

**Islamic Republic of Iran**

Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts & Tourism Organization

**ICHHTO**



**State of Conservation report of Meidan Emam Esfahan  
World Heritage Site**

*UNESCO*

*World Heritage Convention*

*Tehran 2016*

*In the name of God*

Meidan Emam, Esfahan which is inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 is a 9-ha square surrounded by four architectural monuments, Masjed-e Emam, Shekh Lotfollah Mosque, the Pavilion of Ali Qapu, the Portico of Qeyssarieh and series of two storeys arcades with unique decorations.

The square is located in the midst of the historic fabric of Esfahan as within its historic-cultural axis, thus it was always a side of a double-faced development conflicts in Esfahan. Fortunately, two of the main disputes involving Meydan Emam Esfahan, namely Jahan nama tower, and Metro line 2 of Esfahan city, have been solved, the first one with a reduction of height and the second one with a shift in its route.

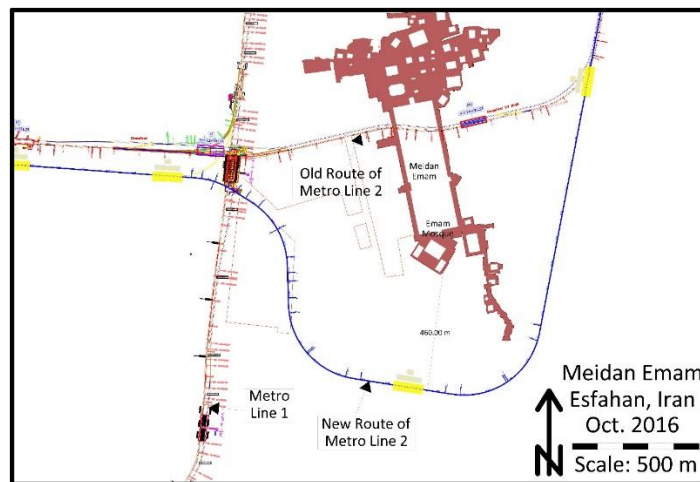


Figure 1. Newly assigned route for metro line 2 of Esfahan

Meydan Emam Esfahan benefits from several decision-making teams to help with finding the best solutions and answers for protecting its OUV, integrity and authenticity. Thus, the teams discuss all the relevant plans, implementation projects, issues and conflicts in their meetings. Here are the most important conservation related themes approved/ implemented:

- Reinforcement and restoration of the decorations on Masjed-e Emam dome
- Restoration on the columns and ceiling of Ali qapu pavilion
- Restoration and harmonization of the parietal decorations in Ali qapu portico
- Revitalization and reorganization of Royal road
- Reorganization of the Square
- Reorganization of lightings in Meydan Emam
- Establishment of a presenting room for the complex
- Installation of presenting signboards
- Awareness raising for publics regarding the historic and cultural significances of Meydan Emam World Heritage Site
- Installation of Security and monitoring equipments
- Monitoring Tourism in Meydan Emam and development of related infrastructures

## **Introduction**

Meidan Emam, Esfahan which is inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 is a significant architectural complex known as one of the most magnificent Islamic symbols in Iran. The 9-ha square surrounded by four architectural monuments, Masjed-e Emam (on the southern side), Shekh Lotfollah Mosque (on the eastern side), the Pavilion of Ali Qapu (on the western side), the Portico of Qeyssarieh (on the northern side) and series of two storeys arcades with unique decorations (mosaic tiles, wooden Girih, paintings, etc.).

The square is located in the midst of the historic fabric of Esfahan as within its historic-cultural axis, thus it was always a side of a double-faced development conflicts in Esfahan. Since there was no specific boundary defined for the complex as compatible with the current policies of World Heritage Convention, the management system had always the concerns of protecting its integrity and authenticity against the increasing rate of development in the city. Thus, development of its core and buffer zone boundaries accelerated by the decision of authorities in ICHHTO, to be able to correspond to the legal measure needed to take in order to keep the complex intact, as well as to be able to correspond to its World Heritage status standards.

Fortunately, as the process of defining the boundaries is completed (the maps and required documents is attached in a separate set to gain the final approval of the World Heritage Committee), two of the main disputes involving Meydan Emam Esfahan, namely Jahan nama tower, and Metro line 2 of Esfahan city, have been solved, the first one with a reduction of height and the second one with a shift in its route.

