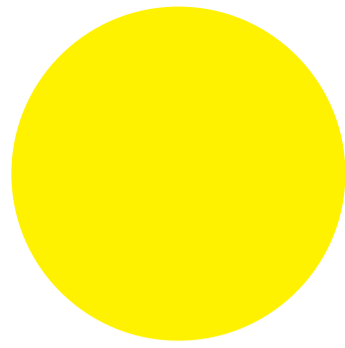


Israel ratchets up Lebanon assault as Hezbollah rejects 'farce' truce



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Leader: Enemy shifting to hybrid warfare after battlefield defeat

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Collapse of hegemony: How six years of conflict redrew Middle East map

By Mohammad Reza Sadeghi
Researcher at Center for Middle East Strategic Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the early hours of March 13, 2026, the Persian Gulf witnessed a scene that would have been deemed inconceivable just years prior. The thick plumes of smoke rising from the US Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters in Manama were more than just the aftermath of a missile strike; they signaled the formal conclusion of an era where Washington considered itself the region's undisputed hegemon. The 44th wave of "Operation True Promise 4," which targeted the heart of US logistics in Bahrain, stands as the culmination of a six-year strategic metamorphosis—a journey that began with the 2020 assassination of General Qassem Soleimani and ended with a total reconfiguration of the balance of power.

From 'shock' of 2020 to 'reality' of 2026

When the Trump administration ordered the drone strike at Baghdad Airport in January 2020, Washington's calculus was rooted in a traditional "show of force" intended to paralyze the resistance network and restore American deterrence. However, six years later, analysts suggest that rather than instilling fear, the move served as the primary engine for a fundamental shift in Tehran's military doctrine. Instead of retreating, Iran transitioned from "calibrated response" to a doctrine of "escalatory deterrence". Under this new paradigm, any tactical provocation by an adversary triggers an exponential and non-linear retaliation designed to drive the costs of conflict beyond the enemy's threshold of control.

2025; crucible for strategic resilience

The current geopolitical landscape cannot be understood without the context of the twelve-day war in June 2025. During that conflict, Israel, with significant US assistance, launched an unprecedented campaign to dismantle Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure. While the strikes inflicted heavy damage on sites like Natanz and Fordow and resulted in the loss of several senior Iranian commanders, the result for the Western-Israeli coalition was an "incomplete victory". Iran's retaliation—launching over 550 ballistic missiles and 1,000 drones—demonstrated that even under extreme systemic pressure, Tehran could paralyze the strategic depth of its rivals. This war proved that the era of "hit-and-run" operations against Iran was over. In the post-war aftermath, Tehran rapidly filled its defensive gaps with advanced Eastern-bloc technology, setting the stage for the definitive confrontation of 2026.

Neutralizing 'steel ring'

By March 2026, the operational reality on the ground turned bleak for Washington. The US Fifth Fleet, for decades the symbol of Western maritime dominance, was effectively rendered non-operational during Wave 44 of Operation True Promise. Reports confirmed that precision-guided "Khorramshahr" and "Kheibar Shekan" missiles struck command-and-control centers and fuel depots in Manama, sending a shockwave through global markets. Simultaneously, the downing of several advanced F-18 fighters and a KC-135 refueling aircraft over the region challenged the notion of absolute US air superiority. Regional allies of the US are now facing a stark new reality: the very bases intended to guarantee their security have become high-priority, reachable targets.

Economic earthquake: end of petrodollar?

The conflict has expanded far beyond the trenches, striking at the core of the global energy economy. As security in the Strait of Hormuz faltered and vital ports were targeted, crude oil prices surged. Beyond the price at the pump, the "Petrodollar" system—a cornerstone of US financial hegemony—is facing an existential threat. Major energy buyers are increasingly pivoting toward bilateral national currencies and gold to hedge against the risks of Washington's militarized diplomacy.

New order emerging

In 2026, the Middle East is no longer a region where a single phone call from the White House can dictate the course of history. The assassination of General Soleimani, intended as the "end of resistance," instead became the starting point for the collapse of American prestige in West Asia. From the Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain to the bases in Al-Asad and Erbil, the "indispensable power" of the past has been revealed as a vulnerable and targetable actor. Tehran's message is unmistakable: any attempt to shift the balance through force will be met with a response that expands the theater of war to the enemy's most vital interests. The Middle East is moving past the era of unilateralism, giving way to a new order defined by the will of regional nations and the reality of indigenous escalatory deterrence.

Iran: Security key to sustainable development, economic progress



Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni speaks during a meeting of ministers of internal affairs and public security of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on June 5, 2026. IRNA

International Desk

Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni said that security is the foundation for any form of sustainable development and economic progress, adding that without stability and security, investment would be meaningless. Speaking at the fifth meeting of ministers of internal affairs and public security of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek on Friday, Momeni called the current situation and relations governing the international system fragile, fluid, and unstable.

In a world facing increasing security challenges, he said, no country could stand alone against these challenges. The Iranian minister highlighted the importance and position of discourse centered on multilateralism and a multipolar order in the SCO's long-term strategy. The organization had become one of the main pillars shaping geopolitical and geo-economic developments, as well as peace, stability, and prosperity on a regional and global scale in the 21st century, he noted. Momeni reiterated that security was the prerequisite and foundation for any form of sustainable development and economic

progress, adding that without stability and security, investment would have no meaning. The approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran was based on ensuring regional security by the countries of the region themselves, in accordance with the universal principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, he added. Unilateral sanctions and double standards did not create security but rather led to further instability and distrust, the official noted.



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Leader: Enemy shifting to hybrid warfare after battlefield defeat

International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei said that Iran's enemies have turned to "hybrid warfare" tactics after suffering a humiliated defeat in a recent aggression, urging national unity and vigilance to neutralize their plots. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a message on Thursday on the occasion of the 37th passing anniversary of the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini. Millions of Iranians from various social strata and as many devotees in other countries took part in the ceremonies held at Imam Khomeini's mausoleum in southern Tehran as mourners paid homage to the architect of the Islamic Revolution and renewed allegiance to the ideals of the 1979 Revolution. The Leader said the "evil" enemy has experienced defeat and a profound humiliation in its confrontation with the country's Armed Forces and now seeks to compensate through a hybrid war strategy. "The malicious enemy, having been defeated in its confrontation with

your brave sons in the Armed Forces and having experienced a profound and meaningful humiliation both on the battlefield and in the public arena, has concentrated its efforts on two objectives in the framework of hybrid warfare: weakening the people's resilience and creating miscalculations among the country's officials," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

"The system of domination that created a military outpost, called Israel, nearly 80 years ago cannot accept the existence of a strong and independent Iran, endowed with numerous advantages and capabilities, on the eastern border of the false and fictitious geography of Greater Israel, that is the east of the Euphrates, so it spares no effort to prevent its (Iran's) progress," Ayatollah Khamenei emphasized.

Call for unity

The Leader warned that the enemy seeks to create doubt, frustration, fear, mistrust, and discord, stressing that all Iranians must foil such sinister plots through steadfastness and insight by preserving unity, cohesion, and mutual trust, and refusal to echo their voice.

He stressed the "very important" role of Iranian authorities in supporting these matters, saying, "Any act that causes pessimism and disappointment among the people is considered a kind of aid to the enemy of this country and its people."

The Leader noted that the passing away anniversary of Imam Khomeini provides a valuable opportunity for contemplation and deliberation about "this renowned yet insufficiently understood figure."

He described the late Imam Khomeini as a charismatic personality, whose deep understanding and recognition of his luminous path and goal would illuminate the future of the Islamic Iran. However, he said, many younger members of the nation have not had the opportunity to know the late Imam Khomeini directly and even many of those who lived during his lifetime have not fully understood the depth of his personality and the principles of his path. Iran confronted the latest bout of unprovoked aggression by the United States and the Israeli regime, which began on February 28, with at least 100 waves of decisive and successful



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
IRNA

retaliatory strikes. The reprisal hit sensitive and strategic American and Israeli targets throughout the region. The Islamic Republic also shut down the Strait of Hormuz to enemies and their allies. Faced with the crushing response, US President Donald Trump announced a

unilateral ceasefire on April 8. The Islamic Republic began implementing far stricter controls over the strategic strait after Trump announced continuation of an illegal naval blockade of Iranian vessels and ports on April 13 in violation of the terms of the ceasefire.

