

US, Israel wreak further damage on Iran's cultural heritage

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The atrocious character of the American and Israeli war on Iran is apparent not only in the aggressors' murdering of civilians but also in their attacks on Iran's cultural heritage. The latter country's near-total internet blackout and the proverbial fog of war make obtaining a clear picture of the ongoing vandalism difficult. Nevertheless, independent reporting indicates that at least 56 Iranian cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed.

Iranian officials say that over 131 museums, historical buildings and cultural sites have been damaged. This barbarity is assaulting not only Iranian culture and history, but also the heritage of humanity as a whole.

Many UNESCO World Heritage sites have been damaged. One, as we have reported, is Golestan Palace in Tehran, a royal complex and former seat of the Qajar dynasty with roots in the 15th century. This complex sustained damage from a direct strike, as well as blast damage. Another is Chehel Sotoun, a Safavid-era pavilion in Isfahan that dates to the 17th century. The UN recognizes these sites as containing "cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity." They theoretically enjoy legal protection under an international treaty, and the attacks on them underscore the Trump administration's open contempt for international law.

More recently, the US and Israel have damaged Saadabad Palace complex, a former royal residence in Tehran. The complex was the home of the Qajar and Pahlavi shahs, including Reza Shah, who was installed through a coup executed by the United States and the United Kingdom. After the 1979 Iranian revolution, parts of the complex became public museums. The Green Palace, one of the three palaces in the complex, has been called the most beautiful palace in Iran.

Strikes also have damaged the Marble Palace, which was built in 1933 while the Pahlavi dynasty was in power. The palace stands on lands that belonged to Qajar princes, and Iranian institutions used it for almost 40 years. It has served as the headquarters of Islamic Revolutionary Committees, the offices of senior judiciary officials and the office of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. It also has housed the Iranian National Jewels.

Teymourtash House in Tehran, which was owned by the first minister of court during the Pahlavi era, also has been damaged. Notably, the building incorporates Iranian, Russian and Indian styles of architecture. The mansion's first floor houses a war museum with exhibitions dating from the Safavid era to the Pahlavi era. Like Saadabad Palace and the Marble Palace, Teymourtash House is not an isolated building but a museum network. Damage to these sites has thus affected archives, collections and the ability to conduct research.

Isfahan, Iran's third-most populous city, has suffered multiple attacks. Damage has been confirmed at several sites inside the city's heritage complex, within and around Naqsh-e Jahan Square. These sites include the Shah Mosque and Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, both of which date to the 17th century and are regarded as masterpieces of Persian architecture. Strikes have cracked the structures of these buildings, dislodged masonry and shattered decorative elements.

In Kashan, the historic Fin Garden sustained damage to its pavilions and water features. The garden was completed in 1590, making it the oldest extant garden in Iran.

As terrible as the damage to these sites is, even more heinous is the destruction of Rashk-e Jenan, a site that housed the Isfahan Governor's Palace. The centuries-

old complex dated to the Safavid era, was renovated during the Qajar period and was known for its gold-decorated ceilings. With characteristic, Nazi-like savagery, the Israeli Air Force destroyed the site in a direct strike in March.

The US and Israel seek to destroy not only Iran's cultural heritage sites but also its centers of knowledge and study. Dozens of universities and research centers have been struck, according to Iran's Foreign Ministry. Among them are the Iran University of Science and Technology and Isfahan University of Technology. As they have done in Gaza, the Zionist state and its imperial sponsor seek to obliterate the accumulated knowledge that is the foundation of civilization and progress.

The fascistic government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also has used the war on Iran as a pretext for an invasion of Lebanon, where it seeks to create a "security zone" extending north to the Litani River. Rejecting all restraint, Israel is targeting the country's civilian infrastructure and cultural heritage.

In March, Israeli airstrikes hit the vicinity of Lebanon's ancient city of Tyre, which is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. The airstrikes damaged the entrance to the Al-Bass archaeological site, which is centered on a 3,000-year-old necropolis. A museum under construction in that area had its windows blown out. The necropolis, the Roman-era triumphal arch, aqueducts and hippodrome were fortunately unscathed, but not because of any scruples on the part of Israel. Tyre was heavily damaged during Israel's 2024 invasion of Lebanon.

Israeli strikes have also occurred within yards of major Roman temples at Lebanon's Baalbek archaeological site. The large site encompasses the ruins of an ancient Roman town and is one of the most important Roman temple complexes in the world. It was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984. The remains of a formerly massive Temple of Jupiter are one of the main structures at the site, which also is home to a Temple of Bacchus.

There can be no doubt that these sites in Iran and Lebanon were struck intentionally. "The Israelis know everything. They know your shoe size ... and they know very well this is an archaeological site," Nader Saqlawi, an official in Lebanon's culture ministry, told the semiofficial Saudi newspaper *Asharq Al Awsat*.

Nor is the US acting out of ignorance. As we previously reported, UNESCO transmitted the coordinates of every protected site in Iran to the US and Israel. Both countries confirmed that they had received the information.

The US has consciously shifted its focus from Iran's military targets to its civilian infrastructure and cultural heritage. On Wednesday, Trump threatened to destroy "each and every one of their electric generating plants." He promised to "bring them back to the Stone Ages." This monstrous threat, which did not originate with Trump individually but the entire ruling elite, is a repudiation not only of international law but also of human civilization itself. The US and its attack dog Israel seek to obliterate the culture, historical memory and social cohesion of their enemies. The loss of the precious and irreplaceable heritage of mankind is of no consequence to these criminals.

Only a social order that has exhausted its progressive role and entered a stage of terminal decline could produce a malignancy like Trump, who himself is only the most repulsive symptom of an international crisis. The illegal imperialist war against Iran proves beyond doubt that capitalism can no longer preserve human culture, let alone allow it to flourish. For the sake of humanity, capitalism must be overthrown.



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