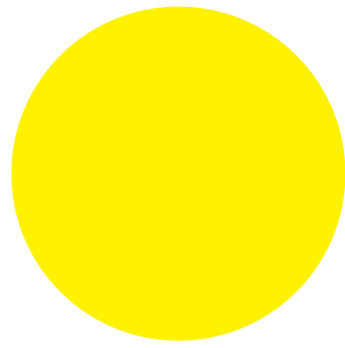


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) shakes hands with Pakistani Army chief Asim Munir in Tehran on April 16, 2026. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

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A displaced resident travels through the Qasmieh area as she flashes a victory sign while holding flags of Hezbollah and Iran on the way back to her home in the southern Lebanon, on April 17, 2026. [AFP](http://AFP)



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# Pezeshkian reaffirms Iran's firm commitment to lasting stability in region

'We're very close to making a deal,' Trump claims

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reaffirmed Tehran's firm commitment to lasting peace and stability in the region as there are regional efforts led by Pakistan to end the ongoing tensions in the West Asia region, which have been caused by the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

The Iranian president made the remarks during a meeting with Pakistani Army chief Asim Munir in Tehran on Thursday.

Pezeshkian also applauded Pakistan's constructive mediation in brokering a ceasefire between Iran and the United States.

The meeting came days after Friday's negotiations between Iran and the United States in Pakistan to put an end to a US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which failed to produce an agreement due to the American delegation's excessive demands.

The talks followed a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire agreement which temporarily ended the aggression which began on

February 28. The 14-day ceasefire expires on April 22.

During the aggression, the US and Israel assassinated Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders and killed more than 3,000 civilians.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran seeks lasting peace and stability in the region and emphasizes the realization of the rights of the Iranian nation within the framework of international law," Pezeshkian stated.

## Legitimate self-defense

The Iranian president made it clear that the recent targeting of US military bases in Persian Gulf Arab states by Iran's armed forces was carried out strictly within the framework of legitimate self-defense in response to the aggression imposed on the country.

Pointing to the root cause of regional instability, Pezeshkian said Israel is behind many wars and acts of division among Islamic countries.

"The Islamic Ummah must, through

convergence and cooperation, prevent the Zionist regime from exploiting Islamic lands against Muslims themselves," he emphasized.

The Iranian president expressed satisfaction with Pakistan's responsible and consistent efforts to end the war, urging other Islamic countries to follow the same path.

Pezeshkian warned that war serves no one's interest. "America will not win this conflict; it is the countries of the region and the world that will suffer serious losses, while only the Zionist regime seeks to fulfill its desires."

The Pakistani official, for his part, said that although the war will end, the region will not return to pre-war conditions.

He stressed the need for collective cooperation in reconstruction, stability, and peace, noting the support of countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey for the diplomatic process. There are some speculations about holding the second round of the negotiations in Pakistan. However, neither side has confirmed the issue.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Pakistani Army chief Asim Munir in Tehran, Iran, on April 16, 2026.  
president.ir

## 'Very close to a deal'

US President Donald Trump claimed on Friday that a deal to end the war in Iran could be reached soon, although the timing remained unclear.

Trump said a two-week ceasefire could be extended, although he did not be-

lieve that would be necessary as Tehran wanted a deal.

"We're going to see what happens. But I think we're very close to making a deal with Iran," he told reporters, adding if an agreement was reached and signed in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, he may go there for the occasion.

## 10-day ceasefire agreed on by Israel, Lebanon goes into effect

Iran says Lebanese truce signifies 'unity of the Axis of Resistance'

### International Desk

A 10-day truce began in Lebanon on Friday that paused fighting between Israel and the Hezbollah resistance group and boosted attempts to extend the ceasefire between Iran, the United States and Israel after weeks of devastating war. US President Donald Trump announced the agreement as a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. Barrages of gunshots rang out across Beirut as residents fired into the air just after midnight to celebrate the beginning of the truce.

Displaced families began moving toward southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs, despite warnings by officials not to attempt to return to their homes until it became clear whether the ceasefire would hold. Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he agreed to the ceasefire "to advance" peace efforts with Lebanon, but said Israeli troops would not withdraw.

Hezbollah said that "Israeli occupation on our land grants Lebanon and its people the right to resist it, and this matter will be determined based on how developments unfold" — a stance that could complicate the ceasefire. The agreement came after a meeting between Israel's and Lebanon's ambassadors in Washington and a flurry of subsequent phone calls from Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, ac-



A damaged building, rubble and a destroyed vehicle are seen in the aftermath of Israeli strikes, near Hiram Hospital in Tyre, south Lebanon, on April 16, 2026.  
REUTERS

ording to a White House official. It is one of the key points of the 10-point Iranian proposal that was initially accepted by the American side in the peace talks between Tehran and Washington in Pakistan.

### Tehran's diplomatic efforts

Iranian officials in separate messages welcomed the ceasefire. Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said Iran warmly welcomed the ceasefire, underlining that the halt to aggression against the country forms an integral part of the broader ceasefire understanding reached between Iran and the US. Baqaei described the development as the direct fruit of Tehran's unwavering diplomatic efforts. "From the outset of talks with various regional and international parties, including the Islamabad negotiations, the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently stressed the imperative of a simultaneous ceasefire throughout the region, including in Lebanon," Baqaei

affirmed. The speaker of the Iranian Parliament stressed that the ceasefire is a result of the steadfastness of Hezbollah movement and the unity of the Axis of Resistance.

"We will approach this ceasefire cautiously and will remain united until complete victory is achieved," Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said in a post on X. The latest war between Israel and Hezbollah began on March 2, two days after the US and Israel launched a joint aggression against Iran, with Hezbollah firing rockets into northern Israel. The resistance group said it was retaliating for the assassination of Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who was martyred in the US-Israeli aggression.

More than 2,000 people in Lebanon have since been killed, with more than a million - or roughly a fifth of the population - displaced. An estimated 37,000 homes have been destroyed or damaged. Israel says Hezbollah attacks have killed two civilians in Israel, and that 13 Israeli soldiers have been killed in combat in Lebanon.

## Araghchi: Strait of Hormuz 'completely open' during ceasefire

### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday that the Strait of Hormuz "is declared completely open" in line with a ceasefire in Lebanon and would remain open for the remaining period of the ceasefire.

"In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire, on the coordinated route as already announced by Ports and Maritime Organization of the Islamic Rep. of Iran," Araghchi wrote in a post on X.

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump announced that the leaders of Israel and Lebanon have agreed to a 10-day ceasefire to end six-week fighting between Israel and the Hezbollah resistance movement. Trump on Friday affirmed the strait is "ready for full passage" in a social media post minutes after Araghchi posted his message.

Iran had blocked the strategic waterway following the launch of the illegal US-Israeli aggression against Iran on February 28. Oil prices were falling by more than 10 percent after Iran said the Strait of Hormuz is fully open, which would allow oil tankers to exit the Persian Gulf again and carry crude to customers worldwide.

Trump, however, said the US naval blockade

on Iranian ships and ports "will remain in full force" until Iran reaches a deal with the US to end the war.

Since April 14, the US has imposed a naval blockade on the Strait of Hormuz aimed at forcing Iran to reopen the strategic waterway.

### UN envoy underscores respect for Iran's inalienable rights

Iranian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani in a statement delivered during a UN General Assembly meeting on Thursday said sustainable stability in the Strait of Hormuz is only possible through full respect for Iran's inalienable rights and interests.

"The realization of the principles of freedom of navigation and maritime safety in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman — particularly in the Strait of Hormuz, which lies within the territorial seas of its coastal States — is only possible through full respect for the sovereignty and sovereign rights of those coastal States," he said.

"As such, sustainable stability in the Strait of Hormuz and in the region can only be achieved through the cessation of aggression and the full respect for Iran's legitimate rights and interests."

Iravani also warned that the United States' unlawful actions in the region escalate tensions and threaten both maritime security and international trade.