Israel ratchets up Lebanon assault as Hezbollah rejects 'farce' truce

International Desk

Israel continued to carry out deadly strikes across Lebanon on Friday despite the announcement of a new US-brokered ceasefire agreement reached by Lebanese and Israeli officials in Washington, DC. The violence has pushed the number of casualties higher, with Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health reporting that at least 3,526 people have been killed and 10,733 wounded in Israeli attacks since March 2. Meanwhile, Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem has dismissed the ceasefire as a "farce", warning that northern occupied territories will remain a target as long as Israeli forces continue bombing Lebanon, raising more doubts about the prospects for a lasting truce. Lebanese and Israeli envoys meeting in Wash-



This picture shows the aftermath at the site of an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese coastal city of Tyre on June 5, 2026.
AFP

ington this week agreed to a conditional truce that Hezbollah flatly rejected, with the group instead demanding a comprehensive ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said Friday that the resistance group would withdraw from the area south of Lebanon's Litani River if these conditions were met. Israel has staged its deepest incursion in two decades into Lebanon since

the start of the war with Iran, which it launched in conjunction with its ally, the US. On Friday, the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee warned residents of six towns and villages including south Lebanon's Sarafand, a town on the coastal road between Tyre and Sidon, to immediately evacuate. He earlier warned three villages north of the Litani River in southern Lebanon to leave their homes. Lebanon's state-run

National News Agency reported mass displacement from two of the three villages named in the first warning, and it subsequently reported strikes on some of the threatened areas. Overnight, Israeli strikes killed seven people in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre, a source from Lebanon's civil defense told AFP. In rejecting the truce Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem on Thursday called on the Lebanese government to halt "the farce and humiliation called direct talks" with Israel. "The ceasefire must be comprehensive... without the Israeli enemy having the freedom to kill," Qassem said.

Deputy FM: Tehran seeks access to half of frozen assets upon signing deal

International Desk

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said that a minimum of 50% of its frozen assets abroad should be released simultaneously with the signing any potential memorandum of understanding between Tehran and Washington. In an interview with the Mehr news agency published on Thursday, Gharibabadi explained that the issue of releasing Iran's frozen funds is a matter that serves Iran's interests and requires resolution. He added that the determination of which portion should be released first and which could be released later after a certain period remains under discussion. Gharibabadi emphasized that Iran insists on transferring at least half of its frozen assets promptly following the signing of the memorandum of understanding, with the remaining portion to be released after a reasonable time interval. The Iranian official clarified that these funds do not belong to Western countries or the United States in a way that would require Tehran to negotiate or seek assistance or financing. Instead, he described the assets as purely Iranian funds that the US illegally froze and prevented other countries from transferring them to Iran.

Talks between Iran and the US, mediated by Pakistan and facilitated by Qatar, are continuing based on Iran's 14-point proposal. The discussions aim to produce a memorandum to end the joint US-Israeli aggression against Iran, end a blockade on Iran's ports, and secure the release of frozen Iranian assets. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Wednesday that there is currently no formal negotiation process underway between Iran and the US. The two sides, though, retain their communications, Araghchi went on, while noting that the communications had not yielded "any significant progress" over the recent days. "Both sides are currently reviewing the existing frameworks, and if the conditions are conducive, negotiations will resume on the basis of Iran's national interests, the rights of the Iranian people, and the objective of ending the war in both Iran and Lebanon." However, US President Donald Trump made a different assessment from the negotiations, saying on Wednesday that talks with Iran are going "very well" and could yield results over the coming weekend. "I hear the negotiation itself is going very well actually," Trump told reporters, adding that a potential deal "could happen... over the weekend."

US, Israel to blame for war crimes over attacks on Iran's nuclear sites

International Desk

Iran called on the international community to adopt a "zero-tolerance policy" toward armed attacks on peaceful nuclear facilities, telling a special meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors that the United States and Israel carried out 17 waves of strikes against Iranian safeguarded nuclear sites in 2025 and 2026. In a statement, Iran's delegation said one of the gravest attacks targeted a structure just 350 meters



from the reactor at the Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, which contains thousands of kilograms of nuclear material. The IAEA chief has previously

said a direct hit on the plant could result in a "very high release of radioactivity to the environment." Iran said the attacks con-

stitute war crimes and acts of aggression, entailing international responsibility and individual criminal liability for the perpetrators. It recalled that UN Security Council Resolution 487 (1981) condemned a previous Israeli attack on an Iraqi nuclear facility and obliged Israel to refrain from any such acts in the future. The United States has opposed two previous IAEA General Conference resolutions on prohibiting attacks on nuclear installations, both proposed by Iran, the statement said.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Iran, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan agree to boost trade on SCO sidelines

Economy Desk

Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak held separate talks with his Uzbek and Tajik counterparts on Friday, with the three sides agreeing to boost trade volumes, streamline customs procedures and operationalize previous bilateral agreements.

The meetings took place on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) industry ministers' meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

In his meeting with Laziz Kudratov, Uzbekistan's Minister of Investment, Industry and Trade, the two sides emphasized increasing trade and economic exchanges through the facilitation of customs processes and the operationalization of existing agreements between

Tehran and Tashkent.

The two sides discussed "strengthening trade and customs processes, cooperation in mining and mineral industries, and leveraging new and knowledge-based technologies." They also emphasized expanding "industrial and trade cooperation within the framework of the SCO."

In a separate meeting with Sherali Kabir, Tajikistan's Minister of Industry and New Technologies, Atabak and Kabir focused on maximizing bilateral capacities and strengthening economic ties. The two ministers stressed accelerating the implementation of previous memorandums of understanding and operationalizing mutual agreements.

They discussed increasing trade exchanges between the two countries, with a focus on Iran's capabilities in

mineral reserves and processing, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and readiness to expand cooperation.

Given the importance of increasing trade volume, the two ministers agreed on the need to facilitate administrative processes to accelerate trade and industrial relations between Tehran and Dushanbe.

Trade between Iran and Tajikistan reached approximately \$484 million in 2025, a 28 percent increase from the previous year, making Iran one of Tajikistan's top five trading partners. Bilateral trade surged 50 percent in the first quarter of 2026 compared with the same period in 2025, reaching about \$120 million.

The meeting also emphasized the need to utilize SCO capacities as a transformative platform for industrial integra-



Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammad Atabak attends the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) industry ministers' meeting in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on June 5, 2026. [dolat.ir](https://www.dolat.ir)

tion among member states, as well as expert-level consultations and continuous follow-up to achieve tangible results.

Tehran's largest rooftop solar plant comes online to plug shortages

Economy Desk

The construction and grid connection of a 2-megawatt solar power plant at the Tehran International Exhibition Center has been completed, the Energy Ministry said on Friday, describing it as part of efforts to expand renewable energy capacity and strengthen electricity supply.

The ministry said the project was developed to meet a legal requirement for government entities to supply 20% of their electricity consumption from renewable sources, according to Mehr news agency. The solar plant was completed in two phases and is now fully connected to the national power grid.

According to the ministry, the first phase of the project, with a capacity of 1.1 MW, was inaugurated in November 2025. A second phase with a capacity of 825 kilowatts was subse-

quently completed and connected to the grid.

With the addition of the new capacity, the Tehran International Exhibition Center solar plant has reached its final capacity of 2 MW, making it the largest rooftop solar power plant in Tehran Province, the ministry said.

In a statement issued on Friday, the Energy Ministry said it had launched a broad program since the beginning of last autumn to improve the readiness of the country's electricity network.

The statement said 14 major projects in the power sector have been implemented or are under implementation, including the expansion of thermal and renewable power generation capacity, the installation and development of smart meters, the modernization of transmission and distribution networks, the expansion of power substations and upgrades to

grid infrastructure.

The ministry added that major and periodic maintenance work had been carried out on power generation units with a combined capacity of more than 110,000 MW as part of preparations for peak summer electricity demand, with most of the work completed before the start of the high-consumption season.

The statement said that during the recent US-Israeli 40-day war, about 4,200 MW of industrial power generation capacity was damaged and more than 6,000 locations in the electricity sector's facilities and equipment came under attack.

