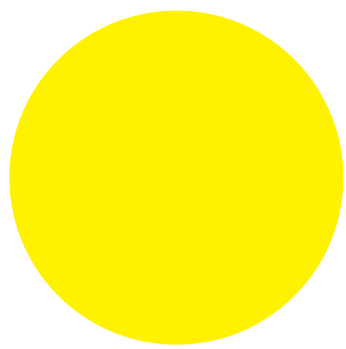


Iran ranked OPEC's second-largest producer for first time in 12 years **3** >



Pezeshkian: Iran will only continue talks within framework of int'l law

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Anti-war New Yorkers demand end to US military support for Israel

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Protesters block traffic during a demonstration outside the New York office of US Sen. Chuck Schumer, calling for an end to the US-Israel war on Iran and opposing US weapons support for Israel in New York on April 13, 2026.

AP



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US Naval blockade of Iran risky, hard to execute

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

A war launched by the United States and Israel against Iran led, after forty days, to a temporary ceasefire, with both sides opting to test their chances by kicking off a new round of negotiations. The first round, however, yielded no results and left Washington—already under global pressure due to disruptions to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz—seeking to step up the pressure by imposing a naval blockade on Iranian ports in a bid to force the Islamic Republic to accept its terms.



Abed Akbari

Abed Akbari, an international affairs expert, argues that such a move is both highly risky and not particularly feasible for the United States, while Iran has a range of tools at its disposal to push back against this pressure. The full transcript of Iran Daily's interview with the expert follows.

IRAN DAILY: How feasible is a US naval blockade of Iran, and what are the main practical, military, and legal obstacles it would face?

AKBARI: A US naval blockade of Iran is fraught with such operational and legal complexity and cost that the likelihood of its full implementation is very low. Under international law, a naval blockade is considered an act of war and can only be justified within the framework of an armed conflict and with a formal declaration of war. Therefore, enforcing such a measure without approval from the UN Security Council would place the United States in the position of undertaking unilateral action in violation of the UN Charter.

From an operational standpoint, fully controlling the entry and exit points of the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and Iran's multiple trade routes would require even a country like the United States to maintain a constant deployment of naval strike groups, establish inspection lines, and potentially face off with Iranian naval forces. Given the high density of commercial traffic in the region, such a move would increase the risk of miscalcu-

lation and unintended confrontation, making it difficult to control. Militarily, Iran possesses significant capabilities, including coastal anti-ship missiles, drones, fast attack craft, naval mines, and an integrated defense network, all of which could create a high-risk combat environment for US forces—one that would require Washington to take on substantial political, human, and economic costs. Taken together, these factors make a naval blockade of Iran—both in terms of cost and regional consequences—an option that is not easily executable and high-risk.

What practical, military, and diplomatic measures could Iran take in response to such a move?

Iran's response to such a scenario could simultaneously play out across operational, military, and diplomatic domains. On the operational front, Iran would likely ramp up alternative land and rail trade routes through Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Central Asian countries, shifting part of its maritime trade onto overland corridors. In the military sphere, Iran could

demonstrate its deterrence capability through a more visible and expanded presence in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. By conducting naval exercises or establishing secure transit patterns for its commercial vessels, it could signal to the opposing side that it has the capacity to bypass or counter restrictions.

Diplomatically, Iran could seek to build up regional and extra-regional consensus against US actions—particularly among countries dependent on Persian Gulf energy, Asian oil importers, and powers such as China and Russia that oppose unilateral measures. In parallel, recourse to international legal mechanisms, filing complaints at the UN Security Council, and drawing on political support from countries for whom any disruption in the Strait of Hormuz carries significant costs are all tools Tehran could employ to neutralize the pressure.

This balanced combination of measures would likely reduce the practical impact of any blockade while driving up the cost of sustaining it for the United States. **Page 8** >

***Pezeshkian:* Iran will only continue talks within framework of int'l law**

'Threats, pressure, and military action do not solve the problem'

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian firmly reiterated that Iran will continue all negotiations exclusively within the framework of international law and regulations, while underscoring Tehran's firm commitment to diplomacy, regional stability and the protection of its national rights in the face of the US-Israeli war of aggression. In a telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, President Pezeshkian emphasized adherence to international principles. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to continue the talks

solely within the framework of international laws and regulations and with the aim of protecting the rights of the Iranian people," he said, Press TV reported. Pezeshkian stated that Europe can play a constructive role by encouraging Washington to respect such legal frameworks. He also highlighted the seriousness and goodwill demonstrated by Iran's negotiating team throughout the Islamabad negotiations between Iran and the US in Pakistan. "Despite the expert understandings reached between the parties, the excessiveness and lack of political will of senior US officials have prevented

the agreement from being finalized," Pezeshkian stated. He also stressed that "approaches based on threats, pressure, and military action not only do not solve the problem, but also add to the complexity of the issues and will exacerbate the self-created problems of the American side." Diplomacy, he said, remains Iran's preferred path, pursued while fully preserving national dignity and authority. Referring to the recent threat issued by US President Donald Trump against the Strait of Hormuz, Pezeshkian warned of its dangerous implications. "The Islamic Republic of Iran



Emmanuel Macron

Masoud Pezeshkian

has always sought to ensure sustainable security for the passage of ships in this strategic passageway, and any threat to the security of this region will have wide-ranging consequences for global trade," he

stated. In the conversation, Macron referred to his recent consultations with the US president and emphasized the necessity of including the issue of Lebanon within the framework

of the initial ceasefire agreement. He also presented his views on the Iranian nuclear file and developments concerning the legal regime of the Strait of Hormuz.

Anti-war New Yorkers demand end to US military support for Israel

International Desk

Hundreds of people held a demonstration in the US city of New York to protest US military support for Israel amid a recent joint aggression by the US and the regime against Iran.

The protesters gathered near the offices of Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer and his colleague Kirsten Gillibrand, whom they accuse of voting against a measure aimed at blocking US arms sales to Israel.

They blocked a major avenue in Manhattan for just under an hour to protest US military support for Israel.

New York's police detained around 100 people taking part in the rally by a Jewish organization that promotes Palestinian rights, an AFP correspondent saw, with Chelsea Manning among those held.

Manning is the army intelligence analyst who leaked documents to WikiLeaks, and had her 35-year sentence commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017. She now campaigns for pro-Palestinian



Protesters get arrested during a rally outside the New York office of US Sen. Chuck Schumer, calling for an end to the US-Israel war on Iran and opposing US arms support for Israel on April 13, 2026.

● AP

causes. "Our actions matter in shaping the course of history. Senators Schumer and Gillibrand have repeatedly supported weapons sales to Israel that are being used to commit atrocities across Palestine, Lebanon, and Iran. We call on Senators Schumer and Gillibrand to follow the will of New Yorkers and vote to block weapons and bulldozer sales to Israel," she said in a statement issued by JVP. Protesters chanted slogans like "stop the bombs", "end the killings" and "free Palestine" while voicing their strong opposition to the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, Israel's ongoing deadly attacks in south

Lebanon and Israel's aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip. The demonstrators also chanted "let Gaza live", "let Iran live" and "let Lebanon live."

The US and Israel initiated a large-scale and unprovoked war of aggression against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders as well as hundreds of civilians. Washington's costly war on Iran, which soon turned into a regional conflict, has already consumed tens of billions of dollars and raised concerns about the strain on US weapons stockpiles, large parts of which are also shipped to Israel to be used either against Iran or against Palestine and Lebanon.

US 'excessive demands' hindered deal in Islamabad talks: *Araghchi*

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the US's "excessive demands" hampered an agreement during the negotiations in Pakistan aimed at a conclusive end to the US-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic.

Araghchi made the remarks in separate phone calls with his Saudi and French counterparts days after the talks between Iranian and American delegations in the Pakistani capital of Islamabad ended without a breakthrough.

"Despite progress on many issues discussed, the US prevented the achievement of an agreement due to its approach of excessive demands and the continuous change of its demands," Araghchi told French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot on Monday.

Araghchi and his Saudi counterpart, Faisal bin Farhan, also exchanged views on the negotiations between Iran and the US following the announcement of a temporary ceasefire and risks arising from Washington's provocative acts.

