

Iran urges UNESCO to protect historical sites from Israeli aggression

The Iranian minister of cultural heritage, tourism and handicrafts said the UNESCO director general has warned Israel against targeting Iran's cultural and natural heritage sites. Reza Salehi Amiri made the remark in an interview with Iran's official news agency (IRNA) on Wednesday, after Iran requested UNESCO's support in protecting its invaluable historical and cultural heritage sites from potential damage due to Israeli attacks. He said Iran has officially sent a letter to UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay, calling for urgent and effective action by the international body to safeguard its cultural and natural heritage from threats posed by Israeli military actions, Press TV reported. In the letter, Salehi Amiri has highlighted the responsibility of UNESCO and the international community to preserve irreplaceable global treasures,

citing the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, as well as the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage to prevent damage to Iran's invaluable historical and natural sites, he said. Iran, the minister said, has more than 40,000 nationally registered monuments and 28 World Heritage Sites, including more than 100 historical, natural, and cultural sites. More than 50 other monuments are also on UNESCO's tentative list for World Heritage registration. Iran also warned that delays in UNESCO's response could lead to irreversible damage to its World Heritage sites, stressing that many of these monuments are under direct and indirect threat. "We are aware that the Director-Gener-

al of UNESCO has conveyed this issue as a warning to the Zionist regime," Salehi Amiri said when asked about UNESCO's action regarding Iran's letter and the necessity of protecting Iran's historical and cultural monuments. On June 13, the Israeli regime launched unlawful aggression against Iran, leading to the assassination of many senior commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary citizens. Iran retaliated in less than 24 hours with a barrage of missiles and drones, and followed it up with a series of retaliatory operations under True Promise III. The US entered the war on behalf of Israel on June 22, when its bombers hit three Iranian nuclear sites in brazen violation of international law. In response, Iran launched a missile strike on Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the largest US military air base in West



Asia, as an act of retaliation. After 12 days, during which the Iranian armed forces inflicted heavy blows on

the regime and its military and industrial infrastructure, the Israeli regime was forced to accept a truce deal.

Iran expedites Afghan deportations in spy hunt after Israel aggression

Nearly half a million illegal migrants expatriated



Afghans stand on a queue after arriving at the zero point of the Islam Qala border crossing between Afghanistan and Iran on June 28, 2025, following their deportation from Iran.

● AFP

Social Desk

Iran has stepped up deportations of undocumented Afghan nationals in recent weeks, citing national security threats and espionage ties with Israel, senior officials said Tuesday. Since March 20, over 400,000 illegal Afghan migrants have been sent back to Afghanistan, according to Nader Yar-Ahmadi, head of Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant Affairs (BAFIA) at Iran's Interior Ministry. He said the removals have accelerated

following Iran's 12-day military war with Israel, after which Iranian intelligence flagged concerns over "infiltrators" linked to Mossad. "Some of those who entered in recent years were not just migrants," Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni said on state TV on June 28. "They had clear sabotage goals." Without giving specifics, he claimed some Afghan nationals were sent into Iran to disrupt national security during the conflict. The push to expel migrants comes

amid growing pressure from the public. Iranian officials have emphasized the removals are a "popular demand," especially in border provinces where the economic burden of hosting refugees runs high. Authorities say more than 75% of the returnees have left voluntarily through official crossings like Dogharoun in Khorasan Razavi Province, while others were forcibly deported after being apprehended. The border town of Taybad, with its strategic crossing into Afghanistan, has become a key departure point. "The entire process, from detection to removal, is being coordinated," Yar-Ahmadi said during a visit to Dogharoun on July 1. "We've ensured all infrastructure is in place for a dignified return." Over 400,000 illegal migrants were deported since March 20, Momeni said Wednesday, stressing that immigration reform is now a "top legislative priority." A long-delayed National Migration Organization bill is currently awaiting parliamentary approval. "The job can't be piecemeal," he added. "From visa issuance to employment supervision, it must be handled

start to finish by one agency." Judicial authorities have echoed the urgency. Prosecutor-General Mohammad Movahedi-Azad warned on June 28 that unauthorized residents, "especially Afghans," must leave "without delay," or face legal action. "Those deceived by Zionist schemes must turn themselves in," he added, hinting at suspected recruitment operations by foreign intelligence services. Following the war, Iranian military commanders issued strict orders to cut off logistical support for Afghan nationals. "Any lease to an Afghan is void," Border Guard Commander Ahmad-Ali Goudarzi said last week. "Properties will be sealed and seized." The policy, he claimed, is "backed by overwhelming public support." Officials insist the measure is necessary. "We have hosted Afghans for over 40 years," said one senior border official. "But national security comes first." Despite mounting global criticism, Iran has vowed to press ahead. "We'll continue deportations in line with the law," Momeni said. "We can no longer carry the burden alone."