Despite the damage, reconstruction, repair and restoration work is proceeding rapidly, the ministry said, adding that electricity sector personnel are continuing to work around the clock to maintain services.

Iranian crypto platforms reassure users as US slaps new sanctions

Economy Desk

Iran's Information and Communications Technology Guild Organization (NASR) and four sanctioned Iranian cryptocurrency exchanges said US sanctions imposed this week would not affect users' assets or disrupt services, adding that the measures had been anticipated and necessary safeguards were already in place.

The statements came after the US Treasury Department on Tuesday added Iran's four biggest cryptocurrency exchanges — Nobitex, Wallex, Bitpin and Ramzinex — to its sanctions list under a new round of measures against Iran. The sanctions also target several Nobitex executives.

The US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) accused the four Iranian digital asset platforms of enabling the Iranian government and black-listed state institutions to circumvent Western sanctions. Nasr said "technical and expert assessments" showed the sanctions had so far had no impact on the security of users' assets or the quality of services provided by the platforms. The organization added that the exchanges continued to operate normally and that their technical and security infrastructure had been designed to withstand foreign pres-



sure.

"The four cryptocurrency exchange platforms mentioned in the recent report continue to provide stable and secure services to their users as before," the organization said. "The security architecture and technical layers used for asset custody, including storage in cold and multi-signature wallets and other technical measures, have been designed to ensure maximum resilience against external shocks and pressures. Users' assets belong to them, and no announcement can alter or threaten citizens' legal ownership of their property."

Anticipated move

The four exchanges also said in separate statements that their services would continue uninterrupted, that the sanctions had been foreseeable, and that necessary precautions had been taken. They urged users not to worry about their assets.

Nobitex said it had anticipated sanctions scenarios years ago and had

already designed and implemented the necessary technical and operational measures. The exchange said protecting user assets had always been its top priority.

Wallex said user assets are held in secure, isolated wallets and that the latest sanctions would have no impact on user ownership or platform operations. Bitpin said precautionary measures had been implemented months ago and that deposits, withdrawals and trading remain available.

Legal action

Ramzinex said the sanctions were not unexpected and that its infrastructure had been designed with such scenarios in mind, while rejecting rumors of government ties and describing itself as a private independent startup pursuing legal action.

Separately, the Iran Fintech Association expressed support for domestic exchanges, saying the addition of several exchanges to the sanctions list does not mean users themselves have been sanctioned or that ownership of their assets has changed. The association called on media to clearly distinguish between sanctions on entities and the status of users to avoid unnecessary concern and preserve public confidence.

Iran, Russia push ahead with \$25b nuclear plant, trade corridor

Economy Desk

Iran and Russia are accelerating work on the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and expanding civil nuclear cooperation, including a \$25 billion memorandum signed in 2025 for a major new power plant in Hormozgan, Iran's ambassador to Moscow said.

In remarks at an online scientific and practical conference on "Russian-Iranian Cooperation in a Changing World," jointly organized by the CIS Institute and Iran's Center for Political and International Studies, Ambassador Kazem Jalali outlined the growing scope of bilateral economic ties, Press TV reported.

Jalali said the INSTC — a strategic multi-modal route linking Russia and northern Europe to the Indian Ocean and South Asia via Iran — has become increasingly vital given emerging threats to international waterways and chokepoints.

"More than 3 million tons of goods are currently moving through the eastern branch of the corridor, which has the

capacity for up to 15 million tons," Jalali said. The central Caspian Sea route, he added, has handled 10 million tons and can reach 14 million tons. "Both need to be strengthened."

On the western branch passing through Azerbaijan, over 3 million tons of cargo are transiting, but completion of the remaining 162-kilometer Rasht-Astara railway section is critical.

Jalali said he met with Russia's deputy transport minister a day earlier, and land acquisition for the route has been finalized. "It will soon be handed over to Russia for project launch," he said.

He also cited a planned Russian gas pipeline transit through Iran and the growing movement of strategic goods to Eurasian countries, including Russia, as further examples of expanding economic cooperation.

Nuclear cooperation

Turning to civil nuclear energy, Jalali said cooperation remains a cornerstone of bilateral ties. The Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant is now operational, with second and third units under construction. He thanked Russian partners

for gradually returning engineers and specialists to Iran to advance work on those units.

Alongside Bushehr, Jalali highlighted the Hormozgan plant as a large-scale project. "In 2025, we signed a memorandum of understanding worth \$25 billion," he said. "This is Iran's largest atomic project, being carried out by Iran's private sector in cooperation with Rosatom."

The ambassador also noted joint work on small-scale nuclear power plants in partnership with Rosatom, expressing hope that work would begin soon.

Medical sector

In the medical sector, Jalali said research and operational cooperation between Iran and Russia on radiopharmaceuticals is growing rapidly.

"Iran has made remarkable progress in this field," he said. "We now produce 70 radiopharmaceutical products. In 2025, Iran ranked among the world's top three producers of radiopharmaceuticals — demonstrating that our use of nuclear technology is strictly for peaceful purposes."



The ambassador's remarks underscored how Tehran and Moscow are systematically deepening economic and technical cooperation across transport, energy, and nuclear medicine, even as both countries face Western sanctions and shifting global trade dynamics.

The conference was held in Moscow and included senior officials and academics from both nations. Jalali's



Iran's ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali (c) speaks at an online scientific and practical conference titled "Russian-Iranian Cooperation in a Changing World" held in Moscow on June 4, 2026.

comments focused on bilateral economic and technical cooperation, with additional remarks addressing broader geopolitical issues unrelated to trade.

Torpedo attack on Iran's unarmed Dena frigate

Did US commit a war crime?



By Mohammad
Hossein Sharifan
Legal Scholar

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The attack by the United States of America against the Iranian warship "Dena" during the military conflicts of March 2026 was not merely a military or tactical event; rather, this incident must be regarded, from the perspective of international law, as one of the most significant contemporary challenges to the humanitarian law regime. What renders this occurrence more sensitive and a subject of serious legal controversy is the nature of the IRIS Dena.

Contrary to certain narratives that endeavor to characterize this watercraft as an active combat objective, IRIS Dena was present on a training naval mission and, based upon published information, was operating as part of the Iranian Navy's training flotilla. This very characteristic fundamentally calls into question, from the perspective of the rules of the law of armed conflict, the lawfulness of the American attack.

Under international humanitarian law, the lawfulness of any military attack depends upon the establishment of several foundational principles: the principle of distinction, the principle of proportionality, the principle of military necessity, and the principle of precautions in attack. These principles are not mere ethical recommendations but instead constitute binding rules of international law that have been solidified in the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Additional Protocol I of 1977, and customary international law.

Article 48 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions explicitly stipulates that the parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between military objectives and civilian persons or property and shall direct their attacks solely against military objectives. Although the United States might argue that any watercraft belonging to the Iranian Navy is per se a military objective, this argument is not absolute under international law. Pursuant to Article 52 of the same Protocol, only those objects constitute legitimate military objectives which, "by their nature, location, purpose or use, make an effective contribution to military action" and whose destruction offers "a definite



Sri Lankan authorities move the remains of the Iranian sailors of IRIS Dena to a mortuary on the country's southern coast in March 2026.
● ISHARA S. KODIKARA/AFP

military advantage".

At this juncture, the central question arises: is a training vessel, not participating in a direct combat mission, a legitimate target of a lethal attack? If Dena was not in an offensive operational posture and did not pose an imminent threat to American forces, then establishing the legal necessity of the attack will be difficult. International humanitarian law distinguishes between "potential military capacity" and "actual participation in hostilities". Otherwise, every asset connected to a state's governmental structure — including educational or logistical centers — could be indefinitely subjected to attack, an interpretation that would, in practice, destroy the restrictive philosophy of humanitarian law. On the other hand, the principle of proportionality, as articulated in Article 51 of Additional Protocol I, prohibits attacks in which human casualties or collateral damage would be "excessive" in relation to the anticipated military advantage. This principle constitutes one of the most important criteria for assessing the lawfulness of military attacks in contemporary law. An attack that results in the complete sinking of a vessel and the death of a large number of its crew members, particularly under circumstances in which the vessel was on a training mission, appears difficult to reconcile with the proportionality standard. In fact, even if the United States could justify the principle of

targeting IRIS Dena, it must nonetheless explain why it employed a method that seriously increased the probability of extensive crew fatalities. Under the law of armed conflict, the mere existence of a military objective does not constitute a license for the unlimited use of force. The attacking state is obligated to choose, from among available options, the method that produces the least human damage. This requirement is set forth in Article 57 of Additional Protocol I under the heading "Precautions in Attack".

