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International Desk

Iran's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, stressed that Tehran neither seeks nor has ever sought war, but will under no circumstances abandon its legitimate rights.

In a message marking the 40th day since the martyrdom of the previous leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and addressing critical issues related to the war with the United States and Israel, the Iranian leader emphasized that the Islamic Republic views the entire Axis of Resistance as a unified front in this confrontation.

The United States and Israel launched an aggression against Iran on February 28, targeting the former leader on the first day.

In response, Iran targeted not only Israel, but also US positions and interests across the region, while also restricting passage through the Strait of Hormuz for hostile nations.

After 40 days of clashes, the two sides eventually agreed to a temporary ceasefire to enter into Pakistan-mediated negotiations.

In his message, Ayatollah Khamenei made clear that Iran has not abandoned pursuing the "criminal aggressors" and will demand compensation for every single damage inflicted, as well as blood money for the martyrs and veterans of the war.

He added that Iran will also usher in a new phase in the management of the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran intends to change the legal regime governing the strait even after the war, although details of such a plan have yet to be finalized and remain under review.

Call on southern neighbors

Addressing Iran's southern neighbors, Ayatollah Khamenei described the recent events as "nothing short of a miracle" and called on them to see and understand it correctly, and to stand in the right side of history.

In an implied reference to the United States and Israel, he warned them to be wary of the "false promises of the devils."

Iran has strongly criticized regional countries for allowing the US to use their territory and airspace against Iran, describing its strikes on those countries as legitimate in this context. Nevertheless, the Iranian leader still invited them to friendly relations.

"We are still waiting for a proper response from you so that we can show you our brotherhood and goodwill," he said. "This will not happen unless you turn away from the arrogant powers, who never miss an opportunity to humiliate and exploit you."

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Iran's 10-point plan acts as basis of Islamabad talks: *Deputy FM*

International Desk

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi said that the Saturday's negotiations between Iran and the United States in Pakistan will be based on the 10-point ceasefire plan proposed by Iran.

Delegations from Iran and the US are scheduled to hold the first round of talks in Islamabad on Saturday after a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire agreement between Tehran and Washington took effect on April 8.

The truce was agreed to allow negotiations aimed at ending an unprovoked aggression by the US and the Israeli regime that has already killed thousands and plunged the global economy into turmoil.

Iran pursues a "responsible" approach to the declaration of the ceasefire, adding, "It has been agreed that Iran's 10-article plan will be the basis for negotiations," Takht-Ravanchi said in a meeting with ambassadors and heads of foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations based in Tehran on Friday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always welcomed diplomacy and dialogue, but not a dialogue based on false information with the purpose of deceiving and paving the way for renewed military aggression against Iran," he added.

"We do not want a ceasefire that will allow the aggressive enemy to rearm and launch another attack, and we have explicitly told our friends that this situation will not recur without guarantees," the Iranian official said.

According to the statement issued by Iran's top security body on Wednesday, the United States has agreed to the 10-point proposal that fundamentally commits Washington to no new aggression against Iran, continued Iranian control over the Strait of Hormuz, acceptance of uranium enrichment, removal of all primary sanctions, removal of all secondary sanctions, termination of all anti-Iran UN Security Council resolutions, termination of all anti-Iran IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, payment of compensation to Iran, withdrawal of US forces from the region and cessation of war on all fronts, including against the Islamic Resistance of Lebanon.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Majid Takht-Ravanchi speaks in a meeting with ambassadors and heads of foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations based in Tehran on April 10, 2026.
IRNA

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said on Friday that two previously agreed measures, a ceasefire in Lebanon and the release of Iran's blocked assets, must be implemented before negotiations begin.

In a post on X on Friday, Qalibaf said the steps were part of commitments made between the parties and warned that talks should not start until they were fulfilled.

US Vice President JD Vance is due to lead the US delegation on Saturday, joined by special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Vance said on Friday he was looking forward to having positive negotiations with Iran as he left for talks in Pakistan with a warning to Tehran not to "play us."

Iran sinks in sea of grief on 40th day of Leader's martyrdom, Minab tragedy

National Desk

Millions of Iranians have taken to the streets across the country to commemorate the 40th day since the martyrdom of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, top commanders and schoolchildren of Minab in the US-Israeli aggression against the country.

In the capital Tehran, the mourning procession began on Thursday morning, with participants marching from Jomhouri Square to the location where Ayatollah Khamenei was assassinated in the US-Israeli strikes.

Waiving Iran's flags, carrying pictures of Ayatollah Khamenei, the mourners pledged their allegiance to his ideals.

The Leader was assassinated, alongside some of his family members, on February 28, the first day of the unprovoked aggression launched by the United States and the Israeli regime against Iran. A host of Iran's top military commanders and advisers were also assassinated, including Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani, and Major General Mohammad Pakpour.

The enemies have deliberately targeted Iran's civilian infrastructure and energy facilities, killing hundreds of people. In one of the deadliest attacks on the first day of the aggression, the US military targeted a primary school in Minab, killing more than 170 civilians, mostly children.

The Iranian armed forces began to swiftly retaliate against the military assault by conducting barrages of missile and drone attacks on the Israeli-occupied territories as well as on the US assets in regional countries.

In a statement released on Thursday, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said that the martyrdom of Ayatollah Khamenei was as effective as his lifetime presence in the promotion of Islamic Revolution and the Islamic Republic.

It also enumerated the resistance and unity of the Iranian nation and the Islamic establishment, as well as 100 fatal strikes by the Iranian armed forces and the enemies' humiliating retreats, as parts of the blessings of the Leader's pure blood during the imposed war.

Ayatollah Khamenei's thought, discourse, conduct and command in the fields of resistance, independence, progress, justice, unity, fight against oppression, and spirituality form a comprehensive system for governing the country, it added.

Pezeshkian: Iran never to forsake Lebanon in face of Israeli onslaught

Pakistan scolds Israel as 'evil and a curse for humanity'

International Desk

AFP

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian announced on Thursday that the Islamic Republic would never abandon the Lebanese nation after the Israeli regime's barbaric bombing of various areas across the country despite a ceasefire.

More than 100 Israeli airstrikes across Lebanon on Wednesday, including attacks on densely populated neighborhoods in Beirut, killed over 300 people and damaged a key bridge linking southern Lebanon with the rest of the country.

The bombings, which also wounded more than 1,150 people according to Lebanon's Health Ministry, were described as the deadliest aggression since March 2, when Israel launched an air campaign and ground operations in southern Lebanon. The onslaught on April 8 came hours after Iran and the US announced a 15-day Pakistani-brokered ceasefire which also included Lebanon in a 40-day war. "Renewed aggression by the Zionist regime against Lebanon blatantly violates the initial ceasefire," Pezeshkian wrote in a post on his X account.

Pakistan confirmed that Lebanon was included in the ceasefire it had mediated. Israel and the US, however, claim the ceasefire does not include Lebanon, with Israel announcing it will continue its attacks on the country.

