Peace Museums are a relatively new idea. War, on the other hand, has enjoyed glorification through monuments, literature, art, and war museums for centuries. Against the backdrop of these relatively one-sided accounts, the idea arose of comprehensively recording the details of warfare—its depravity, the acute human costs associated with war, the totality of warfare that extends beyond the images of glory and valor—in the setting of a formally organized museum. The motivation for such an endeavor was and still is the faith that "making people aware of the reality of war [is] tantamount to educating them for peace." 1

The dawn of the age of modern warfare at the turn of the 19th century provided the impetus for Jean de Bloch, a Polish-Russian entrepreneur, to establish the first noted peace museum of our era. In 1902, the International Museum of War and Peace was opened to the public in Lucerne, Switzerland. It was another two decades before another peace museum took root. In the wake of the devastating effects of World War I on European society, particularly in the German republic, Ernst Friedrich launched the First International Anti-War Museum in 1925. It was later closed by the Nazi regime in 1933 as Friedrich fled persecution.

The second wave of peace museums sprung up after the destructive years of World War II. Appropriately, the majority of these museums were established in Japan, where a keen understanding of the fatal consequences of nuclear warfare was realized. The cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were centers of staunch opposition to nuclear warfare that spread throughout the world. Peace museums also were instituted in post-war Germany.

Today, peace museums can be found in every continent of the world. Though war still lingers, there is hope to be found in the growth of the peace museum movement. Efforts aimed at furthering the cause of peace are truly "an incremental enterprise." 2 The greater the presence of peace museums, the more palpable the message of peace for the general public to approach, appreciate, and assimilate as part of their own beliefs.

The Tehran Peace Museum is a proud member of this tradition.

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For peace and non-violence to prevail, we must:

• Foster a culture of peace through education
• Promote sustainable economic and social development
• Promote respect for all human rights
• Foster participatory decision-making
• Advance understanding, tolerance, and solidarity
• Support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge
• Promote international peace and security

The Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflict by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups, and nations (UN Resolution A/RES/53/243: Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace).
The Tehran Peace Museum is as much an interactive peace center as a museum. It coordinates a peace education program that holds workshops and hosts conferences on the culture of peace, reconciliation, international humanitarian law, disarmament, and peace advocacy. Additionally, the museum houses a documentary studio that provides a workspace wherein the individual stories of victims of warfare can be captured and archived for the historical record. The museum’s peace library includes a collection of literature spanning topics from international law to the implementation of peace to oral histories of veterans and victims of war. Permanent and rotating peace-related art exhibitions displaying the work of amateur international and Iranian artists are also housed in the museum complex. Finally, the Iranian secretariat for the international organization “Mayors for Peace” is housed in the Tehran Peace Museum.