal measures "if they do anything malign" against Iran.

Later, Iran sent a response through Oman to Trump's letter.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araçchi said Tehran has rejected direct talks with the US under pressure.

"Our policy is still to not engaging in direct negotiations while under maximum pressure and military threats, however, as it was the case in the past, indirect negotiations can continue," IRNA cited him as saying.

On Thursday, Trump reiterated that he would prefer to hold "direct talks" with Iran.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) speaks during a meeting with the country's state and military officials in Tehran on April 5, 2025.

president.ir

"I think it goes faster and you understand the other side a lot better than if you go through intermediaries," the US president argued.

In 2015, the Islamic Republic reached a landmark deal with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely the United States, France, China, Russia, and the United Kingdom, as well as Germany, on its nuclear activities.

The agreement provided sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Iranian nuclear activities.

In 2018, during Trump's first term in office, the US withdrew from the agreement and re-instated sanctions on Tehran. In response, Iran rolled back on its commitments under the



agreement and accelerated its nuclear program. Western countries including

the United States have long accused Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapon, which Tehran has

denied, insisting its enrichment activities were solely for peaceful purposes.

Trump's global tariffs trigger outrage, bear heavily on Wall Street

International Desk

The US President Donald Trump's baseline tariff of 10% on products from all countries worldwide took effect on Saturday, sparking protests in the US and several other countries and causing worst crisis for Wall Street since COVID pandemic.

The blanket tariff was announced by the US president on Wednesday evening, when his speech on so-called "Liberation Day" sent shockwaves across the global stock market as he unleashed sweeping taxes on imports. Much higher tariffs against what Trump branded as the "worst offenders", such as a 20% rate for the EU and a 34% one for China, are set for 9 April.

A 25% tariff imposed on all foreign cars imported into the US came into effect on Thursday.

American customs officials began collecting the new 10% tariff on Saturday morning.

World's response

Various countries are still deciding how to respond (or not), and companies have begun adjusting to the new reality — largely by raising prices.

Some countries responded with new tariffs of their own.

Canada announced new duties on certain vehicles imported from the US, and China announced that it will impose countermeasures against the US starting April 10.

China's response to US tariffs caused an immediate acceleration of losses in markets worldwide. The Commerce Ministry in Beijing said it would respond to the 34% tariffs imposed by the US on imports from China with its own 34% tariff on imports of all US products beginning April 10. The United States and China are the world's two largest economies.

Worst daily drop

The UK's leading stock market, the FTSE 100, suffered its worst daily drop in more than five years, closing on Friday 4.95% down, a level not seen since March 2020.

All three of the US's major indexes, including The Dow Jones Industrial Average, the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite, were down by more than 5% at market close on Friday, making for the worst day in American markets since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ever since the US president an-

nounced the tariffs, analysts estimate that around \$4.9trn has been wiped off the value of the global stock market.

As stock markets reeled, Trump was largely out of public view at his golf course where he sent multiple defiant social media messages guaranteeing victory for the US economy.

One of his messages on Truth Social read, "Big business is not worried about the Tariffs, because they know they are here to stay, but they are focused on the BIG, BEAUTIFUL DEAL, which will SUPERCHARGE our Economy. Very important. Going on right now!!!"

The British maker of Jaguar and Land Rover cars is pausing shipments to the US as it works to mitigate the impact of a 25% tax on vehicle imports.

Also on Saturday, thousands of people gathered on Washington's National Mall and other cities across America in opposition to the policies of Trump, in the largest protests since he returned to the White House.

At a time of spreading global resentment against the Republican president, rallies took place earlier in international capitals including Paris, Rome, London, Berlin and Lisbon.

Video footage appears to contradict Israeli account of Gaza medic killings

Phone video from one of 15 Palestinian medics killed by Israeli forces last month appears to contradict Israeli claims that the medics' vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire on them in southern Gaza.

The footage shows the Red Crescent and Civil Defense teams driving slowly with their emergency vehicles' lights flashing, logos visible, as they pulled up to help an ambulance that had come under fire earlier. The teams do not appear to be acting unusually or in a threatening manner as three medics emerge and head toward the stricken ambulance, AP reported.

Their vehicles immediately come under a barrage of gunfire, which goes on for more than five minutes with brief pauses. The owner of the phone can be heard praying. "Forgive me, mother. This is the path I chose, mother, to help people," he cries, his voice weak.

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a UN staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by Israeli troops conducting operations in Tel al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops then bulldozed over the bodies along with their mangled vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. UN and rescue workers were only able to reach the site a week later to dig out the bodies.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society's vice president, Marwan Jilani, said the phone



Palestinian Red Crescent Society

with the footage was found in the pocket of one of its slain staffers. The Palestinian ambassador to the United Nations distributed the video to the UN Security Council.

Israel claimed a number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters had been killed in the incident, but it has not provided any evidence or further explained the threat to its troops. Asked about the video, the Israeli military said Saturday that the incident was "under thorough examination." It said "all claims, including the documentation circulating about the incident, will be thoroughly and deeply examined to understand the sequence of events and the handling of the situation."

The Israeli military earlier said it opened fire on the vehicles because they were "advancing suspiciously" on nearby troops without headlights or emergency signals.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, Younes Al-Khatib, called for an independent investigation. "We don't trust any of the army investigations," he told a briefing at the UN on Friday.

All Iranians to ...

Stance of domestic critics on democracy, foreign intervention

Despite our criticisms of the Establishment and its policies, we believe that Iran's independence, security, and democracy should be shaped by its people without foreign intervention. Democracy cannot be achieved through the interference of foreign powers, especially those who openly display their tyranny, support the criminal regime of Israel, and send advanced weapons and financial and political backing. This is while Israel's genocide and war crimes have been condemned by all international human rights organizations and are under investigation by the International Criminal Court, and have faced widespread student and popular protests in the US and Europe. Iran, with its ancient history, much older than most of the current countries in the world — which Hegel called the beginning of world

history and Kant, Nietzsche, and many great thinkers spoke of its splendor - does not need the sympathy of such forces.