"Such actions signal deception and non-compliance, rendering negotiations meaningless," Pezeshkian added. "Our hands remain on the trigger. Iran will never forsake its Lebanese brothers and sisters." The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also announced that Iran is preparing "regret-inducing" response to the renewed Israeli attacks on Lebanon, warning that any assault on Hezbollah is an assault on the Islamic Republic.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif blasted the Israeli regime as "evil and a curse for humanity," slamming its ongoing genocide against innocent civilians in Lebanon while diplomatic peace efforts are underway in Islamabad.

Taking to the social media platform X on Thursday, the senior Pakistani politician drew a clear line between the Zionist entity's bloodletting and any pretense of pursuing peace, stating, "Israel is evil and a curse for humanity, while peace talks are underway in Islamabad, genocide is being committed in Lebanon. Innocent citizens are being killed by Israel, first Gaza, then Iran and now Lebanon, bloodletting continues unabated."

Asif further described the Zionist regime as a "cancerous state" forcibly implanted on Palestinian land, underscoring that its very existence has brought nothing but destruction and instability to the region and the wider world.

Pakistan has long stood firmly with the Palestinian people and the Lebanese resistance in their legitimate struggle against Zionist occupation and expansionism.

Former FM Kamal Kharrazi martyred in US-Israeli attack

President touts Kharrazi as 'committed, influential figure'

National Desk

Kamal Kharrazi

Head of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations and former Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi succumbed to his injuries sustained in a US-Israeli attack earlier this week.

Kharrazi, who had been wounded in an attack that targeted his home in Tehran, attained martyrdom on Thursday night. His wife was martyred in the same attack on April 1.

Kharrazi held numerous high-profile positions throughout his distinguished career of public service, spanning decades since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

He headed the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations and served as a senior advisor to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Established in June 2006, the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations is a prominent Iranian think tank and advisory body that reports directly to the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Kharrazi also served as the foreign minister from 1997 to 2005 and as a member of the Expediency Discernment Council.

Following his martyrdom, many Iranian officials issued condolences massages.

President Masoud Pezeshkian described him as a prominent, committed, and influential figure in the country's diplomatic arena, who spent many years of his noble life in critical positions such as the foreign minister and the country's ambassador Iran to the United Nations. He carried out these responsibilities with sincerity, wisdom, and a deep commitment to the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, in the path of defending national interests.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condoled the martyrdom of Kharrazi, describing him as an "educated scientist, prominent diplomat, and an indelible face in the field of foreign policy."

"The absence of such a personality is not just the loss of a person, but the reticence of part of the reason, experience and sound of Iran's diplomacy in the international arena," he added.

Araghchi also said Kharrazi spent his life on the difficult and challenging path of foreign policy, while demonstrating honesty, patience, prudence and honor.

During his tenure in the Foreign Ministry and the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, Kharrazi represented rationality, contemplation, and adherence to national interests, he noted.

Kharrazi's "name is intertwined with the dignity of Iran's diplomacy, firm logic vis-à-vis the world, and solemn defense of the nation's independence," Araghchi said.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

An Indian liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) carrier, Shivalik, arrives at Mundra Port via the Strait of Hormuz, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Gujarat, India, on March 16, 2026.
● AMIT DAVE/REUTERS

China's teapots buy Iranian oil at premiums for first time in years

Iranian crude reaches India under waiver: *Data*

National oil exports jump 700,000 bpd

Economy Desk

Two million barrels of Iranian crude reached India under a temporary US sanctions waiver while Chinese independent refiners purchased Iranian oil at premiums to Brent for the first time in years, marking a shift in Asian energy flows amid Middle East conflict disruptions, according to data and sources.

Chinese independent refiners, known as teapots, bought Iranian oil at premiums to Brent for the first time in years after benchmark prices fell and amid expectations that India might purchase more cargoes following Washington's temporary waiver of sanctions, according to Reuters.

India received its first Iranian oil cargo – two million barrels – in seven years after Washington temporarily waived sanctions on Iranian oil at sea due to the impact of the conflict in the Middle East, TankerTrackers data showed Friday.

The tanker-tracking platform did not provide vessel details but said the delivery was made possible under a sanctions waiver, Anadolu Agency reported.

The reported arrival came after the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control issued Iran General License U on March 20, authorizing transactions ordinarily necessary for the sale, delivery, and offloading of Iranian-origin crude oil and petroleum products loaded on vessels on or before March 20 this year, through April 19.

The license permits activities related to docking, anchoring, tug assistance, bunkering, inspections, pilotage, and discharge of covered cargoes, providing a temporary window for previously loaded Iranian oil shipments to complete delivery.

India announced last Saturday that it has resumed oil purchases from Iran, the first time in seven years, amid the ongoing armed conflict in the Middle East, which has disrupted energy supplies around the world, particularly in Asian countries.

This was the first public announcement by the South Asian nation since 2019, when it stopped importing oil from Iran after US waivers on the purchase of sanctioned Iranian oil were not renewed for buyers.

The development could mark a limited resumption of Iranian crude arrivals to major Asian buyers as war-related disruptions in the Middle East and shipping risks around the Strait of Hormuz continue to reshape regional energy flows.

Waivers granted to deliver Iran cargoes

With a view to speeding delivery of energy supplies from the Persian Gulf, India has recently granted waivers to allow two Iranian cargoes aboard an older tanker and another under international sanctions to enter its ports, two officials familiar with the matter said, Reuters reported on Thursday.

The world's No. 2 importer of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), India is facing its worst gas crisis in decades, with the government rationing supplies to industry to ensure households are supplied with cooking gas.

India recently permitted the LPG tanker Aurora to dock in the southern port of Mangalore despite it being about 30 years old, one of the sources said. A crude oil tanker, the Jaya, despite being under US sanctions, was also permitted to unload, the other source said.

The officials said the approvals were being made on a case-by-case basis and only vessels meeting safety parameters were being considered for waivers.

Oil exports rise

CNN reported on Friday that Iran's oil exports have increased by 700,000 barrels per day following US military strikes on February 28, while crude prices have doubled.

According to Tasnim News Agency, citing CNN, the United States has negotiated a fragile ceasefire aimed at potentially reopening the Strait of Hormuz, but Asian allies dependent on the critical waterway have been forced to seek alternative energy suppliers — a shift that benefits Washington's primary rivals.

Following initial US and Israeli air strikes in February, Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, a chokepoint through which approximately one-fifth of global oil supplies transit.

Chinese teapots pay premiums

According to Reuters, China's teapots bought Iranian oil at premiums to Brent for the first time in years, sources said Friday.

Iranian oil typically trades at discounts to Brent because of sanctions. Chinese independent refiners are its biggest buyers.

At least two refiners in Dongying, a major hub for independents in the eastern Shandong province, purchased Iranian Light at premiums of $1.50 to $2 a barrel to ICE Brent earlier this week, trade sources said. That compared with a $10 per barrel discount before the conflict.

The cargoes are floating near China and will be delivered this month, the people said.