Moreover, the law of naval armed conflict creates special obligations concerning the rescue of wounded and shipwrecked persons. Geneva Convention II of 1949 for the Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea obligates states to take all possible measures to rescue survivors after an engagement. If it is proven that the attacking force took no effective action to rescue the crew after the attack or deliberately created conditions that reduced the possibility of providing aid, this circumstance could be deemed an independent violation of humanitarian law.

From the perspective of international criminal law as well, this matter holds particular significance. Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies intentional disproportionate attacks, or attacks that cause severe human casualties without military necessity, as war crimes. Although the United States is not a party to the International Criminal Court, many rules concerning war crimes have acquired customary and

peremptory character. For this reason, non-membership in the Court does not signify absolute immunity from international responsibility.

The larger problem, however, is that this is not confined to a single incident; rather, it pertains to a dangerous trend observed in recent years within United States foreign policy. The United States has repeatedly extended the scope of the use of force beyond the traditional limitations of international law through expansive interpretations of concepts such as "anticipatory self-defense" or "security necessity". From the 2003 invasion of Iraq to drone operations in various countries, an approach has emerged in which military power effectively takes precedence over legal rules.

The attack on Dena must also be analyzed within this same framework. If the international community accepts that a military power may conduct lethal operations against another state's training vessel on the high seas without the establishment of an immediate and definitive necessity, then one of the most important red lines of humanitarian law will, in practice, be erased. The consequence of such a trend is the normalization of violence and the gradual erosion of the legal system established after World War II.

The important point is that defending the rules of humanitarian law is not the defense of any particular state; rather, it is the defense of the principle of limiting violence in the contemporary world. If an attack against a training vessel is justified today based upon ambiguous security necessities, there is no guarantee that tomorrow the same logic will not be employed against



In fact, even if the United States could justify the principle of targeting IRIS Dena, it must nonetheless explain why it employed a method that seriously increased the probability of extensive crew fatalities. Under the law of armed conflict, the mere existence of a military objective does not constitute a license for the unlimited use of force. The attacking state is obligated to choose, from among available options, the method that produces the least human damage. This requirement is set forth in Article 57 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions under the heading "Precautions in Attack".

other states and even against civilians.

International law possesses meaning only when it is enforceable against power as well. Otherwise, what remains is not "international law" but merely "an order based upon force," an order in which the law is not a standard of justice but instead follows the balance of power.

The fundamental problem with American conduct is not merely a single military attack; rather, it is the pattern that this state has established over the past two decades with respect to international law. From Iraq and Afghanistan to drone strikes in various countries, Washington has gradually transformed the concept of "security necessity" into an instrument for expanding the scope of cross-border military operations. The result of this trend has been the gradual weakening of those very rules that were formulated after World War II to restrain the violence of powerful states.

If powerful states may conduct lethal operations against another state's vessels in international waters and then evade accountability with a few general statements about national security or anticipatory defense, one of the fundamental pillars of the global legal order will, in practice, collapse. Under such circumstances, international law is reduced from a binding system to a collection of political recommendations — rules that are enforced only against weak states.

At the same time, criticizing this action does not mean ignoring Iran's reciprocal obligations. Humanitarian law is founded upon the principle of humanity, and a potential violation by one party does not create legitimacy for a violation by the opposing party. But it is precisely for this reason that the conduct of powerful states carries greater significance because they are not only military actors but also the creators and champions of the global legal order.

The attack on Dena was not merely a naval incident; it was an indicator of a deeper crisis: the crisis of the decline of law's authority in the face of the logic of power. If the international community remains silent in response to such occurrences, then tomorrow there will be no guarantee that the rules of humanitarian law, even as a minimal moral agreement, will survive. War commences when politics fails, but the collapse of humanitarian law is itself the failure of civilization.

Iranian frigate IRIS Dena is seen in the Bay of Bengal during International Fleet Review held at Visakhapatnam, India, on February 18, 2026.
● AP



Belligerent warships in third states

Internment, neutrality and non-belligerency in IRIS cases



By Himanil Raina
Researcher in
international law

OPINION

In mid-February, the frigate IRIS Dena (75), the oiler IRIS Bushehr (422) and the landing ship IRIS Lavan (514) arrived in the Bay of Bengal to attend the International Fleet Review and Exercise Milan being hosted by India. On departing Indian waters after February 25, the IRIS Dena was torpedoed by the USS Charlotte (SSN-766) in Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) on March 4. Sri Lanka recovered 84 bodies and rescued 32 sailors. On the same day, IRIS Bushehr and IRIS Lavan, which had requested access to Sri Lankan and Indian ports, were granted the same.

The legality of the torpedo attack and compliance with search and rescue obligations have already attracted extensive legal commentary. This post examines the legal issues surrounding the repatriation and internment of the sailors and the warships and the complex debates arising therefrom relating to neutrality and non-belligerency.

Entry of IRIS Bushehr, IRIS Lavan into Sri Lanka, India

The Iran-USA/Israel conflict started on February 28. The very same day, Iran requested India for permission for its three ships in the region to dock at Indian ports — permission that was granted on March 1. However, none of these ships docked immediately. Following the sinking of IRIS Dena on March 4, IRIS Bushehr informed Sri Lanka that one of their engines has suffered damage and requested entry into their ports. Sri Lanka first reached an agreement with the ship's captain and Iranian embassy officials and then proceeded to intern its crew of 208 personnel at Colombo and the vessel at Trincomalee. IRIS Lavan docked in the Indian port of Kochi on March 4 as well, following engine troubles — with its crew of 183 personnel being accommodated/held at Indian Navy's accommodations.

Noting that IRIS Bushehr belonged to a "party in a war," the Sri Lankan President Anura Dissanayake specifically invoked the Hague Conventions of 1907 and asserted that Sri Lanka was a "neutral state" (notably, this was a conclusion arrived at by Switzerland as well). In contrast, the Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's statement was more cryptic and ambiguous, with the minister stressing upon the humanitarian element of its actions, "other than whatever the legal issues were."

Following these developments, Sri Lanka repatriated the 84 dead bodies recovered from the sinking of the IRIS Dena. India also made the decision to repatriate up to 133 "non-essential" crew members of the IRIS Lavan. Notably, India's action occurred during the active phase of hostilities between Iran and Israel-USA. These crew members were returned from Kochi, India, by way of the very same Turkish chartered flight, which was returning the bodies of the 84 sailors from IRIS Dena. Over a month later, following the fragile cease-fire between the USA and Iran, Sri Lanka made the decision to repatriate both the survivors



A child puts a wreath of flowers around the neck of one of the nine surviving sailors of Iran's Dena Destroyer who was repatriated to the country, in Shiraz, southern Iran, on April 18, 2026.
● DEFA PRESS

from IRIS Dena and over 200 sailors from IRIS Bushehr as well back to Iran.

Interplay of Geneva Law, Hague Law on the Question of Internment

Sri Lanka initially distinguished between the rescued personnel of the IRIS Dena and the interned personnel of the IRIS Bushehr, treating the former as governed by IHL and the latter by Hague law. However, as will shortly become evident, both routes ultimately lead to the same destination. India, by contrast, repatriated 133 "non-essential" crew members of the IRIS Lavan, during the active phase of hostilities. While there has been no public reporting on any communications between Israel-USA and India on this issue, it has been reported that the USA has conveyed to Sri Lanka that it should not repatriate either the survivors of IRIS Dena nor the crew of IRIS Bushehr.

Article 5 of Geneva Convention II (GC II) requires neutral states to apply, by analogy, the provisions of GC II to members of the armed forces of the parties to the conflict received or interned in their territory. A crucial clarification in the commentary to Article 5 is that the binding nature of this article is completely independent of whether or not a state considers or declares itself as being neutral or whether it adopts a stance of non-belligerency (para 962). So long as a state is not party to the international armed conflict, it is bound by Article 5 (para 963).