Concern for global peace

We are not only concerned about Iran but also about global peace. In the past 15 months, the Israeli regime has blatantly trampled on all human rights norms, international humanitarian laws, and the values of peace, democracy, and humanity, and has undermined the credibility of international organizations, continuing its human rights violations with the support of the US and some European governments. We now face a US administration led by an individual who, contrary to his claims of seeking peace during the election campaign, wants to resolve international issues through force, bombs, and war. His behavior toward Greenland, Canada, Europe, Ukraine, and Gaza also demonstrates

his preference for the language of force over diplomacy and legal discourse. He has repeatedly stated that Iran will either negotiate or be bombed. These statements are a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and a threat to global peace.

Declaration of position

We, the signatories of this statement, in defense of Iran, humanity, and global peace, will, regardless of our differing viewpoints with the Establishment, defend our country with all our might in case of any aggression. We call upon the world to stand against the crimes of the Israeli government and the warmongering threats of the new US administration. Any aggression against Iran and any action against our country's defense capabilities is not just an action against the Establishment but also against the Iranian people, and it will plunge the region into chaos and harm the world.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran's oil exports to China hit new high despite US sanctions

Economy Desk

Iran's oil exports to China reached 1.91 million barrels per day in March, a 11.9% increase compared to the previous record of 1.71 million barrels per day in August 2024, S&P reported Saturday.

This record is also 19.5% higher than the February imports of 1.6 million barrels per day.

Iran's oil exports to China in March hit a new record high since US President Donald Trump imposed the so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran and pulled his country out of the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump signed an executive order to restore the maximum pressure campaign on Iran when he returned to the White House with the main goal of "slashing Iranian oil exports to a trickle."

Washington has been adding oil tankers that allegedly transfer Iranian oil to world markets to its list of sanctions.

Improved logistics, including drawing from floating storage in Malaysian waters, as well as competitive pricing compared to alternative feedstocks, contributed to the rise in Iran's oil imports to China, according to informed sources, ISNA reported.

However, market analysts say that the import trend in April may be affected due to the hostile actions of the US in recent weeks.

While some private refineries have adopted a wait-and-see approach amid escalating geopolitical risks, traders expect imports to remain high in April due to Iran's competitive oil pricing at around seven million tons (1.91 million barrels per day).

"If Iran's oil shipments have better economics than other options, Chinese private refineries will continue to purchase them," a trade source said.

According to informed sources, Iran's floating oil storage in Malaysia has decreased as more volumes have been transferred to China.

Traders said that floating storage in March was 426,000 barrels per day, according to Platts, 44% lower than the January and February levels as the transfer to private refineries in Shandong, China, accelerated, according to Kpler.

According to the S&P Global Commodity Insights survey, Iran's crude oil production proved resilient, reaching 3.23 million barrels per day in February, slightly higher than January, and has remained above three million barrels per day since September 2023.



IRNA

Non-oil exports set new record while Iran trade deficit reaches \$14.6 billion



IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's non-oil exports soared to new heights in the past Iranian year (began on March 20, 2024 -1403), reaching a remarkable value of \$57.8 billion,

according to official data.

Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy for planning and international affairs at the Iranian customs office (IRICA), who provided insights into the country's robust trade performance made the announcement, IRNA re-

ported.

Akbarpour revealed that the total value of imports also witnessed a substantial increase, amounting to \$72.4 billion, with a notable contribution of over \$8 billion in raw gold bullion imports.

In an interview with IRNA regarding Iran's non-oil foreign trade statistics for the 12-month period of the last Iranian year, Akbarpour said, "Last year, we exported over 152 million tons of non-oil goods worth \$57.8 billion, marking a 10% increase in weight and a 15.62% rise in dollar terms compared to the previous year (began on March 20, 2023)."

Last year, "39.3 million tons of goods valued at \$72.4 billion were imported, representing a 0.77% decrease in weight and an 8.22% increase in dollar value compared to the previous year - 1402," he added.

Akbarpour identified Iran's top non-oil export commodities in 1403 as "natural gas, liquefied propane, liquefied butane, methanol, petroleum

gases, liquefied gaseous hydrocarbons, and gas condensates."

"Natural gas was the most significant export commodity in 1403, with an average customs value of \$314 per ton," he said.

The official also highlighted, "Other major export items included petroleum bitumen, urea, unalloyed iron and steel ingots, iron or steel bars, and polyethylene."

China, Iraq and UAE: Iran's top export destinations

According to Akbarpour, Iran's primary non-oil export destinations in 1403 were China (\$14.8 billion), Iraq (\$11.9 billion), UAE (\$7.2 billion), Turkey (\$6.8 billion), Pakistan and Afghanistan (each \$2.4 billion), and India (\$1.9 billion).

"Together, these countries accounted for \$47.6 billion, or 82.3% of Iran's total non-oil export value," he said. Regarding imports in 1403, he stated, "Gold equivalent to 10 million tons, valued at over \$8 billion, constituted one of Iran's key import

items, representing 11.12% of total import value. Essential goods — including animal feed corn, soybean meal, genetically modified soybeans, rice, sunflower seed oil — as well as smartphones, tractors, and vehicle spare parts were among the top imported commodities."

UAE leads exporters to Iran

The deputy for Planning and International Affairs at IRICA identified the UAE (\$21.9 billion), China (\$19.3 billion), Turkey (\$12.4 billion), Germany (\$2.4 billion), India (\$1.7 billion), Hong Kong (approximately \$14 billion), and Russia (\$1.3 billion) as Iran's main source countries for imports in 1403.

"These eight countries, with a combined \$60.7 billion, accounted for 83.8% of the total dollar value of Iran's imports," Akbarpour said.

The official concluded that, "Despite Iran's non-oil trade deficit reaching \$-14.6 billion last year, over \$8 billion of this deficit was attributed to imports of raw gold bullion."

NIOC: Offshore oil, gas exploration to resume in Persian Gulf

Economy Desk

Iran plans to resume offshore oil exploration activities in shared border areas with neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf for the first time after a five-year hiatus, according to a senior Oil Ministry official. Mohyeddin Jafari, head of Exploration Directorate at the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) expressed hope that Iran's offshore exploration activities in shared border areas with neighboring countries would commence this year, adding that operations had been suspended since 2019 due to offshore rig limita-

tions, Tasnim reported. "With the support of the Oil Ministry and the NIOC, and in collaboration with the Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC), we successfully held a tender and selected a contractor with an offshore rig," Jafari said.