One of the people said he believed it was the first time since 2022 that teapots have bought Iranian oil at a premium to Brent.

These refiners, armed with fresh import quotas from Beijing, sought prompt cargoes of Iranian crude after Brent crude futures dropped 13% to below $100 on Wednesday following the announcement of a ceasefire for the war.

The contract rebounded 1% on Thursday as traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remained largely halted.

Earlier this week, China raised ceiling prices for retail gasoline and diesel by 420 yuan ($61) and 400 yuan per metric ton, respectively.

Refining margins at teapots have improved with lower crude costs and higher domestic fuel prices, encouraging them to look for Iranian oil for prompt delivery, traders said.

Minister urges 'smart' Hormuz management, port cooperation review

● REUTERS/DADO RUVIC/Illustration

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh Malvajerd emphasized the need for "smart management" of the Strait of Hormuz and a review of port cooperation with neighboring countries, citing shifting regional dynamics following recent conflicts.

According to Mehr news agency, Sadegh Malvajerd made the remarks during a meeting with members of the Ports and Maritime Organization's executive board and via webinar with port managers across the country.

"Smart management of the Strait of Hormuz and also the legal regime related to this strait are important issues that must be considered," she said, referring to the strategic waterway's significance.

Sadegh Malvajerd added, "Part of the Islamic Republic of Iran's interactions with neighboring countries in this region relates to shared waters and maritime issues, which are directly related to the missions of the Ports and Maritime Organization."

The minister also addressed the effects of the 40-day US-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28, stating that regional relations require reassessment.

"In the type of interactions and relations with neighboring countries, it is necessary to make revisions and some approaches should be modified according to new conditions," she said.

Sadegh Malvajerd highlighted port performance during the "US-Zionist imposed war" period, noting that unprecedented records were achieved in port activities. "During this period, records were registered in the field of port activities that had not even been achieved before in normal conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to identify and modify cumbersome processes that prevented such achievements in normal conditions," she said.

Iran and the United States announced a 15-day ceasefire early Wednesday with Pakistan's mediation.

Iran, pursuing smart control of the Strait of Hormuz, has altered transit routes and required vessels to obtain permits and pay fees in cryptocurrency. So far, no liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargo has been permitted to transit the strait.

Tehran-Mashhad rail line back in service after US-Israeli attack

● IRNA

Economy Desk

Iran's Islamic Republic Railways announced Friday that the Tehran-Mashhad railway line has reopened following reconstruction work to repair damage from what it described as a US-Israeli attack on rail infrastructure in Tehran Province.

According to Tasnim news agency, reconstruction operations at the damaged section of the Rey-Bahram block line in Tehran Province were completed Thursday night through round-the-clock efforts by railway staff, and train traffic between Tehran and Mashhad in both directions has now resumed.

The damage to the railway line occurred following a Zionist-American attack on railway infrastructure, which was resolved through the efforts of engineers and forces of Iran's Islamic Republic Railways.

Accordingly, except for the Zanjan-Tabriz rail corridor in northwestern Iran, movement of freight and passenger trains is stable across the rest of the rail network.

Also on Friday, Ali Hemmati, the executive deputy of Raja Railway Company, told ISNA in Tehran that despite enemy attacks on rail infrastructure, train movement has returned to normal, and if needed, special trains will be arranged for passenger transportation.

"Given the merciless attack that occurred and railways being announced as one of the attack targets, the first priority at Raja Company was to protect passengers' lives, and measures were taken to ensure no harm came to passengers and railway staff," Hemmati said.

He added that planning was completed and train schedules were arranged so passengers could reach their destinations, while necessary security was also provided.

Hemmati emphasized that train movement had to be suspended for two days to achieve more stable conditions. "This passed quickly. Even on the second day, we ran special trains from Mashhad to Varamin so compatriots in Mashhad who needed to return to Tehran could easily reach their destination," he said.

From petrodollar to petroyuan

Iran's emerging role in geopolitics of energy

By Reza Mokhtar
Senior energy researcher

By Seyed Hamid Hosseini
Spokesperson for OPEX

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

bitcoin.com

Over the past half-century, the petrodollar has underpinned the global financial order. Since the 1970s, pricing and settling most of the world's oil and gas trade in US dollars has allowed Washington to finance massive budget deficits and deploy the dollar as a tool of sanctions, pressure and financial control.

Today, however, that order is under strain. China's rise, Russia's resurgence as an energy power and Iran's increasingly assertive regional posture are together nudging the system toward a more fragmented monetary and energy architecture. Central to this shift is an emerging, though still incomplete, "petroyuan" framework — one in which a growing share of energy trade is settled in China's currency rather than the dollar.

Russia already settles part of its oil and gas exports in yuan. Iran, by virtue of its control over the Strait of Hormuz and its strategic position in the Persian Gulf, has leverage over both the rules governing transit and the currency in which some energy transactions are cleared. China, as the world's largest incremental buyer of energy, has every reason to expand the use of the yuan in its import bill.

In this evolving landscape, a gradual move away from the pure petrodollar model looks increasingly plausible. For Iran and Russia, the goal is not only to erode dollar dominance, but also, over the longer term, to keep a potential future Chinese monetary hegemony in check by leveraging their control over key energy chokepoints.

Chokepoints of energy

The Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb are among the most critical chokepoints in the global energy chain. A substantial share of crude oil and refined products from the Persian Gulf flows through these narrow passages.

Iran exercises direct control over the Strait of Hormuz and indirect influence over the Bab el-Mandeb through allied actors in the Axis of Resistance. If new legal and financial mechanisms were to emerge, Tehran could, at least at the margins:

• Influence the settlement currency for a portion of energy trade — for example, by accepting yuan, alongside a limited role for the rial, in transit fees, certain energy contracts or even insurance arrangements;

• Use these waterways as instruments of pressure in times of economic and financial confrontation.

When such control over chokepoints is combined with the substantial production capacity and reserves of Iran and Russia, it enables both countries to affect not only the physical flow of energy, but also the monetary architecture of energy transactions. In a world of grinding, long-term conflicts — from Ukraine to Gaza to recurring tensions in the Persian Gulf — this combination becomes a strategic lever in its own right.

It should not be forgotten that the entry of the Ansarullah (Houthis) into the conflict — along with their warnings about closing the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and even targeting a US naval vessel — was one of the factors that weakened the position of the US and pushed it to accept the terms of an agreement with Iran.

How WTI crude shows up at gas pump

To understand how energy pressure translates into domestic strain in the United States, it's essential to look at the link between the price of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude and the price of gasoline at the pump.

Energy economists in the US often work with a rough empirical rule of thumb: Every $1 increase in the price of a barrel of WTI crude adds, on average, about 2 to 2.5 cents to the retail price of a gallon of gasoline. This passes through with a lag and is influenced by taxes, refinery margins and distribution costs.

If we take 2.5 cents as a simple benchmark, then:

• A $30 jump in WTI — from, say, $70 to $100 a barrel — can add roughly $0.75 to the price of a gallon of gas.