Article 12, GC II specifies that its provisions apply to the individuals specified therein who are at sea and who are wounded, sick or shipwrecked. Crucially though, once on its territory, Article 5 does not tackle (para 982) the question of whether a neutral state has to ensure that these individuals, "take no further part in operations of war...The circumstances in which this is required are exclusively regulated by the law of neutrality, not by international humanitarian law". Indeed, the commentaries clearly specify that the moment these persons cease to qualify as "wounded," "sick" or "shipwrecked," they are, "no longer protected the Second Convention, and their status in neutral territory will be regulated on the basis of the law of neutrality" (para 966).

Article 15 of GC II deals with those wounded, sick or shipwrecked persons who are taken onboard a neutral warship and Article 17 ad-

resses the same category of persons who are landed in a neutral port with the consent of the local authorities. The commentaries to these provisions also confirm the observation made above in Article 5 on the issue of ensuring that such individuals take no further part in operations of war — namely, that "the only framework considered relevant by the drafters of the Geneva Conventions was the law of neutrality" (paras 1551 and 1605 and 1612).

The law governing neutrality is found in Hague Convention (V) and the 1907 Hague Convention (XIII). Article 11 of Hague V provides that a neutral state that receives on its territory troops belonging to the belligerent armies shall intern them. Article 14, Hague V requires a neutral state to guard the wounded and sick of a Party to the conflict that it has authorized to pass over its territory, as well as those "who may be committed to its care," so as "to ensure their not taking part again in the military operations".

Equivalent and other domain specific provisions in Hague XIII are found in Articles 12–20 which contain restrictions on a belligerent's stay in or engagement in certain activities in neutral ports. Articles 24–25 also outline the obligations of a neutral state in this respect. Articles 24 and 25 clarify that if a belligerent ship does not leave a port where it is not entitled to remain, then a neutral state is "bound" to take such measures as are necessary (including detention and internment) to prevent the violation of these provisions.

What these provisions make clear is that once accepted into a neutral state's jurisdiction, such individuals must, at a minimum, be disarmed. The next question is whether the detention (this term is employed in Article 40, GC II) of such individuals necessitates depriving them of their liberty by way of internment. Internment refers to the "non-criminal, non-punitive detention for security reasons in situations of armed conflict". Alternatives internment may include requesting regular appearances before a police station or confining the personnel to a living facility under electronic surveillance (paras 1558 and 1559).

Sri Lanka explicitly invoked the status of neutrality but also returned the detained sailors prior to there having been anything resembling a general close of military operations. Consequently, its actions give rise to two inter-

esting questions which can be flagged though not resolved here. First, whether the requirement of internment under the law of neutrality may be discharged upon the conclusion of a cease-fire, or does it endure until there is a more definitive cessation of hostilities? Second, while Sri Lanka has repatriated the sailors, IRIS Bushehr is still interned. Is it permissible to disaggregate the logic of Hague XIII between a naval vessel and its crew in this manner?

Locating Indian actions amidst wider churn of neutrality law

Sri Lanka's conduct initially appeared closer to the classical model of ordinary/strict neutrality, even if questions remain about whether repatriating sailors during a cease-fire was permitted under its Hague obligations. India's actions, however, are more difficult to assess because the issue is not simply whether or not it is neutral. Had India claimed the status of ordinary/strict neutrality, its repatriation of Iranian personnel during the active phase of hostilities would have been very difficult to reconcile with the classical law of neutrality. However, the difficulty is that neutrality law is itself in a state of flux (pp.65–66). The first prong of the fiercely raging debate on this issue is whether the status of neutrality is automatic or optional. If it is optional, then there exists a third status other than a belligerent or a neutral — that of a non-belligerency.

However, if neutrality is mandatory, there remains an ongoing debate concerning the doctrine of qualified neutrality, which purports to allow a third state to militarily support a belligerent, based on the assessment of who is the aggressor and who is the victim. While this doctrine preserves the binary distinction of a neutral or a belligerent status, it does so at the cost of permitting a state to derogate from the core duties of neutrality (abstention and impartiality). Notwithstanding the traction that it has gained in the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, it represents a very slippery slope.

Had there been a UN determination of Israel and USA aggression, and had India expressly claimed qualified neutrality, then its repatriation of the Iranian sailors during active hostilities could have been defensible. However, India has not explicitly invoked the law of ordinary/strict neutrality, nor made any references to qualified



On the issue of warship and crew internment, all roads lead to the Hague law governing neutrality. However, the contrasting approaches adopted by Sri Lanka and India have drawn attention to the limitations of the classical structure erected on the belligerent-neutral binary and the reality of most states today choosing the intermediate status of non-belligerency.

neutrality. This leaves us with the difficult category of non-belligerency. As noted by Kolb (p.217), the modern tendency of states is not to be fully neutral. Rather, they tend to depart from neutrality, with varying degrees of assistance for one belligerent. Some acts, such as sending one's own troops to participate in combat, clearly establish a state of belligerency. However, other acts, like providing funding, weapons, or logistical support, do not by themselves establish a state of belligerency.

Where, then, within this spectrum, does the return of interned combatants to a belligerent during an ongoing conflict fall? Particularly in a situation characterized not by a clear pattern of support to a single belligerent, but one in which the putative non-belligerent maintains a substantial defence relationship with the opposing side as well. This is precisely the position of India. This episode thus represents a particularly instructive illustration of what have been alluded to as "hard cases" for purposes of determining when a certain form of conduct represents a state becoming a party to a conflict.

The law of neutrality distinguishes between violations of neutrality obligations and the termination of neutral status. How, if at all, does this framework apply to non-belligerency? Can non-belligerency sustain a gradation between violation and termination? Or is this limiting function mediated, in practice, by the jus ad bellum framework? Existing treatments exploring this dynamic have tended to conceptualize the belligerent-third party relationship in a manner that foregrounds the belligerent-neutral binary, resulting in the sidelining of intermediate positions and effectively collapsing non-belligerency into an undifferentiated category of third parties. As a result, intermediate forms of support risk being either assimilated into neutrality, thereby understating their legal significance, or treated as indicative of participation in the conflict, thereby overstating it.

On the issue of warship and crew internment, all roads lead to the Hague law governing neutrality. However, the contrasting approaches adopted by Sri Lanka and India have drawn attention to the limitations of the classical structure erected on the belligerent-neutral binary and the reality of most states today choosing the intermediate status of non-belligerency. While not without issues, Sri Lanka's conduct reflects the possible role that can still be played by the classical framework of neutrality law, whereas India's position reveals the strain placed on that framework by contemporary patterns of state behaviour. These incidents illustrate that challenges in international law are not always about simply ensuring compliance with settled rules. In many areas, the challenge is one of conceptual adequacy. In the present case, the challenge is whether legal frameworks are capable of accommodating evolving patterns of state conduct without collapsing into over simplified binaries that obscure the complexity of contemporary state practice.

The article first appeared on *Opinio Juris*.

Ulaanbaatar Open Ranking Series: Sohrabi wins all-Iranian final to secure Worlds spot

Sports Desk

Greco-Roman wrestler Danial Sohrabi booked his place at October's World Championships in Astana after rallying past his fellow Iranian, Mohammad-Javad Rezaei, in a thrilling 72kg final at the Ulaanbaatar Open on Thursday.

Earlier, on the opening day of the third Ranking Series event of the season, world silver medalist Payam Ahmadi cruised to the top prize in the 55kg class.

Both Sohrabi and Rezaei followed identical paths to the final, posting back-to-back superiority victories without conceding a single point.

In the final, Sohrabi was the first to go in par terre. Rezaei – silver medalist at April's Asian Championships – did his best to turn Sohrabi twice and take a 5-0 lead. Sohrabi, who felt hard done by after settling for bronze in last year's world championship, seemed unfazed despite falling behind.

When the second period began, he managed to earn the par terre position for himself. However, he turned Rezaei only once. When Sohrabi tried a throw, Rezaei managed to defend it, but the former was awarded a step-out, making the score 5-4.

Shortly after, Sohrabi brought down Rezaei for a takedown and took a 6-5 lead. He then turned Rezaei again to extend his lead to 8-5, which he defended to win the gold medal – his second in a row at the Ulaanbaatar Open.