"Through this tender, for the first time in five years, we managed to sign a contract for an offshore rig in the exploration sector," he added.

In an interview with the ministry's official website, Jafari noted that over the past six months, the Exploration Directorate had focused its efforts on the two critical phases of studies

and operational execution. "What we have been planning during this period, particularly under the current administration, is to conduct a precise assessment of exploration activities over the past 30 years," he stated.

Highlighting key objectives, he said, "One of our most important goals in the current administration is to accelerate exploration speed in drilling operations by increasing the number of rigs and in geophysical operations through modern equipment. If we succeed in these two areas, we can double the pace of discoveries."

Roads minister calls ports, maritime economy top priorities

Iran's minister of roads and urban development emphasized that a maritime-based economy and port development are top priorities for the ministry, adding that expanding the fleet of vessels to boost tourism is also on the agenda.

Farzaneh Sadegh outlined the ministry's key strategic plans, emphasizing that port development and the maritime economy are top priorities.

Highlighting recent achievements, Sadegh noted substantial growth in maritime travel. "90 percent of marine trips were conducted via Bandar Abbas and Qeshm. With the addition of two new passenger vessels, we have seen strong public demand," she said as reported by Mehr.

The minister added that plans are underway to expand the passenger vessel fleet to further stimulate marine tourism.

"Our maritime economy strategy fo-

cus mainly on the southern coasts, including Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, and other provinces along the southern borders," Sadegh said.

"We are drafting a comprehensive plan to promote the southern coastline with a maritime economic approach."

Makoran coastline development

Sadegh also announced plans for dredging the Arvand River to facilitate the navigation of larger vessels to Khorramshahr Port. "This project will significantly boost the local economies of Khuzestan, Khorramshahr, and Abadan, located along the Arvand River," she added.

The minister also stressed the importance of developing the Makoran coastline as a cornerstone for advancing the maritime economy. She mentioned ongoing agreements aimed at increasing the number of vessels to support passenger and tourism growth.

Upgrading northern ports, regional ties

Sadegh reported the commencement of dredging operations at Astara Port on the Caspian Sea. "Although northern ports have considerable potential, improving service quality remains essential," she emphasized. She also referred to the recent Caspian Sea summit, where Iran's proposal to create a comprehensive maritime database and joint information-sharing platform among littoral states was approved.

Sadegh highlighted that enhancing the quality of the maritime transport fleet for both cargo and passengers is the ministry's priority.

"The development of Chabahar must primarily benefit local communities and their livelihoods. Current development efforts are proceeding in cooperation with Indian partners."

Missile cities symbol of Iran's deterrence



OPINION

Deterrence is a concept in international relations and the realm of international security, referring to a set of measures taken by a government to neutralize and contain potential or actual threats from opposing states. In other words, deterrence is not a strategy for waging war but aims to maintain the status quo, mitigate and counter the target country's actions, and convince the adversary that hostile measures, large-scale military operations, and aggression come at a high cost. Deterrence may not prevent hostile operations by the enemy, but it can at least hold back widespread aggression.

Currently, missiles are a crucial factor in putting pressure on a country and serve as a key tool for striking enemy positions. The extensive shifts in international relations, the complex situation in the Middle East, and the threats Iran faces for various reasons as a key player from international actors such as the US and its regional allies have made our country determined to consider deterrence as a strategic approach.

The missile program is one of these key strategies. Given the escalating verbal tensions between Tehran and Washington since Donald Trump came into office, and more importantly, the deadlock in direct negoti-

ations between the two sides for various reasons — including Trump's maximum pressure and his increasing threats against Iran — the unveiling of missile cities could be seen as a form of deterrence against the opposing side.

According to Maya Carlin, an analyst with The National Interest think tank, Iran has unveiled missile cities displaying various missiles with different ranges. Missiles such as the Emad, Haj Qassem, Qadr-H, Kheibar Shekan, and Paveh are stored in these cities. Of course, this is not the first time Iran has showcased its missile capabilities. Last February, the IRGC Navy revealed an underground missile base in the

southern coastal regions, and in January, another underground missile base near the Persian Gulf was unveiled just days after displaying a similar underground missile city. Undoubtedly, Iran uses its underground depots as a means to demonstrate that, in the event of an attack, it will still have access to weapons.

Iran's missile stockpile has grown significantly over the past decade. According to a report by The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Iran's total ballistic missile arsenal exceeds 3,000 units. Moreover, Iran possesses a considerable number of cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear payloads. In Iran's first attack on Israel last year, at

least 120 ballistic missiles were used. On the one hand, the Shahid missile fleet, with its long-range, has been a threat to Iran's enemies. On the other hand, Iran has a deadly cruise missile fleet that can reach Israel in less than 15 minutes.

Major General Mohammad Baqeri, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, stated during the unveiling ceremony of the new missile cities that this deterrent "iron fist" is very powerful and that its growth rate outpaces the enemy's ability to patch up its weaknesses.

Another Iranian military official had previously commented on the number of missile cities and bases in the country, stating that the unveiled cities are just one of hundreds of missile cities and represent only a small portion of Iran's missile and military defense capabilities. Due to certain considerations, only a small percentage of them have been granted official public disclosure.

Under these circumstances, Iran has consistently sought to ramp up the quantity, speed, and precision of its missiles to bolster its deterrence — a point also acknowledged by Western experts — thereby balancing threats in the region. By showcasing its missile cities, Iran sends a message to the US and its key regional ally, Israel, that in the event of hostile actions against the country, it is capable of resorting to hard power — its missile capabilities — to fend off attacks from opposing sides.

The article first appeared in Persian on IQNA.



A new missile city of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) was unveiled in the presence of Commander of IRGC Aerospace Force Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh (standing-R) and Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff Major General Mohammad Baqeri (standing-L), in an undisclosed location on January 11, 2025.

