

US-Israeli aggression harms environmental sites in 11 provinces

Iranica Desk

During the US-Zionist war against Iran, the infrastructure, buildings, and protective facilities of this organization were damaged in 11 provinces of the country, said the deputy head of the Department of Environment for natural environment and biodiversity, Hamid Zohrabi. He noted that the environment and natural areas

have become victims of the Zionist regime's war-monger activities against Iran, IRNA reported. Zohrabi added that, in addition to damage to some environmental infrastructure and facilities, the attacks on fuel-storage centers also caused severe air pollution in the capital. He reported that, during the 12-day conflict, approximately 8,500 hectares of protected areas

— including forests and rangelands — were affected by fires, a large share of which occurred in the Zagros region. Emphasizing the continuity of the Department of Environment's conservation mission, he stated, "Despite the damages incurred, our organization's commitment to protecting biodiversity and natural areas remains strong." He further said, "We

strive to prevent any disruption in the protection of natural areas through greater cohesion and cooperation with environmentalists, nature-lovers, and civil-society organizations." Fortunately, he noted, despite the prevailing conditions, there has been no interruption in the protection of various regions of the country, and pathways for misuse by violators

have been blocked. According to Article 55 of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention, the severe destruction of natural environments is prohibited. The serious air pollution in Tehran following the attacks on fuel-storage centers can be considered an example of environmental manipulation for military purposes — an act also contradictory to the 1976 ENMOD



● IRNA

Convention (Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques). During his visit to North

Khorasan Province, Zohrabi also inspected several sites under the management of the Department of Environment.

Iran to seek compensation for heritage damage

The damage inflicted on Iran's buildings and cultural-heritage sites by the recent American-Zionist attacks must be assessed by official judicial experts and pursued for compensation through international legal mechanisms — especially via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO, the distinguished cultural-heritage figure said. Fae'q Towhidi emphasized the need for legal follow-up within the framework of international obligations and treaties. He noted that the destruction or damage of historic and cultural monuments during armed conflict is prohibited under international law. According to the conventions on cultural-heritage protection, such attacks violate international obligations and can be classified as war crimes, and in some cases, crimes against humanity.

Based on these commitments, governments are obliged to prevent harm to cultural and historic heritage even in wartime. Consequently, where monuments have been damaged, a precise damage-assessment must be carried out and legal mechanisms for claiming reparations activated, according to chtn.ir. Towhidi also highlighted preventive measures for museum collections. He said that, in line with national and international protocols, Iran has taken the protection of museum artifacts in critical and wartime conditions seriously, implementing the necessary arrangements for their safe preservation. Earlier, Iranian archaeologist Habib Emadi issued a grave warning about the potential destruction of Iran's historic monuments amid ongoing military conflicts and missile strikes.



● IRNA

Emadi stressed that any assault on cultural heritage is not merely an attack on a nation's assets but an affront to humanity's collective memory and shared capital. He called on the global archaeological community to adopt a clear, responsible stance against such acts. Emadi underscored the funda-

mental role of cultural heritage in shaping national identity, stating: "Cultural heritage is a cornerstone of national identity, cultural creativity, and collective self-confidence. Damage to historical sites during wartime is not only an irreparable loss for a country but a profound blow

to the world's shared heritage." Referencing Iran's illustrious civilization, he added, "Iran's ancient and rich civilization has contributed unparalleled masterpieces to global art, culture, and philosophy. Therefore, archaeologists everywhere have a duty to react decisively to any threats against ancient sites and to condemn such actions through official statements." Emadi also pointed out Iran's historic influence on global culture, "Persian art and culture, because of their unique characteristics and the region's geopolitical position, have always exerted a deep influence on the contemporary world. For any researcher or heritage enthusiast, witnessing — or even imagining — damage to sites like the Golestan Palace or other monuments affected by the recent conflict is deeply painful."

Emadi emphasized the responsibility of international organizations, adding: "Global bodies, particularly UNESCO, must play a more active and effective role in enforcing protective laws and monitoring compliance with conventions and protocols related to the safeguarding of cultural heritage during crises and wars." Referring to the damage sustained near several nationally and globally registered historical sites during recent US-Israeli strikes, he said, "The vast spiritual and cultural capital derived from Iran's unique civilization requires serious and comprehensive attention. Cultural heritage is the result of the thought and labor of generations who lived on this land; passing it on to future generations is a responsibility that rests on the shoulders of all members of society."

