



When Classrooms Become Battlegrounds: The Assault on Iranian Science

In a shocking escalation, Iran was recently targeted by the Israeli regime in a military operation that, among its many atrocities, aimed to undermine the nation's scientific and intellectual infrastructure. Alarming reports indicate that key figures in Iran's academic community, especially in fields like physics and medical sciences were directly attacked. Universities and classrooms were struck by missiles and drones. Several academics were assassinated along with their families, including women and children.

During the brutal 12-day attack by the Zionist regime on Iran, Shahid Beheshti University and many of its professors, especially in the physics department, were directly attacked with missiles and drones in the classroom and at home, which is a rare incident in the current world. Tragically, six medical doctors and eighteen healthcare workers were martyred, including two pediatricians and gynecologists who lost their lives alongside their young children. Beyond the irreparable human loss, these attacks caused severe psychological trauma. Students preparing for national and final exams experienced acute distress, and many along with their families are now dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) ^{1,2}. In light of this devastating assault, we must reflect on the broader implications for scientific progress, particularly in the realm of basic sciences ³.

Two opposing perspectives emerge

Support for basic sciences is crucial: Fundamental research, especially when translatable into clinical or applied outcomes, is the backbone of innovation. It fuels optimism, confidence, and problem-solving within academic communities. Supporting basic sciences fosters resilience in both students and faculty, helping societies confront and overcome crises.

Neglecting science is self-sabotage: A narrow, short-sighted approach to funding where research budgets are cut due to economic pressures risks compounding the damage inflicted by external attacks. When scientific development is deprioritized, the consequences for national resilience and innovation are even more severe than the physical destruction wrought by missiles.

Unfortunately, the challenges Iranian scientists face extend beyond the battlefield. As an editor, I am increasingly concerned by the unscientific treatment of Iranian researchers by international publishers. In recent months, many submissions have been rejected on non-academic grounds, reflecting a troubling politicization of global science. This practice, which echoes earlier directives by U.S. authorities to restrict Iranian authors, is a clear departure from the ideals of impartial and collaborative scientific inquiry ⁴. Indeed, science should never be a casualty of politics.

Yet, despite these adversities, Iran's scientific community endures. As affirmed in the Holy Qur'an, "*Indeed, Allah is with those who are patient*". In the face of oppression, our scientists continue to pursue knowledge, serve humanity, and inspire hope.

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