While emphasizing Iran's responsible and good-will approach in accepting the ceasefire and entering the negotiations, the Iranian top diplomat said,



Abbas Araghchi

"Unfortunately, we witnessed the continuation of the American side's excessive demands in the negotiations and this obstructed any result."

Also on Monday, Araghchi held a telephone conversation with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassem Al Thani.

During the call, Araghchi said that Iran has acted decisively in defending its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Iran, he said, entered the diplomatic process to preserve its national interests and protect regional peace and security.

The Qatari foreign minister also voiced his country's support for mediation efforts

to end the war.

The Iranian foreign minister also warned against the perilous consequences of provocative US actions in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, emphasizing that such reckless moves endanger peace and security not only in the region but across the entire world. He made the remarks in a telephone conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday. Following recent threats by US President Donald Trump to impose a naval blockade on Iran, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) declared that it would enforce a blockade in the Sea of Oman and the Arabian Sea east of the Strait of Hormuz, effective from 17:30 Tehran time on Monday.

The announcement stated that the measure would cover all vessel traffic irrespective of their flag.

Iran has categorically rejected any illegitimate US attempt to interfere in its sovereign waters.

Iran's military warned that any threat to the country's ports would trigger a broader regional response, declaring that no port in the Persian Gulf or the Sea of Oman would remain secure if Iranian ports are targeted.

Iran as 'victim of aggression' seeks reparations from Arab states

International Desk

Iran demanded compensation from five Arab nations for committing internationally wrongful acts by allowing their territories to be used by aggressors and in some cases directly participating in unlawful armed attacks against Iran.

In a letter addressed to Secretary General António Guterres and Security Council President Jamal Fares Alrowaie, Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative Amir Saeid Irvani rejected recent compensation demands from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Jordan and said that under the present circumstances, the named states cannot lawfully invoke Article 51 of the UN Charter (the right to self-defense) vis-à-vis Iran as they facilitated the US-Israel aggression.

Instead, Tehran asserts that it is "the victim of aggression" and is exercising its inherent right of self-defense, he added in the letter. The letter further states that in some instances, unlawful armed attacks against civilian targets inside Iran have been carried out directly by those states.

The Iranian mission demanded that the five countries should immediately cease their internationally wrongful acts of allowing their territories to be used by aggressors and, in certain cases, engaging in direct unlawful armed attacks against Iran. By those acts, he added, they have breached their international obligations towards Iran under international law, thereby engaging their international responsibility.

Irvani reiterated that they should make



Firefighters conduct rescue operation at the site of an airstrike during the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in the central city of Qom, Iran, on April 6, 2026.

● MIZAN

full reparations to Iran, including compensation for all material and moral damage sustained as a result of their internationally wrongful acts.

US-Israeli war inflicts \$270b damage

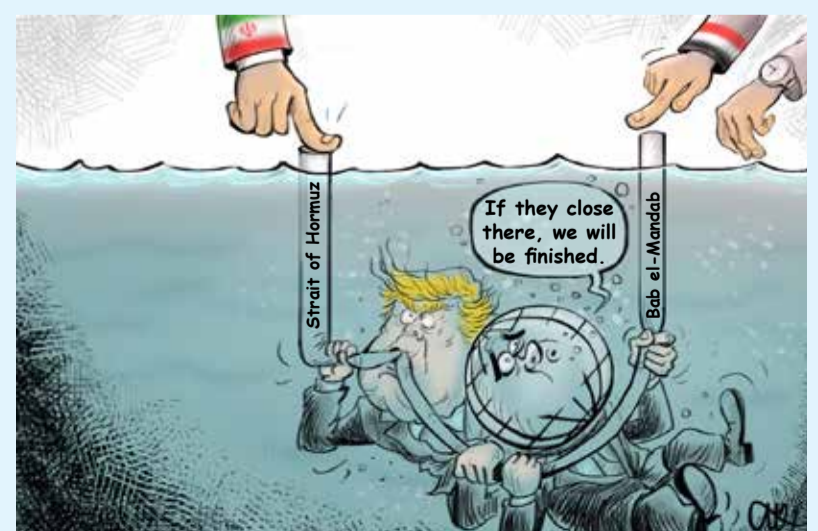
The government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani has said the country's preliminary assessment of the damage caused by the unprovoked US-Israeli aggression has reached \$270 billion, stressing that the figure may change.

On Friday, the president of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said more than 125,000 civilian structures had been either destroyed or severely damaged because of the aggression.

Pir-Hossein Koulivand identified 100,000 of the structures as residential properties and 23,500 as commercial centers.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran ranked OPEC's second-largest producer for first time in 12 years

Economy Desk

Iran has become OPEC's second-largest producer for the first time in 12 years as Arab output fell amid the 40-day conflict, while the price of its heavy crude surged \$57.51 to \$124.10 per barrel in March, the producer group's latest report showed.

The country has climbed to second place within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries for the first time in 12 years, following sharp production declines among Arab member states in the region, according to OPEC's latest report.

OPEC reported Iran's oil production in March at 3.06 million barrels per day. Based on the report, with severe production cuts among Arab countries in the region, Iran rose to the position of OPEC's second-largest producer in March 2026. This marks the first time in 12 years since the implementation of oil sanctions against Iran. Iran had been OPEC's second-largest producer after Saudi Arabia until 2014, but lost that position in 2015 with the intensification of US sanctions. The US-Israeli war against Iran, which began on February 28, has proven very costly for Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, and OPEC's recent report confirms this.

Iran's oil price rises \$57 month-on-month

OPEC's latest monthly report also

showed that the price of each barrel of Iran's heavy crude in March reached \$124.10, an increase of \$57.51 compared to the previous month.

According to ISNA, the price of each barrel of Iran's heavy crude rose from \$66.59 in February to \$124.10 in March. The average price of Iran's heavy crude from the beginning of 2026 has been \$84.77 per barrel compared to \$77.31 in the same period of 2025.

The OPEC basket average in March reached \$116.36 compared to \$67.90 in February, showing a monthly increase of \$48.46. The OPEC basket average from the beginning of 2026 through March reached \$82.96 compared to \$76.77 in the same period of 2025.

OPEC cuts Q2 oil demand forecast

According to Reuters, OPEC on Monday lowered its forecast for world oil demand in the second quarter by 500,000 barrels per day, the producer group's monthly oil report showed in its first public assessment of the Iran war's impact on the market.

The war has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil route, shutting in millions of barrels of Middle East production and sending fuel prices soaring. The price surge is pressuring consumers and businesses

across the globe, and triggering government action to conserve supplies.

Global oil demand is projected to average 105.07 million bpd in the second quarter, OPEC's report said, down from the 105.57 million bpd forecast in last month's report.

Based on OPEC's report, Saudi Arabia's oil production in March decreased by 2.314 million bpd compared to the previous month, reaching 7.799 million bpd. Iraq's oil production also decreased by 2.563 million bpd in that month, the UAE by 1.527 million bpd, and Kuwait by 1.369 million bpd.

Iran's oil production in that month decreased by only 182,000 bpd.

The country's Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad said on Tuesday, "Colleagues in the oil industry on Kharg Island, with brilliant performance, did not allow even a one-day halt in oil exports, and oil sales during this period have also been desirable and encouraging."

The UAE, with production of 1.892 million bpd, was OPEC's third-largest producer in March.

Except for Nigeria and Venezuela, all OPEC members faced production declines in March, which indicates that even oil production in countries not located in the Persian Gulf region has been affected by conflicts in the region.



Nigeria's oil production increased by 22,000 bpd in March and Venezuela's by 79,000 bpd, but Libya's oil production decreased by 7,000 bpd, Gabon's by 5,000 bpd, Equatorial Guinea's by 2,000 bpd, Congo's by 11,000 bpd, and Algeria's by 1,000 bpd.

Four-percent price rise

According to Tasnim, based on the latest data published on the Oil Price website on Monday, prices of various types of Iranian oil increased by 4% on that day. Accordingly, the price of each barrel of Iran's light crude for delivery in

the northwest Europe region reached \$98.87. Iran's heavy crude and Forouzan crude were traded at prices of \$96.97 and \$97.22 respectively in that region.

In the Mediterranean region, Iran's light crude was recorded at \$98.22 and heavy crude at \$96.07. Forouzan crude was also priced at \$96.32 per barrel.