Ahmadi, meanwhile, emerged as the most dominant wrestler of the day, outscoring his opponents 33-0 in four bouts to claim the gold medal in the Nordic bracket.

Ahmadi opened the day against Asian silver medalist Lalit of India and secured an easy 8-0 technical superiority win in one minute and 57 seconds.

In Round 2, Ahmadi took only 33 seconds to see off home favorite Davaabandi



Greco-Roman wrestler Danial Sohrabi (red) is seen in action against Mohammad-Javad Rezaei in an all-Iranian 72kg final at the Ulaanbaatar Open in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on June 4, 2026.

UWW

Munkh Erdene. He blocked the Mongolian's body lock attempt for four points and threw him again for four more points. He took just 46 seconds to do the same to Sumiyabazar Munkhaya – also from the host coun-

try – in Round 3. Ahmadi's final bout was against Türkiye's Emin Cakir. The 20-year-old Iranian, who grabbed an impressive silver on his senior Worlds debut last year, pulled off two four-point

throws from par terre to complete a 9-0 victory and win the gold.

"Payam delivered an outstanding performance today, defeating all four of his opponents in dominant fashion," said Iran head

coach Hassan Rangraz of the young prodigy, who also grabbed junior world and Asian golds last year.

"Securing four victories in a combined total of just five minutes underscored his exceptional technical level. The achievement was even more impressive given that he had been away from competitive action for nearly nine months, part of which was spent recovering from surgery, keeping him away from training."

In Friday's morning session, Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar progressed to the final of the 63kg event, thanks to a 9-0 semifinal rout of South Korea's Choi Hyun-woong.

Keshtkar's most significant win, however, came in the second round, where he defeated Asian silver medalist Erfan Jarkani 6-2 in an all-Iranian battle to punch his ticket for the World Championships, looking to improve on last year's bronze in Zagreb. With Sohrabi and Keshtkar joining Ahmadi and reign-

ing world and Olympic champions Saeid Esmaeili (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg), as well as Asian silver medalist Ali Oskou (77kg), world champion Gholamreza Farrokhi (82kg), and Alireza Mohmadi (87kg) – who has won consecutive world silver medals on either side of his Olympic silver at Paris 2024 – in the Iranian Greco-Roman squad for the Wrestling Worlds, the remaining spot up for grabs will be decided through a highly anticipated 130kg showdown featuring Amin Mirzazadeh and Fardin Hedayati at the International Takhti Cup, which begins on June 15 in Kerman.

Two-time world champion and Olympic bronze medalist Mirzazadeh will need a victory in a best-of-three contest against Hedayati, who is aiming for a breakthrough at senior level, having already collected three world titles across the under-23 and junior age groups.

Iran beat Mali in last World Cup warm-up before heading to Tijuana

REUTERS – Iran will head off to their World Cup base this weekend with a spring in their step after beating Mali 2-0 in a friendly behind closed doors in Turkey on Thursday, even if some uncertainty still clouds their participation in the tournament.

Goals from midfielder Saeid Ezatollahi and right back Ramin Rezaeian either side of halftime gave Team Melli a record of three wins and a single loss in their four friendlies this year in the Turkish resort city of Antalya.

The friendlies are the only competitive football the Iran-based players have played since the domestic league was suspended in the wake of U.S. and Israel air strikes on the Islamic Republic in late February that triggered a regional war.

The squad have received visas for Mexico, officials confirmed this week, and will leave Turkey today for their tournament base in the border city of Tijuana.

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum agreed to host the squad after being told

that the U.S. authorities did not want Iran staying in their original base in Arizona throughout the June 11 to July 19 tournament.

The squad have not yet received the visas they will need to get into the U.S. to play their group games against New Zealand and Belgium in Los Angeles and Egypt in Seattle, however. Iranian FA (FFIRI) President Mehdi Taj told Iranian media this week that the U.S. visas were the main concern for the federation as Iran's tournament opener against

New Zealand on June 15 approaches.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday there was "no problem" with the Iran squad entering the country, but Washington would not let officials or staff with ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) accompany them.

Iranian midfielder Saeid Ezatollahi (6) celebrates his goal during a 2-0 victory over Mali in a friendly in Antalya, Turkey, on June 4, 2026.

FFIRI



Iran looking to carry CAVA momentum into Women's Nations Cup

Sports Desk

Iran's women's volleyball national team will look to build on last week's CAVA Championship title when it opens its AVC Women's Nations Cup campaign against Indonesia in Candon, Philippines, today.

The Iranian side, which has been away from the country since April 21 as part of an unprecedented preparatory program amid the regional conflict, defeated Kazakhstan in four sets in Kathmandu, Nepal, to secure back-to-back CAVA trophies. The triumph continued the team's upward trajectory over the past 12 months, following its historic 2025 CAVA title – the country's first international gold medal since



Iran's women's volleyball national team celebrates winning the CAVA Championship title in Kathmandu, Nepal, on May 29, 2026.

AVC

the launch of the women's national team program in 1963 – as well as a bronze medal at the Islamic Solidarity Games.

South Korean head coach Lee Do-hee's side steps into today's opener fresh off victories against the Philippines in back-to-back three-set warm-up

friendlies this week. Iran won the first match in straight sets (25-23, 26-24, 25-21) before prevailing again on Thursday (26-24, 25-27, 25-9) – statement results against the team that made the podium at the previous two editions of the Nations Cup, with bronze in 2024 and silver

in 2025.

Today's Pool B opener against Indonesia marks a rematch of the teams' two meetings at last year's tournament in Hanoi, Vietnam. Iran won a five-set thriller in the pool stage before suffering a 3-1 defeat in the classification round and ultimately settling for sixth place.

Lee's side will then face 2022 champion Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, and defending three-time champion Vietnam before taking on Lebanon in its final group-stage match on June 12.

Iran also faced Kazakhstan in Hanoi, falling in four sets during the pool stage. Formerly known as the AVC Women's Challenge Cup, this year's tournament features 12 of Asia's top women's national

teams outside those competing in the Volleyball Nations League. In addition to competing for the continental title, teams will seek valuable FIVB Volleyball World Ranking points and potentially strengthen their chances of qualifying for the VNL and other top-tier competitions.

The Philippines headlines Pool A alongside Chinese Taipei – bronze medalist in the 2023 and 2025 editions – Australia, which reached the semifinals in 2024, Uzbekistan, which finished fourth in 2022, and tournament newcomers South Korea and Kyrgyzstan.

The top two teams from each pool will advance to the semifinals, with the final scheduled to take place at Candon City Arena on June 14.

IWBF Men's Repechage: Iran to begin bid for World Championship berth against Senegal

Sports Desk

Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team will take on Senegal in its Group B opener at the 2026 IWBF Men's Repechage in Suphan Buri, Thailand, on Monday.

The tournament is the final qualification event for the 2026 IWBF World Championships, with eight teams competing for the remaining four places at September's global showcase in Ottawa, Canada.

Iran will follow its opener against Senegal with a clash against Brazil on Tuesday before facing Poland in its final group-stage fixture on

Wednesday.

Host Thailand is joined by South Korea, the Netherlands, and Venezuela in Group A, while Iran, Senegal, Brazil, and Poland make up Group B.

The top team in each group will face the bottom-placed team from the opposite group in the crossover round, while the runners-up will meet the third-placed team from the other pool. The winners of the four crossover matches will qualify for the World Championships, which will also serve as a qualification pathway toward the Los Angeles 2028 Paralympic Games.

Kabirkuh emerges as premier ecotourism destination in Iran

Iranica Desk

The vast Kabirkuh Mountain Range, stretching 225 kilometers and covered with pristine vegetation, is not only a site of historical significance dating back to the Sassanid era but is also recognized today as one of the most important destinations for ecotourism and mountaineering in western Iran.

Kabirkuh is among the longest and most majestic sections of the Zagros Mountain. Extending from the vicinity of Ilam to near Andimeshk in Khuzestan Province, the range forms part of Iran's westernmost mountain chain and terminates at the Karkheh River, according to chn.ir.