Qanbari U-turns on Australian asylum to rejoin Iranian teammates

Sports Desk

Zahra Qanbari, the captain of the Iranian women's national football team, reversed her decision to obtain asylum in Australia and rejoined her teammates on the way back to their home country. This was the latest twist in a weeks-long media saga swirling around Team Melli during its AFC Women's Asia Cup campaign in Gold Coast, Australia. It all began when an IRIB TV host urged the Iranian authorities to treat the players "as wartime traitors" after they refused to sing the national anthem before their opening group game against South Korea. The team soon became the center stage of a propaganda warfare amid the country's military conflict with the United States and Israel, which was initiated by airstrikes on Tehran on February 28. Persian social-media accounts and London-based broadcaster Iran International claimed the players would not be safe upon returning to the country. The rumor was then amplified by several English-language media outlets, with U.S. President Donald Trump calling on Australian authorities to grant asylum to the Iranian players, only days after American missiles struck an elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, killing over 170 students. While the players sang the na-



● Zahra Qanbari (No. 9) leads the Iranian team onto the pitch ahead of a game against the Philippines at the AFC Women's Asia Cup in Gold Coast, Australia, on March 8, 2026. ● AFC

tional anthem and performed military salutes before their next two matches against Australia and the Philippines, Iranian officials denied all the allegations, with Sports Minister Ahmad Donyamali insisting the players would be "welcomed to their homeland with open arms." However, five players, including Qanbari, decided to part ways with the squad and seek asylum in Australia after three successive defeats saw Iran crash out in the group stage, with Australia's Home Affairs Ministry approving their requests. The group of five was then followed by teammate Mohaddeseh Zolfi and coaching staff member

Zahra Solatan, though the two, plus Zahra Sarbali and Mona Hamoudi, were quick to change their decision and left Gold Coast to join the rest of the squad in Malaysia ahead of a long trip back home. Qanbari became the fifth member of the team to have a change of mind and left for Kuala Lumpur late on Sunday, but Atefeh Ramezani and Fatemeh Pasandeh stayed in Australia. What started as a sporting event participation evolved into a politically charged episode, exposing how global tensions spill onto the playing field, with media narratives shaping public perception far beyond the match results.

Iran to play Nigeria, Costa Rica in friendlies, Taj confirms

Sports Desk

The Iranian men's national team will face Nigeria and Costa Rica in a friendly double-header during the upcoming FIFA international break, Mahdi Taj, chairman of the Iranian Football Federation, confirmed on Sunday. The four-team event in Antalya, Türkiye, also featuring Jordan, will be part of Iran's preparation for the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada in June and July. Team Melli will take on Nigeria on March 27, before facing Costa Rica four days later. The tournament was initially scheduled to take place in Amman, Jordan, but it was moved to Türkiye due to an ongoing military conflict between Iran and a U.S.-Israeli coalition. The United States and Israel initiated a military campaign against Iran on February 28, assassinating the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and several top Iranian military commanders on the first day of the airstrikes in Tehran. Iran has been retaliating with widespread missile and drone attacks against Israel and U.S. bases in the region. With all domestic and international flights cancelled in the country due to the conflict,



● VARZESH3

the national team players will likely have to undertake a challenging land journey to Antalya for their two games. "We have obstacles in traveling to Türkiye that we are working to overcome to ensure the team plays the two games and does not fall behind in its preparation for the World Cup," Taj said. Iran is scheduled to kick off its World Cup campaign against New Zealand at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, California, on June 16, before facing Belgium at the same venue five days later. The final round of Group G fixtures will see Iran take on Egypt in Seattle, Washington, on June 26. However, questions remain re-

garding Team Melli's participation at the global showpiece, after U.S. President Donald Trump said last week that it would not be appropriate for the Iranian players to visit his country "for their own life and safety." The Iranian federation and team head coach Amir Qaleneoei quickly responded to Trump's comments through social media posts on Thursday, insisting that "no one has the authority to exclude Iran from the World Cup." "If any country is to be expelled, it should be the one that merely carries the title of 'the host' but fails to guarantee the safety and security of the participating teams," the statement added.