The highest price for Iranian oil was at Egypt's Sidi Kerir port, where each barrel of Iran's light crude was priced at \$100.12 in that region. Iran's heavy crude in that region was announced at \$97.97 and Forouzan crude at \$98.22 per barrel.

US-sanctioned ships pass Hormuz as China raps Trump's blockade



A screenshot from MarineTraffic shows the locations of ships near the Strait of Hormuz.
 ● MARINE TRAFFIC

er, Rich Starry, is expected to be the first to leave the Persian Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz since the blockade took effect, based on LSEG and Kpler data.

The ship and its owner, Shanghai Xuanrun Shipping Co. Ltd., have been sanctioned by the United States for dealings with Iran.

LSEG data showed Rich Starry, a medium-range tanker, is carrying roughly 250,000 barrels of methanol loaded at its most recent port of call, Hamriyah in the UAE. The vessel is Chinese-owned and crewed by Chinese nationals, the report by Press TV added.

China's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday said the blockade move would increase regional tensions. It did not specify whether any Chinese vessels were transiting the strait.

"The US increased military operations and took a targeted blockade

action, which will only exacerbate tensions and undermine the already fragile ceasefire agreement and further jeopardize safety of passage through the Strait of Hormuz," Guo told a news conference in Beijing.

China vows countermeasures

China also vowed to impose "countermeasures" in response to Trump's threats of new tariffs on its goods entering the United States if Beijing provided military assistance to Iran during the conflict involving the Islamic Republic.

"If the US insists on using this as an excuse to impose additional tariffs on China, China will definitely take resolute countermeasures," Guo said.

The senior Chinese diplomat further said that reports of China providing weapons to Iran "are completely fabricated."

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeed Iravani, called the blockade a "grave violation" of Iran's sovereignty, saying the measure was "unlawful."

Eastern border trade posts 30% surge after war as basic supplies secured



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Iran has maintained uninterrupted supplies of basic and consumer goods during a 40-day military onslaught that began late February, while trade transit through its eastern and northeastern borders has grown by approximately 30% compared to pre-war levels, a senior trade actor said.

Ensuring the supply of imported goods, particularly essential and consumer items needed by the population, has been among the country's top priorities during crisis and wartime conditions. Over the past six weeks, despite military attacks on the country and public concerns about potential shortages of essential items, officials have repeatedly stated that basic goods supplies have remained fully secured during wartime, and that no shortages would be felt even if the conflict were to continue for several months.

Kazem Shirdel, a member of the Khorasan Razavi Province Exporters Union, vice president of the Iran-Tajikistan Joint Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the joint commercial committees with Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, said that following the 40-day US-Israeli military attack on Iran that began on February 28, commercial exchanges through the country's eastern and northeastern borders have continued robustly, with transit and commercial traffic showing about 30% growth compared to before the war.

"In the meantime, export restrictions and prohibitions imposed by the government on the agricultural and food sectors, which were adopted with the aim of maintaining domestic market stability, meeting the country's essential needs in wartime conditions, preventing potential goods shortages, controlling price fluctuations, and ensuring citizens' access to needed products, are gradually returning to normal and pre-war conditions," Shirdel said.

"Since the start of the war and at present, there are no problems at the Dogharun border (toward Afghanistan) and the Sarakhs border (the route for exports and imports to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and other Central Asian countries), and commercial exchanges through these routes are ongoing. Even some other provinces have been exporting their goods through these routes since the war began," he said.

"Transit and export/import infrastructure to Central Asia and Afghanistan is in place, and in this regard, the efforts of public and private



Kazem Shirdel

sector officials and their coordination and interaction have been very effective. For example, at the Dogharun border, the trade gateway to Afghanistan, where normally between 1,100 and 1,200 trucks crossed daily before the war, after the war started, daily truck traffic reached 1,800," Shirdel said.

"In the period after the war, transit and commercial exchanges at the Sarakhs border have grown between 30% and 40%. Also, the volume of goods transfer, truck and train traffic, and rail transport toward Central Asia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia via the Sarakhs border has seen significant growth," he added.

The increase in truck and goods transport traffic has resulted from reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and facilitation measures that have sped up work, Shirdel said. Faster border crossings have resulted from solidarity and effective cooperation among involved organs and sectors, including measures such as accelerating responses to quarantine standards for goods and extending working hours at goods entry and exit points.

"Of course, this acceleration in commercial affairs at borders has not meant reduced standards, but has been made possible by extending working hours at goods entry and exit points. In the energy sector, for example, regarding diesel exports via rail wagons to Afghanistan and Central Asia, during the war period and at present, crossings are proceeding without problems," Shirdel added.

Neighbors' aid

"In recent days, 107 trucks from Tajikistan's private and public sectors have sent humanitarian aid. Also, some humanitarian aid has arrived from Uzbekistan. These aids were delivered via trucks at the Sarakhs border to Iran's Red Crescent," Shirdel said.

"Of course, Iran also fulfilled its neighborhood duty toward bordering countries during the coronavirus pandemic and provided aid; even a plane carrying medicine and medical aid was sent from Tehran and Mashhad to Tajikistan," he added.

Pakistan opens Iran transit corridor to Central Asia

Economy Desk

Trade activity through the newly launched Iran-Pakistan transit corridor officially started on Monday with the dispatch of the first export shipment from Pakistan.

Sanaullah Abro, director of transit trade customs, told The Express Tribune that the maiden shipment — frozen meat — was sent to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, via refrigerated trucks.

Abro said that under the new arrangement, goods from Pakistan will move through Gwadar, cross into Iran, and then proceed toward Central Asian

destinations.

He added that the launch of the corridor is expected to stimulate Pakistan's economic growth and boost freight movement through the country's ports.

According to the Directorate of Transit Trade Customs, the corridor operates under the TIR (Transports Internationaux Routiers) system. To facilitate this, authorities have streamlined TIR procedures and activated major border points, including Taftan, Rimdan, Sost, and Gwadar.

Officials describe the Iran-Pakistan transit corridor as an important ad-



vancement for Pakistan's trade and transit sectors, with the potential to expand exports and strengthen regional connectivity. They said the route will offer Pakistan a cost-efficient alternative to maritime trade, reducing transport times and significantly cutting logistics expenses.

Persian Gulf states understand logic of power well



By Mohammad Farazmand
Former Iranian ambassador to Turkey and Bahrain

OPINION

I shall provide responses to three questions during this convocation: First, why did this conflagration assume a regional dimension?

Second, what shall be the security arrangements of the region in the aftermath of the war?

Third and most important, what shall be the nature of Iran's relations with the nations of the Persian Gulf and beyond, and what are the prospective scenarios?

First things first. In my estimation, there exists a singular, uncomplicated rationale: Iran refused to be a predetermined loser in a war that had targeted its existence, its history, and its civilization. Had this conflict not acquired regional proportions, Iran would have lost the war in advance. The nation's political and strategic decision-makers had already proclaimed this, correctly and with meticulous precision; among them was the martyred Leader, who stated, "should an act of aggression occur, the war shall become extensive and regional." Numerous rationales and pieces of evidence exist for the regionalization of the war. I shall cite several instances:

First, during past wars and prior confrontations, including Operation True Promise 1, Operation True Promise 2, and the 12-Day War, it was unequivocally demonstrated that American bases in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East — the Americans possess 15 bases in West Asia, 9 of which are permanent installations — were entirely involved in combat operations. These operations were not solely defensive nor merely for countering projectiles; radar and refueling capabilities were utilized. Iran had not yet crossed that historical threshold of launching a large-scale assault upon American bases situated within neighboring countries, except for one measured and entirely managed response to the American base at Al Udeid in Qatar and, prior to that, in 2020, to the Ain al-Asad base.

The 12-Day War compelled Iran, in its subsequent trajectory and within its prognostications for the next war, to arrive at a determination and to prepare an exceedingly precise target bank. This decision had been made in advance: should America and Israel attack, Iran would no longer heed the traditional pronouncements of its neighbors asserting, "we are not participants in this war" and "American bases are not offensive installations." Iran resolved not to accept this utterly fallacious and fictitious narrative and to assail those bases and, consequently, other American interests within the region.

Furthermore, after 47 years — nearly half a century — of contemplating the utilization of the Hormuz Strait leverage, Iran was compelled to employ this leverage. This was not a war wherein defeat would signify mere political loss; defeat in this war had no end. As Trump declared, they had targeted our identity, our civilization, and our existence.