More than a geographical feature, Kabirkuh stands as a testament to Iran's ancient history. Human settlement in the foothills of the region dates back to the Sassanid period. The Seymareh River, which originates in the heart of the mountains and flows through dense for-



● wikipedia.org

ests, has played a key role in the area's development, creating numerous waterfalls and fertile pastures that fostered the emergence of historic settlements. One of the defining characteristics that sets Kabirkuh apart from other parts of the Zagros is its remarkable ecological diversity. The Kabirkuh Protected Area, managed by Iran's Department of Environment,

serves as a habitat for a variety of rare species. As visitors move away from the lower slopes and ascend to higher elevations, increasingly rich and untouched vegetation becomes visible. Tourists exploring the region may encounter valuable wildlife species, including wild goats, brown bears, leopards, wildcats, and the Persian squirrel. The



● darehshahr.com

area is also home to distinctive and rare plant species, such as the Larg tree near Badreh, a botanical attraction that captivates nature enthusiasts.

The highest peak in the range is Kan Seifi Mount, rising 3,065 meters above sea level and attracting mountaineers from both Iran and abroad.

Speaking to ISNA, Farzad Sharifi, Director General of Cultural

Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Ilam Province, highlighted the region's attractions. He said that spring and summer are the ideal seasons for travelers seeking lush landscapes and flourishing nature, when visitors can enjoy swimming in natural pools, boating on fast-flowing rivers, and hiking through fields covered with red poppies and

narcissus flowers. For those who prefer tranquility and snow-covered scenery, autumn and early winter are recommended.

Sharifi noted that visitors can access the area via roads passing through Darreh Shahr and Badreh after arriving in Ilam Province. Directional signs near these towns guide travelers into the heart of the Kabirkuh region.

He added that Kabirkuh is surrounded by numerous historical and natural attractions that complement any visit. Among them are Bahram Chubin Gorge, Khazineh Valley, Agha Mir Cave, Haft Asiab Waterfall, the twin lakes of Siah Gav, the Poldokhtar wetlands, and the historic Gavmishan Bridge.

According to Sharifi, the region's exceptional combination of history, unspoiled nature, and rich biodiversity has made it one of the premier destinations for adventure travelers and ecotourism enthusiasts in southwestern Iran.

Historic Riab village eyes international heritage status

Iranica Desk

In the southern reaches of Khorasan Razavi Province, near the city of Gonabad, the historic village of Riab stands as a living page from the history of Iran's desert civilization. Here, the past continues to breathe through winding alleyways and earthen architecture, while contemporary life unfolds in harmony with centuries-old traditions.

Riab tells the story of a community that emerged in a challenging environment and sustained itself through patience, ingenuity, and a deep understanding of nature.

The village's appeal becomes evident upon arrival. Its cohesive mud-brick and adobe architecture, punctuated by traditional windcatchers rising against the skyline, reflects a sophisticated indigenous response to the demands of a hot and arid climate. The dense urban fabric, narrow passageways, winding lanes, and covered alleys known as Sabat not only provide shade but also offer protection from strong winds and natural hazards. Riab is widely regarded as an outstanding example of climate-responsive architecture, combining functionality, simplicity, and beauty.

At the heart of the village lies its enduring relationship with water. Riab developed in accordance with the logic of the qanat system and the natural slope of the land, with its architecture carefully aligned to the movement of water. Features such as underground access points to qanats, water chambers, and architectural spaces designed to channel water into residential compounds demonstrate that water was not merely a necessity but a defining element in the organization of daily life. This physical and cultural connection to the qanat network has made Riab one of the most valuable examples of sustainable desert habitation in Iran.

Beyond its architecture, Riab remains a living cultural landscape. Traditional ceremonies, local dialects, handicrafts, and hospitality continue to shape community life. From religious observances and seasonal customs to traditional weaving and handicraft production, the village has preserved many aspects of its intangible heritage. Riab was also among the pioneering rural communities in the province to establish eco-lodges and community-based tourism initiatives, highlighting its potential to become a model cultural tourism destination where local residents play a central role in both preservation and development. These characteristics — including the authenticity of its earthen architecture, the integrity of its historic fabric, its connection to the qanat system, its living traditions, and the active participation of the local community — have strengthened calls for the village's inscription on international heritage lists. Advocates argue that global recognition could provide an important safeguard against incompatible development, environmental degradation, and other long-term threats while positioning Riab within an international network of distinguished rural destinations.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Hadi Mohammadpour, the Parliamentary representative for Gonabad and Bajestan, described Riab as one of the most significant tourism and heritage assets in Khorasan Razavi Province.

He noted that the province, particularly its desert cities such as Gonabad and Bajestan, is home to valuable historical sites, extensive qanat systems, caravanserais, and historic villages that reflect the culture and civilization of earlier generations.

"Riab, with its long history, ancient qanats, and valuable traditional fabric, is one of the most prominent tourist attractions in south-



ern Khorasan Razavi," he said. Mohammadpour also highlighted the village's early role in developing rural tourism. He noted that during 2017 and 2018, Riab was among the first locations in the province to establish traditional eco-lodges operating as cultural centers. The village was nationally registered years ago, and in recent years it has received increased attention from provincial cultural heritage authorities.

The lawmaker further revealed that Riab has been included among the candidates for international recognition. According to him, the village was among 50 locations across the country considered last year for global registration initiatives. Three villages from Khorasan Razavi were nominated, including Riab. He said that sustained follow-up efforts by provincial authorities, cooperation with local government institutions, and measures undertaken in recent weeks have resulted in the implementation of many recommendations made by cultural heritage experts.

recreational facilities.

"The existence of historic qanats and the traditional urban fabric are among the clearest indicators of the village's long history," he said. "These valuable elements form the historical identity of Riab and deserve greater efforts toward preservation and international recognition."

Hamidreza Mahmoudi, head of Gonabad's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, described Riab as one of the most complete and best-preserved examples of desert architecture in eastern Iran. He said the village has successfully maintained its architectural authenticity through the continued use of adobe and mud-brick construction techniques. According to Mahmoudi, local builders employed indigenous materials

and architectural solutions specifically adapted to the harsh desert climate.

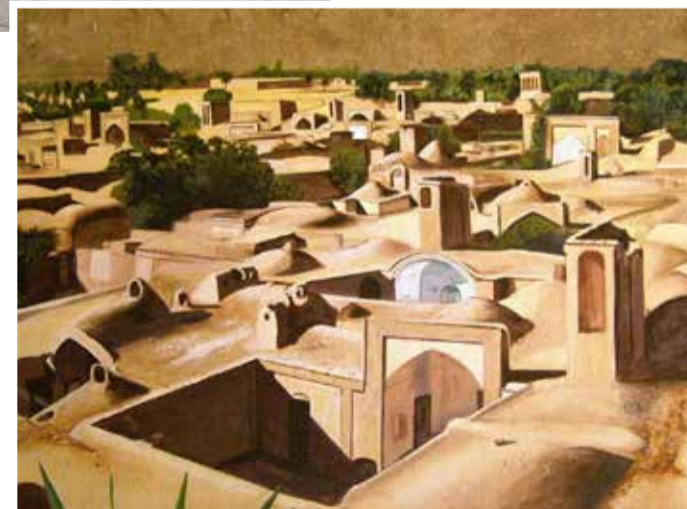
lodge skyline is distinguished by traditional windcatchers that function as natural ventilation systems, while the entrance vestibules of homes reflect the careful separation of private and public spaces in local culture. He identified the integration of architecture and water management as one of Riab's defining characteristics. The historic settlement developed in accordance with the terrain and the flow of the renowned Qasabeh Qanat, while prominent residences such as the Salari House used water chambers and underground access points to bring water into the heart of domestic life.

According to Mahmoudi, the village's layout represents a sophisticated balance between security, water management, and environmental adaptation. Narrow alleyways and numerous dead ends once created a defensive network that enhanced security, while covered passages provided opportunities for surveillance and protection.

He further noted that the village's physical structure was organized parallel to the qanat's water flow, ensuring an orderly hierarchy of water use. Buildings were generally oriented toward the qibla, maximizing sunlight during winter while providing shade during the summer months.

Mahmoudi stressed that Riab's historic fabric has remained largely intact because modern development was directed outside the historical core, allowing the village center to avoid many of the destructive effects of contemporary urbanization.

Among the village's most notable landmarks, he cited its historic water reservoir, Grand Mosque, central fortress, and the Alipour House. The latter, he said, became the region's first eco-lodge and represents a distinguished example of Iranian architecture featuring decorative elements from both the Safavid and Qajar periods.