## Army chief: Iran fully prepared to confront any threat with 'iron will'

Commander-in-Chief of the Iranian Army Major General Amir Hatami said the country is fully prepared with "iron will" to confront any threats and aggression against the Islamic Republic.

The Army chief issued a message on Friday on the occasion of the National Army Day, saying the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, saved the Iranian Army from the conspiracy of dissolution and weakening and stabilized it to safeguard the Islamic establishment, independence and territorial integrity, Press TV reported.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, he added, the Iranian Army strongly confronted sworn enemies and made great efforts in the fields of relief services.

The Army considers itself a self-sacri-



ficing defender of the security of the Iranian nation while maintaining its vigilance and combat readiness, Hatami reiterated.

He said the Army stands ready to confront any threat or act of aggression by enemies "with firm determination, watchful eyes, an iron will, and fingers on the trigger" and will remain committed to its pledge until the last breath.

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also said it stands ready alongside the Army to deliver a "regret-inducing" response to the US and Israeli regime if they renew their criminal act of aggression against the country.

The IRGC made the announcement in a statement released on Friday to mark National Army Day. "The Islamic Republic of Iran Army and the IRGC [using] weapons of unity, integrity, coordination, synergy, empathy, and sacred will ... stand ready amid a lull in the battlefield during the third imposed war, with their hand on the trigger to deliver a powerful, destructive and regret-inducing response to any aggressive and criminal act by the American-Zionist enemy and their companions against Iran and its history-making nation," it said.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



# Four Iran-linked container ships defy US naval blockade

## Economy Desk

Four Iran-linked container ships have slipped through a US naval blockade after departing Iranian ports, maritime tracking data shows, even as Washington vows to continue enforcing restrictions on vessels tied to Iranian trade.

All four vessels are container ships; three operate under the Iranian flag, while the fourth, named "Tava 4," is registered in the Comoros.

According to Marine Traffic data, the ships have moved as follows since the blockade began on Monday: "Azargoun" departed Iran's Shahid Rajaei port, crossed the blockade line around 16:00, and is heading to Kandla port in northwest India; "Ashkan 3" left Chabahar in southeastern Iran and is currently registered in Karachi, Pakistan; "Shabdis" also departed Chabahar, crossed the line around 21:00, and is now near the southwest Indian coast around Kerala, having declared Zhuhai, China, as its destination; and "Tava 4" left Imam Khomeini Port in southern Iran, crossed the blockade line around 13:00, and is en route to Jawaharlal Nehru port near Mumbai, India.

The assessment is based on positions reported by the vessels themselves. However, some ships may turn off their tracking systems

or transmit false information — a practice known as "spoofing."

US Joint Chiefs Chairman General Dan Caine has emphasized that the United States "continues to enforce the blockade." In response to inquiries, US Central Command (CENTCOM) stated it had "nothing beyond previous statements" to add.

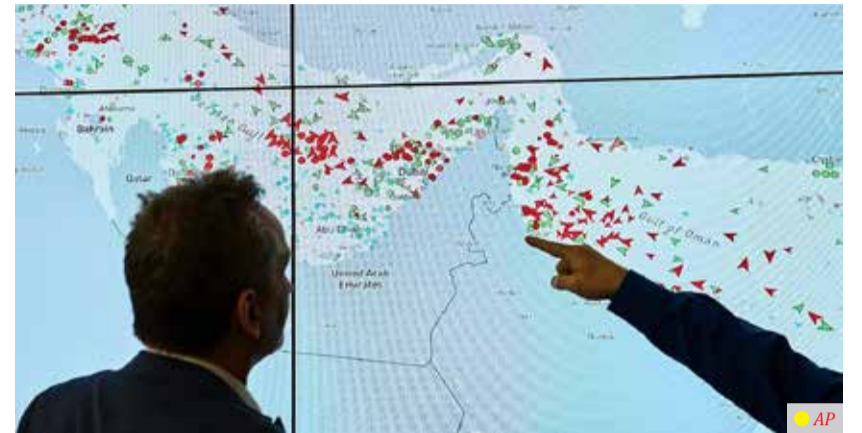
## More ships crossing strait

The developments come as shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime corridor for oil and gas exports, has shown signs of increased vessel movement in recent days despite ongoing military tensions and the US naval blockade targeting Iranian ports, gulfnews.com reported. Maritime tracking data and reporting indicate that a growing number of commercial vessels have continued to transit the narrow waterway, which saw dramatic declines in activity earlier in the American-Israeli war on Iran that began on February 28.

On Thursday, data compiled by monitoring firm Marine Insight showed that more than 20 vessels transited the strait within a 24-hour period amid the blockade, even as some ships were ordered to turn back or reroute. The United States announced a naval blockade allowing "zero ships" in and out of Iranian ports starting 6 p.m. on Mon-

day. The blockade was ordered by US President Donald Trump after talks with Iran in Pakistan failed to make progress and Iran had kept the Hormuz closure for "the hostile states." However, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday that passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz remained open for the remainder of the ceasefire period, which ends on April 22, in line with the arrangement in Lebanon. On Thursday, General Caine announced the blockade's "expansion" to pursue and intercept Iran-linked vessels globally, including "dark fleet" tankers in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, regardless of nationality. The move follows stalled ceasefire talks, with Trump claiming Iran agreed to hand over enriched uranium — amid rising US oil prices. CENTCOM clarified that vessels sailing to and from non-Iranian destinations remain free to pass through the strategic waterway. Reuters tracking data has also noted that at least eight merchant vessels — including three tankers linked to Iran — made transit attempts in the days following the US blockade announcement.

Independent counts reported that 279 vessels have passed through the strait since the war began in late February, though the total includes a period of heavily reduced traffic due to security risks. Most of the recent



crossings, however, appear to involve ships bound for or departing from non-Iranian ports.

Some maritime analysts have also noted shifts in vessel routing, with ships using designated corridors along the Iranian and Omani coasts amid security concerns and alternative transit advisories.

The Wall Street Journal, citing two US officials, reported over 20 ships crossed the strait in the past 24 hours, with some halted. Kpler data also confirmed at least three

vessels transited post-blockade, including the Liberia-flagged bulk carrier Christianna — which discharged cargo at Iran's Bandar Imam Khomeini and passed near Larak Island shortly after restrictions took effect. Before the escalation of conflict, roughly 100 or more commercial ships a day moved through the Strait of Hormuz. Continued transit, however, reflects resilient commercial efforts to maintain critical supply chains even as geopolitical tensions persist in the region.

## Indian refiners pay for Iran oil in yuan via ICICI Bank: Report



95% of the cargo's value against the supplier's notice of readiness, which indicates that the loaded tanker had entered Indian waters, two of the sources said. One of them said this was an unusual arrangement.

Typically, Indian state-owned refiners settle payments upon delivery or discharge for oil from countries that are sanctioned by Western nations, the two sources said. India has been among the top buyers of Russian oil since Moscow's 2022 war on Ukraine resulted in widespread Western sanctions on Russia.

The sources declined to be named as they were not authorized to speak to the media. Indian refiners have also used China's currency to settle some of their Russian oil purchases. IOC does not plan to make further Iranian oil purchases, one of the sources said.

Until the US waiver, India had shunned the purchase of Iranian oil since 2019, under pressure from American sanctions. Chinese independent refiners, known as teapots, have been the main buyers of Iranian oil exports since then.

## Economy Desk

Indian refiners are settling payments for rare cargoes of Iranian oil purchased under a temporary US sanctions waiver using Chinese yuan through Mumbai-based ICICI Bank, four sources with knowledge of the matter said. Last month, Washington unveiled 30-day waivers on US sanctions for the purchase of Russian and Iranian oil at sea in an attempt to ease prices that were driven up by the US-Israeli war on Iran. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the US would not renew the waivers, with the exemption on Iranian oil set to lapse on Sunday, Reuters reported.