• If regular gas rises from about $3.50 to around $4.20–$4.30 per gallon, that's consistent with a $30 move in crude.

This is not a mechanical law. State and local taxes, refining capacity, inventory levels, regional bottlenecks and wholesale margins all matter. But the relationship captures the direction and order of magnitude of the inflationary pressure that higher crude prices exert on American households.

America's gas habit, household budget

The United States consumes roughly 8 to 9 million barrels of gasoline a day. At about 159 liters per barrel, that works out to roughly 1.3 to 1.4 billion liters of gasoline daily — a staggering flow of fuel that reflects the country's geography and economic structure:

• The country is vast;

• Commuting to work and shopping are heavily car-dependent;

• In many areas, public transit is either limited or not a realistic alternative.

Within the typical US household budget, transportation costs — fuel, maintenance, insurance and related expenses — generally account for about 5 to 7 percent of annual spending, with considerable variation by state and income level. When gasoline prices rise sharply, the burden falls disproportionately on families who drive long distances to work, live in exurbs and rural areas, or own multiple vehicles.

When $7 gas becomes political, economic crisis

Under normal conditions, gasoline in the $3 to $4.50 per gallon range is painful for many families but rarely constitutes a full-blown crisis. The threshold where economic stress begins to morph into a political emergency is higher. A genuinely destabilizing scenario would look more like this:

• Gasoline prices rising to around $6 to $7 per gallon on a national average basis;

• Those levels persisting not for weeks, but for months.

If we apply the same crude-to-gasoline pass-through rule (roughly 2.5 cents per $1 of WTI), then to move from $3.50 to $7 — a $3.50 increase per gallon — you would need about a $140 per barrel rise in crude. In other words:

• If WTI climbed from roughly $60–$70 to around $200 a barrel,

• It would not be unreasonable to see national average pump prices drift into the $6.50 to $7 per gallon range, depending on taxes and regional dynamics.

The precise numbers would vary by state and market conditions, and some regions could hit those levels even with lower crude prices. But, as a ballpark, the idea that $200 WTI could push US gasoline toward $7 per gallon is a defensible, order-of-magnitude scenario.

One point that often gets overlooked is the spread between Brent, WTI and Oman crude. The United States sits in a unique position: drawing on its own production alongside supplies from Venezuela, Mexico and Canada, it can insulate itself from many external producers and, for a time, exert real control over the price of crude, refined products and even petrochemicals — especially as it builds out and completes more of the value chain at home.

But that same structural advantage makes a drawn-out, grinding conflict a long-term liability for Washington and for the dollar's dominance. Prolonging the war ultimately works against US interests. From this perspective, recognizing Iran's emerging regional hegemony and moving to end the conflict before domestic strains in America reach a breaking point may be the more rational choice.

The United States also produces more than 20 million barrels per day of total liquids — crude oil, LNG and condensates combined. These figures may not necessarily trigger an economic crisis inside the US, but they would almost certainly deal a serious political setback to the Republican Party.

Credit system under energy shock

The US consumer economy is deeply credit-driven. Household spending relies heavily on:

• Credit cards,

• Auto loans,

• Mortgages and home equity lines of credit.

In such an environment:

1. When essential costs (fuel, food, housing) rise, households often use credit cards to bridge the gap between stagnant incomes and higher bills.

2. If inflationary pressures persist, debt-to-income ratios climb and a growing share of families struggle to make payments on time.

3. In a prolonged high-gas-price scenario, with pump prices in the $6–$7 range, one could reasonably expect:

• Higher delinquency rates on credit cards;

• Rising defaults on auto loans;

• Increased stress in mortgage repayment for the most leveraged households;

• And mounting pressure on bank balance sheets, particularly smaller banks and local credit institutions.

Post-2008 reforms have made the US financial system somewhat more resilient. But the combination of very high

> China, as the world's largest incremental buyer of energy, has every reason to expand the use of the yuan in its import bill. In this evolving landscape, a gradual move away from the pure petrodollar model looks increasingly plausible. For Iran and Russia, the goal is not only to erode dollar dominance, but also, over the longer term, to keep a potential future Chinese monetary hegemony in check by leveraging their control over key energy chokepoints.

Drivers wait in their vehicles to pump gasoline at a Costco gas station in Hawthorne, California, US, on March 18, 2026.
PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP

energy prices, elevated interest rates and heavy consumer indebtedness is capable of posing serious risks to financial stability. Under extreme conditions, those dynamics can help trigger a chain reaction of corporate failures, financial distress and industrial contraction — putting severe internal pressure on American society.

Attrition warfare, Pentagon's budget and energy market

In a long war of attrition, the United States must devote a substantial share of its military and fiscal resources to overseas deployments, logistics, munitions production and support for allies. That has several implications:

• Fewer resources remain for direct support of financial markets or high-risk innovation sectors — especially if those sectors are showing signs of speculative excess, as in parts of the tech and AI ecosystem;

• Washington's need to contain energy shocks grows because a major spike in oil and gasoline prices, layered on top of heavy defense spending, compounds the strain on both the federal budget and the domestic social contract;

• In such an environment, any significant disruption to energy supply — from tensions in the Strait of Hormuz to reductions in Russian exports — feeds directly into the cost of war and the stability of the home front.

For actors like Iran and Russia, engaged in various degrees of asymmetric confrontation with the United States, prolonging conflict and steering it toward economic and energy attrition is part of the broader strategic play. In this kind of contest, oil, gas, maritime chokepoints and settlement currencies can be as consequential as missiles and drones.

Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN Vasily Nebenzya (front) vetoes a resolution encouraging states to protect commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, during a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City, US, on April 7, 2026.
JEENAH MOON/REUTERS

> Iran and Russia, with their vast hydrocarbon reserves and strategic transit positions, are in a position to influence both the physical flow of energy and the financial architecture that underpins it.

Energy, money and new "war of systems"

Taken together, these dynamics suggest a world in which energy markets, monetary systems and geopolitical conflict are tightly interwoven:

• Energy and its chokepoints — above all, the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el-Mandeb — have become tools not only to challenge the petrodollar, but also to shape an emerging petroyuan ecosystem;

• Iran and Russia, with their vast hydrocarbon reserves and strategic transit positions, are in a position to influence both the physical flow of energy and the financial architecture that underpins it;

• Extreme scenarios in which WTI crude trades near $200 a barrel and US gasoline hovers around $7 a gallon would translate quickly into pressure on household budgets, the credit system and the broader political economy of the United States;

• And, ultimately, today's long wars of attrition are not confined to battlefields. They continue in energy markets, financial systems and the monthly budgets of ordinary households.

Conditioning Hormuz transit perfectly legal

By Reza Nasri
International Lawyer

OPINION

Iran's legal position regarding the Strait of Hormuz rests on a firm and multi-layered foundation in international law that has been consistently articulated, formally recorded, and never relinquished.