This is a thoroughly objective rationale accompanied by corroborating evidence. During the Ramadan War as well, the Americans exhibited no reticence whatsoever in making public their utilization of Persian Gulf regional bases. Not only did they not deny this, but



DAVID PLUNKERT/BLOOMBERG

they also disseminated evidence, indications, and documentation that made it unequivocally clear these bases were engaged in the conflict. Among these was, on the 30th day of the war, CENTCOM's release of an image depicting a destroyed AWACS at the Sultan Air Base, located to the south of Riyadh. Prior to that, a rumor had arisen regarding our having struck five aerial refueling planes, and Trump tweeted that the planes "were not struck or destroyed". CENTCOM released another, quite astonishing, image: artillery fire from a desert area directed toward Iran. This image clarified that an assault upon Iran was being conducted with artillery from a location within the Arabian Peninsula. From a conceptual standpoint, furthermore, it is impossible to imagine that America would enter a war in West Asia while CENTCOM remained inactive and neutral. CENTCOM's area of responsibility stretches from the Indian Ocean to North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. Were CENTCOM to remain neutral in America's wars within this region and refrain from utilizing its capabilities, there would exist no rationale for its presence.

Another conceptual indication is this: when you prepare for a war across five decades, the defensive and security strategy of Saudi Arabia and its allied nations within the Persian Gulf region had been designed based upon the perception of Iran as a threat and based upon waging war against Iran. The primary mission of the bases located in this region is Iran. Just as Iran, too, had prepared and equipped itself across five decades for the moment of war against Israel and America.

When four parties — namely, America, Israel, the Arab nations, and Iran — prepare for the moment of war across five decades, inevitably that war shall occur, as indeed it did. Notwithstanding the fact that, across two or three stages, it was tested whether this war could be kept contained. Following Israel's attack upon our consulate in Damascus in 2024, which elicited Iran's response; following the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh and the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, again a contained war was tested, and ultimately we arrived at the 12-Day War and subsequently the Ramadan War. Hence, a five-decade-long preparedness existed, and this preparedness eventually culminated in confrontation. Another rationale that rendered

this war inevitable is the profound asymmetry and the chasm between the security and military strategies of the two sides of the Persian Gulf. To the degree that, across the past five decades, we have moved toward autonomy in security and toward indigenous, independent military strategies, our neighboring nations have moved toward dependency to the same degree.

Concurrent with this security and military asymmetry, a severe economic asymmetry also took shape. The sanctioning of Iran coincided with the accumulation of wealth on the other side of the Persian Gulf, and each side considered the other's assets as its own. Iran justifiably believed that what transpires on the opposite shore regarding economic matters is a direct consequence of sanctions and the unrighteous exploitation by its southern neighbors because they possessed not the slightest regard for the interests of their neighbor. A salient example is the shared gas field with Qatar: had Iran not been under sanctions, such unilateral accumulation of wealth on the opposite shore would not have occurred.

Another point is that Iran has consistently felt that, to its south, along the southern littorals of the Persian Gulf, it possesses no beneficial neighbors. Oman is an exception; Oman has been a wholly respectable and beneficial neighbor to Iran, and Iran has likewise been beneficial to Oman. Regarding the other neighbors, however, even during periods devoid of tension, it was peculiar that no benefit whatsoever came to Iran. We have had two or three renewals of relations

with Saudi Arabia, but each time they advanced only to the point where they felt reassured of not sustaining harm. In the 2023 Beijing Agreement as well, it became entirely evident that Saudi Arabia's objective in that agreement was to remain immune, in the event of war — which had become probable since 2023 — due to political relations.

Therefore, when Iran decided to respond to the attacks by America and Israel and to strike the bases, it harbored no concern whatsoever regarding the jeopardization of any specific interests. The sole neighbor that might have been conceived as assisting Iran in economic matters was the United Arab Emirates, which constituted our third or fourth economic partner. However, Iran's commercial relations with Dubai had taken shape at a time when Abu Dhabi did not play the destructive role it assumes today. Subsequently, the sanctioning of the Emirates' aggressive policy and betrayal. Over the past two years, the Emirates has secured from all of its friendly nations, including China and Russia, statements against Iran's territorial integrity and has intensified pressure within international community concerning the three islands. But Iran, from a certain point onward, decided to set aside these considerations.



During the Ramadan War as well, the Americans exhibited no reticence whatsoever in making public their utilization of Persian Gulf regional bases. Not only did they not deny this, but they also disseminated evidence, indications, and documentation that made it unequivocally clear these bases were engaged in the conflict.

Region's security arrangements after war

A discourse frequently reiterated in various circles is that the Persian Gulf Arabs have realized that American bases do not provide security and that they might distance themselves. Qatar has articulated these discussions with greater explicitness. In my estimation, however, no alteration shall occur in the dependency of the Persian Gulf Arab nations upon America because no alternative exists.

The bases currently situated in the region, many of them were initially established for other missions: the Sultan Air Base in 1990 to contain Iraq; the Al Udeid base in Qatar following an explosion at the Al Kharj base and due to Saudi-Qatari rivalry; the Kuwaiti bases are products of the war and the liberation of Kuwait. Subsequently, however, their primary mission became enmity toward Iran, and our neighboring nations exercised no control whatsoever over America's missions.

The first doubts regarding the utility of these bases arose during the 12-Day War, when the Israelis attacked Hamas leaders in Qatar and the Al Udeid base did nothing. The Qataris again referred the matter to the Americans.

These nations find themselves in an exceedingly difficult position. The absolute losers of this war were the Persian Gulf Arab nations. Their military strategy led them into the war; American bases did not defend them, and America did not even consult with them regarding the decision to go to war or to declare a cease-fire. They lack the option of independence because, fundamentally, a national ethos or an independence movement has never existed within these countries. Their independence is the product of an agreement among great powers, and they have always relied upon an external force; even for fear of one another.

The scenarios before them are constrained: hybrid outsourcing to Europe (which is feeble), or to regional powers such as Turkey, Pakistan, or Egypt (experience demonstrated these add no value), or to Russia and China (China possesses no military disposition, and there exists no precedent for Russo-American security cooperation). Consequently, they have no recourse except to return to reliance upon America and must establish an equilibrium between this reliance and Iran — which has entered a different league entirely.

Relations with Persian Gulf nations following war

I harbor no apprehension whatsoever regarding the restoration of relations with the Persian Gulf nations. These nations possess a good comprehension of the logic of power. We endeavored assiduously, through the language of gentleness and by rendering ourselves equal, to establish a different kind of relationship, but we received no positive response. Now, they have realized that Iran plays in another league, and they shall assuredly strive for a normalization of circumstances. Except for the Emirates, which expelled our ambassador, the remaining nations exhibited limited reactions.

Following this war, which, God willing, shall conclude with honor and triumph, we must resolve our issues with each nation individually. We are now at another level and in another league, and neighboring countries must compete with one another in friendship with Iran, not in hostility.

The full article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



A post on X by the US Central Command (@CENTCOM) dated April 6, 2026, shows American servicemen preparing M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) in a desert area, presumably within the Arabian Peninsula, to fire at Iran.

Amid Iran war, Persian Gulf countries slow the pace of reforms

By Sarah Yerkes & Amr Hamzawy
Senior fellows at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

OPINION

The US-Israel war on Iran, coupled with the halted pattern of Iranian attacks on Persian Gulf states, is profoundly reshaping the political and social landscape of the Arabian Peninsula. What had previously appeared to be a cautiously evolving regional order is now under significant strain. Across the Persian Gulf, governments are recalibrating their priorities in response to rising insecurity while societies are absorbing the consequences of heightened geopolitical tension. Security has regained primacy in the region, leading to a broad slowdown, distortion, and in some cases contraction of already limited reform trajectories. Iranian attacks targeting infrastructure, shipping routes, and strategic facilities — whether carried out directly or through Iran-backed groups — have heightened perceptions of vulnerability across Persian Gulf states. These developments are embedded within a broader war dynamic involving the United States and Israel, which has reintroduced large-scale military confrontation into a region that had, until recently, been tentatively moving toward de-escalation. The return of war as a central organizing factor in regional politics has predictable consequences: governments are prioritizing regime stability, tightening internal controls, and becoming increasingly risk-averse regarding political and social reform.