Difficulties over arranging payment for such cargoes given longstanding sanctions on Tehran have deterred some would-be buyers of Iranian crude under the waiver, traders have said. Earlier this month, state-run Indian Oil Corp, opens new

tab (IOC), the country's largest refiner, bought 2 million barrels of Iranian oil onboard the very large crude carrier Jaya in the country's first purchase of Iranian crude in seven years, Reuters reported, a cargo worth roughly \$200 million. India has also allowed four vessels carrying Iranian oil to berth for privately-run refiner Reliance Industries, sources said last week. A vessel, the MT Felicity, has discharged thus far, according to LSEG data and a shipping source. Both refiners are settling the trade through ICICI, which is routing funds in Chinese yuan via its Shanghai branch to seller accounts in yuan. The identity of the sellers could not be determined. ICICI, IOC, Reliance and India's Foreign Ministry did not respond to emails seeking comment. Details on how the cargoes are being paid for have not been previously reported. IOC paid about

## Aref vows full compensation for war damage as preliminary losses hit \$270b

## Economy Desk

Iran's First Vice President said the government has plans for both defense and reconstruction, vowing to support citizens and compensate all damages from the recent US-Israeli military aggression with full capacity.

Mohammad-Reza Aref, continuing regular meetings of cabinet members with the ministers of oil, industry, mines and trade, roads and urban development, and the head of the Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), received the latest reports on damages caused by the military aggression by the Israeli regime and the United States, and issued necessary orders to meet public needs.

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

## 2,000 points hit in power sector

Mostafa Rajabi-Mashhadi, deputy minister for electricity and energy at the Ministry of Energy, said damage to the country's power infrastructure from the attacks amounted to 35 trillion tomans (\$225.8 million). He thanked the public for their power-saving efforts "during this sensitive period." Rajabi-Mashhadi told IRNA that the Zionist-American regime's attacks, which he described as a direct assault



An Iranian flag is planted in the rubble of a police station, damaged in airstrikes on March 3, 2026 in Tehran, Iran. MAJID SAEEDI/GETTY IMAGES

on the people, targeted 2,000 points in the power sector, all of which have been restored through round-the-clock efforts by staff in the field.

## Bridges, tunnels repaired within 48 hours

Houshang Bazvand, deputy minister of roads and urban development and managing director of the Transportation Infrastructure Development Company, told IRNA that vehicle and train traffic has been restored on all routes, adding that bridges and tunnels bombed in the recent imposed war were reopened within a maximum of 48 hours. Bazvand said that during this round of US-Israeli attacks on the country's infrastructure, four operational railway bridges, three railway tunnels under construction, four freeway tunnels under construction, and five bridge spans on freeways in Lorestan, Khuzestan, the Zanjan-Tabriz route, and the Mianeh-Tabriz road were hit by enemy projectiles.

He added that these structures were immediately subjected to temporary repairs and reconstruction after the damage, so that traffic is now flowing through these bridges and tunnels with no disruption to movement. Regarding the bridges, temporary vehicle passage was enabled through variant operations, and currently there are no blockages on railway, freeway, or high-

way bridges.

"The most prominent project attacked during these 40 days was the B1 Karaj bridge, which was considered an engineering masterpiece," Bazvand said.

"Damage to this bridge is under study; relevant surveying must be completed to determine whether twists and bends have occurred in its columns."

"Consultants are preparing debris removal plans and technical inspection schemes, and there is even a possibility that it may need to be completely demolished."

Bazvand noted that the bridge was 99% complete and scheduled to become operational by mid-April, adding, "Construction of this bridge had taken more than 10 years, and now, with what has happened, there is a 50% probability that it must be demolished for safety reasons."

## 50 aircraft damaged, 10 destroyed

Regarding damage to the aviation industry infrastructure, Mohammad-Reza Rezaei Koochi, head of the Parliament's Construction Committee, said about 50 aircraft were damaged in the war, of which approximately 10 were destroyed by direct attacks.

"Upon the end of the war, domestic and international flights will resume without delay," Koochi told ILNA, adding that some damaged aircraft

can be repaired and returned to flight operations.

According to Iranian media reports, seven Iranian airports were targeted during the 40-day military conflict that began on February 28, with attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities. Based on estimates and a report published in The Wall Street Journal, Mehrabad Airport in Tehran, as well as airports in Tabriz, Kashan, Urmia, Khorramabad, and the Bahram and Azmayesh facilities in Tehran, were repeatedly targeted by air strikes and bombings during the conflict. The attacks damaged infrastructure including runways, air traffic control towers and hangars, while dozens of Iranian passenger aircraft used for tourism and travel were either completely destroyed or removed from flight operations due to shrapnel hits and collateral damage.

Inquiries by ILNA from some aviation industry activists and the country's airline offices revealed that the largest wave of attacks has been directed at Iranian passenger aircraft. Maqsood Asadi Samani, secretary of Iran's Airlines Association, told ILNA, "The damages incurred include opportunity costs for airlines given that we were in the Nowruz holidays (began on March 20), as well as damages to aircraft and subsequently damages that have been inflicted on the country's airports." He stated that estimates of opportunity cost losses for travel companies that had planned to transport Nowruz passengers exceed 700 billion tomans (\$4.52 million) per day, and even excluding the Nowruz travel situation, total damages inflicted on the country's airline offices during the 40 days of imposed war against Iran amount to about 30 trillion tomans (\$193.5 million).

# A paradigmatic metamorphosis in media warfare

## Iran mastered memes, AI, and narrative contestation



By Mehdi Salami  
Expert at Institute  
for Political and  
International Studies

### OPINION

The formal and informal utilization of a novel modality of message transmission and perspective articulation — such as image-based jokes (memes) and AI-generated viral videos — during the course of the American and Zionist regime's aggression against the Islamic Republic of Iran evinces a profound metamorphosis in media warfare; an area wherein success is determined not by factual credibility but, rather, by algorithmic visibility, emotional response, and cultural adaptability. Although critics deem this content merely a superficial form of propaganda, its efficacy resides precisely in its capacity to amalgamate amusement with political messaging; a phenomenon that has fundamentally reconfigured the methodology of exerting influence within the digital age.

### Transition from traditional outreach to platform-based influence

In the past, narratives disseminated primarily through official and controlled media channels; the contemporary approach demonstrates a conspicuous divergence from this model; when, in lieu of official outreach, communications predicated upon memes and AI-generated videos, compatible with the viral logic of social networks, are employed. This shift signifies a fundamental transformation; messages are no longer imposed upon the audience but are, instead, embedded within content that the audience actively seeks.

Today, we observe that, in addition to informal and independent groups, even Iranian embassies across various countries have joined this initiative and, consequently, the Iranian front has succeeded in aligning its messages with the logic of platforms such as TikTok, X, and Instagram; where “engagement” and “selection” have supplanted “authority” as the determining factor of visibility.

This novel strategy demonstrates how innovation in the modality of message transmission and participation in the arena of narratives can function as a force multiplier in asymmetric war. In comparison with traditional media production, this model permits:

- Content to be generated rapidly and synchronously with field developments.
- Costs to be diminished dramatically.
- Narratives to be adapted continuously to the battlefield. This enables a nation with comparatively limited media resources to compete with powerful actors upon the global stage and to play a role in the shaping of global public opinion that transcends its traditional capacities.



A screenshot from a viral AI-generated video produced by Explosive Media, also known as “Akbar-e Enefjari” in Persian, shows an American Lego-style pilot being chased by an angry mob of armed locals in Iran.  
● BBC

memes and videos:

- First, entertain.
- Then, convey the message indirectly.