● SNN



Given the escalating verbal tensions between Tehran and Washington since Donald Trump came into office, and more importantly, the deadlock in direct negotiations between the two sides for various reasons — including Trump's maximum pressure and his increasing threats against Iran — the unveiling of missile cities could be seen as a form of deterrence against the opposing side.

Iranian ballistic missiles are displayed during the ceremony of being introduced to the Armed Forces, in Tehran, Iran, on August 22, 2023.

● president.ir



Legal dimensions of US threats



The recent statements by US officials are not merely diplomatic rhetoric — they may signal an approach that must be examined through the lens of international law. Respect for international law is the cornerstone of global order.



Yahya Golshahin
Political activist, scholar

ANALYSIS

In the world of diplomacy, threats have always been counted as a tool of pressure. But where should one draw the line between political pressure and a clear violation of international law?

The recent statements by American top officials like the one by the US State Department spokesperson, who implicitly referred to military action as "very bad options" in case of no agreement with Iran, have once again brought the issue of military and economic threats to the forefront of legal and political analyses.

International law,

prohibition of threat of force

Under Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, any threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of states is prohibited. This principle is considered one of the fundamental pillars of international peace and security. Threatening a country, especially by major powers, not only challenges global order but can also set the stage for irreversible crises.

The US has relied on economic sanctions against Iran for years. But can these sanctions be considered a threat of force? Many international law experts believe that sanctions that directly or indirectly harm people's livelihoods can be seen as a form of indirect use of force.

There are numerous examples of sanctions that have cut off Iran's access to medicine, medical equipment, and essential goods, effectively making life harder for ordinary citizens.

Two legal dimensions of US threats

US threats can take two general forms:

- **Military threat:** If the "very bad options" imply military action, this would be a clear violation of the UN Charter and could prompt Iran to file a complaint with international bodies such as the Security Council or the International Court of Justice.

- **Economic threat:** If the threat involves stepping up sanctions, its assessment depends on their severity, scope, and impact on

civilians. Sanctions that lead to widespread humanitarian harm may violate human rights principles.

Legal, diplomatic consequences of threats

Any international-level threat can have consequences:

- **International responsibility:** If threats result in violations of international law, the offending state may be held accountable and required to make amends.

- **Right to self-defense:** Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, a country facing threats may, under certain conditions, exercise its right to self-defense.

- **Role of international institutions:** Iran can turn to legal avenues to challenge US threats, though experience shows that

the political influence of major powers complicates such processes.

The recent statements by US officials are not merely diplomatic rhetoric — they may signal an approach that must be examined through the lens of international law. Respect for international law is the cornerstone of global order.

Any threat — whether military or economic — that falls outside the framework of international law not only undermines regional security but also calls into question the legitimacy of international institutions. Maintaining global stability hinges on respect for international law.

The article first appeared in Persian on Golestan-e Ma.



● NATALIA SHULGA/AL JAZEERA



People demonstrate against the United States entering a war with Iran on the East Front of the US Capitol in Washington, United States, on January 9, 2020. Later, the House adopted a war powers resolution with the aim of limiting President Donald Trump's military actions against Iran during his first term in office.
● SARAH SILBINGER/GETTY IMAGES

Yes, Iran can sink American aircraft carriers

By **Brandon J. Weichert**
Journalist, author

OPINION

Any conflict with Iran will drastically increase the chances that an American carrier is either grievously damaged or sunk in an engagement.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh was recently interviewed while attending a prayer service in Tehran — shortly after US President Donald Trump threatened the Islamic Republic with severe consequences if they did not abandon their alleged quest for nuclear weapons. According to Hajizadeh, "The Americans have at least 10 military bases in the region surrounding Iran, housing around 50,000 troops." Any normal aerospace commander would likely be fazed by such a hostile presence. Yet Hajizadeh speculated that the United States' abundance of forces in the region weakened it rather than strengthening it. "This means they're sitting inside a glass house," he explained. "Someone sitting in a glass house should not be throwing stones at others." And Hajizadeh is correct.

Israel-Iran conflict's geopolitical context

US bases in and around the Mideast are under serious risk of massive Iranian retaliation.

But the fact remains that, if they decided to, both Israel and the United States could likely decimate Iran's nuclear facilities, dealing a real blow to Iran.

Yet while the Americans have certain significant advantages over the Iranian regime, the IRGC commander is correct when cautions America about the retaliatory capacity of Iran. The bases ringing Iran are conspicuous targets for such retaliation. But Iran could also go even further — sinking one of the two US Navy aircraft carriers currently deployed to the region, the USS Harry S. Truman and the USS Carl Vinson.

Houthis' threat to American carriers

Already, the Iran-backed Ansarullah (Houthi) fighters in Yemen have demonstrated a remarkable capability to threaten US aircraft carriers operating near their shores. Using increasingly sophisticated anti-ship ballistic missiles, the Houthis have been getting closer and closer to American carriers deployed to fight them. Over the last year, multiple reports have come out highlighting the intensity of the American conflict with the Houthis.

For instance, last year, US Navy Commander Eric Blomberg of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Laboon described the dangers of his tour of duty against the Houthis as the toughest fighting the Navy has

experienced since the Second World War. "I don't think people really understand just how deadly serious it is what we're doing and how under threat [US Navy warships] continue to be," Blomberg explained to the Associated Press in June 2024.

And that was from an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer's commanding officer. Those destroyers provide cover for US aircraft carriers when operating as part of a larger aircraft carrier battle group. Even with these additional screens, Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) have become so effective that, last year, a Houthi missile nearly clipped the flight deck of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower.

That carrier just barely escaped devastation by a mere 656 feet (200 meters). That's far too close, especially considering that the Houthis are generally looked down on by Westerners as a pack of cave-dwellers. A more sophisticated foe, like China or Iran, could undoubtedly do far worse.

In the Red Sea, the intensity of combat operations is so significant that fear of Houthi activity indirectly caused the loss of an E/A-18G Growler going into the new year. The pilot and his weapons officer ejected to safety and were rescued without injury.

And within the last week, unconfirmed reports from the region claim that the Houthis opened fire upon the American

carrier on March 16 with drones and ASBMs that "hit" the carrier. The Navy denies this. But it is interesting to note that, shortly after the alleged attack, the Pentagon ordered the carrier to reposition itself just outside the range of Houthi weapons.