Oman and Qatar pull back

In countries such as Oman and Qatar, the current crisis is driving a noticeable shift away from openness. Oman's political model has long relied on quiet diplomacy, internal consensus-building, and modest reform efforts. It has played a key role in resolving regional conflicts, including facilitating the secret US-Iran talks that led to the 2015 nuclear agreement and, along with Kuwait, working to end the four-year blockade of Qatar in 2021. Over the past decade, the country has pursued economic restructuring under its Vision 2040 plan (which intends to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons to below 10 percent of GDP) alongside administrative reforms aimed at improving state efficiency. However, the regional conflict is narrowing this space. Faced with external threats and economic uncertainty, Omani authorities are increasingly prioritizing stability over experimentation. Reform initiatives are being reassessed through a risk-management lens, with heightened emphasis on preserving social cohesion and preventing internal disruption. The result is a slowing of reform momentum in government agencies as well as in civil society, and a subtle tightening of permissible public discourse in a country that already highly restricts freedom of expression and media. While this does not amount to a complete reversal, it marks a clear shift from gradual economic opening to cautious consolidation.

A similar, though distinct, trajectory is evident in Qatar. Over the past two decades, Qatar has



Foreign workers look at a tall plume of black smoke that ascends following a strike on the Fujairah industrial zone on March 3, 2026.

● FAREH SEHNA/ATP

cultivated an image of global engagement, economic dynamism, and controlled openness, hosting the World Cup and serving as the home of Al Jazeera. Qatar's development of "Education City" in Doha, which houses branches of various American, British, and French universities, has raised the country's profile globally. Its governance model allows for very limited participation and expression for the country's citizens (who themselves make up a small share of the population in comparison to expatriates), while its economy emphasizes innovation and international connectivity. Yet Qatar's strategic position — hosting key US military assets, maintaining complex regional relationships (balancing those military assets while also hosting Hamas's political bureau), and acting as a diplomatic intermediary — makes it particularly sensitive to regional instability.

The pressures of war are reinforcing what was already strict state control over the public sphere. Qatari authorities are becoming even more vigilant in managing information flows. The emphasis is on unity and resilience, leaving little tolerance for ambiguity or contestation. As in Oman, reform has not been halted but recalibrated, with control taking precedence over openness in civil society and media arenas. Economic and technological initiatives may continue, but political space is becoming more constrained.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE clamp down

In contrast, in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the war's impact is more clearly visible in the further tightening of already controlled public environments. Previously, both countries had embarked on ambitious transformation agendas aimed at diversifying their economies, attracting global investment, and positioning themselves as hubs of innovation and

culture. These efforts were accompanied by selective social liberalization. In Saudi Arabia, reforms over the past few years have had a real impact on the country's social life, including permitting women to drive and allowing some cinemas to exist and public concerts to take place.

However, this limited social liberalization occurred alongside increased political repression, in a country that already has a strong centralized authority and very limited political pluralism. In 2025, Saudi Arabia carried out more than 300 executions — a record number for the country. The current security environment is reinforcing this framework. The Saudi leadership's emphasis on national transformation under external threat is leading to further consolidation of control. Public discourse is increasingly framed in terms of national security, unity, and loyalty. Saudi Arabia's "Photography serves the enemy" campaign is a symbol of the criminalization of coverage of the current war's impact. The country is particularly sensitive about photos and videos online that contradict the government's public statements about the war. The United Arab Emirates exhibits a similar pattern. In the face of Iranian attacks and regional instability, Emirati authorities are intensifying their focus on surveillance, regulatory oversight, and control of public space. The country is using its harsh Federal Penal Code and Cybercrime Law to silence anyone critical of the government. More than 100 people in the UAE, including tourists, have been arrested under these laws, and the country's public prosecutor has blocked access to several X accounts for filming or posting information or images of the Iranian strikes. The goal is to shore up the image of the UAE as a safe and secure place and to maintain investor confidence. However, this comes at the cost of further restricting the

already narrow avenues for public participation and debate.

Bahrain and Kuwait forestall reform for security

This tightening across the Persian Gulf reflects deeper structural dynamics. Persian Gulf states are highly exposed to external shocks due to their hydrocarbon-dependent economic models, demographics where very small minorities of the population hold citizenship, and strategic geographies. Iranian attacks underscore the vulnerability of critical infrastructure, including energy facilities, ports, data centers, and cities, throwing into question the image of stability and attractiveness the region has sought to project. In such an environment, governments are less willing to tolerate the uncertainties associated with political opening. The balance shifts decisively in favor of control, upending the limited reforms governments were embarking on before the current war.

At the same time, beneath the surface of heightened state control, there are growing signs of social distress and tension, particularly in countries like Bahrain and Kuwait. These cases highlight the complex interplay between external conflict and internal dynamics, as well as the limits of security-centered governance approaches.

In Bahrain, longstanding political and sectarian divisions are being exacerbated by the broader confrontation with Iran. While the government's security-oriented policies have maintained order, they have not resolved underlying grievances related to political representation, economic opportunity, and social inclusion. The regional escalation adds a new layer of tension, as external conflict intersects with internal fault lines between the Shia majority and ruling Sunni minority. The result is a form of latent instability, where social frustrations persist beneath a surface of enforced calm.

Kuwait presents a different but equally instructive scenario. Its relatively open political system and a tradition of public debate distinguishes it from many of its neighbors. However, this openness also makes it more vulnerable to internal tensions during periods of external stress. Political gridlock resulting in the suspension of parliament in 2024, economic challenges, and societal divisions can become more pronounced in the context of regional conflict. The war with Iran, along with associated security and stability



Foreign workers look at a tall plume of black smoke that ascends following a strike on the Fujairah industrial zone on March 3, 2026.

● FAREH SEHNA/ATP



In the face of Iranian retaliatory attacks and regional instability, Emirati authorities are intensifying their focus on surveillance, regulatory oversight, and control of public space. The country is using its harsh Federal Penal Code and Cybercrime Law to silence anyone critical of the government. More than 100 people in the UAE, including tourists, have been arrested under these laws, and the country's public prosecutor has blocked access to several X accounts for filming or posting information or images of the Iranian strikes.



Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (C) inspects the country's International Airport on March 27, 2026, after Iran's eye-for-an-eye war tactic targeted fuel tanks.

● SOCIAL MEDIA

concerns, is contributing to uncertainty that complicates governance and strains the existing political equilibrium that has already been unraveling before the war began.

These internal dynamics are unfolding within a broader geopolitical context shaped by renewed US military engagement in the region. While Persian Gulf governments continue to rely on American security guarantees, they are also acutely aware of the historical record of US interventions, particularly in Iraq. The legacy of state collapse, prolonged instability, and unintended consequences serves as a cautionary backdrop.

The current intervention risks reproducing some of these patterns by escalating tensions and contributing to a volatile regional environment. This creates a dilemma for Persian Gulf states: they depend on external security support but also bear the costs of instability. This tension reinforces a defensive posture in which governments prioritize immediate security concerns over long-term reform agendas.

Foreign intervention also has subtler domestic effects. It strengthens hardline tendencies within states, as leaders become more risk-averse and less inclined to pursue political reform. It shifts public expectations, with populations placing greater emphasis on security and economic stability rather than political participation. It also alters the balance between state and society, reinforcing centralized and hierarchical governance structures. In this sense, the war's impact extends beyond policy adjustments to affect the underlying logic of governance.

The cumulative effect of these dynamics is the disruption of the fragile balance that had been emerging in the Persian Gulf between controlled reform and political stability. In recent years, several Persian Gulf states had experimented with governance models combining economic modernization with limited social and administrative reforms. These models were inherently dependent on stable regional conditions and the absence of major external shocks. The current war represents precisely the type of shock they are ill-equipped to absorb.

As a result, reform trajectories are stalling, backsliding, or being redefined. Economic diversification efforts continue out of necessity but are increasingly decoupled from political reform. Social openings are being recalibrated to emphasize control and repression, while governance improvements related to transparency, accountability, and participation are being deferred or diluted.

This does not imply a full return to pre-reform conditions. The economic, social, and institutional changes of the past decade are too significant to be entirely reversed. However, the direction of change is shifting. Instead of gradual expansion of public space and incremental political liberalization, the region is moving toward a model of managed modernization under heightened control akin to the decade following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the decade following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The full article was first published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.