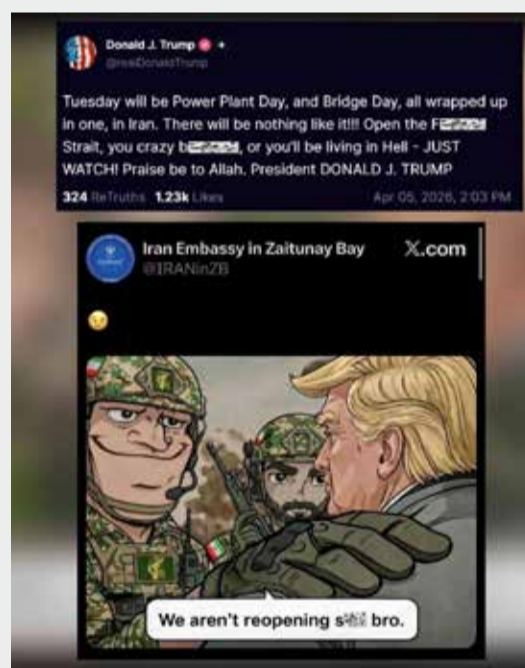
This model results in audiences consuming and redistributing the content, occasionally even without a profound awareness of its political nature. Consequently, the final product has been transmuted into a form of “viral entertainment,” whose sphere of influence is considerably more extensive.

### Arguments for & against

Nevertheless, some contend that this type of content, owing to its simplicity or even its humorous character, does not exert a profound impact upon public opinion and generates merely short-term attention. This perspective is predicated upon the assumption that influence necessitates a profound alteration of beliefs. Whereas, within the contemporary media environment, shaping what people see and discuss possesses greater importance. Even superficial engagement can play a role in determining the audience's agenda-setting. Others maintain that humorous, cartoonish, or AI-generated content lacks credibility and may lead to the weakening of the message. Although credibility holds significant importance within traditional media, within the digital sphere, the criteria have changed. Shareability and relatability have frequently supplanted credibility. The success of such productions demonstrates that, for the purpose of exerting influence, the establishment of credibility is no longer a necessary condition.

The formal and informal application of AI-generated Lego-based videos, humorous memes, and the like evinces a foundational transformation in information warfare. By concentrating upon virality, emotional impact, and a profound comprehension of global digital culture, Iran has succeeded in adapting itself to the logic of the digital attention economy. The digital attention economy is an economic model wherein human attention is regarded as a scarce and valuable commodity, and digital platforms compete to capture, measure, and monetize it. Ultimately, this case demonstrates that, in modern conflicts, power is exerted not solely through military or economic instruments but, rather, through the capacity for the large-scale shaping of narratives. With the advancement of artificial intelligence technologies, such strategies will, in all likelihood, become one of the principal pillars of global competitions within the informational domain.

The article was first published in Persian by the Institute for Political and International Studies.



In response to US President Donald Trump's profanity-laden, criminal threat (above) to bomb Iran's infrastructure, the Iranian Embassy in Zaitunay Bay, Beirut, Lebanon, posted a meme (below) depicting IRGC soldiers talking to Trump.  
● X



The above post on X dated March 27, 2026, shows Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf reacting to the bizarre statement by US War Secretary Pete Hegseth with an iconic meme.  
● X

### Emotional framing, logic of viral dissemination

The salient characteristic of such productions is their reliance upon emotional simplification rather than analytical complexity. In this manner, content becomes:

- More comprehensible.
- Endowed with a greater affective weight.
- More likely to spread.

Within the digital sphere, the intensity of emotions has a direct correlation with the extent of dissemination. It appears that Iran's strategy has been configured precisely upon this basis: prioritizing emotional impact, whereby influence is achieved not solely through profound persuasion but, rather, through repetition and expansive visibility.

### Strategic targeting of global audiences, youths

For example, an emergent independent group, named “Explosive Media,” has released AI-generated videos within familiar formats — such as the employment of Lego toys, a humorous language, and rap and hip-hop music — which have profoundly engaged the Western-American digital space. Among the strengths of this approach is the meticulous selection of the audience. The use of Lego structures, American rap music, humor, and familiar visual elements indicates that this content has been designed specifically for international audiences, particularly within the West and for the youth generation. This indicates a significant

transformation:

- Exclusive concentration upon the domestic audience has been abandoned.
- Competition (effective and expeditious) in shaping narrative upon the global level has been placed upon the agenda.
- By integrating political messages into global internet culture, such content is less frequently perceived as “foreign propaganda” and enjoys greater acceptance.

### Eradication of boundaries between amusement, propaganda

The most important innovation of this initiative is the fusion of amusement with political messaging. In contrast to traditional propaganda, which is explicit and readily identifiable, these



The formal and informal application of AI-generated Lego-based videos, humorous memes, and the like evinces a foundational transformation in information warfare. By concentrating upon virality, emotional impact, and a profound comprehension of global digital culture, Iran has succeeded in adapting itself to the logic of the digital attention economy. In comparison with traditional media production, this model enables a nation with comparatively limited media resources to compete with powerful actors upon the global stage.

# How Zionism's anti-Jewish logic led Israel to bomb Iranian synagogue



By Jared Sacks  
Member of South  
African Jews for a Free  
Palestine

## OPINION

Israel and its propaganda machine (officially called “Hasbara”, Hebrew for “explanation”) has long claimed that Jews across the world are under existential threat from terrorists and antisemites emanating from the Muslim world and their “far-left” allies. This narrative asserts that Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran hate Jews simply for being Jews; that they seek the destruction of all Jews; and that their opposition to the Israeli regime is driven by this anti-Jewish hatred. Hasbara further posits that Israel is the only guarantor of Jewish safety — and that without it, we are doomed to a repeat of the Nazi Holocaust.

Yet, in the name of Jewish safety, Zionists have colonized Palestine, ethnically cleansed and destroyed its population, and constructed a regime of apartheid to manage ever-shrinking bantustans in the West Bank. In the name of Jewish safety, Israel has annexed Palestinian land and, as part of its Greater Israel project, sought further expansion into Syria and Lebanon. In the name of Jewish safety, Israel has jailed over 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners, turned Gaza into a concentration camp, and has recently adopted a law applying the death penalty only to Palestinians, while Jewish murderers and rapists are defended, even celebrated, by its parliamentarians instead of punished.

Finally, in the name of Jewish safety, Zionists have transformed the overwhelming majority of Jewish religious and cultural institutions into de facto embassies and propaganda arms of the Israel.

Because it presents an obvious threat to the Zionist colonial project, the long and extraordinary history of Jewish anti-Zionism has been suppressed, with its proponents sidelined or ostracized.

Diverse Jewish cultures — from the Qırmızı Qəsəbə (Red Village) of Azerbaijan, to the melahs and haras of North Africa, to the shtetls of Eastern Europe — have been supplanted by an increasingly homogenized and diminished Israeli colonial culture modelled on German “high culture”. Rich creolized languages such as Ladino, Krymchak, Kayliñña, Judeo-Arabic, Yevanic, Gruzinic, and Yiddish are now endangered or extinguished, eroded in part by the imposition of German-accented Hebrew in 1948 Palestine. Under this compulsion to conform, traditional cultural practices such as the shtetl badchan (wedding jester), Sephardic amulet-making, Yiddish theater, and Mekonenot mourning have also been eroded or erased.