First, the applicable treaty framework does not support the imposition of the "transit passage" regime on Iran. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) introduced transit passage as a novel legal construct, granting expansive rights — including overflight and submerged navigation — to foreign military assets. However, Iran never ratified UNCLOS and explicitly rejected this regime upon signature. Under general principles of treaty law, a state cannot be bound by provisions of a treaty it has not ratified, particularly where it has expressly objected to those provisions at the time of signature.

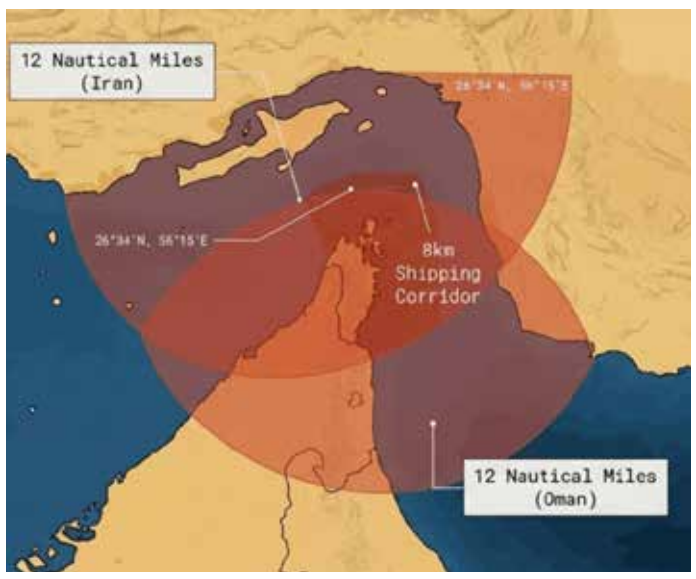
A police speedboat patrols the port as oil tankers and high-speed crafts sit anchored near the Strait of Hormuz in Muscat, Oman, on March 30, 2026.
ELKE SCHOLIERS/GETTY IMAGES

This position is reinforced by the doctrine of the persistent objector. Even if one assumes, arguendo, that transit passage has evolved into customary international law, Iran has consistently and openly rejected its applicability. As such, it is not bound by that rule.

Second, in the absence of a universally binding transit passage regime, the governing law reverts to earlier treaty law and customary principles, most notably the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone. Both Iran and key user states, such as the United States, are not parties to UNCLOS, creating a legal vacuum in which reliance on earlier treaty regimes is not only appropriate but necessary.

Under this framework, the right of passage through territorial seas is not unlimited. It is conditioned on innocent passage, a well-established rule allowing coastal states to regulate navigation to protect their security and public order. Crucially, innocent passage excludes activities that threaten the coastal state, including military operations, intelligence gathering, and acts connected to hostile conduct.

Third, the geographic reality of the Strait of Hormuz strengthens Iran's legal position. The navigable channels lie entirely within the overlapping territorial seas of Iran and Oman. This is not a high seas corridor but a maritime space subject to coastal sovereignty, albeit qualified by navigational rights. That sovereignty carries with it the right to adopt and enforce laws necessary to safeguard national security.



The map shows the overlapping territories of Iran (above) and Oman at the Strait of Hormuz.
nextgenlearning.org.uk

> The applicable treaty framework does not support the imposition of the "transit passage" regime on Iran. Iran never ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and explicitly rejected this regime upon signature. Under general principles of treaty law, a state cannot be bound by provisions of a treaty it has not ratified, particularly where it has expressly objected to those provisions at the time of signature.

Fourth, even under UNCLOS itself, the regime of non-suspendable innocent passage remains a legally recognized alternative in certain straits. This regime is more restrictive than transit passage and explicitly allows the coastal state to take necessary steps to prevent passage that is not innocent. Iran's interpretation is therefore not a legal aberration, but a plausible reading grounded in existing law.

Fifth, and most critically in the present context, the law of armed conflict and the UN Charter fundamentally alter the legal landscape. Following an unlawful use of force against it, Iran is entitled to invoke its inherent right of self-defense. In such circumstances, the legal characterization of passage cannot be divorced from the realities of hostilities. Vessels and aircraft associated with belligerent states — or facilitating military operations — cannot claim protected navigational rights while simultaneously contributing to acts of aggression.

International law has never required a state to permit its own territorial sea to be used as a conduit for hostile operations. On the contrary, the right of self-defense permits proportionate measures to prevent such exploitation. Conditioning passage on neutrality and non-hostility is therefore not only lawful but necessary to uphold the integrity of that right.

Finally, the conduct of other states further undermines any claim that Iran's position is exceptional. The United States itself is not a party to UNCLOS, yet selectively invokes its provisions as customary law when convenient.

The article was first published on X.

Sports Desk

Asian Wrestling Championships:

Rangraz hails 'historic' Greco-Roman campaign for Iran

The Iranian Greco-Roman squad and coaching staff pose with the team trophy at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on April 8, 2026.
IAWFIR

Iran head coach Hassan Rangraz lauded "a historic day" for the country's Greco-Roman wrestling after his squad completed a clean sweep of 10 medals to claim the team title at the Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Reigning world champions Mohammad-Hadi Saravi and Amin Mirzazadeh headlined Iran's medal haul by grabbing gold in the 97kg and 130kg weight classes, respectively, while Erfan Jarkani (63kg), Mohammad-Javad Rezaei (72kg), Ali Oskou (77kg), Mohammad-Amin Hosseini (82kg), and Gholamreza Farrokhi (87kg) settled for silver in their respective categories.

Mohammad Hosseinvand Panahi (55kg), Ali Ahmadi Vafa (60kg), and Ahmadreza Mohsennejad (67kg), meanwhile, added three bronze medals as Iran topped the team table with 195 points – 42 clear of second-placed Kyrgyzstan, with Uzbekistan finishing third on 136 points.

"Today is a historic day for our Greco-Roman wrestling," Rangraz wrote on Instagram, adding: "I am grateful to God that for the first time, we have become Asian champions for four consecutive years – an achievement born of the round-the-clock efforts of the technical staff, the wrestlers, and the federation's support, and dedicated to our beloved people.

"We had the most finalists in the history of the competition for three straight years. This shows that our team is not only champion but has also reached stability and strength in depth.

"Most importantly, for the first time ever, all 10 of our national team members finished their campaign with a medal – meaning we are a complete, united, and fighting team.

"Another notable point is that we secured the team title on the penultimate day of the competition – a clear indication of our team's technical and psychological superiority throughout the event," added Rangraz, who also led the Iranian team to the Greco-Roman title at the World Championships last year in Zagreb.

What makes the latest achievement even more significant is that the Iranian squad's preparation for the event was hampered amid the country's military conflict with a U.S.-Israeli coalition that began on February 28, while the team also endured an exhausting road trip to reach the Kyrgyz capital.

"This title is more than just a sporting success," Rangraz wrote.

"We had to travel to the competition under circumstances where our country was facing immense hardships and pressures. Even the mere idea of sending a team to this event – in Kyrgyzstan, at a considerable distance – was no easy task.