Asian Wrestling Championships: Valizadeh, Azimi steal the show, emerge as global contenders

Sports Desk

It was business as usual for Iranian freestyle wrestling at the newly finished Asian Championships in Bishkek.

A remarkable haul of eight medals, including four golds, across 10 weight classes saw the global powerhouse finish atop the standings with 178 points – 16 clear of second-placed India – and claim a ninth continental team title in a decade on Sunday. While the title-winning runs for Kamran Qassempour and Amirhossein Zare', who share nine world and Olympic medals between them, were nothing beyond expectation, their compatriots Milad Valizadeh and Mohammad-Mobin Azimi introduced themselves as two new contenders in their respective categories by grabbing gold in the Kyrgyz



Milad Valizadeh (L) and Mohammad-Mobin Azimi celebrate with the Iranian flag after grabbing freestyle gold medals at the Asian Wrestling Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. **IAWFIR**

capital. Valizadeh built on last year's Asian silver and world U23 bronze to dominate the 57kg division, finishing off with a 14-3

victory over Mongolian Munkh Erdene Batkhuyag in the final – the first gold medal for Iran in this weight class since Reza Atri's triumph in 2019.

Batkhuyag suffered an apparent rib injury while scoring a stepout midway through the first period, which cut Valizadeh's lead to 4-3. After the restart, Valizadeh – who

had outmuscled India's Ankush (10-0) and Japan's Fuga Sasaki (11-0) en route to the final – shot in for a takedown, at which point Batkhuyag seemed to have

stopped fighting. But Valizadeh didn't, and flipped the lifeless Batkhuyag back and forth until he piled up enough points for a superiority victory that ended the match at 1:47 on Saturday.

Meanwhile, world U23 champion Azimi, who moved down to 92kg after taking a bronze at 97kg last year, was also in a league of his own.

The Iranian finished an 11-0 victory over Russian-born Magomed Sharipov, who represented Bahrain, with just under a minute to go – and 10 seconds after scoring his first takedown of the final on Sunday.

Azimi built up a 7-0 lead with a flurry of stepouts – five in all – before combining a takedown and gut wrench to conclude the match at 5:01.

The result meant that Azimi scored a total of 26 points across three bouts, not conceding a single point, in Bishkek.

It also saw the 23-year-old stake a claim for a place in the national team for September's World Championships, though he will still have to see off domestic competition from his compatriot Amirhossein Firouzpour, who won world bronze in Zagreb last year.

World Taekwondo Junior Championships: Khodaei wins boys' gold, takes Iran's tally to two medals

Sports Desk

Mohammad-Erfan Khodaei pushed Iran's medal count to two at the 15th World Taekwondo Junior Championships, clinching gold on the second day of action in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Competing in the boys' -55kg weight class, Khodaei dominated at the Olympic Sports Complex on Monday, winning all six of his bouts without dropping a single round.

In the final, Khodaei was unstoppable against Poland's Antoni Sokolowski, sweeping the match in consecutive rounds to claim the title.

His campaign began with a commanding 2-0 victory over El Salvador's Astorga Melgar. He followed that with identical straight-



Iran's Mohammad-Erfan Khodaei (red) is seen in action against Poland's Antoni Sokolowski in the boys' -55kg final at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on April 13, 2026. **WORLD TAEKWONDO**

round sweeps against rivals from Malaysia and Albania. The Iranian prodigy contin-

ued his impressive run by defeating Chinese Taipei's Po-Yu Cheng in the quarter-

finals before beating the Kazakh representative to book a place in the final.

Pinar Lotfizadeh had opened Iran's account on Day 1, settling for a consolation bronze in the girls' -59kg class after a last-four defeat to her Chinese opponent on Sunday.

Elsewhere on Monday, Khodaei's compatriots Taha Nazer (boys' -48kg) and Dina Babarhim (girls' -55kg) fell short of the podium.

The 15th edition of the competition – featuring 986 competitors from 115 countries – will run for six days. Iran bagged 11 medals at the previous edition in Chuncheon, South Korea, in 2024, including a remarkable seven golds, to complete a clean sweep of the team titles.

Iran names women's team for Asian taekwondo meet

Sports Desk

Head coach Mahrouz Saei has confirmed Iran's women's team for the upcoming Asian Taekwondo Championships.

The 27th edition of the continental showcase will get underway in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on May 21.

The Iranian team trials took place during the two-week national team training camp, with eight contestants coming out on top in their respective weight classes.

The Olympic silver medalist Nahid Kiani, who has recently recovered from surgery on her injured knee, will headline the Iranian squad in the Mongolian capital, look-

ing to add to her four Asian medals when competing in the -57kg weight class. Mobina Ne'matzadeh – a bronze medalist at the Paris 2024 Olympics – will represent the country in the -53kg contest, aiming to build on her gold-winning campaign in last December's U21 World Championships.

The high-profile duo will be joined by former world senior silver medalist and two-time world cadet champion Mahla Mo'menzadeh, who will vie for glory in the -49kg event.

Yalda Valinejad, meanwhile, will step into the -62kg contest on the back of a silver medal at last November's Islamic Solidarity Games in



taekwondo.ir

Riyadh. Ma'soumeh Ranjbar (-46kg), Fereshteh Fat'hi (-67kg), Baran Ne'mati (-73kg), and Fatemeh Ahmadi (+73kg) complete the Iranian women's team in Ulaanbaatar.

Winners of a maiden women's team title in 2022, Iran had to settle for a sixth-place finish at the Asian Championships in 2024, collecting a bronze and a silver medal in Da Nang, Vietnam.

Piazza calls up Iran's 30-man squad for Volleyball Nations League

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Roberto Piazza has named a provisional 30-man roster for the upcoming FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League.

The Asian heavyweight will get its campaign underway with a daunting test against Brazil in Brasilia on June 10. The two sides also met on the opening day of the annual event last year in the Brazilian capital, with the South American powerhouse emerging victorious in straight sets.

In his second year in charge, the Italian coach has again lined up a young squad for the global showpiece, ignoring the so-called 'Golden Generation' of Iranian volleyball – namely the veteran trio of Milad Ebadipour, Seyyed Mohammad Mousavi, and Amir Ghafour.

The national team's first training camp will begin in the northern Iranian city of Noor on May 1, with Iranian champion Foolad Sirjan's players – who are set to compete at the AVC Men's Champions League from May 13 – as well as overseas players joining the rest of the squad after concluding their club duties.

Tricky tests will come thick and fast in Week 1 of the preliminaries for Piazza's men, who will take on Bulgaria – finalists at last September's World Championships – on June 11, before facing Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium.

Iran also played Argentina and Bulgaria in last year's edition, defeating the former 3-1 before conclud-



FIVB

ing the preliminary phase with a straight-sets win against the European powerhouse.

Iran will then visit Orleans, France, for the second week of action, starting with a mammoth task against the host and reigning Olympic champion France at the CO'Met Arena on June 24. This will be followed by matches against the United States (June 25), Japan (June 26), and Cuba (June 28).

The third and final week of the preliminaries will see the Iranian men go head-to-head with Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, with further tests against Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17), and Türkiye (July 19). The top eight teams in the 18-team standings will progress to the VNL Finals, which will begin in Ningbo Beilun, China, on July 29. China is already guaranteed a place in the quarterfinals as the host.

Iran will aim to build on a promising first year under Piazza by securing its first quarterfinal berth in four years at the prestigious tournament. After finishing in the bottom three in the two previous editions, Iran staged a late surge

in the 2025 preliminaries to place eighth with six wins from 12 matches. However, Piazza's team ultimately missed out on the Finals, as China's host status secured the Asian team a quarterfinal spot despite finishing second from bottom.