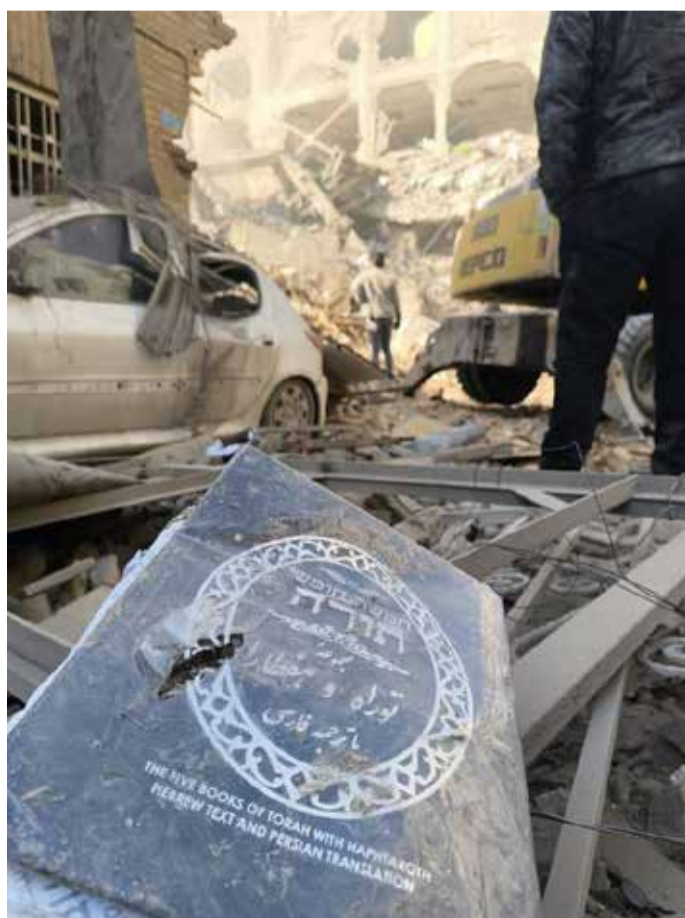
Ethno-nationalism targets not only its external enemies. In attempting to manufacture a non-existent ethnos, it also seeks the dissolution of its pre-



ceived internal enemies. In this case, Zionism works to eliminate Jewish diversity in all its forms, especially that which directly challenges the Zionist project.

This is why anti-Zionist Jews (like me) are dismissed as “self-hating” and constantly have our Jewishness invalidated. The goal is to either force conformity through intimidat-

tion and fear, or to blackball us from Jewish institutions, events, and communities that Zionists want to ideologically “purify”. This is also why many Zionists dismiss the Lemba of Limpopo — who see Africa as their homeland — as insufficiently Jewish. And this is why Israel and the United States show little hesitation indiscriminately bombing Iran, even when this risks



A rare, sacred Torah with Persian translation is found damaged at the site of an Israeli air strike on the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran, Iran, on April 7, 2026.

The photo shows the destruction of the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran, Iran, from an Israeli bombing, on April 7, 2026.

WANA

harming or killing the Kalimi Jews who have lived there for millennia.

The Kalimi community of Iran — now numbering around 15,000 — are Iranian Jews who refused to join the Zionist project of colonizing Palestine. Despite sustained efforts by Israel to encourage their emigration (their numbers once exceeded 100,000), this remaining community has insisted that Iran — not Israel — is their home.

This presents a profoundly uncomfortable contradiction for Zionism. On the one hand, it insists that Iranian Jews are oppressed by what it describes as “the most antisemitic regime on the planet.” On the other, it is confronted by a community that has forsaken Zionism and, by refusing to leave Iran, directly undermines narratives of Iranian antisemitism.

It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Israel bombed the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran on April 7, in the middle of the Jewish holiday of Passover. According to reports, confirmed by Israel, the entire building was reduced to rubble, with footage of the aftermath showing Jewish community leaders salvaging prayer scrolls from the debris while calling for unity against Israel. Iranian Jewish leaders, including former MP Siamak Moreh-Sedegh and the current MP and Tehran Jewish Association leader Homayoun Sameyah Najafabadi, have publicly condemned Zionism and called for resistance to Israel and the Unit-

ed States.

This is not to claim that Israel deliberately targeted the synagogue; Zionism’s internal opposition to diversity is probably not that crass. It is, however, to recognize a broader logic of Zionism.

The use of the Hannibal Directive, including on October 7, 2023, and the prolonged and fanatical refusal to agree to a cease-fire and prisoner exchange, point to a pattern in which Jewish captives’ lives are subordinate to political objectives. Reports indicate that the Israeli army killed an unknown number of its own soldiers and civilians on October 7 and that many of the captives were killed in the months that followed by Israeli air strikes, suffocation from bombings, and sniper fire. That is to say, Israel has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to treat Jewish life as disposable (and at times politically useful) in service of its ideological project.

At a minimum, this logic renders Kalimi Jews acceptable collateral damage in Israel’s pursuit of regional dominance. In fact, the Israeli army has referred to the bombing of the synagogue as exactly that: “collateral damage”. As the “wrong” kind of Jews, their destruction is treated as scarcely worthy of concern.

If antisemitism is understood, not as opposition to Zionism or its manifestation in Israeli apartheid, but as the systemic racial discrimination and hatred of Jews for being Jewish and the consequent devaluation of Jewish life, then how should we understand Israel’s bombing of the Rafi-Nia synagogue?

If we recognize the long and important history of Jewish political, ethnic, and cultural diversity, if we accept that Jewishness is inherently heterogeneous, then any attack on that diversity must be understood as anti-Jewish.

Situated within the broader Zionist project that seeks to erase such diversity in the name of ethnonationalism, the bombing of Rafi-Nia begins to resemble a form of internal Jew-hatred which positions “elite” Zionist Jews against other Jews. In particular, against the traditional, non-Westernized, diaspora Jew. Whether Israel set out to bomb the synagogue or not, it operates within a political logic that ranks Jewish lives, rendering such outcomes predictable, even tolerable. Zionism does not necessarily explicitly seek to harm Jews. Rather, it manufactures a hierarchy among Jews in which those who refuse to conform must either be assimilated or be expendable. Is the Rafi-Nia bombing, in some perverse way, not then a general expression of Zionist antisemitism against other Jews?

We must oppose Zionism first and foremost because of what it does to the Palestinians. But this is another reason to oppose it: because the very future of humanity, including Judaism itself, is at stake.

The article first appeared on *Mondoweiss*.



On the one hand, Zionism insists that Iranian Jews are oppressed by what it describes as “the most antisemitic regime on the planet.” On the other, it is confronted by a community that has forsaken Zionism and, by refusing to leave Iran, directly undermines narratives of Iranian antisemitism. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Israel bombed the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran on April 7, in the middle of the Jewish holiday of Passover.

# World Taekwondo Junior Championships: Iran's Houshyar grabs gold, Ebrahimian takes consolation bronze

## Sports Desk

The penultimate day of action at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent saw Iran's Parsa Houshyar claim gold in the men's competition, while Helia Ebrahimian won a bronze in the women's event, lifting the country's overall tally to seven medals.

Houshyar, who won the world cadet title less than a year ago in Fujairah, secured Iran's fourth gold in the Uzbek capital with a hard-fought victory over France's Nolhan Rosemond in the -63kg final on Thursday. Rosemond led the first round but conceded five Gam-jeoms (penalty points), handing the round to his opponent. Houshyar appeared on course to win the second round, only for Rosemond to deliver a stunning late body kick and take it 4-3. But Houshyar was not to be denied, claiming the decisive third round 9-6 to seal gold.

Bronze medals went to Serbia's Sergej Ivanovic and South Korea's Youngjin Ji.

Houshyar opened his campaign with a straight-round win over Slovenia's Vid Milosevic, then defeated Senegal's Malick Diagne, Mexico's Dylan Alex Solorio, and Türkiye's Ibrahi Hasanoglu – all in consecutive rounds – to reach the semifinals. He then beat Ivanovic 2-0 to advance to the final.

Elsewhere, Ebrahimian had to settle for joint third place alongside Serbia's Tina Ninić in the



-49kg division after a 2-0 semifinal loss to South Korea's Lee Siwoo. Lee went on to beat China's Mixue Li 2-0 in the final. Abolfazl Najafi was the other Iranian in action on Thursday but was left empty-handed in the men's -68kg class after a last-16 loss (2-1) to Russia's Ismail Ismailov. Thursday's results followed Hana Zarrinkamar's back-to-back golds with a win over Czechia's Alice Binová in the women's +68kg final on Tuesday, while Benyamin Soltanian dominated the men's -73kg event without dropping a single round.

Zarrinkamar's high scoring and trademark head-kicking impressed throughout the day, and she understood the effort required to translate her talent into titles.

"I have a tall height, and I think this is a really good option for me. I think because of that I became world champion, and I trained a lot – I have to mention it. I am also really good at head kicks," she told the official website of the sport's international governing body. Zarrinkamar knew she would be closely studied by her opponents, but she was delighted to

prevail over all of them in the end.