## Shift in Metro line 2 of Esfahan City

Referring to the concerns of the World Heritage Committee and ICHHTO a decision made by Iranian authorities, Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization and Esfahan Municipality, in 29th February, 2016 with the approval of Dr. Soltanifar, the former vice president of Iran and Head of Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization in 16th March, 2016 which resulted to a shift in the route of Metro line 2 of Esfahan city from its previous path.



Figure 1. MOU between the ICHHTO and the different departments of Esfahan's Municipality to shift the route of metro line 2 (left)- signification of a shift in metro line 2 route by Dr. Soltanifar former head of ICHHTO (right)

The below map is shown the new route of metro line 2 in Esfahan is completely out from buffer zone of Meidan Emam World Heritage Property. We would like to inform the World Heritage Committee about new route of metro line 2 that is 350 meters far from Meidan Emam and it is completely acceptable regarding the safety measures.

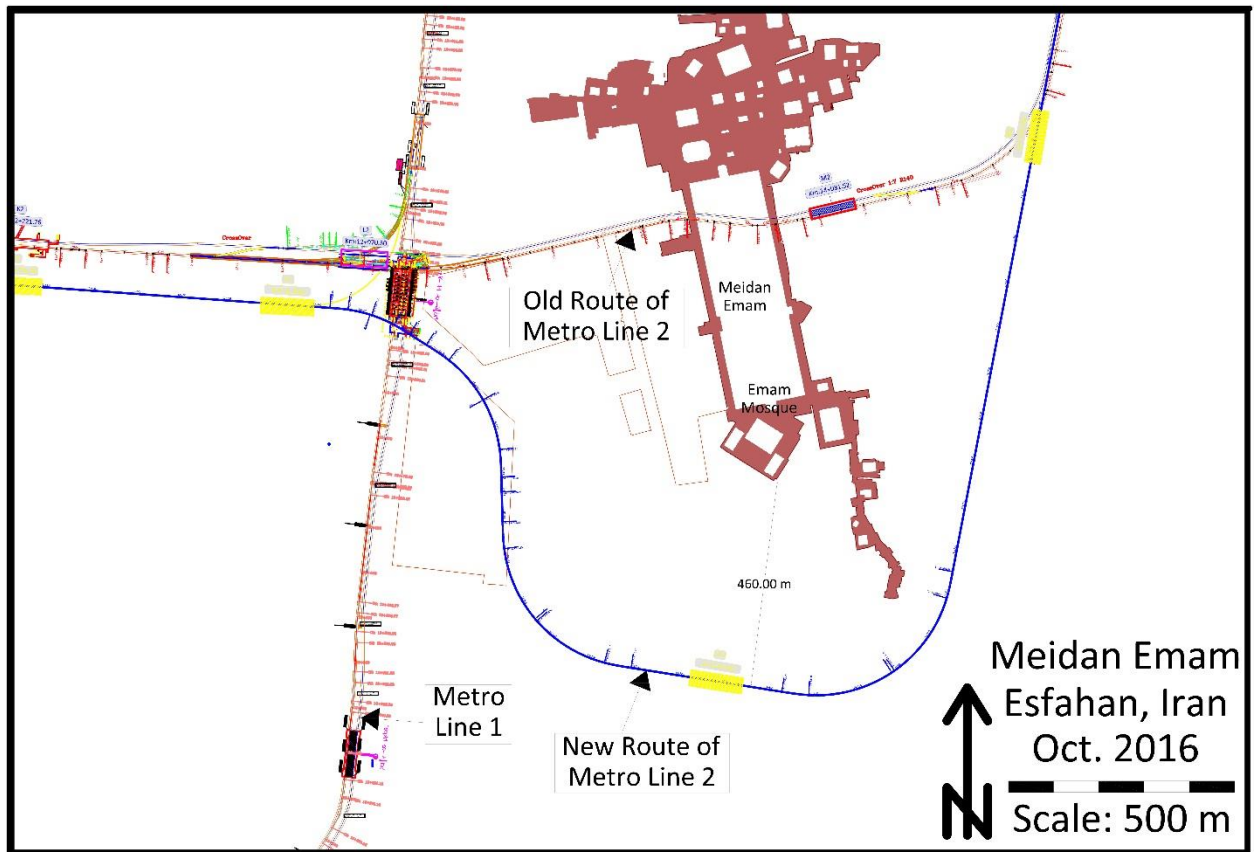


Figure 2. newly assigned route for metro line 2 of Esfahan

### Conservation Planning in Meydan Emam Esfahan

Meydan Emam Esfahan benefits from several decision-making teams to help with finding the best solutions and answers for protecting its OUV, integrity and authenticity. Thus, the teams discuss all the relevant plans, implementation projects, issues and conflicts in their meetings. Here are the conservation related themes approved by each team:

#### Approved measures within the board of trustees sessions regarding Meydan Emam Esfahan

- Implementation of the pavements within the square's northern side
- Reorganization of some of the endowed shops with handicraft related functions
- Reorganization of lightings in the square and its architectural elements
- Reorganization of the immediate passage behind Emam Mosque
- The regulations for the commemoration of religious and national events within the World Heritage Site
- Reorganization of the urban sewage system in the core and buffer zone of the square by Esfahan's Water and Wastewater Organization



Figure 3. Board of Trustees Session in Esfahan Governorate- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive

### Approved measures within the technical committee sessions

- Reconstruction and rehabilitation plan of the square entrances in Sepah, Hafez and Sa'di Streets
- The executive plans and projects for 2015 & 2016
- Details of the implementation plan for the pavements within the square's northern side
- Details of the reorganization plan regarding the immediate passage behind Emam Mosque
- The details of regulations for the commemoration of religious and national events within the World Heritage Site to be presented in the Board of Trustees session
- Development of a plan to utilize the second storey of square's arcades as a museum
- Development of a plan regarding the reorganization of the shops' lightings and awnings
- The plan regarding wooden fences of Ali qapu's portico



Figure 4. Technical Committee Session in Meydan Emam World Heritage Base- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive

### Approved measures within the stakeholders sessions

- Reorganization and purification of the green area inside the complex by the associated municipality branch
- Reorganization of the Square shops by the "tradespeople", "Esfahan's Organization of Industry, Mine and Trades", "Esfahan's Handicraft-Trade Union", "Esfahan's

## Chamber of Guilds” and “Esfahan’s Urban Development and Revitalization Organization”

- Provision of a database on the information of tradespeople (regarding their occupations, rent types, work permissions, etc.) by Endowment and Charity Affairs Organization, Esfahan’s Organization for Registration of Deeds and Properties, Saremodolleh Endowment Organization and Esfahan’s Chamber of Guilds
- The plan and implementation of the shops’ signs reorganization and prevention of passage blockage along bazaar by the associated municipality branch
- Monitoring assessment and patrol inside the core and buffer zone of the complex by Meydan Emam professional personnel
- Security Patrol and controlling the safety of tourists inside the complex by the security guards and tourism police



Figure 5. Stakeholders Session in Meydan Emam World Heritage Base- ©Meydan Emam Base’s Archive



Figure 6. Tourism Police and security Guards in Meydan Emam World Heritage Site- ©Meydan Emam Base’s Archive

## Approved measures on executive projects within the distinguished supervisors sessions

- Development and implementation of restoration on Ali qapu’s columns
- Development and implementation of the reinforcement for the western side of Ali qapu’s portico
- Development of a plan for the wooden fences of Ali qapu’s portico





Figure 7. Distinguished Supervisors Session in Ali qapu Pavilion- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive

## Conservation- restoration measures in the Meydan Emam World Heritage Site

### Reinforcement and restoration of the decorations on Masjed-e Emam dome

In 2014, some damages exposed to the decoration tiles of Masjed-e Emam, the restoration of which considered as a priority in ICHHTO, so in the same year the restoration process started by the financial support of Iranian World Heritage Sites' Office. The dome, however, consists of 16 sections, 8 of which are now restored and reinforced. The procedure is currently pursuing for the other 8 sections.