The following is Iran's full provisional VNL squad:

Setters: Arshia Behnejad, Emran Kookjeili, Ilshan Davoudipour, Ardalan Seyyed-Abbasi

Opposite spikers: Amir-mohammad Golzadeh, Amin Esmailnejad, Pouya Aryakhah, Mohsen Delavari, Ali Mombeini

Outside hitters: Ehsan Daneshdoust, Alireza Abdolhamidi, Matin Hosseini, Amirreza Aftab-Azari, Arian Mahmoudinejad, Morteza Narimani, Seyyed Hossein Zamani, Ra'ouf Khoshhal, Mobin Nasri

Middle blockers: Yousef Kazemi, Seyyed Issa Nasseri, Nima Bateni, Armin Qelichniazi, Shayan Mehrabi, Taha Behboudnia, Amirreza Sarlak, Mahdi Jelveh

Liberos: Mohammadreza Hazratpour, Komeil Khojasteh, Morteza Tabatabaee, Hossein Hajikalateh.

Work started to restore Shiraz's war-scarred historic building

Iranica Desk

On the evening of the first day of Nowruz (Iranian New Year), the building of Shiraz's first municipality — which dates back to the first Pahlavi era and now houses the Fars Education Museum — was targeted by an American and Israeli attack.

This historic building, registered as Iran's National Heritage List in August 2002 under the name of the Fatemeh al-Zahra (SA) Cultural-Educational Center, currently holds a treasure trove of memories, documents, images, and records of Fars Provinces' educational history.

Cultural heritage and education represent two hu-



man dimensions that numerous international laws defend as immune from military attack. However, in the face of a criminal enemy, many humanitarian and human boundaries have been violated.

Iranian schools have been targeted, children have been killed, 140 historical sites across 20 provinces have been damaged, and missiles have disregarded international laws governing retaliation.

On the night of March 21, a missile from the aggressor enemy struck 20 meters southwest of this building, and its shrapnel hit this Iranian national heritage site. According to the deputy director of cultural heritage for Fars Province, many parts of it were damaged.

Sadeq Zare' told IRNA that the building's facade has collapsed, its decorations and plasterwork have been destroyed, parts of the floor and staircase have been damaged, and its historic doors and windows have been blown off. Regarding the restoration of this damaged national heritage site, he said, "Preliminary damage assessments have been



IRNA

completed and sent to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Crisis Management Headquarters of Fars Province's General Governorate. The ministry has made the necessary summary and submitted it to national and international bodies to compensate for these damages."

According to him, once the necessary funding is allocated and secured, the restoration of this historical heritage site of Shiraz will

begin.

Over the years, this historic building had become a safe haven for objects and the historical heritage of education, serving as a museum of education open to the public.

According to the Head of Public Relations Office of Fars Province's Education Department, the museum displayed old documents, photographs, report cards, and textbooks from past centuries.

He added, "Printing press-

es, old microscopes, educational aids from decades past, and valuable relics of the province's education system from the last century were gathered in this museum."

Today, amid the flames of an imposed war, the rubble of this building — a remnant of Fars Province's from the last century — is drawing the attention of international bodies worldwide, much like the ancient heritage of Isfahan and Tehran.

Kashkan Bridge stands after thousand years



FARS

Iranica Desk

The Kashkan Bridge, with a history spanning over a thousand years and bearing the title of "Mother of Iran's Bridges," stands as a symbol of ancient engineering in Lorestan Province, continuing to welcome visitors as a historical and tourist attraction.

Ata Hassanpour, the Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Lorestan Province, highlighted the strategic position of the province as a historical corridor. "Iranian engineers in ancient times, understanding the importance of this region, built numerous bridges over its turbulent rivers," he stated, ISNA wrote.

He further explained that, among these, the Kashkan Bridge, as the largest and most prominent of them all, embodies the genius and creativity of Iranian architects from the fourth century AH (the tenth century CE).

"The construction of this astonishing bridge, which took place from 998 to 1008 CE, was carried out by order of Abu Najm Badr ibn Hasanuyeh, the then-governor of Lorestan," Hassanpour added.

The Kashkan Bridge was not only located on an important communication route between Shapourkhast (modern-day Khorramabad) and Ctesiphon in Iraq, but it is also recognized as one of the great water structures and historical monuments of Iran and the ancient world.

He provided further details on the bridge's dimensions, "The bridge is approximately 325 meters long and has 12 arched openings, one of which has a span of 25 meters. With a height of about 25 meters, this bridge is a symbol of grandeur and scale in ancient architecture."

He also noted a remarkable aspect of its construction, "The massive stones used in the bridge were transported from a distance of 15 kilometers, specifically from the slopes of Maple Mountain, which itself demonstrates the extraordinary ability of the engineers and laborers of that era."

Hassanpour emphasized the bridge's resilience, "The durability and stability of the Kashkan Bridge over thousands of years, even during the devastating flood of 2019, which damaged one of its piers, is admirable. This exemplary stability, along with the bridge's colossal dimensions, makes it one of the most unique structures among Iran's historical monuments."

Adjacent to this architectural masterpiece, a museum of various bridges displays historical bridges from different periods of Iran, ranging from the Achaemenids to the first Pahlavi era, thereby illustrating the evolution of bridge-building in this land. Today, the Kashkan Bridge has not only remained a historical monument, but it has also become a major tourist destination, attracting numerous visitors who are eager to witness its magnificence and grandeur.

Discover Jiroft, where civilization meets scenic beauty

Iranica Desk

Spring in southeastern Iran comes alive in Jiroft, a city where nature, history, and culture converge to create a landscape of extraordinary beauty and heritage. Here, spring is not merely a season, but a living narrative of centuries-old civilization, vibrant traditions, and hidden natural treasures.

Jiroft can be described as a land of harmonious contrasts — where water, mountains, valleys, and history come together to form a captivating and rare panorama.

Delfard Waterfall, with its cool climate and pristine surroundings, is one of the region's most prominent natural attractions. The beautiful and lush Delfard Waterfall is located in the heart of one of the greenest valleys, approximately 25 kilometers north of the city of Jiroft. Once you enter the road from Kerman to Jiroft, after some driving you can reach this stunning attraction. The waterfall sits about 2,000 meters above sea level, which gives it a climate significantly different from that of Jiroft itself. The road that takes you to Delfard Waterfall is winding and twisting, and it is itself a beautiful destination for tourism and picnicking.

One of the most interesting features of Delfard and its waterfall is its climatic diversity. Although Jiroft has a warm climate for most of the year, Delfard enjoys a cold climate due to its high altitude. This allows visitors to see fruits and plants typical of cold regions growing alongside tropical fruits and plants. The region's extensive vegetation is not only due to its climate but also results from higher rainfall



Esfandaqeh Mountain
balad.ir

compared to other parts of Kerman.

Along this route lies a valley often referred to as the Mediterranean Valley due to its four-season climate. In fact, this road is the best option for tourists who intend to travel from Kerman

groves, which at this time of year are bursting with spring blossoms. Their delightful fragrance echoes throughout the vast expanse of the valley. Thanks to the flowering of these trees, one of the most beautiful natural landscapes in the region is created.

creating the most beautiful natural and touristic scenery in the province.

Jiroft is recognized as the cradle of one of the world's oldest civilizations, with a history spanning several millennia. A vivid reflection of this legacy can be seen at the Jiroft Archaeological Museum, whose valuable artifacts narrate the story of a civilization that has placed Jiroft prominently on the map of world history.

The scenic Jebalbareh Road, with its striking mountainous views, is considered one of the most delightful access routes to the city. Nearby, a forest park provides a welcoming setting for family recreation and relaxation.

The Esmaili District, through which the Jiroft-Boluk road passes, plays an important connective role. In addition, its extensive greenhouses and lush farmlands stand as a clear symbol of the region's dynamic and modern agricultural sector.

Alongside these capacities, historical sites such as the Konar Sandal Hills, the mosque of the old city of Jiroft, and the remains of the ancient settlement vividly showcase the deep historical identity of this land.



Delfard Waterfall
ealiya.com

Province to Bandar Abbas and also wish to enjoy the historical and tourist region of Ort, located along the only permanent river in southeastern Iran.