Recall that during the Eisenhower incident last year, Navy commanders vociferously denied that any Houthi ASBM came close to the carrier or even posed a threat...until they were forced to quietly concede that the Houthi missiles got within 656 feet of the carrier. Of course, "close" is subjective. Similarly, the Navy is vehemently denying that the Houthis ever posed a threat to the Truman on March 16. But if so, why would they then move the carrier backwards?

It doesn't really matter. All that does is that we know the tempo of Houthi operations against US Navy assets in their region is significant and that the ASBMs, in particular, pose a substantial enough threat to American flat tops that the Navy is keeping these assets at safe distances from Houthi launch sites.

Given that the Houthi missiles are made by the Iranians and IRGC elements trained the Houthi on how best to utilize these systems, it stands to reason that any conflict with Iran will drastically increase the chances that an American carrier is either grievously damaged

or sunk in an engagement.

Even if the Americans avoid such a terrible fate by keeping their carriers out of the range of Houthi and/or Iranian missiles, that move alone will significantly degrade the utility of the costly carriers. It will also reaffirm to ever-mindful China that their plan of using similar systems against American warships when — and if — they opt to attack Taiwan is the correct course.

America no longer dominates Middle East

Twenty years ago, American military dominance in the Middle East was assured. Today, the Houthis and their Iranian allies have crafted a sufficient enough capability that they could believably keep American carriers over the horizon, dramatically limiting their effectiveness. And if those carriers dared to move closer to the combat area, the Iranians could very credibly sink them.

Such a loss would be a devastating blow to America's psyche, which views its aircraft carriers as the ultimate symbol of American might. These platforms are highly sophisticated — and onerously expensive. If even one were destroyed or rendered combat-ineffective by Iranian ASBM attacks, the blow to America would be grave.

The full article first appeared on *The National Interest*.



IRGC Aerospace Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh speculated that the United States' abundance of forces in the region weakened it rather than strengthening it. "This means they're sitting inside a glass house," he explained. "Someone sitting in a glass house should not be throwing stones at others." And Hajizadeh is correct.



The USS Harry S. Truman conducts flight operations in the US Central Command area of responsibility on March 27, 2025.
● US NAVY

2025 Beach Soccer World Cup:

Iran given Portuguese test in group stage



Sports Desk

Iran and two-time champion Portugal were drawn in the same group at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup – starting May 1 in Victoria, Seychelles.

The draw for the flagship international event of the sport took place in the host city on Friday, where Iran and Portugal were joined by world No. 12 Paraguay and Mauritania in Group B.

Iran will get its campaign underway against Mauritania on the opening day of the competition at Victoria's Paradise Arena, before taking on Paraguay two days later. The final round of the group fixtures will see Iran and Portugal go head-to-head on May 5.

Iran and Portugal – champion in 2015 and 2019 – will be the favorites to progress to the quarterfinals as the top two in the group, though Paraguay and talisman Carlos Carballo are a force to be reckoned with.

The Albirroja beat Brazil 5-3 in the group stage of last month's Copa America, before falling 5-4 to the same opponent in a thrilling final. Debutant Mauritania will have it all to do, though the African side recently proved to be capable of springing surprises, finishing runner-up in last October's Africa

Cup of Nations in Egypt. Iran, which finished third in its last two World Cup appearances in 2017 and 2024, booked its place at this year's finals after cruising to a record fourth Asian Cup trophy last week in Pattaya, Thailand. Ali Naderi's men claimed five successive victories before routing Oman 8-1 in the final showpiece to defend their title – scoring 56 goals, while conceding only six in the process.

Elsewhere in the World Cup draw, the host nation landed in a wide-open Group A alongside fellow first-timer Guatemala, with Belarus, the revelation of the 2024 edition in Dubai, and Japan, runner-up in 2021, the favorites to go through. Group C will see Tahiti, Spain, Senegal, and Chile battle it out for the last-eight spots.

Tahiti and Spain have finished second at the World Cup twice and once respectively, while Senegal reached the semifinals in 2021. Brazil – the most decorated side in the tournament with six titles – Italy, El Salvador, and Oman complete the lineup in Group D.

The clash between Brazil and Italy will be the game to watch in the group phase as it will be a repeat of the 2008 and 2024 final showdowns, where Selecao came out on top on both occasions.

Iran names karate quadruple for 2025 World Games

Sports Desk

Iran will be represented by four karatekas at the 2025 World Games – starting August 7 in the Chinese city of Chengdu – the national governing body of the sport confirmed.

Four-time Asian bronze medalist Fatemeh Sadeqi will be among the favorites in the women's individual kata event, having walked away with ultimate prize in January's Karate 1-Series A event in Tbilisi, Georgia. Former world bronze medalist Sara Bahmanyar will be the sole Iranian girl in the kumite con-

tests, vying success in the -50kg weight class – also featuring world champion Moldir Zhangbyrbay of Kazakhstan and silver medalist Erminia Perfetto of Italy. Bahmanyar was also a gold medalist in the Georgian capital. In the men's draw, reigning world silver medalist Mahdi Khodabakhshi will be the Irania participant in the kumite -84kg contests, leading the pack alongside Egyptian Youssef Badawy, who beat the Iranian to the 2023 world title in Budapest. Four-time Asian gold medalist Saleh Abazari will part of the

+84kg draw, which will be headlined by the world gold medalist Mehdi Filali of France and Egyptian Taha Tarek Mahmoud, beaten by the Frenchman in the 2023 final. A total of 96 athletes have earned their spots in the karate event of the World Games – scheduled for August 8-9 – with eight competitors in each category.



L-R: Fatemeh Sadeqi, Sara Bahmanyar, Mahdi Khodabakhshi, and Saleh Abazari will be the four Iranian karate participants at the 2025 World Games in Chengdu, China.

● IKF



● MOHSEN DAVOUDI/FFIRI

Iran up to fifth in Futsal World Ranking

Sports Desk

Iran climbed into the top five of the FIFA Futsal Men's World Ranking in the latest list released by the international governing body of the sport on Friday.