"Moreover, the host nation entered the competition with strong championship ambitions. Yet our athletes proved that no obstacle can stand in the way of their will. Not only did we compete under these difficult conditions, but we won with dominance.

"I dedicate this crown to our dear people – the people who have always been our main source of support."

No reunion for 'Golden Gen' as Piazza names provisional squad

Sports Desk

Former Iran national team players Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi (L) and Milad Ebadipour have not been named in the provisional squad for the Volleyball Nations League and the Asian Championships.
FIVB

There will be no return to the national team for the veteran trio from the so-called 'Golden Generation' of the Iranian volleyball as head coach Roberto Piazza unveiled a provisional roster for the two major international events later in the year.

The Italian named a 42-man squad for the upcoming Volleyball Nations League and September's Asian Championship in Fukuoka, Japan, with none of outside-hitter Milad Ebadipour, middle-blocker Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi, and opposite-spiker Amir Ghafour recieving a call-up.

Both tournaments hold considerable weight for Iranian volleyball, impacting the team's global rankings and the qualification path to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Recent speculation had suggested a first international call-up for the trio under Piazza, but the Italian seems to be prioritizing the development and integration of younger talent in his second year in charge.

Piazza guided Iran to an eighth-place finish in the VNL 16-team preliminary table last year with six wins from 12 matches, before his team progressed to the quarterfinals at the World Championship in the Philippines.

"I don't really expect Piazza to call me up," Ebadipour, who made his senior international debut in 2014, had said in February. "I think Piazza wants to continue with the same squad from 2025. The issue of confidence comes into play – he wouldn't want it to be perceived that he doesn't trust his current team, nor would he want to appear to be turning back to more experienced players. That's why I believe he will stick with the same group from last year."

Iran will look to secure its first VNL quarterfinal berth in four years when it opens its campaign against South American powerhouse Brazil on June 10.

Piazza's men will also chase a fifth Asian title in eight editions from September 4.

Beyond continental glory, additional incentive awaits in Fukuoka as the tournament winner will secure direct qualification to Los Angeles Games.

Another potential showdown between Iran and Japan could follow at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games, which begin on September 19, where Piazza's side will be chasing a fourth consecutive men's gold medal.

Iranian taekwondo teams arrive in Tashkent for World Junior Ch'ships

taekwondo.ir

Sports Desk

Iranian boys' and girls' teams arrived in Tashkent on Friday ahead of the upcoming World Taekwondo Junior Championships.

The 15th edition of the global showpiece will be held in the Uzbek capital from April 12 to 17. Named 'Caravan of Hormuz,' the Iranian squads had been conducting their preparatory camps in the north of the country amid the military conflict with the United States and Israel, which began on February 28, before embarking on their journey.

On Tuesday, they crossed the Turkish border by land and traveled to the city of Van. From there, the team flew to Tashkent, arriving on Friday morning.

The delegation has been named 'Hormuz' in honor of the bravery of Iran's armed forces in safeguarding the nation, particularly the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

The girls' national team includes Bahar Tahmasbi, Negar Mozaffari, Seyedeh Zahra Mousavi, Helia Ebrahimian, Rozhan Heidari, Dina Babarahim, Pinar Lotfizadeh, Aynaz Mikaeili, Asal Goltapeh, and Hana Zarrin Kamar.

The team is headed by head coach Niloofar Safarian, assisted by coaches Parvin Keshavarz, Fatemeh Khayyeri, and Zahra Kangarani.

Iran will also be represented by Amirarsalan Ahmadi, Taha Nazer, Ali Razmiyan, Erfan Khodaei, Amir Eqbali, Parsa Houshiyar, Abolfazl Najafi, Benyamin Soltanian, Amirali Hazrati, and Mohammad-Javad Geryan in the boys' event.

They are led by head coach Feyzollah Nafjam, with Kourosh Rajoli, Behrouz Khodadad, and Masoud Kazempour serving as assistants.

volleyball.ir

Mehregan Noor to represent Iran in AVC Women's Champions League

Sports Desk

Iran's Mehregan Noor volleyball team, composed of national team players, will represent the country in the AVC Women's Volleyball Champions League.

According to the communications department of the Iran Volleyball Federation, the tournament is scheduled to take place from April 26 to 30 in Bangkok, Thailand. Following the withdrawal of Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan, and after extensive coordination by Seyyed Milad Taqavi, head of the federation, it was decided that Iran and Central Asia's representative would compete under the name of Mehregan Noor, fielding the lineup of the national women's team.

Given the current circumstances in the country and existing limitations, the team's preparation camp will begin on April 10 in the city of Sari, northern Iran.

Lee Do-hee, the South Korean head coach of Mehregan Noor, has announced the names of 15 players called up for the training camp and the showpiece.

Shabnam Alikhani, Hasti Vahedi, Negar Hashemi, Negar Abbasi, Fatemeh Khalili, Elaheh Pour-Saleh, Masoumeh Qadami, Aida Valinejad, Zahra Salehi, Yosna Ahankoub, Zahra Karimi, Reyhaneh Karimi, Sepinoud Dastbarjan, Shaqayeq Farahani, and Mahsa Kadkhoda have been named in the squad.

The team's training camp gets underway today in Sari.

Shahrestanak, where history still breathes

Iranica Desk

Shahrestanak Palace, a magnificent relic of the Qajar era, lies in a scenic valley in the Alborz Mountains near Karaj and tells a story of architectural taste, summer retreat life, and the rise and fall of Iran's historical heritage. Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, escaping Tehran's unbearable heat and polluted air, would seek refuge in the cool highlands around the capital during the summer months. Eventually, in Shahrestanak village, he ordered the construction of a summer palace. The palace was meant to serve as a place of comfort for the king and his courtiers during the hot season, and today it preserves not only the remains of stone and brick, but also a living memory of Qajar culture and art.

Construction of the palace began in 1878, and Agha Mohammad Ebrahim Khan, the master architect of the court, was entrusted with the project. Within three years, a building emerged that is regarded as one of the most important examples of Qajar architecture.

Yet, like many historical monuments, the fate of the palace became tied to neglect and deterioration. After the end of the Qajar dynasty, Shahrestanak Palace suffered from the harsh climate of the Alborz region and from vandalism, gradually falling into ruin. Even its temporary use as a mountaineers' shelter in 1969 did not halt the damage. However, a new hope for the revival of this historic site emerged in 2016, when the building was handed over to the Fund for the Development of Handicrafts and Handwoven Carpets, and later in 2022, its operation was transferred to the private sector, according to chtn.ir.

Shahrestanak Palace consists of two main parts, the inner quarters and the outer quarters, each reflecting the hierarchical and class-based structure of the Qajar court. The main semicircular entrance led the Shah and distinguished guests into the courtyard, while a secondary entrance was reserved for servants and attendants.