The Mediterranean Valley is considered one of Iran's premier tourist destinations. It has a Mediterranean climate and is filled with large citrus orchards, especially orange

The high, winding roads of this valley and the surrounding mountains are covered with mountain almond bushes. In short, one of the most stunning natural landscapes of Kerman Province can be seen here. A river rich with water flows through this valley, transforming Delfard Valley into the valley of waterfalls and

Pezeshkian warns hitting schools aims to derail Iran's development

Social Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said that adversaries are targeting schools and universities to hinder Iran's development. Speaking at a meeting with the education minister and senior officials during a supervisory visit to the Ministry of Education on Tuesday, Pezeshkian described education as the "foundation" of sustainable development and warned that any reform without a robust schooling system would be short-lived, IRNA reported. He praised teachers and administrators for maintaining instruction and public

services during the 40-day war period, calling their efforts "steadfast." "Enemies" oppose Iran's "knowledge and capability" and "do not want" the country to advance, he said, adding that this explains why "schools and universities" come under pressure. He urged educators to clearly convey this to students and motivate them to help build a "prosperous" Iran. Pezeshkian stressed the need for greater coordination across the executive branch, saying a shared understanding among managers would streamline progress toward national goals.

He also called for expanded delegation of authority and administrative decentralization, citing recent government experience as "effective" in accelerating problem-solving and boosting efficiency at the local level. Reaffirming the government's commitment to development, he said Iran would continue along a path of progress by relying on domestic expertise and scientific capacity. "We will pursue advancement with full force," he said, stressing unity and empowerment of capable managers as key drivers of faster, more balanced growth.



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (5th L) speaks during a meeting with the education minister and senior officials at the Ministry of Education in Tehran on April 14, 2026. ● president.ir



Nearly 1m tons of CO2 released during war

Social Desk

Iran's Department of Environment (DoE) said on Tuesday that recent attacks on industrial facilities and protected areas across 10 provinces released close to one million tons of carbon dioxide and caused widespread environmental damage. The report details the environmental toll of what Iranian authorities describe as the "Ramadan war," saying strikes on key industrial, oil and conservation sites triggered large-scale fires, air pollution and ecosystem degradation, with impacts expected to persist for decades, IRNA reported. The agency said attacks targeted production and service units in provinces including East Azerbaijan, Alborz, Bushehr, Tehran, Razavi Khorasan, Khuzestan, Markazi, Yazd, Gilan and Fars, with environmental effects ranging from low to severe. It added that 13 protected areas across seven provinces sustained varying degrees of damage. A major share of emissions stemmed from fires at fuel storage facilities in the capital. The agency said more than 360,000 cubic meters of oil products burned at sites in Shahr-e Rey and Kauhak, releasing nearly

1 million tons of carbon dioxide. Separate strikes on fuel tanks in Fardis, Alborz province, emitted a further 53,000 tons of carbon dioxide and about 220 tons of aromatic compounds. Experts cited in the report said nearly 4,000 tons of volatile organic compounds were released, posing serious risks to public health and the environment. Environmental activist Majid Fazeli told Mehr News Agency that soil degradation is the "primary" consequence of explosions. "When soil is destroyed, erosion accelerates to the point that living organisms are wiped out and the chain of life is disrupted," he said, pointing to severe erosion in mountainous areas and the destruction of forests. He added that chemical changes in the atmosphere have led to "acid rain," damaging vegetation and threatening biodiversity. "If such pressures persist in areas with high ecological value, some species could face irreversible extinction," Fazeli said. Fazeli also highlighted noise pollution as a key factor in wildlife mortality. "Explosions act like a shock," he said, adding that intense sound waves can cause sudden death among birds and wild



Environmental damage in Tehran following airstrikes on key infrastructure, including the Shahr-e Rey oil depot, on March 7, 2026, with large fires releasing toxic pollutants and blanketing surrounding areas in heavy smoke. ● AMIR KHOLOUSI/ISNA

animals, which cannot be relocated safely during conflict. Hamid Zohrabi, deputy head of natural environment and biodiversity at the Department of Environment, said natural ecosystems were among the "victims" of the hostilities, noting that attacks on fuel storage sites contributed to severe air pollution in Tehran. He said that during the 12-day conflict, about 8,500 hectares of protected forests and rangelands were affected by fires, with the bulk of damage occurring in the Zagros ecological zone. The body said it would continue conservation efforts despite the damage, while calling on international bodies to take note of the environmental impact and support remediation. The report warns that damage to air, soil and biodiversity extends beyond immediate infrastructure losses and could take decades to reverse.

Iran officials voice support for Pope's peace remarks, rebuke Trump

Qalibaf praises pontiff's 'fearless' stance

Social Desk

Christian members of Iran's Parliament, joined by senior officials and clerics, on Tuesday praised Pope Leo XIV's anti-war stance and condemned US President Donald Trump's remarks about the pontiff, describing them as an affront to "peace" and religious sanctities. In a joint statement issued on behalf of Iran's Christian community, three lawmakers denounced what they called "insults" by Trump toward the head of the Roman Catholic Church, after the Pope criticized recent aggression against Iran and warned against a "delusion of omnipotence" driving conflict, IRNA reported. The legislators said the Pope's position reflected divine teachings that call for unity and peace, stressing that humanity should act as a "single family." They described Trump's comments as a "blatant attack" on justice and interfaith values, and said disrespect toward religious leaders and figures such as Jesus Christ was unacceptable to "any free person." President Masoud Pezeshkian echoed the criticism a day earlier, condemning the



Pope Leo XIV presides over a Prayer Vigil and Rosary for Peace, in Saint Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, April 11, 2026. ● REMO CASILLI/REUTERS

remarks in a message addressed to the pontiff and reaffirming that desecration of revered religious figures runs counter to shared human and moral principles. "His Holiness Pope Leo XIV, I condemn the insult to Your Excellency on behalf of the great nation of Iran, and declare that the desecration of Jesus, the prophet of peace and brotherhood, is not acceptable to any free person. I wish you glory by Allah," the Iranian president wrote in a post on his X account. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also lauded the Pope's "fearless" stance against what he termed war crimes, saying the message "I fear nothing" had

resonated widely among those who refuse silence in the face of civilian suffering. Grand Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamedani, in a letter released Monday, described the Pope's position as "courageous" and enduring, saying it would be immortalized globally as a stand against injustice. He highlighted the role of religious leaders in defending human dignity despite political pressure. Culture Minister Abbas Salehi, in a separate post, criticized Trump's rhetoric as excessive and warned it reflected the historical trajectory of "Pharaohs," invoking a religious metaphor to stress the limits of power. The statements follow escalating rhetorical exchanges after the Pope voiced opposition to military action targeting Iran, drawing reactions across political and religious circles in the country.

US Naval blockade ...

How do you assess the role of countries that transit the Strait of Hormuz or benefit from it in this crisis?

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Countries that transit the Strait of Hormuz or benefit from it—including Persian Gulf littoral states and major energy importers such as China, Japan, India, and South Korea—are highly sensitive to any threat of disruption in this strategic waterway. For Arab states in the southern Persian Gulf, the stability of the Strait is a vital national security issue, as a large portion of their revenue and economic stability depends on oil exports through this route. As a result, these countries are naturally inclined to ensure that the crisis does not escalate to a level that threatens their exports. In such situations, they typically seek to step in as mediators or de-escalators, although their positions may be influenced by their relations with the United States. Countries like China and India, as the largest consumers of the region's energy, fun-

damentally oppose any action that could even raise the possibility of disrupting the daily flow of millions of barrels of oil, since even minor shocks in Hormuz could destabilize global energy prices and harm their economies. These concerns tend to push them toward exerting diplomatic pressure on Washington to moderate its actions. Accordingly, the role of these countries in the crisis is largely that of balancers and deterrents—seeking, through their economic and political influence, to contain the situation and prevent it from escalating into a broader conflict.

What role can international organizations such as the United Nations or the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) play in resolving this crisis? The United Nations stands as the primary reference body for addressing such a crisis. Any unilateral action that threatens international peace and security must, under the UN Charter, be reviewed by the Security Council. If Iran frames such a move

as a threat to regional stability, the Council could convene an emergency session and potentially issue a statement or resolution calling for de-escalation. While, in practice, the US veto could block the adoption of a binding resolution, merely bringing the issue before the Security Council would generate considerable political and media pressure. Alongside this, UNCLOS provides a clear framework governing freedom of navigation, the security of shipping lanes, and the prohibition of hostile actions without legal basis. Iran could invoke these principles to challenge the legitimacy of US actions. Other bodies, such as the International Maritime Organization, could also warn of the risks posed by insecurity along shipping routes. Overall, international mechanisms primarily serve to apply diplomatic pressure and undercut the legitimacy of a blockade. While their role is not absolutely binding, they are highly effective in shaping global consensus and increasing the political cost of unilateral action.