Iran climbed one spot to sit behind world champion Brazil, Portugal, Spain and Argentina.

Thailand is the second-best Asian side at 11th, followed by Japan (13). Indonesia climbed seven rungs to sit in 21st spot while Uzbekistan dropped two to 23rd.

In the Women's World Ranking,

Thailand stood fifth to lead the way among the Asian countries, with Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Argentina ahead of the Southeast Asian side.

Iran (9), Japan (10) and Vietnam (11) are the next best ranked Asian nations with Indonesia and Chinese Taipei both moving seven rungs up to 17 and 18 respectively.

In a repeat of the previous two Asian Cup finals, Iran and Japan played to a goalless draw during a four-team tournament in Thailand – also featuring the host country and Uzbekistan.

The event is part of the Iranian girls' preparation for the third edition of the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup, which will resume after a seven-year hiatus in China in May. Forouzan Soleimani's side will begin its bid for a third successive title with a game against the Philippines on May 7, before squaring off against Vietnam and Hong Kong in Group B. The top three of the 12-team tournament will punch their tickets for the inaugural FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup – starting November 21 in the Philippines.

Doncic, James star as Lakers beat Pelicans

BBC. Luka Doncic and LeBron James helped the Los Angeles Lakers to a comfortable victory against the New Orleans Pelicans.

Doncic put on a game-high 35 points with team-mate Austin

Reaves adding 30, while James scored 27 points with eight assists in a 124-108 win.

The Lakers bounced back from defeat against the Golden State Warriors to further boost their hopes of a top-four finish in

the Western Conference. It is the sixth successive win for the Lakers over the Pelicans, including three victories this season.

Elsewhere, Western Conference leaders the Oklahoma

City Thunder, who host the Lakers in back-to-back games on Sunday and Tuesday, saw an 11-game winning streak ended against the Houston Rockets.

Jalen Green and Alperen Sen-

gun combined for 65 points to triumph 125-111 in Houston.

The Boston Celtics set a new record for the number of three-pointers scored in a single season during their 123-103 win over the Phoenix Suns.

Boston, the defending NBA champions, scored 14 at TD Garden to take their overall tally to 1,370, eclipsing the previous record of 1,363 set by the Golden State Warriors in 2022-23.

Timeless elegance of historical houses in Shiraz

Iranica Desk

The historical houses of Shiraz, the capital city of Fars Province, constitute an integral part of the city's rich identity. These houses are some of the most well-known tourist attractions, attracting numerous visitors throughout the year. As one of the oldest cities in Iran, Shiraz has served as a seat of power for various Iranian governments across different eras. Over the years, the city has been home to many significant historical artifacts and structures, among which the historical houses hold a special place. To delve deeper into some of the ancient houses of Shiraz, join us in this article.

Saber House

Saber House is one of the historical houses in Shiraz, dating back to the late Zand era and the early Qajar period. This old residence was constructed by one of the most renowned Iranian merchants, Hasan Ali Saber Sangari. Due to its symmetrical and modern design, Saber House was considered one of the preeminent aristocratic houses of its time, IRNA wrote. The house features two floors, with the main building situated in the northern and eastern sections of the courtyard. Inside Saber House, exquisite decorations are evident, including delicate stuccowork and intricate wood carvings. Antique objects and dishes are displayed on the walls and tables, adding to the house's historical charm. The porch, with its tall and luxurious columns, provides a stunning view of the courtyard.

The courtyard walls of Saber House are beautifully adorned with brick and tile work, which features intricate designs of flowers, birds, and Qajar kings. This historical house is located directly across from the holy shrine of Shahecheragh. Other significant historical attractions nearby include the Tomb of Sibawayh, the Manteqi Nejad House, the Atiq Mosque, and the New Mosque.

Saber House was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 2003. Following extensive renovations in 2005, the Cultural Heritage Organization transformed this historical house into a museum, showcasing its architectural beauty and historical significance.

Sa'adat House

Sa'adat House, situated in the historical Sang Siah neighborhood, is located adjacent to the tomb of Sibawayh, a prominent Persian grammarian from Basra. This historical house dates back to the Qajar era. In recent years, structural repairs and treatments for termite damage have been undertaken to reinforce the integrity of the roof, walls, and other parts of the house. The layout of Sa'adat House features a central courtyard that includes both three-door and five-door rooms. A stunning turquoise pool is placed in the center of this courtyard, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. The architecture of the house is characterized by decorative tile work, brickwork, geometric patterns, stone carvings, and intricate woodwork. The stuccowork on the ceiling of the main building is particularly noteworthy, drawing interest from artists and visitors alike. The ceiling decorations are inspired by the four seasons of the year.

After a complete restoration by the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization, Sa'adat House was transformed into the Khatam House of Shiraz.

This venue currently hosts a permanent exhibition aimed at preserving and promoting the authentic art of *khatam* (inlaid work) in Shiraz. Outstanding works from renowned *khatam* artists in Iran, such as Kash-tiara, are showcased in the Khatam House. Additionally, participants interested in this artistic craft can engage in workshops alongside the exhibition. Sa'adat House was also registered in the Iran's National Heritage List in 2003, further solidifying its importance in the cultural landscape of Shiraz.

House of Forough Al-Molk

The House of Forough Al-Molk is one of the historical houses located in the Sang Siah neighborhood of Shiraz. Its origins trace back to the late Qajar era and the early Pahlavi period, constructed by Forough Al-Molk Ghavami, the wife of Ismail Khan Forough al-Mulk. The historical residence is situated adjacent to the shrine of Bibi Dokhtaran and spans an impressive area of over 1,000 square meters, once standing as one of the most luxurious houses in Shiraz.

The House of Forough Al-Molk comprises various sections, including a kitchen, stable, guard-house, bath, inner courtyard, and outer courtyard. Within this property, two buildings can be found, with the main building consisting of three floors. The primary structure features two separate courtyards, with the *shahneeshin* (the king's quarters) and the *hosseiniyeh* (a building designed specifically for gatherings of Shia Muslims) being among its most aesthetically pleasing areas. The second building has since been transformed into the Fadak Guesthouse.