13 protected zones damaged as war hits Iran's natural heritage

Social Desk

Iran's Department of Environment said on Wednesday that the recent 12-day war caused "irreparable damage" to the country's natural reserves, burning thousands of hectares of forest and displacing wildlife across at least 13 protected zones. The losses, the department said in a statement, span nine provinces including Fars, Ilam, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Khuzestan, Lorestan, Hamedan, Gilan and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, ILNA reported. Iran boasts one of the richest biodiversities in the region, home to 8,660 species of plants—around one-third of them endemic—as well as some 35,000 species of invertebrates and 2,362 vertebrate species. The country contains nine of the world's 11 major ecosystems and hosts 41 out of 42 recognized types of wetlands globally. Close to 20% of Iran's land—comprising 327 classified reserves, 211 no-hunting zones, 13 biosphere sites, and 226 wetlands—is managed under

national environmental protection mandates. "Nearly 9,000 hectares of forest and rangeland were scorched by fragments of war projectiles," the department said, adding that fires wiped out plant cover, damaged soil layers and killed multiple animal species. A ranger station was destroyed and several other facilities were also hit. The conflict forced widespread wildlife migration and led to a spike in road-kill, hunger and poaching. Experts warn the war also disrupted food chains and ecosystem services, with knock-on effects yet to be measured. To tackle the crisis, a special task force titled Emergency Biodiversity Management Committee has been formed. The department has sent new biodiversity protection guidelines to provincial offices and begun compiling field reports to assess the full extent of the damage. The department pledged to submit a "comprehensive" damage report to relevant international bodies in the coming weeks.

Iran must raise ...

A review of Iran's regional policy over the years reveals a deliberate avoidance of direct confrontation with the Israeli regime. Instead, Tehran's strategy has centered on leveraging internal dynamics within the occupied territories, supporting Palestinian resistance, and bolstering allied forces in the region. Based on this approach, the current situation demands two things: first, that direct confrontation be halted; and second,

that resistance movements, like Hamas and Hezbollah be allowed the space and time to recover. At this stage, both sides are weighing the cost of reigniting direct conflict. This does not necessarily mean they will return to the battlefield. Israel has struck some targets in Iran, including nuclear sites, with the US involvement, and has achieved part of its goals. In response, Iran has delivered heavy retaliatory blows to Israeli military sites.

In parallel with military action, Israel has pursued a second objective: fomenting unrest inside Iran in hopes of exploiting internal divisions or even setting the stage for regime change via a "Plan B." However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu himself has acknowledged that military aggression will not bring about such a change. Israeli leaders now appear to believe that prolonging the war would ultimately backfire, shifting the balance in Iran's favor. This realization casts serious

doubt on their willingness to reignite conflict—unless, perhaps, they succeed in reshaping the playing field through the Plan B. All things considered, renewed direct warfare would offer little strategic gain for either party. Turning to the issue of negotiations with the United States, several critical points emerge. First, a premature return to the negotiating table—particularly without prerequisites—could send the wrong signal. It may create the impression that Iran

is acting out of weakness, emboldening Washington to fall back on secondary plans and assume it has leverage. Given the breakdowns in previous rounds of talks, rushing back into dialogue would be ill-advised. Iran must learn from those experiences and raise the cost of bad faith and broken commitments. Simply put, the price for walking away from the table must rise. Therefore, any return to talks should be delayed or preceded by firm preconditions. One

potential move could involve suspending cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), sending a clear message that any deal-breaking will not come cheap. Iran must act in a way that, even if it does return to negotiations, makes any future withdrawal by the other party a costly miscalculation. Accordingly, no signal should be sent that Iran is always ready at the negotiating table, allowing the other side to walk away whenever they please.