



# VP urges policy revision as public, opposition unite in Iran's defense

## Social Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref on Sunday said the unprecedented national unity following Israeli airstrikes earlier, drawing support even from opposition groups, signals the urgent need to "revisit and revise" four decades of domestic policies. Speaking at the headquarters of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) in Tehran, Aref said Iranians turned out in large numbers across the country to mourn victims of the June 13 strikes, including scientists, military commanders, and civilians, IRNA reported. He likened the public response to the funerals of top officials killed in June 28, 1981 bombing. "Even those critical of the system, opposition voices, marginalized media, joined the people in defense of the homeland," Aref noted, calling the show of solidarity a "second epic" and proof that internal dissent does not equal disloyalty. Aref warned that despite a ceasefire,

"this war isn't over," pointing to what he called the direct involvement of Israel and its backers, including the United States, in imposing the conflict mid-way through Iran's indirect talks with Washington. He accused the West of "sabotaging" diplomatic progress. "They were just steps away from an agreement, then war was forced upon us." According to Aref, the goal of Israel's attack was swift regime change. "They thought Iran would collapse in two or three days," he said. "But the people, despite economic hardship and valid frustrations, stood up for their country. They went all in." Referring to Israel's track record, Aref said, "You can't trust a regime that honors no agreement." He stressed that Iran must remain prepared for future aggression. Calling for a nationwide effort to maintain unity, Aref suggested a "bold reassessment" of cultural and social policies. "We need to ask ourselves honestly whether the path we've fol-



First Vice President Mohammadreza Aref (C) meets with IRNA CEO Hossein Jaberi-Ansari (4th R) during a visit to the news agency's head office in Tehran, Iran on June 29, 2025.

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lowed over the last 40 years still serves the people. The answer might demand courage." Aref said the response to the June war proved Iran's capacity for resilience, scientific, military, and civil. He highlighted the role of homegrown technology and praised national media coverage, noting that nine journalists were killed in the field. "Even once-hostile outlets closed ranks to defend the country's identity," he added. He emphasized that "scientific progress belongs to humanity, not just one nation," urging Iran to share its advances while continuing to build defensive capabilities. He also pointed to IRNA's role in fostering national dialogue and consensus, claiming that unity forged in crisis



must now be preserved by choice. "If our state media had launched a campaign for consensus-building, it could've taken months. The enemy did it in less than 24 hours," he said. Aref stressed that genuine service to

the public must shed any top-down, paternalistic attitudes. "You can't claim to serve the people while deciding for them from above," he said, urging IRNA to open space for public discourse on reform.

## Two Iranian actors awarded at Valencia's Cinema Jove Festival



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian actors Parsa Pirouzfar and Hoda Zeinolabedin won best actor and actress awards at the 40th edition of the Valencia International Film Festival – Cinema Jove, Spain, for their performances in the drama series 'At the End of the Night,' organizers said. Directed by Ida Panahandeh

and produced by Mohammad Yamini, the series secured two special jury prizes in the acting category. The awards were announced at the festival's closing ceremony, though the cast and crew were unable to attend due to ongoing regional tensions, ILNA reported. Produced for the Iranian streaming platform Filmnet, the series tells the sto-

ry of a working-class family in Tehran struggling to stay together amid mounting social and economic pressures. The show first aired in spring 2024 and was met with strong reviews and wide audience acclaim. Cinema Jove, held annually in Valencia from June 19 to 28, focuses on innovative and socially-driven storytelling in cinema and television. It is considered one of southern Europe's prominent festivals spotlighting emerging voices in film and TV. The Iranian series had previously picked up the Best Director award earlier this year at France's 2025 Series Mania Festival, further cementing its international success. Festival officials praised the production for its "honest portrayal of resilience and human connection in the face of adversity."

## Iranian short animations to be screened at Italy's Int'l Cartoon Club Festival



### Arts & Culture Desk

Two Iranian short animations, 'Jiroft' and 'The Splint,' produced by Iran's Documentary, Experimental and Animation Film Center (DEFC), will be showcased in competition at the 41st International Cartoon Club Festival in Rimini, Italy. The event runs from July 12 to 18 across various venues in the city, ILNA

reported. According to a statement from the center, Cartoon Club is among Italy's most important festivals dedicated to animation, comics, and gaming. It offers a platform primarily focused on short animations, including narrative, educational, experimental, and computer graphic works. In addition to film screenings, the festival features exhibitions, educational

and social projects, workshops in local schools, and publishes related books and catalogs. Both 'The Splint,' directed by Mehdi Sedighi, and 'Jiroft,' by Marjan Keshani, have garnered multiple international appearances prior to this event. The festival's venues span from Rimini's historic city center to its coastline, providing a varied cultural backdrop for the diverse programs.

## Iran dismisses threat to national heritage sites after Israeli nuclear claims



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian heritage authorities on Sunday dismissed concerns over the safety of the country's cul-

tural sites following Israeli allegations about enriched uranium storage near the historic city of Isfahan. Speaking to ILNA, veteran cul-

tural heritage expert Seifollah Aminian said Iran's museums and archaeological sites are "not under threat," despite growing international concerns after a recent claim by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In an interview with Fox News earlier this week, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi alleged Iran is hiding "480 kilograms of highly enriched uranium" at a location near a historic site outside Isfahan — a central tourism hub home to centuries-old monuments from the Safavid era and earlier. The statement raised alarm

among preservationists and sparked speculation about the vulnerability of Iran's cultural heritage in the event of renewed military war with Israel. However, Aminian, who has spent decades restoring and protecting heritage sites in Isfahan and Kashan, downplayed the threat. "There is no danger facing Iran's heritage sites, especially in Isfahan," he said, adding that "protective measures are in place, and military defense systems in the region will certainly shield historic monuments." The concern follows the aftermath of a 12-day war between Iran and Israel, during which

dozens of civilians were killed in what Tehran called "brutal" Israeli attacks. The escalation prompted Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, to call on UNESCO for "urgent support" to protect Iranian heritage from possible damage in future hostilities. The 1954 Hague Convention prohibits direct attacks on cultural property during armed conflict. But heritage experts warn that such international agreements have limited deterrence in conflicts involving actors who do not respect global norms. Aminian echoed this skepticism,

stating that "no one can trust the Zionist regime to abide by UNESCO principles." Still, he insisted that Iran's military posture acts as a strong deterrent and that collaboration between the Islamic Republic and the Tourism Ministry ensures full preparedness. "Experts have already briefed the authorities. There's no imminent threat to national or world heritage sites under current circumstances," Aminian said. Isfahan, often called the cultural heart of Iran, is home to UNESCO-listed sites such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square and numerous mosques and palaces dating back over a millennium.