"All the athletes do their best, grow up and train more. They analyze me because my videos on YouTube are available, but fortunately I became world champion again," she said.

For Soltanian, a blend of powerful kicks and accurate punching proved the winning formula in Tashkent. He credits his parents with motivating him to succeed in the sport.

"I did some punches, and am really good at strong kicks," Soltanian said.

Both athletes' ambitions stretch



Iran's Parsa Houshyar (blue) fights France's Nolhan Rosemond in the men's -63kg final at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on April 16, 2026.

● WORLD TAEKWONDO

far beyond the junior stage. The 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar is the next major target. Soltanian spoke for both of their approaches to going beyond that and seeking Olympic gold at Los Angeles 2028.

"You go step by step. You should go first to the Youth Olympics. Then we have to

keep going in senior competition, training a lot to achieve it," he said.

Tashkent 2026 has already proved a key stepping stone, as Zarrinkamar Roudbari explained.

"Most of the athletes that we fight will also participate in that competition [Dakar 2026]," she noted.

The Iranian team travelled by road for 27 hours to Turkmenistan, followed by connecting flights to Tashkent in order to attend the World Taekwondo Junior Championships.

This highlights the passion and determination of the taekwondo community in Iran, and Zarrinkamar and Soltanian gave them a day to remember, which also saw Bahar Tahmasbi win a bronze in the women's -42kg category.

Mohammad-Erfan Khodaei earned Iran's first gold of the competition with a 2-0 victory over Poland's Antoni Sokolowski in the men's -55kg final – his sixth straight-round win of the tournament.

Pinar Lotfizadeh (women's -59kg) opened Iran's account in Tashkent with a bronze medal on the first day of the event.

The six-day 15th edition of the championships featured 986 competitors from 115 countries. Iran won 11 medals at the previous edition in Chuncheon, South Korea, in 2024, including a remarkable seven golds, completing a clean sweep of the team titles.

## Iran 'has to come' to the US for World Cup, FIFA's Infantino says

AL JAZEERA – FIFA President Gianni Infantino is confident Iran will play in the World Cup despite the country's sports minister stating that it cannot participate amid the war with the United States and Israel, along with President Donald Trump voicing concerns for the players' "life and safety". Infantino reasserted his views on Iran's participation on Wednesday, saying the team will travel to the US "for sure".

While the US-Israel war on Iran is currently in the midst of a Pakistan-brokered two-week ceasefire, officials in Iran have repeatedly requested a relocation of their team's games from the US to Mexico – two of the three host nations of the World Cup, along with Canada. However, FIFA and its president, Infantino, have ruled out a relocation, citing logistical impediments and promising safety for the Iranian players and staff.

"The Iranian team is coming for sure, yes," Infantino told US business news outlet CNBC.

The FIFA chief, who has a close relationship with US President Trump, said "Iran has to come" to the tournament despite the fragile ceasefire nearing its deadline on April 22.



"We hope that by then, of course, the situation will be a peaceful situation," Infantino said of the war. "As I said, that would definitely help. But Iran has to come. Of course, they represent their people. They have qualified. The players want to play."

Infantino said he was recently in Antalya, Türkiye, to visit with the Iranian team at its training camp and said the team wants to participate in the World Cup. "They [Iran's players] should play – sports should be outside of politics," Infantino said.

"Now, OK – we don't live on the moon, we live on planet Earth, but if there is nobody else that believes in building bridges and in keeping them



FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks during the 2026 Semafor World Economy conference in Washington, DC, US, on April 15, 2026.

● AFP

intact and together, well, we [FIFA] are doing that."

Iran, one of the first teams to qualify for the World Cup, are scheduled to play all three of their group stage games on the US West Coast. Team Melli are slated to open against New Zealand on June 15, then face Belgium on June 21, with both matches in Los Angeles. On June 26, Iran play against Egypt in Seattle.

Should they advance to the knockouts, the rest of Iran's games would also be held in the US.

## Faraji to continue preparation in Japan ahead of Youth Olympics

### Sports Desk

Iranian young table tennis star Benyamin Faraji is undergoing a crucial one-month training camp in Japan as he prepares for the 2026 Summer Youth Olympics – starting October 31 in Dakar, Senegal. Faraji will remain in the country for another month before returning to Iran, ISNA reported.

Faraji earned his place at the multi-sport event after winning a bronze medal at the 2025 Asian Youth Games in Bahrain and securing a spot among the



● ISNA

world's top 10 under-19 players in the latest ITTF World Rankings.

Faraji was also part of the Iranian trio – alongside Amirhossein Hodaei and Seyyed Mohammad

Mousavi-Taher – that won the men's team silver medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh last November. He then teamed up with Mousavi-Taher for a bronze in the doubles

event in the Saudi capital. While Faraji continues his intensive preparations in one of table tennis's powerhouse nations, attention now turns to the Iranian Table Tennis Federation's plans for his pre-Olympic schedule. It remains to be seen what friendly matches or warm-up competitions will be arranged to ensure he arrives in Senegal in peak form.

The fourth edition of the Games will take place across 25 competitive sporting events in three host cities of Dakar, Diamniadio, and Saly.

## Iran targets wrestling glory at Asian Beach Games

### Sports Desk

Iran's national beach wrestling head coach Mohammad Naderi has set his sights on a glorious campaign at the 6th Asian Beach Games, which will kick off on Wednesday in Sanya, China.

"We aim to achieve the best possible results and raise the flag of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Naderi said ahead of the

competition. Naderi noted that Iran's wrestlers have reached 70 to 80 percent readiness after several training camps in Iran and one week of fine-tuning in China. "We have prepared well," he added.

But the coach warned of strong opposition. "Bahrain has four Russian-born wrestlers in its squad. Pakistan and India are also among the favor-

ites in this sport and hold numerous competitions in their countries. We should not underestimate them."

Naderi expressed gratitude to the National Olympic Committee for ensuring a smooth departure despite challenging circumstances at home.

He added: "I hope the entire delegation achieves favorable results, and we

witness Iran's flag raised at this event."

Iran will be represented by 57 athletes across 10 sporting events – including beach wrestling, beach volleyball, beach handball, beach soccer, jiu-jitsu, beach kabaddi, athletics, 3x3 basketball, sport climbing, and water polo – at the Games, which will resume after a decade, following Da Nang 2016 in Vietnam.

# Historical sites in Fasa to receive new attention

## Iranica Desk

Behzad Moridi, Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Fars Province, during a trip to Fasa, visited three prominent and key historical sites in the region and announced new plans for their restoration, preservation, and utilization with the participation of the private sector and the public. The visits, which were accompanied by a group of local officials, educators, and those involved in the activities related to cultural heritage, included the historical Barashlu Caravanserai, the Fasa Culture Museum, and the ancient site of Tall-e Zahhak.

During his visit to Barashlu Caravanserai he stated, "This caravanserai, a magnificent remnant of the Safavid era which once served as a stop for caravans on the Shiraz to Bandar Abbas route, is on the verge of a major transformation."

Referring to the historical background of this structure built with local materials such as stone, brick, and Sarooj (a traditional water-resistant mortar), Moridi remarked, "This building is evidence of Fasa's commercial prosperity in past eras. Its precise layout, winter rooms, and spacious central courtyard give it a unique potential to become a bustling tourist attraction."

He emphasized the necessity of reviving this document of Fasa's road identity and announced new plans to turn it into an economic-cultural hub.

Stressing that this monument is registered on the National Heritage List, he added, "A structure that was located on Shahi Road

and whose architecture recalls the grandeur of the Safavid era should not be left in isolation. We are preparing a support package to transfer this building to the private sector for tourism purposes, so that this ancient heritage itself becomes a source of wealth and employment for the local people." Referring to the specific geographical features of Barashlu Caravanserai, he noted, "It is part of a tourism chain linked to sites such as Tall-e Zahhak and rural eco-lodges in Fasa. Our priority is to restore the damaged arches and bring life back to the chambers that once served as a haven for merchants and travelers on the southern road. Reviving this monument not only means preserving a national heritage but, by establishing handicraft markets and nomadic black tents nearby, can transform Fasa from a roadside passage into a 'tourist destination.'"

