

Tehran, Moscow urge UNESCO action after strikes damage heritage sites



Arts & Culture Desk

Ahmad Pakatchi and Rinat Alyautdinov, Iran and Russia's permanent representatives to UNESCO, said in a joint emergency letter that missile strikes by the United States and Israel hit civilian infrastructure and cultural sites in Tehran, causing serious damage and breaching international law.

The letter, addressed to UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and shared by Iran's permanent mission, said the area around the St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral was struck during the early hours of April 1, IRNA reported.

The landmark, designed by Russian architect Nikolai Markov and listed on Iran's National Heritage register, sustained severe structural damage. The diplomats said the blasts shattered windows and destroyed doors at the cathedral, while a neighboring facility operating as a Russian nursing home suffered extensive damage, including a partial roof collapse. The incident coincided with the Christian observance of Great Lent

and the approach of Easter, heightening the site's religious significance. Pakatchi and Alyautdinov said targeting areas adjacent to cultural landmarks and humanitarian civilian infrastructure constituted a "clear violation" of international humanitarian law, citing the 1954 Hague Convention. They condemned the strikes and warned they risk undermining cultural identity and long-term regional stability.

The two envoys called on UNESCO to issue a formal condemnation and to step up international efforts to prevent further damage to cultural property.

Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said about 140 historical sites nationwide have been damaged or destroyed in the attacks, with financial losses estimated at roughly 75 trillion rials (about \$48.6 million).

UNESCO had earlier warned of risks to heritage sites, including damage reported at the Golestan Palace, and said it continues to share geographical coordinates of protected sites with parties to minimize harm.

Parliamentarians push to enshrine Strait of Hormuz national day

Social Desk

Iranian lawmakers have tabled proposals to designate a "National Day of the Strait of Hormuz" in the official calendar, senior Parliament figures told ISNA.

Alireza Salimi, a member of the Parliament's presiding board, said a group of legislators had drafted a bill to formalize the commemoration, with two routes under consideration: endorsement by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution or, failing that, passage through Parliament.

Salimi said two dates were under review, February 28, marking what officials describe as the start of Iran's defensive campaign in the "third imposed war", and the date of parliamentary approval of legislation affirming Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. He signaled a preference for February 28, citing its symbolic weight.



Separately, lawmaker Esmail Hosseini, speaking on April 18, said a fast-tracked, double-urgency bill had been submitted to Parliament.

He linked the initiative to historical milestones, including March 20, 1951, when Iran nationalized its oil industry, casting it as part of a broader struggle to assert control over national resources.

Hosseini said the proposed designation would show Iran's role in managing and safeguarding the strategic waterway in line with international conventions, arguing that such stewardship has been pivotal to the country's political and economic resilience.

Alamut Castle reopens to visitors as UNESCO bid enters final stage

Arts & Culture Desk

Alamut Castle in Iran's northwestern Qazvin Province reopened to visitors on April 18 after an 18-month closure, provincial heritage chief Maryam Mahdavi said, marking a return timed with International Day for Monuments and Sites as the landmark nears a final decision on its UNESCO World Heritage bid.

Mahdavi, acting head of cultural heritage in Qazvin Province, said the high-profile site had undergone extensive ground preparation and conservation works before welcoming tourists again, IRNA reported.

The reopening comes as Iran pushes to secure global listing for the mountain citadel, a process officials say is in its closing phase.

In July 2025, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri said international evaluators were expected to conduct a final inspection in early autumn, describing a potential inscription as a "turning point" for regional tourism.

Perched on a rugged ridge about 200 kilometers northwest of Tehran, the site, long known as the "Eagle's Nest", rose to prominence in 1090, serving for over a century as the intellectual and strategic



hub. Authorities are concurrently moving to scale up accommodation capacity and court private investment, aiming to leverage a prospective listing into sustained visitor inflows and broader economic spillovers across the province.

Iranian cinema shows signs of rebound amid wartime disruption

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cinemas grossed about 120 billion rials, roughly \$78,500, and drew more than 130,000 cumulative admissions between March 16 and April 18, according to the Cinema Management and Screening System SAMFA on Saturday, as the sector struggles to regain momentum after wartime disruption and a brief ceasefire period.

Since cinemas reopened on March 16, four new domestic releases have anchored ticket sales. 'Midnight' by Mohammad Hossein Mahdavian led the market with 43,500 ad-

missions and 36 billion rials in revenue. It was followed by 'Gambler' with 10,000 viewers, 'Paradise for Criminals' with 5,800, and 'Line of Rescue' with 5,000.

A broader slate of comedies, animation and war-themed films added to the circuit from April 10, pushing combined attendance to 66,000 viewers and revenues to 58.24 billion rials, about \$38,100.

'Cloture' emerged as the top performer in this group with around 25,000 tickets sold, while smaller titles such as 'James Bond Island Adventure' and 'Cloture' posted uneven results across the market.

Overall box office revenue across all releases has reached nearly 120 billion rials, about \$78,500, during a period marked by wartime conditions and a two-week ceasefire, according to SAMFA data.

Industry figures have voiced concern over the fragile recovery, arguing that sustained audience growth will depend on stronger commercial releases. Film producer Ali Sartipi said cinemas required structural support and more attractive content rather than low-budget productions, adding that box office momentum could not be restored through what he described as forced output.

Int'l Red Cross body unlocks emergency funding for Iran relief operations

Social Desk

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has approved emergency Disaster Relief Emergency Funds and launched an international appeal to bolster relief operations led by the Iranian Red Crescent, the organization said on Saturday.

The move underpins expanded humanitarian coordination in Iran as the IFRC moves to reinforce field capacity and emergency readiness across the country. Initial support includes the delivery of 200 specialized first aid kits to Iranian Red Crescent teams, aimed at improving response speed and the quality of frontline medical assistance during emergencies, IRNA reported.

Further shipments are planned, including advanced search and rescue equipment such as combi tools, concrete breakers, harnesses, safety helmets and pneumatic sets. The IFRC said the equipment is



intended to enhance precision, operational safety and efficiency in rescue missions in disaster-hit areas.

Humanitarian supplies including blankets, carpets and other emergency shelter materials are also being prepared to support displaced people and improve temporary accommodation conditions.