

# Iran fighting ferocious fire in UNESCO-listed forests

## Neighboring countries rush to help battle blaze

### National Desk

Operations are underway to extinguish a large fire raging in UNESCO World Heritage-listed Hyrcanian forests in northern Iran for several days as several neighboring countries have expressed readiness to assist Iran. The fire which was allegedly started by hunters in the rocky area of Elit village in northern Mazandaran Province in early November and was initially quelled, reignited on November 15.

Governor General of Mazandaran Province Mehdi Younesi Rostami said on Saturday that a large portion of the fire in the area has been contained so far.

Younesi Rostami said the fire in seven hectares of the forest has been extinguished and only in less than one hectare is still

burning.

Iran's Army and Islamic Revolution Guards Corps have also dispatched helicopters and airtankers to the province.

Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah wrote Friday on X that Iran has also "requested urgent assistance from friendly countries".

Younesi Rostami said that Turkey has already dispatched a team and Belarus has expressed readiness to help Iran.

Earlier on the day, the Head of the Iranian Environmental Protection Organization Shina Ansari said, "Two specialized water bomber planes, a helicopter, and eight people will be dispatched from Turkey."

"If necessary, we will also seek assistance from Russia," Ansari said.

At least 25 people, who have

been helping to control the fire, have been wounded so far.

The Hyrcanian forests stretch for about 1,000 kilometers along the Iranian coast of the Caspian Sea and into neighboring Azerbaijan. UNESCO recognized the forests as a World Heritage Site in 2019, deeming them unique for both their age – between 25 and 50 million years old – and their varied biodiversity, as home to more than 3,200 species of plants.

UNESCO says on its website the Hyrcanian forests contain "a large number of rare and endemic tree species" and are home to "many relic and endangered plant species."

Hossein Ali Mohammadi, the director general of crisis management for Mazandaran Province, described the operation to extinguish the fire as "one of the most complex in recent years."



The picture shows a view of the fire in the forests of Iran's northern Mazandaran Province which has been going on for several days on November 21, 2025.

● ISNA

## Barzani: Erbil never supported any side against Tehran

### Kurdistan-Iran annual trade hits \$12b

### International Desk

President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq Nechirvan Barzani underlined that the semi-autonomous region had never supported any side against Iran, saying that it seeks to be a source of security and stability across West Asia.

"The Islamic Republic (of Iran) has helped us in the past, and we are grateful for all of its support. We follow fundamental principles in our politics and seek to be a source of security and stability in the region," Barzani told the Sixth Middle East Peace and Security 2025 (MEPS) Forum in the region's city of Duhok.



"I believe that there were some misunderstandings between us and Iran. However, we have never assisted any side against them; we have never done such a thing in the past, and we will not do so in the future." He said that it is not in the interest of

the Kurdistan Region to become involved in any issue against Iran. "We have always said — and will continue to say — that we are grateful and appreciative of all the help Iran has given to us."

Referring to different aspects of relations between Tehran and Erbil, Barzani said that Iran is an important neighbor for the Kurdistan Region and based on a fundamental principle, the region always seeks to maintain positive relations with Iran.

"If we consider only the economic aspect, the annual trade exchanges between Iran and the Kurdistan Region amount to about 11 to 12 billion dollars," he said.

## FM says Iran welcomes dialogue with Lebanon



Abbas Araghchi

● TASNIM

### International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the Islamic Republic welcomes any dialogue aimed at strengthening relations with Lebanon after his Lebanese counterpart invited him for negotiations. "My dear friend, Lebanese Foreign Minister Youssef Rajji, has invited me for negotiations in an interview with MTV Lebanon," Araghchi wrote in Arabic on his X account on Friday.

"We do not interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs, but we welcome any dialogue aimed at advancing bilateral relations between Iran and Lebanon," he added.

Rajji said earlier on Friday that he sees "no taboo" when it comes to the interests of the Lebanese people and called on his Iranian counterpart to hold talks

in a third and neutral country to address alleged issues between Iran and Lebanon. In response, Araghchi noted that there is no need for a third party to facilitate such discussions. "I invite my colleague Youssef to travel to Tehran, and if I am invited to travel to Beirut, I will gladly accept," he stated.

Iran has repeatedly reiterated that it respects Lebanon's sovereignty and does not interfere in the Arab country's domestic affairs.

Back in August, the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Ali Larijani, expressed the Islamic Republic's unwavering support for the government and people of Lebanon in various circumstances, dismissing allegations that Iran seeks to interfere in Lebanon's internal affairs.

Larijani also urged the Lebanese politicians to carefully differentiate between friends and foes, noting that Iran never treats its Lebanese allies as "tools," and the Lebanese resistance does not require guidance from others.

Iran has always supported Lebanon's government and its resistance movement Hezbollah against Israel. However, Beirut under US pressure has decided to disarm the resistance movement which has played a key role in countering Israel's threats against Lebanon.

## MP: Parliament drafting plan against IAEA resolution

### International Desk

An Iranian lawmaker said on Saturday that Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee is drafting a plan as a countermeasure against a recent resolution passed at the UN nuclear agency against Iran.

Spokesman for Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Ebrahim Rezaei, told reporters that the committee strongly condemned the resolution as "unlawful", which was approved by the UN nuclear watchdog's 35-nation Board of Governors on Thursday.

The resolution — drafted by France, Germany, Britain and the US — urges Tehran to "without delay" report on its



Ebrahim Rezaei

enriched uranium stockpile and facilities damaged in the June aggression by Israel and the US, while omitting any mention of Iran's longstanding cooperation with the agency.

Rezaei stressed the necessity for a proportionate response from Iran to the resolution.

Iran has already canceled a cooperation agreement recently signed with the International Atomic Energy Agency in Cairo as a goodwill gesture to resolve the nuclear standoff with the West.

"Like the diplomacy which was assaulted by Israel and the US in June, the Cairo Agreement has been killed by the US and the E3," Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei condemned the resolution as a "blatant misuse of the international body" to advance Western countries' objectives and said Iran is considering more countermeasures against the illegal resolution.

## Balancing engagement, leverage ...

If Iran moves toward reducing cooperation or ramping up nuclear steps, the impact would quickly show up in agency reports, prompting Europe and the United States to rally broader support for pressure. Even if Russia and China maintain more cautious positions, the overall climate would grow tenser, pushing the file into a more difficult trajectory.

In essence, Iran's choices will determine whether the dossier enters a cycle of mounting tensions and back-to-back resolutions or whether a gradual return to controlled cooperation re-

mains possible.

**How likely is it for Iran's case will to be taken to the UN Security Council in the coming months?**

A referral to the Security Council would only occur if several developments converge: sharply critical agency reports, a degree of Western consensus and a noticeable reduction in Iran's cooperation that leaves little room for a technical defense of the file.

Currently, although Europe has adopted a tougher posture, a swift referral would also require either persuading Russia and China or at least avoiding firm

opposition from them, a scenario that becomes plausible only if Iran-agency tensions reach a point where continuing within the Board of Governors looks untenable.

Over the next few months, the likelihood can be seen as "moderate to low": not imminent, but not removed from Western calculations either. The path depends wholly on Iran-IAEA interaction. If technical reports worsen and cooperation ebbs, the chances of referral rise; but if managed technical engagement takes hold, Europeans will prefer to stick with agency mechanisms and avoid the costly dynamics of the Security Council.

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