It is worth noting that the Barashlu Caravanserai, located 20 kilometers from the Fasa-Darab road near Now Bandegan village, is one of the few four-ivan caravanserais in the region that, despite the passage of centuries, has still preserved its architectural splendor. Moridi also visited various sections of the Fasa Culture Museum, including the archaeology hall, the coin and historical documents section, and the anthropology hall. He described this complex as a distinguished example of public participation in preserving and reviving cultural heritage and familiarized himself closely with the process of activities, the methods of preserving artifacts, and its developmental capacities.

Moridi, pointing to the historical importance of Fasa, stated, "The name of the Fasa Culture Museum is intertwined with the cultural identity of the people of this region, and the artifacts gathered in



Culture Museum  
kojaro.com

this complex, from the millennia before Christ to the contemporary era, clearly demonstrate the depth of civilization and historical background of this land."

Noting that Fasa is considered one of the important regions in the study of ancient Iran and the Islamic periods, he added, "The presence of valuable archaeological finds indicates the continuity of life and cultural flourishing in this region for thousands of years; a capacity that must be introduced and showcased more than ever before."

Moridi also emphasized the need to strengthen the infrastructure of this complex, stating, "Physical development of the museum, im-



Tall-e Zahhak  
chtn.ir

proving artifact preservation conditions, upgrading protection systems, and standardizing display cases are among the measures on the agenda of the Fars Province Cultural Heritage Department to provide the ground for a more worthy display of artifacts and to increase the capacities of this complex."

He added, "Given the volume of artifacts obtained from scientific excavations in the region and the existing capacities, it is necessary to create a museum space proportional to these assets; this will allow for the better introduction of Fasa's history and culture to future generations and tourists."

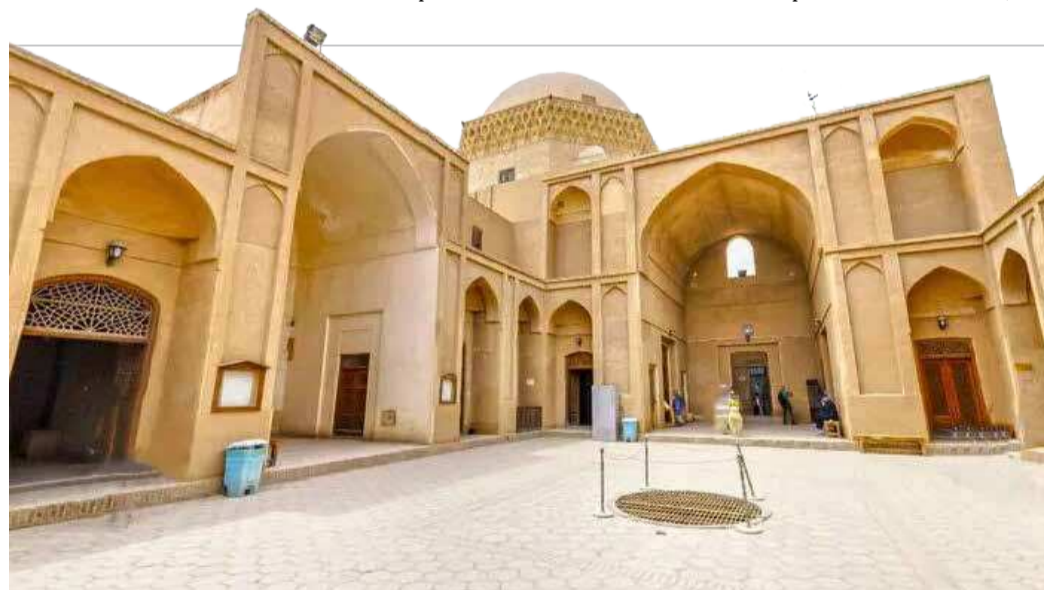
In another part of his remarks, stressing the need for a long-term view of cultural infrastructure development in Fasa, he said, "This city, with its rich background and the presence of outstanding historical sites and monuments, deserves a museum at a national and even international level, and the Fasa Culture Museum can be the primary core and starting point of this path."

He emphasized support for development plans of this complex and noted, "The Fars Province Cultural Heritage Department is ready to cooperate with local officials and public groups to upgrade this museum and strengthen its role in introducing the region's cultural identity."

On the sideline of his visit to the historical mound of Tall-e Zahhak, Moridi announced the formulation of a comprehensive protection plan and a review of the boundaries of this national heritage site. During the visit, he emphasized, "Resolving the problems of land acquisition in the surrounding areas is the prerequisite for beginning extensive scientific excavations of this 5,000-year-old civilization."

He described this site as one of Iran's civilizational identity cards and stated, "Tall-e Zahhak is not just a dirt mound; it contains within itself the continuity of human settlement from prehistoric times to the Islamic era. Protecting this great heritage is our main priority in the Fasa region."

Referring to the existing challenges regarding the site's boundaries, he said, "One of the main obstacles to systematic excavations is the presence of claimants and agricultural lands within the first-grade protective zone. In a meeting with city's officials, a plan to grant substitute land for the acquisition of these lands was approved, so that the hands of archaeologists are opened to reveal the hidden layers of this civilization." Moridi also emphasized the necessity of establishing a permanent protection base at Tall-e Zahhak and added, "The tourism capacities of the site extend beyond the region, and with proper access route organization and correct introduction, it can become one of the main destinations for historical tourists in the south of the country."



IRNA

## Iranica Desk

Sikandar Prison, also known as Alexander's Prison and recognized as the Ziaieh School, is one of the most historical, tourist-friendly, and captivating attractions of Yazd province. It is located in the old, mud-brick neighborhood of Fahadan.

This ancient monument welcomes thousands of heritage enthusiasts throughout the year, especially during various holidays. It is an eternal and unique structure whose very name encourages many tourists to come and visit it. The historical fabric of Yazd surrounds this building, and within this fabric, the Ziaieh School is a

name familiar to everyone. Its architectural style and construction are both fascinating and remarkable, captivating every viewer. The dome of the Ziaieh School is an example of Mongol-era domes in Iran, IRNA wrote.

The monument is situated in the Fahadan neighborhood, next to the Tomb of the Twelve Imams of Yazd. It was built in 1234 CE and was completed in 1306 CE by Zia al-Din Hussein, the father of Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi. The tall dome is made of raw mudbrick and features decorations including stucco work and watercolor paintings in gold and lapis lazuli. The prayer hall of the school contains a prayer niche, or mihrab.

Porticoes, known as rivaqs, have been built around the school's courtyard, with the western side featuring a larger portico and a stucco mihrab. The Katibeh, Hosseinian, and Taghlidi schools of Yazd bear a strong resemblance to the Ziaieh School.

The architecture of this building follows the Azari style and, despite its simplicity, is both unique and beautiful. The use of raw mudbrick in a structure of this size, and its survival over the centuries, demonstrates the remarkable skill of its architects. The employment of raw mudbrick in this climate has been key to the building's durability over the years. Little tile-work has been used in its decora-

## Yazd's ancient Alexander Prison welcomes tourists year-round

tion. Among the most important elements of Alexander's Prison are its dome chamber and its high ivan, or portico.

In addition to its famous dome and dome chamber, the building consists of several sections, including a central courtyard, ivans on three sides, numerous rooms, a wind tower room, a prayer hall, a qanat accessway known as a payab, a well, and a basement in the middle of the courtyard.

Both a large and a small courtyard are located within this building, with rooms and ivans arranged around them. Alexander's Prison contains two central courtyards and three ivans, with the other components of the building situated around the larger courtyard. In the larger courtyard, in addition to small porches in front of the chambers, there are also four taller ivans. The dome chamber is connected to the eastern ivan.