The outer section, with a rectangular courtyard and four terraces, included a two-story structure known as the Divan Khaneh and Naser al-Din Shah's private bathhouse. The inner section also contained two separate courtyards, one for the Shah and another for the servants, along with 19 rooms arranged on the northern and eastern sides of the building, reflecting the order and discipline of the courtly setting. These sections, buried for years under soil and rubble, were revealed again in the 1990s through archaeological excavations.

kojaro.ir

One of the palace's most important features is its harmony with the surrounding natural environment. The terraces, courtyards, and sweeping views over the valley and the Alborz Mountains make the structure an outstanding example of intelligent Iranian architecture, one that combines grandeur with climatic adaptation. Naser al-Din Shah also decorated the palace with European wallpaper and colored glass in the wooden orosi windows, and he held the annual cooks' ceremony there. Although none of those decorations remain today, photographs by Antoin Sevruguin and paintings by Kamal-ol-Molk provide a vivid image of the palace's former splendor.

The current restoration project of Shahrestanak Palace, based on historical documents and images, is progressing, with reconstruction of parts of the walls, towers, and infrastructure continuing. Today, the palace stands as a symbol of the connection between past and present, art and nature, and a reminder of the importance of preserving Iran's cultural heritage.

Shahrestanak Palace, in the heart of the Alborz mountains, is not merely a historic building; it is a living account of Iran's culture, power, art, and collective memory. Built as a summer refuge for a ruler who sought escape from Tehran's heat and the turmoil of urban life, the palace was designed with a clear purpose from the very beginning. Yet its significance goes beyond that of a seasonal residence. Shahrestanak is a symbol of intelligent architecture, constructive interaction between humans and nature, and a form of splendor that still remains visible in the layers of its history.

Its registration on Iran's National Heritage List in 1998 showed that Shahrestanak is not simply an old ruin, but part of the country's historical and cultural identity and must be preserved for future generations. What makes the site even more valuable is not only its royal past, but the enduring message it carries: history, if protected with care, respect, and responsibility, can be brought back to life and continue to play a role in the present. A visit to the palace conveys exactly this feeling, as though history is still breathing through its walls, terraces, and mountain views, speaking to those who come to see it.

Shahrestanak is a clear example of the link between architecture and nature. The structure was built in harmony with the region's climate and geography, showing that Iranian architects were concerned not only with visual beauty, but also with function, comfort, and environmental suitability. This feature has made Shahrestanak, as a historical monument, valuable not only in artistic terms, but also as a source of knowledge about the lifestyle, tastes, and worldview of Iranians during the Qajar period.

Varsho Sazi preserves shining legacy in Iranian handicrafts

Iranica Desk

The art of Varsho Sazi (nickel silver crafting), while rooted in Europe, underwent a profound transformation upon reaching Iran. Infused with the creativity of artisans in Borujerd and Dezful, it evolved into a distinctly Iranian craft and one of the country's most prominent metalworking traditions.

Varsho Sazi refers to the art of creating intricate ornaments and utensils from a specific metal alloy known as nickel silver. Generally, this alloy is composed of 20% nickel, 35% zinc, and 45% copper. The craft takes its name from Warsaw, the capital of Poland, which is pronounced "Varsho" in Persian, where the alloy originated before making its way to Iran, according to IRNA.

The history of Varsho Sazi in Iran dates back to the Safavid era. However, the art reached its zenith during the late Qajar and Pahlavi periods, particularly in the cities of Borujerd and Dezful.

According to veteran artisans, the industry received a significant boost during the premiership of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir. He dispatched a group of skilled coppersmiths — already experts in metalwork — to Russia to master the techniques of working with nickel silver. These craftsmen, hailing from Borujerd, Dezful, and Isfahan, returned to their hometowns to establish the first Iranian Varsho workshops.

IRNA

Due to the sheer variety of its products and the exceptional skill of its masters, Borujerd earned a nationwide reputation in this field. Handcrafted items from Borujerd were not only used in the households of the elite and high-ranking officials, but were also exported directly to international markets.

While the rise of stainless steel — which is cheaper and easier to shape — eventually challenged the dominance of Varsho for everyday use, the craft remains Borujerd's most iconic handicraft.

Artisans soften the alloy to forge a wide array of items, including water vessels, trays, incense burners, mirrors, candlesticks, and the famous Iranian samovars. Today, modern masters have elevated the craft by combining it with Qalam-Zani (metal engraving), creating exquisite works of art that are highly prized by collectors.

Varsho Sazi is closely related to coppersmithing, samovar-making, and Davat-Gari (the making of inkwells and traditional containers). The primary difference lies in the material: coppersmithing uses pure copper, while Varsho Sazi utilizes the nickel silver alloy.

The "Skill and Technique of Varsho Work" was added to Iran's National Intangible Cultural Heritage list in July 2012, followed by "Engraving on Varsho in Borujerd" in March 2018. In 2019, Borujerd was officially designated as the "National City of Varsho." Furthermore, a dossier for Borujerd's global registration as the world center of Varsho Sazi has been submitted to UNESCO.

Since the raw alloy is an imported material, fluctuations in imports currently pose a major hurdle to the industry's growth. Nevertheless, experts believe that with targeted support and better international promotion, Varsho Sazi can be revitalized as a vital cultural and economic asset, ensuring this shimmering legacy is passed down to future generations.

Oqab Mountain near Taft welcomes visitors

Iranica Desk

Oqab Mountain is one of the most scenic and popular tourist attractions in Yazd Province, drawing visitors from across the country every year, especially during the Nowruz holidays.

According to IRNA, the mountain, which from a distance resembles a seated eagle, is located along the Yazd-Shiraz highway, 35 kilometers west of Yazd, in Taft.

Oqab Mountain captures the attention of everyone passing by, and its calm and beautiful natural setting brings a sense of joy and wonder to visitors.

Shaped like a giant eagle resting on the ground, the mountain stands in a pristine natural landscape that offers a peaceful space for people to enjoy.

Due to its proximity to the historic village of Eslamieh in Taft and its location along the Yazd-Shiraz road, visitors can find nearby services such as restaurants, food stores, drinking water, and vehicle repair facilities.

Oqab Mountain is a natural and attractive destination for all people, especially tourists, and is visited each year by many domestic and foreign travelers.

Rising to nearly 2,000 meters above sea level, the mountain stands alone with striking beauty, like an eagle in the middle of the desert, giving it a majestic presence in the region. Located near the villages of Farashah and Eslamieh, the natural landscape of Oqab Mountain has been registered as a National Heritage Site in Iran.

Tamehr Spring, located 13 kilometers east of Oqab Mountain, and the Eslamieh Cave, about 30 kilometers away, are among the nearby attractions.

The origins of Oqab Mountain are said to date back to the early Second Geological Period. Toward the end of that era, the structure of other parts of the mountain changed, and it gained greater height.

During the Fourth Geological Period, the limestone body of Oqab Mountain in Farashah was heavily eroded by the drop in temperature, severe frost, and the thaw that followed, resulting in significant chemical and mechanical weathering.

The center of Taft is located 20 kilometers from the city of Yazd.