Within the *shahneeshin* hall, exquisite decorations featuring inlay work and geometric patterns can be observed. The second building connects to the main structure through corridors, with a reception hall for guests located at the entrance in front of the house. The Forough Al-Molk building's northern and southern sections include two five-door rooms, while the *shahneeshin* in the northwest corner of the main hall leads to the inner courtyard through an octagonal pool area. Other wall and ceiling decorations throughout this complex include tile work adorned with floral designs and intricate ceiling carvings. The furnishings within this historical house exhibit detailed wood carvings and traditional mirror works.

Between 1948 and the mid-1970s, the House of Forough Al-Molk was overseen by the Ministry of Education and served as Forough Al-Molk Primary School during that period. The house was officially registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1998, and restoration efforts for this historic site commenced

two years later.

Throughout the restoration, numerous sections of the building, such as doors, windows, ceilings, and tiles, were meticulously replaced. The restoration of the House of Forough Al-Molk was completed in 2002, after which it was repurposed into the Contemporary Art Museum of Fars, also known as the Meshkinfam Museum.

The Meshkinfam Museum features two distinct sections that showcase artworks from the Meshkinfam family alongside works by contemporary artists from Fars. These exhibitions include carved panels, calligraphy, paintings, photography, and a variety of other visual art forms.

Manteghinejad Mansion

The Manteghinejad Mansion is another remarkable historical building from the late Qajar period. Notably, the mirror hall of this structure is celebrated as one of the most exquisite examples of mirror architecture across Iran. The Manteghinejad Mansion is conveniently located near a mosque and adjacent to the holy shrine of Shahcheragh. Within the *shahneeshin* section of the mansion, exquisite mirror work is complemented by beautiful decorations that include painting, plasterwork, and muqarnas. The paintings in this hall notably showcase designs featuring women's faces, European palaces, and traditional floral patterns. The mansion's interior rooms and the surrounding inner courtyard are situated on both the eastern and western sides, offering pleasant views of the outer courtyard through wooden windows adorned with colored glass.

At the heart of its courtyard lies a beautiful pond, surrounded by traditional seating areas. Additionally, geranium pots can be found scattered around the courtyard and on the verandas, adding to the aesthetic charm. The Manteghinejad Mansion underwent restoration in 2004, and just a year later, it was inaugurated as the "Museum of Music" or "Museum of Archives of Sounds and Melodies." This museum encompasses a range of sections, including auditory and visual rooms, audio and video archives, an instrument gallery, a gallery for manuscripts by renowned music masters, an instrument-making workshop, and a hall dedicated to world music. In 2021, initiatives were launched to create a special-ized museum for the Holy Qur'an and Islamic arts within the Manteghinejad Mansion. This museum aims to preserve manuscripts and historical documents related to the holy Qur'an in a culturally enriching environment. Given its proximity to the Shahcheragh Shrine, the Manteghinejad Mansion serves as an ideal venue for housing a museum dedicated to Qur'anic works. The Man-

teghinejad Mansion was listed on Iran's National Heritage List in 1973.

Ziaian's House

Ziaian's House is one of the historic residences in Shiraz, located within the renowned Sang Siah neighborhood. This house dates back more than 120 years to the late Qajar period and stands as the sole remaining property of the Ziai family. Like many other historical houses in Shiraz, it prominently features design elements and interior decorations characteristic of the Qajar style.

The area of Ziaian's House is approximately 300 square meters. It was home to a well-known merchant of the Qajar era, Ziai, who was regarded as one of the most influential figures in Shiraz. The Ziai family owned several shops in the Vakil Bazaar and held considerable sway during the Qajar government. Ziaian's House consists of two floors, with the central courtyard serving as its heart. Surrounding this courtyard are various rooms and verandas, enhanced by vibrant seven-colored tiles that showcase intricate decorations throughout different sections of the building. These tiles depict images of kings, legendary heroes from Iran's history, and representations of the Imams. In addition, some decorative designs incorporate floral motifs and arabesque patterns.

On the first floor of Ziaian's House, you will find the kitchen, stable, cellar, storage area, and bathroom. Notably, the building's cooling and heating system was among the most sophisticated and modern designs of its time. The second floor features the *shahneeshin* hall, along with five-door, three-door, and two-door rooms. Ventilation channels are integrated into the walls of these rooms, enabling effective air circulation throughout the building.

The interconnected three-door rooms on the eastern side of Ziaian's House are paired with a large adjacent veranda. Despite the wealth of the Ziai family, the house does not boast lavish decorations, other than the exquisite tile work; only a few simple plaster decorations can be seen in select areas of the building.

In 2004, the municipality of Shiraz acquired Ziaian's House, and subsequent restoration efforts began under the supervision of both the Municipality and the Cultural Heritage Department. Since 2007, traditional art workshops have been hosted within this historical residence. Due to the delicacy of its tile work and the artistic workshops conducted there, Ziaian's House has been designated as Honar Sarayi Shiraz (Art House of Shiraz). This historical house was officially registered in the Iran's National Heritage List in 1978.



Saber House
● kojara.com



Sa'adat House
● eneshat.com



House of Forough Al-Molk
● top tourist.ir



Manteghinejad Mansion
● eneshat.com



Ziaian's House
● eneshat.com

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Nowruz tourism booms in Iran

Over 35m hit roads, 4.8m visit historical sites

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Nowruz holidays have once again proven to be a magnet for domestic and international travelers, with millions flocking to the country's historical and cultural sites. During the two-week holiday, spanning March 19 to April 3, over 4.8 million visits were made to cultural and historical attractions managed by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, IRNA reported.

Iconic destinations such as Persepolis, Hafezieh, and Saadieh topped the charts, drawing in hundreds of thousands of visitors. "Persepolis alone pulled in nearly half a million visitors," officials noted, adding that the site hosted 18,257 tourists on April 3 alone.

The surge in tourism was not limited to Shiraz's landmarks. Other popular sites like Pasargadae, Arg-e Karim Khan, and Fin Garden also saw substantial foot traffic. "This year's turnout has really hit it out of the park," a ministry spokesperson said, emphasizing the growing appeal of Iran's historical treasures.