One of the reasons for the significance of this building is the masterful technique used in constructing its dome, which established a new approach in the construction of Islamic schools during the Mongol, or Atabakan, period. Furthermore, its stucco decora-



tions, paintings, and distinctive inscriptions make this building truly unique.

The dome of the Ziaieh School, located on the southern side of the building and made of mudbrick (with its outer shell possibly made of brick), stands 18 meters tall. It is considered an excellent example of simple squinches combined with vaulting. Around the drum of the dome, beautiful banding can be seen using brick and suspended tiles. The outer shell of the dome has a sharp trefoil arch,

which both enhances its beauty and gives it a high load-bearing capacity.

Inside the dome chamber, old tombstones and inscriptions are placed behind glass cases, effectively transforming the space into a small museum.

To preserve the original appearance of the building, the Ziaieh School, or Alexander's Prison, has been restored in recent years using mudbrick. The structure has been registered on Iran's National Heritage List.

# Curtains down on Islamic Revolution Art Week

## Chavoshi picked as 'Artist of the Year'

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian organizers at the closing ceremony of the 12th Islamic Revolution Art Week named Mohsen Chavoshi as the Islamic Revolution Artist of the Year for last Iranian calendar year which ended March 2026.

The ceremony, staged on Thursday evening by the Art Bureau in Tehran, drew senior cultural officials, artists and large crowds. Chavoshi was selected for his two works 'Alaj' (Remedy) and 'Hasbi Allah' (God is sufficient for me), produced during recent conflict periods, which organizers said resonated widely and reinforced themes of national solidarity, IRNA reported.

Other nominees included Ali Mirfattah, Soroush Moghadam and Maryam Sha'bani. Audience members repeatedly chanted Chavoshi's name during the announcement segment, marking strong public backing for the award.

The program featured performances, poetry readings and vi-

sual tributes, including the stage production "Sacred Union" directed by Alireza Tajik, musical pieces by Gholamreza Sanatgar, and narrated media segments recounting cultural activity during recent wartime conditions. In the closing moments, attendees joined in a collective rendition of 'Alaj'.

In a social media message following the announcement, Culture Minister Abbas Salehi congratulated Chavoshi, saying epic music and devotional chants had advanced alongside national defense efforts and helped bolster public morale.

### Mirfattah turns to canvas to depict resistance

Among the shortlisted figures, Mirfattah's trajectory has drawn renewed attention, marking a shift from print journalism to visual storytelling rooted in themes of resistance. A former writer, critic and graphic designer at the early issues of the magazine Soureh under the editorship of Morteza Avini, he later



A large crowd waves Iranian flags and holds placards during the closing ceremony of the 12th Islamic Revolution Art Week, organized by the Art Bureau in the open spaces of Vali Asr Square in Tehran on April 16, 2026.

● ELAHE JAVAN/MOJ NEWS AGENCY

continued in journalism before turning decisively to painting in recent years.

Between 2022 and 2024, Mirfattah staged several exhibitions distinguished by a singular aesthetic. In 2025, following a 12-day war period, he produced a series of works aligned with public sentiment, including a volunteer initiative to paint portraits of fallen figures on Tehran's walls, embedding their memory into the urban landscape.

His output over the year extended to commemorative and topical subjects, from murals depicting victims of attacks to portraits of regional figures and national athletes. Recent works also addressed contemporary



global themes, showing a broadened visual language that merges political commentary with minimalist composition.

The annual event coincides with the anniversary of the 1993 martyrdom of Avini, whose legacy underpins a week-long program

of exhibitions, performances and literary gatherings held across Tehran and other provinces from April 9 to April 16.

## 140 historic sites damaged with Tehran bearing brunt of losses

### Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian cultural heritage official said around 140 historic buildings and sites have been damaged following recent hostilities, with authorities shifting from emergency stabilization to strategic restoration planning, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said in Tehran.

Farhad Azizi, director general of national and world heritage sites, said field assessments based on specialist monitoring teams had identified roughly 140 affected monuments and historic complexes across the country.

He added that the ministry had now moved beyond urgent stabilization into a structured phase of reconstruction, rehabilitation and resilience planning for cultural assets, ILNA reported. The reported damage ranges from structural disruption and extensive physical deterioration to partial or total destruction of architectural elements and decorative features. Each case, according to officials, requires tailored technical intervention depending on the severity of impact.

Tehran has emerged as the principal hotspot of destruction, accounting for about half of all recorded damage. More than 80% of the estimated financial losses and physical degradation are also concentrated in the capital, marking what authorities describe as an urgent need for targeted allocation of resources, funding and operational capacity. Preventive measures were deployed ahead of and



during the crisis, including emergency protection protocols at museums and sensitive heritage sites. These included the secure relocation of museum artefacts and reinforcement of protective layers around high-value monuments, steps which officials say helped avert irreversible losses to movable heritage.

Rapid-response teams were also dispatched to affected locations at the onset of the crisis, carrying out documentation, technical and financial assessments, and emergency risk mitigation work designed to prevent secondary collapses and further safety hazards.

With the stabilization phase now complete, the ministry is advancing towards a long-term restoration framework built on sustainable financing, inter-agency coordination, and the establishment of standardized mechanisms for conservation work. Future rehabilitation efforts will involve heritage specialists, senior restoration experts and volunteer groups, aligned with international conservation standards.

Beyond physical repairs, authorities have prioritized strengthening the resilience of Iran's cultural heritage system against future shocks, framing preservation as a strategic national responsibility aimed at safeguarding historical identity under evolving risk conditions.

## Iran heritage at risk as over 200 scholars warn of cultural loss from strikes

More than 200 international researchers and heritage specialists warned from Europe that ongoing US-Israeli bombardments in Iran have caused significant damage to cultural heritage sites and threaten the country's historical record, according to a statement released via the Society of Iranian Archaeology and cited by French and international academic sources.

The signatories said military strikes beginning on February 28, 2026 and continuing through a fragile ceasefire announced overnight on April 8 have already inflicted "considerable" damage across Iranian territory. They argued that the attacks, which they described as violations of international law, are endangering not only civilian lives but also global scientific research and collective human

memory, Art Dependence magazine reported.

The statement, which has gathered more than 240 signatures from academics affiliated with institutions including the Sorbonne, CNRS, the Louvre, the University of Geneva, and Yale University, expressed solidarity with the Iranian people and warned that cultural destruction risks erasing centuries of historical continuity across the Middle East.

The researchers cited repeated March warnings from UNESCO and concerns raised by heritage organizations including Europa Nostra, the International Council of Museums, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, and the US Committee of the Blue Shield.

They said more than 120 heritage sites have been affected, including UNESCO-listed land-

marks such as Golestan Palace in Tehran and Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan.

While acknowledging that some damage may be incidental, the signatories said several strikes appeared to have targeted cultural institutions and universities in Tehran and Isfahan, raising concerns over efforts to undermine archival records and academic infrastructure.

They highlighted a March 8 strike in Khorramabad, Lorestan Province, which destroyed offices of Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization, injuring staff and leaving archaeological archives and scientific documentation at risk. Nearby historical sites, including the Falak-ol-Aflak Citadel and an adjacent museum, were also damaged, they said. The statement added that Iran's cultural heritage encompass-

es around 40,000 nationally registered sites and 29 UNESCO World Heritage properties, spanning archaeological layers from prehistoric settlements to major urban and architectural centers of the Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian and Islamic eras. The scholars urged expanded international support for documentation, digitization and academic mobility programs, warning that disrupted research and damaged archives could have irreversible consequences for the study of ancient and modern societies.

They also called for sustained academic cooperation with Iranian researchers, citing France's long-standing scientific engagement in the region, and warned that continued conflict risks deepening divisions and eroding shared historical memory across the Middle East.

### PHOTOS OF THE DAY



Members of Iran's Jewish community attend a ceremony honoring Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Iran's late leader, at Yusef Abad Synagogue, officially known as Sukkat Shalom Synagogue, in Tehran, Iran, April 16, 2026.

● JOOANA ABADIAN/IRNA

