

Crime Against Science

Open Letter to the International Community Regarding the Military Aggression by the United States and Israel Against Iran's Scientific and Educational Infrastructure

The Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Director-General of UNESCO

Science as a Shared Heritage of Humanity

Science is a shared heritage of humankind. It is built through the cumulative contributions of many civilizations over centuries and is sustained through international cooperation, academic freedom, and the protection of educational and research institutions.

Iranian civilization has long been part of this global intellectual tradition. Scholars such as Avicenna, Al-Biruni, Al-Khwarizmi, and Omar Khayyam made lasting contributions to science and philosophy. In modern times, figures such as Mahmoud Hessaby, Maryam Mirzakhani, Majid Samii, and Saeed Kazemi Ashtiani—alongside many other researchers—have continued this tradition through their contributions to global knowledge.

Today, Iran remains an active participant in the international scientific community. The country hosts more than three million university students and approximately eighty thousand faculty members across nearly two thousand universities and higher education institutions. Iranian researchers contribute over two percent of all Scopus-indexed publications worldwide, and Iran ranked seventeenth globally in scientific output in 2024. Iran also ranks fifth worldwide in nanotechnology research and hosts the largest technology park in West Asia. International engagement is further reflected in initiatives such as the Mustafa Prize as well as the presence of approximately one hundred thousand Iranian students studying abroad.

Attacks on Scientific and Educational Infrastructure

We write to express deep concern regarding the military attacks carried out by the United States and Israel against Iran in June 2025 and March 2026. These attacks caused extensive damage to civilian, scientific, and educational infrastructure. Available reports indicate that a number of these sites were deliberately targeted rather than incidentally damaged. These attacks, conducted in violation of ceasefires and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran, are matters to which the scientific community cannot remain indifferent.

According to available reports, these attacks resulted in, or were associated with:

- Damage to or destruction of **700 schools and educational facilities**, including the direct bombing of Shajareh Tayyebah School in Minab

- Damage to several universities and research centers, including the **Aerospace Research Center, Isfahan University of Technology, Iran University of Science and Technology, Pasteur Institute of Iran, Shahid Beheshti University and Sharif University of Technology**
- The deaths of **more than 290 students and teachers** in educational environments
- The deaths of 33 university students in various cities, and the attack on the training vessel **Dena**, which resulted in the deaths of **104 unarmed students**
- Major disruption to academic and research activities, affecting more than three million university students and **seventeen million school students**, causing irreparable harm to educational development goals
- Threats to the safety of more than **60,000 international students** studying and conducting research in Iran
- Targeted attacks on residential areas, reportedly intended to assassinate **more than twenty scientists and members of their families**, including the president of one of Iran's largest non-governmental universities

The targeting of scientists, researchers, and academic institutions raises grave concerns for the safety of the global scientific community. Researchers who openly share their work through publications, books, and other scholarly channels should not face threats to their lives, their families, or their institutions. The academic community considers it a professional and moral duty to stand with civilians and, beyond condemning military intervention, to defend science and its infrastructure.

Protection of Education and Science

Attacks on schools, universities, and research institutions conflict with widely recognized principles of international humanitarian law. The principle of distinction between civilian and military objects, reflected in Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (1977), requires that civilian objects—including educational and scientific institutions—must not be targeted. Similarly, the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict calls for safeguarding educational, cultural, and scientific institutions.

From the perspective of international human rights law, such actions also raise serious concerns regarding the protection of the right to education and the right to participate in scientific progress, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2601 (2021) condemns attacks against education during armed conflict and emphasizes the protection of students, teachers, and educational facilities. UNESCO's 2017 Recommendation on Science and Scientific Researchers likewise highlights the importance of protecting academic freedom and ensuring the safety of researchers.

Recent events in Iran also echo patterns observed in other conflict-affected regions over the past two decades—including Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, and Lebanon—where educational and research institutions have suffered damage during armed conflict. The growing indifference toward the immunity of science and education in times of war is a deeply concerning trend. This conflict represents a **crime against science and humanity**, and a threat to global peace,

as science is an essential pillar of international understanding and cooperation. Attacks on Iran's scientific institutions are not merely attacks on one nation; they are attacks against thought, progress, and peace.

Requests for International Action

We, the undersigned academics, researchers, and members of the international scientific community, respectfully call for international attention and action in response to the attacks on educational, scientific, and civilian institutions in Iran, which—according to available reports—resulted in the deaths of students, teachers, researchers, and scientists.

We therefore request:

- An official statement condemning the attacks on Iran's scientific and educational infrastructure
- An independent international fact-finding commission to document incidents affecting educational and research institutions
- The activation of legal and judicial mechanisms necessary to hold those responsible for these attacks accountable before the International Court of Justice and other relevant bodies
- Support for the protection and safety of scholars and researchers facing threats in vulnerable contexts internationally

Indifference toward such attacks threatens the security of the scientific community worldwide. Protecting educational institutions and fostering international scientific cooperation are essential to the future of global knowledge and peace.