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Farhadi returns to Cannes competition with 'Parallel Tales'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Oscar-winning filmmaker Asghar Farhadi will compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2026 Cannes Film Festival from May 12 to 23 in Cannes, unveiling a 21-film main lineup that also features Spain's Pedro Almodóvar and Russia's Andrey Zvyagintsev.

Farhadi's new feature, 'Parallel Tales,' will screen in the main competition, marking a high-profile return to the Croisette for one of contemporary cinema's most decorated auteurs.

The film brings together an international cast including Isabelle Huppert, Vincent Cassel, Virginie Efira and Catherine Deneuve, in a multinational co-production spanning France, the United States, Belgium and Italy.

Festival general delegate Thierry Frémaux said the United States would be "represented," though major studios are largely absent this year, shifting the spotlight toward global auteurs and independent voices. The selection includes multiple entries from Japan and Spain, marking a broad international sweep.

Farhadi, a two-time Academy Award winner for 'A Separation' (2012) and 'The Salesman' (2017), returns to Cannes after securing the Grand Prix for 'A Hero' in 2021. His long-time collaborator, Iranian editor Hayedeh Safiyari, is cutting 'Parallel Tales' in their seventh joint project, reinforcing a creative partnership that has shaped his precise, character-driven narratives.

The jury will be chaired by South Korean filmmaker Park Chan-wook, the first from his country to hold the post, succeeding French actress Juliette Binoche. Honorary Palme d'Or awards will go to Barbra Streisand and Peter Jackson.

Out of competition, the festival will feature works ranging from aviation-themed storytelling by John Travolta to sports documentaries revisiting iconic football moments involving Diego Maradona.

US-Israeli hostilities damage 125,000 Iranian civilian structures as Tehran alleges war crimes

Social Desk

Iran's Red Crescent Society on Friday attributed damage to more than 125,000 civilian structures across the Islamic Republic to US-Israeli military operations that began on February 28, 2026, as the nation's Human Rights Headquarters separately denounced the strikes as deliberate war crimes violating international humanitarian law.

Pirhossein Kolivand, president of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), detailed in a televised assessment that residential properties accounted for approximately 100,000 of the compromised units, with numerous dwellings entirely razed, while commercial establishments sustaining losses totaled 23,500.

Medical infrastructure bore significant brunt: 339 facilities, including Vali-Asr, Shahid Motahhari and Khatam hospitals alongside pharmacies, laboratories and emergency centers, incurred damage, though several resumed operations within 24 hours.

Educational institutions faced widespread disruption, with 32 universities and 857 schools damaged, alongside 20 Red Crescent facilities directly targeted during the 39-day period of intensified hostilities.

Critical infrastructure also suffered, comprising 15 strategic sites, five fuel depots, airports and civilian aircraft, while 49 rescue vehicles and 43 ambulances were struck during humanitarian operations.

Iran's Human Rights Headquarters, issuing a concurrent statement, condemned what it termed repeated and deliberate attacks by the United States and Israeli forces against civilian targets, including residential homes, hospitals, medical and relief centers, vital infrastructure, economic hubs, bridges and schools, as well as vessels and barges integral to livelihoods.

Iranian firefighters with the help of an excavator clear rubble from a destroyed residential building in northern Tehran. ● *IRNA*

The office stressed such acts constitute a clear violation of fundamental humanitarian and legal principles, potentially amounting to war crimes under international law.

Referencing assaults on four fishing boats at Lengeh port and other civilian vessels set ablaze, the statement underscored direct breaches of the right to life, the right to work and the right to development.

It further cited threats by US President Donald Trump and War Secretary Pete Hegseth to return Iran to the "Stone Age" as evidence of intent to commit war crimes against civilian infrastructure.

The Human Rights Headquarters emphasized that the principle of distinction under international humanitarian law obliges all conflict parties to avoid targeting civilian persons and property, asserting that systematic attacks against ordinary citizens and vital development arteries represent gross violations.

It characterized US-Israeli practices as collective punishment breaching prohibitions on the threat and use of force under international law.

Tehran has forwarded documentation of alleged humanitarian law breaches to the International Criminal Court prosecutor and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which subsequently validated the submissions, while maintaining that legal accountability sufficed without requesting foreign assistance.

Volunteer ranks swelled by 1.6 million during the crisis, bolstering the organization's pre-existing four-million-strong force, with pharmacies operating round-the-clock to ensure uninterrupted access to medicines.

Red butterflies soar over ruined Iranian school in memorial to Minab students

Arts & Culture Desk

The Islamic Architecture Art Center, a cultural arm of Tehran-based Art Bureau, has suspended 2,000 crimson butterflies nine meters above the rubble of Shajareh Tayebeh Primary School in Minab, southern Iran, crafting a conceptual memorial that honors student martyrs on their fortieth-day commemoration, according to center director Mostafa Momeni-rad.

The installation transforms the war-damaged campus into a contemplative space where translucent red forms, fashioned after blood-stained school notebooks, ascend skyward on 72 filaments, Art Bureau reported.

Momeni-rad said the design emerged from extensive consultation with bereaved families and rigorous analysis of visual documentation, selecting a metaphor that converts childhood aspirations into suspended symbols of resilience.

Executed in Tehran before deployment to the coastal city, the artwork juxtaposes delicate aesthetics against the harsh reality of destruction. Each butterfly represents a young life extinguished, their names etched not in stone but in ephemeral light filtering through the ruined ceiling.

Families visiting during installation reportedly found solace in the allegorical narrative, recognizing their children's transcendence within the ascending forms. The temporary piece, engineered for swift disassembly, paves the way for the school's conversion into a memorial museum, while discussions advance for a permanent public monument in Minab's civic spaces.

Completed under compressed timelines amid regional tensions, the project shows how cultural institutions can mobilize artistic language to process collective trauma.

Momeni-rad noted that the center evaluated nearly 10 concepts before settling on the notebook-inspired motif, which he described as translating intimate grief into shared remembrance.

Nationwide solidarity boosts blood donations as first-time, female donors step forward in Iran

Social Desk

Iran's Blood Transfusion Organization chief Ahmad Gharehbaghian said Friday that blood donations have surged since the onset of the "third imposed war," on February 28, with first-time donors and women driving a sharp rise.

Gharehbaghian said more than 63% of donors were giving blood for the first time, marking a significant shift in public participation as authorities ramped up mobilization efforts in the early days of the conflict, IRNA reported.

He added that women's contributions climbed by over 79%,

a record high that underscores expanding civic engagement during wartime, according to IRNA.

"From the outset," he said, coordinated planning helped "reshape" donation patterns nationwide, bringing new groups into the system and stabilizing supply chains under pressure.

He emphasized that the organization is now working to convert first-time donors into regular contributors, calling sustained participation "essential" to meeting long-term medical needs.

The official also outlined upcoming outreach and education campaigns aimed at further boosting women's involvement in what he described as a humanitarian duty.

Gharehbaghian praised donors, medical staff and media outlets for what he termed their "strong" support, saying their collective effort has reinforced national resilience.