Beyond cultural sites, the Nowruz season witnessed a broader travel boom across the country. Minister of Cultural Heritage Reza Salehi Amiri highlighted that approximately 40% of Iran's population embarked on trips during this period. "Over 35 million people hit the road," he stated in a televised inter-

view, pointing to a 2.2% increase compared to last year.

Salehi-Amiri attributed this uptick to improved infrastructure and coordinated efforts by government agencies. "We pulled out all the stops this year," he said, praising the contributions of 28 organizations involved in travel services.

The minister also underscored the role of tourism in countering negative perceptions about Iran abroad: "We're turning the tide on Iranophobia through cultural diplomacy." Despite the celebratory mood, Salehi-Amiri acknowledged that there is still room for improvement. "We're not out of the woods yet when it comes to bureaucratic hurdles," he said, calling for streamlined processes to attract foreign investment in tourism.

He also stressed the importance of enhancing infrastructure to ensure a seamless travel experience for both domestic and international tourists.

The minister further revealed that over seven million foreign tourists visited Iran last year—a figure he hopes will climb higher with ongoing efforts to bolster safety and accessibility. "It's not just about rolling out the red carpet; we need to address every bottleneck," he said.

In Ilam Province, tourism also flourished during Nowruz holidays with remarkable growth. The Director-General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Ilam announced a 27.8% increase in visitor arriv-



als during this period and added that Ilam ranked as the top province in terms of tourism growth nationwide. Farzad Sharifi said that from March 13 to April 3, over 265,000 people stayed in offi-

cial accommodations such as guesthouses, eco-lodges, and hotels across Ilam Province. Additionally, from March 15 until the end of Nowruz holidays, 640 tourism tours from various parts of Iran visited Ilam and ex-

plored its attractions. Sharifi said that over 12,000 visits were recorded at historical, natural, religious sites, museums, and Nowruz celebrations in Ilam during this time frame.

'No to Accidents' campaign posts 8.5% drop in Nowruz traffic fatalities



Social Desk

Iran's national campaign, "No to Accidents," has been credited with an 8.5% reduction in road traffic fatalities during the Nowruz holiday period compared to last year, according to a spokesperson for the initiative.

The campaign, which ran from March 15 to April 4, aimed to raise public awareness and encourage safer driving practices, IRNA reported.

Alireza Raisi, Deputy Minister of Health and spokesperson for the campaign, added "This year, 828 of our fellow citizens lost their lives in traffic accidents during Nowruz. While this number is still tragic,

it represents a significant step forward," he said, noting that the campaign has been a "game-changer" in addressing road safety. Breaking down the data, Raisi noted that 615 fatalities occurred at the scene of accidents, with 549 on highways and 66 in urban areas.

An additional 213 individuals succumbed to their injuries after being transported to medical facilities. "These figures underscore the urgent need to zero in on key factors like vehicle quality, road safety, human error, and legal reforms," he emphasized.

The campaign also showed the staggering number of injuries sustained in road incidents. Over 85,000 people were injured

during the holiday period, with more than 20,000 requiring intensive care due to severe injuries. Raisi called this a "wake-up call" for authorities and citizens alike.

The "No to Accidents" initiative was launched to draw attention to the annual toll of nearly 20,000 road deaths in Iran. "We're not out of the woods yet," Raisi admitted. "But this campaign has proven that by working together and addressing root causes head-on, we can turn things around."

As authorities double down on efforts to improve road safety, Raisi urged both policymakers and drivers to stay committed. "This is not just about numbers; it's about saving lives," he concluded.

Iranian films to be screened at Istanbul Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

The 44th Istanbul Film Festival will roll out the red carpet for a diverse lineup of Iranian films, showcasing the breadth and depth of Iranian cinema.

Running from April 11 to April 22, the festival will feature a mix of feature films, documentaries, and short films that promise to captivate audiences and spark conversations, ILNA reported.

One of the standout entries in the main competition is "The Crowd," directed by Sahand Kabiri, which represents Iran in its bid for the Golden Tulip award. Joining it in the same category is "The Things You Kill," an international co-production directed by Alireza Khatami, involving Turkey, France, Poland, and Canada.

The festival will also shine a spotlight on several compelling documentaries and short films. Hesam Eslami's short film "Citizen-Inmate" delves into themes



of surveillance and control through an innovative docufictional lens. The film has already turned heads internationally with its bold narrative style.

Meanwhile, "The Volunteer," directed by Gelareh Kiazand and Monir Armstrong (a Canada-Turkey production), and "Istanbul Mood," co-directed by Nafiseh Motlagh and Saeed Nasiri (a Turkish production), add further depth to the festival's offerings.

Iran, Afghanistan team up to tackle environmental challenges

Social Desk

Iran has stepped up efforts to collaborate with Afghanistan on environmental issues, shifting focus from water rights disputes to broader ecological challenges.

In a recent visit to Afghanistan, Iranian officials proposed joint initiatives to restore the Hamoun Wetland and combat severe dust storms, which have devastating effects on both countries, IRNA reported.

"We suggested starting a joint project on environmental issues, such as reviving the Hamoun Wetland and tackling dust storms, which have severe impacts on people in both countries," said Sediqeh Torabi, an official with Iran's Department of Environment.

"This approach can pave the way for reviving the Hamoun Wetland and

managing the drought crisis in a way that benefits all residents around it, whether Iranian or Afghanistani."

The Hamoun Wetland, once a thriving ecosystem, has faced severe desiccation due to reduced water flow from the Helmand River, largely caused by Afghan dam projects. This has led to increased dust storms, affecting agricultural productivity and forcing migration in both Iran and Afghanistan.

Iran has emphasized the importance of regional cooperation to address these transboundary environmental challenges.

"Issues like dust storms are crucial for advancing environmental diplomacy with neighboring countries," Torabi noted. Iran has also participated in regional workshops, including a meeting in Qatar, where countries shared strategies to com-



bat dust storms.

The collaboration aims to leverage international support and technology to enhance environmental monitoring and mitigation efforts. Iran has signed agreements with international organizations to secure equipment for air pollution monitoring, aiming to improve data accuracy and develop effective solutions.