● chn.ir

Mohammadpour expressed hope that, once the remaining requirements are completed, Riab will be internationally recognized as one of the leading tourism destinations in southern Khorasan Razavi Province.

He also emphasized the role of local residents in tourism development, noting that Riab is among the few villages where a significant number of residents have become actively involved in establishing eco-lodges and

and architectural solutions specifically adapted to the harsh desert climate.

"The village displays remarkable visual cohesion," he said. "Its inward-looking spatial organization and dense urban fabric minimize exposure to sunlight, while the covered passageways provide shade and serve a structural role in protecting against earthquakes and the region's famous 120-day winds."

Mahmoudi added that the vil-

Leader pardons, commutes sentences of more than 2,000 convicts

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei pardoned or commuted the sentences of more than 2,000 convicts ahead of Eid al-Ghadir, a major Muslim festival, the judiciary has announced.

The clemency, approved at the request of Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, applies to inmates convicted by general and revolutionary courts, military tribunals, and government penal institutions, Press TV reported.

Judiciary official Ali Mozafari said Friday that eligible convicts must have no private plaintiff, no effective criminal record, and demonstrated signs of reform after serving part of their sentence. Age, family circumstances, and the nature of the offense are also considered.

"The principle in the judiciary is the full execution of sentences," Mozafari

said. "But when it becomes clear during enforcement that a person has reformed and continued punishment is unnecessary, pardon or sentence reduction becomes possible."

Most of the 2,000 pardoned convicts will be released immediately, Mozafari added.

Mozafari drew clear red lines, stating that convicts of security crimes, espionage, actions against internal or external national security, and those who have threatened public security will not be pardoned under any circumstances.

"In the current situation where the Islamic Republic of Iran is engaged in a imposed war with global arrogance, the United States, and the Zionist regime, dealing with crimes against national security is carried out with full decisiveness, and this category of convicts is excluded from any reduction or par-

don," he said.

Cases with private plaintiffs also cannot receive clemency until the plaintiff's consent is obtained.

Such pardons are routinely announced on major religious and national occasions. Eid al-Ghadir, celebrated on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijjah, marks the occasion when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) appointed Imam Ali (PBUH) as his successor.

Provincial pardon commissions and a central commission reviewed eligible cases despite time constraints caused by holidays and the country's war footing, Mozafari said. He emphasized that decisions are based solely on legal criteria and that no outside pressure or demands influence the process.

"No pressure, demand, or consideration outside legal frameworks has any effect on the review process," he said. The clemency comes as Iran continues



Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei
 IRNA

to face heightened terrorism from the United States and Israel. Mozafari reiterated that those convicted of crimes

against state security remain entirely outside the scope of any sentence reduction or forgiveness.

Tehran, Dushanbe seek deeper cooperation on biodiversity protection



Social Desk

Iran and Tajikistan agreed to expand environmental cooperation during talks in Samarkand on Wednesday, with officials highlighting joint efforts to protect biodiversity, monitor pollution, and safeguard endangered species, according to Iran's Department of Environment (DoE).

Shina Ansari, Iran's vice president and head of the Department of Environment, met the Chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, Bahodur Sheralizoda, on June 4 on the sidelines of meetings linked to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and regional environmental forums in the historic Uzbek city, IRNA reported. The two officials discussed areas of

The vice president of Iran and head of the Department of Environment, Shina Ansari (L), meets with Bahodur Sheralizoda, Chairman of the Committee for Environmental Protection under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, on the sidelines of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) meetings in the Uzbek city of Samarkand on June 4, 2026.
 ● DOE

common concern at regional and international levels and explored ways to strengthen cooperation on biodiversity conservation, wildlife protection and pollutant monitoring.

"Iran and Tajikistan can effectively cooperate in the fields of biodiversity conservation, protection of wildlife and endangered species, and pollutant monitoring," Ansari said

during the meeting. She also raised the prospect of joint work under emerging international efforts to curb plastic pollution.

Sheralizoda voiced support for broader environmental engagement between the two countries and said Tajikistan was prepared to host Iranian biodiversity experts and specialists for technical visits and exchanges of experience.

The discussions underscored growing environmental ties between Tehran and Dushanbe as both countries confront shared challenges ranging from ecosystem degradation to climate-related pressures. Officials framed scientific cooperation and knowledge-sharing as key tools for strengthening environmental resilience across the region.

Ansari traveled to Samarkand to attend regional and global environmental meetings, including the sixth gathering of environment ministers from member states of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). On the sidelines of the visit, she also toured cultural and religious sites in the city and met members of the local Shiite community during Eid al-Ghadir celebrations.

The talks added fresh momentum to Iran-Tajikistan cooperation, with both sides signaling readiness to translate shared environmental priorities into practical collaboration.

Iranian short film wins top prize at Birmingham Kurdish festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Edris Mahmoudian's short drama 'Limo Knew Everything' won the Best Short Film award at the first Birmingham Kurdish Film Festival (BKFF), which concluded on May 31 in Birmingham, England.

The 21-minute film, written and directed by the Mahabad-born filmmaker, emerged as the top winner at the festival's closing ceremony, attended by British cultural and artistic figures. Launched on May 28, the Birmingham Kurdish Film Festival

was established to showcase Kurdish cinema and provide an international platform for Kurdish filmmakers from across the globe. Set in a rural household, 'Limo Knew Everything' unfolds around a family's anticipation of the birth of a son after eight daughters. Through a vibrant ensemble of women, restless movement, and an immersive camera, the film draws viewers into the pulse of everyday life, where hope hangs in the air like a whispered promise.

The latest accolade adds to the film's growing

international recognition. Earlier this year, it received a Jury Commendation at the Fifth Kurdish Film Festival of the Netherlands. It had previously earned Special Jury Mentions at the 11th Duhok International Film Festival in Iraq, the 41st Tehran International Short Film Festival, and the 21st Image of the Year Festival, while also collecting awards for Best Director and Best Sound at the Lahijan Open-Air Film Festival.

The cast includes Zhaleh Niloufari, Kamal Nojavan, Helya Alaei, Aram Amini, Mahpareh Amini, Dordaneh Razmara, Nastaran Sohrabi-Nia, Farinaz Naderi, Asal Mohammadi, Gazizeh Ebrahimi, Melina Mahboubi, Baran Mohammadi, and Rozhan Bayazidi.

Mahmoudian, who holds a degree in historic preservation, has been active in cinema since 2009 and previously directed the short films 'Kite' and 'Now a Girl Is My Homeland'.

British publisher to release Tehran war diaries for global readers

Arts & Culture Desk

British independent publisher NOP is set to release 'When the Sparrows Grow Anxious' (diaries from Tehran at war), a firsthand account by Iranian writer and researcher Ali Asghar Seidabadi that chronicles daily life in Tehran during the 40-day conflict involving US and Israeli attacks on Iran.

Seidabadi began writing the diary on February 28, 2026, and continued through the day

after the ceasefire. Originally addressed to an international network of children's and young adult authors, the book combines 50 daily entries with reflections and conversations involving 44 writers and artists from countries including the United States, Britain, Japan and France.

The English-language edition offers an intimate portrait of Tehran as residents navigated uncertainty while preserving the rhythms of everyday life.

Through observations, memories and personal reflections, Seidabadi explores how war reshapes time, language, family bonds, friendship, humor, fear and hope.

NOP said the book aligns with its mission of amplifying distinctive voices and overlooked narratives. In a statement, the publisher described the work as a record of "the texture of ordinary life under extraordinary pressure," allowing readers to witness how people continue

to care about "birds, food, jokes, books, neighbors and the weather while history presses against their windows."

The publisher said it chose the project because it offers a rare, ground-level perspective on a city often discussed internationally but less frequently heard in its own voice. The diary, it added, reaches beyond the boundaries of a single city and conflict to examine what it means to remain human when public events intrude upon private lives.

"The consequences of war are not experienced only in headlines," NOP said. "They are present in kitchens, streets, silences and the small acts of endurance that sustain daily life."

The book's cover draws on an image by IRNA photographer Akbar Tavakoli, while the digital edition features photographs by IRNA contributors and other Iranian photographers.

A Persian-language edition is also scheduled for publication in Iran by Agar Publishing.