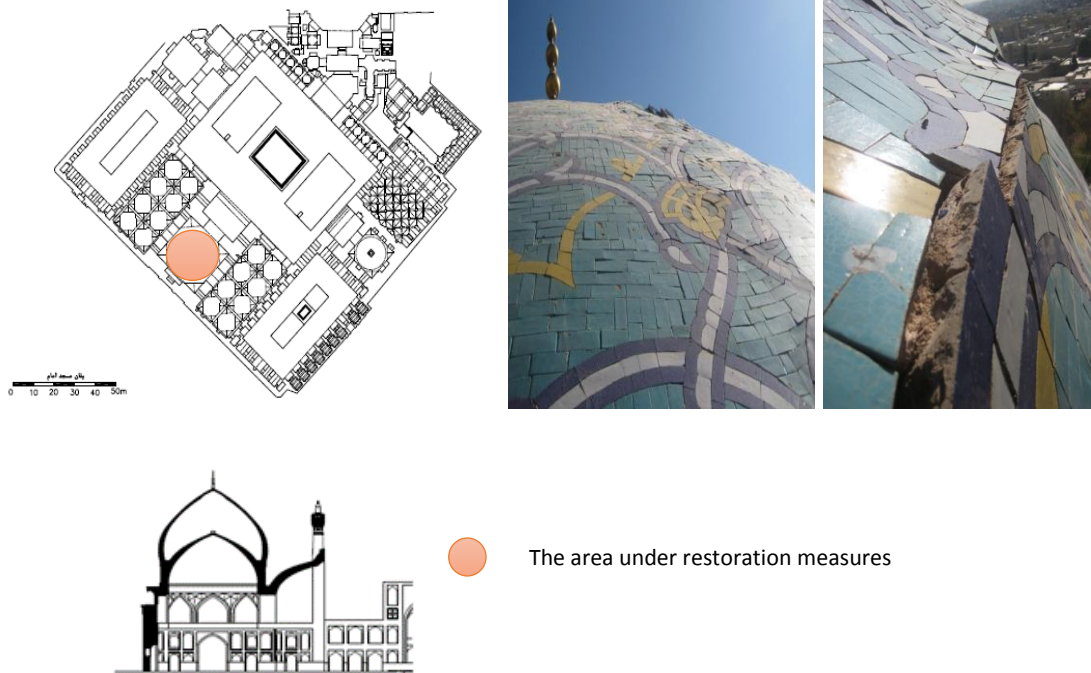


Figure 8. The condition of tiles before restoration- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive



Figure 9. Reinforcement and restoration of the decoration tiles on Masjed-e Emam dome (left)- a part of installed tiles after restoration and reinforcement (right)

### Finalization of the restoration on the columns and ceiling of Ali qapu pavilion

The reinforcement and restoration of Ali qapu's portico was firstly established by an Italian group in 1966. The portico consists of 18 wooden columns and solid wooden Girih (Strapwork) decorations on the surface of the ceiling. The next stages of restoration and consolidation carried out since 2003. The process, however, finalized this year.



□ The restored and reinforced area

Figure 10. Restoration, reinforcement and harmonization of portico columns



*Figure 11. Restoration of decorative wooden elements*

### **Restoration and harmonization of the parietal decorations in Ali qapu portico**

Restoration and harmonization of the parietal decoration in Ali qapu portico has started from 2015 on the paintings, Layeh chini and wooden girih doors of which the northern side is completed.



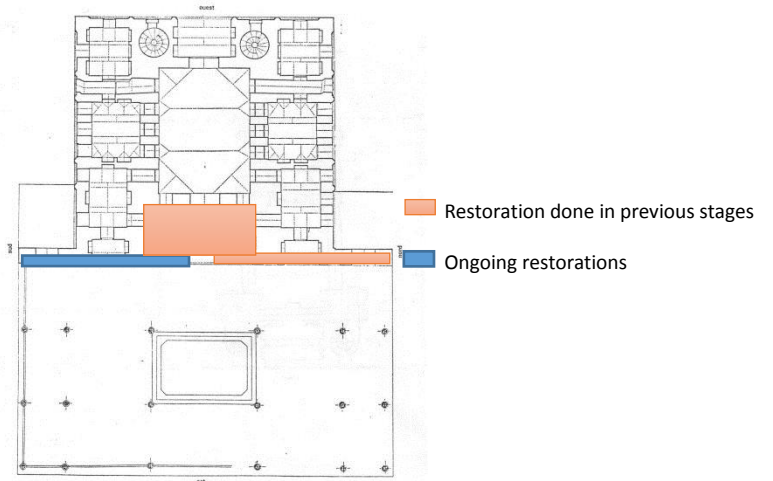


Figure 12. Restoration and harmonization of the parietal decorations in Ali qapu portico

### Revitalization and reorganization of Royal road

On the western side of Meydan Emam, there were entrances assigned for the court, authorities and the king to gain access to the square. It also linked the square with the Safavid *Dolat khaneh* (State House). The most important entrance of which was assigned for his majesty and the attendants, was located beside Ali qapu pavilion.

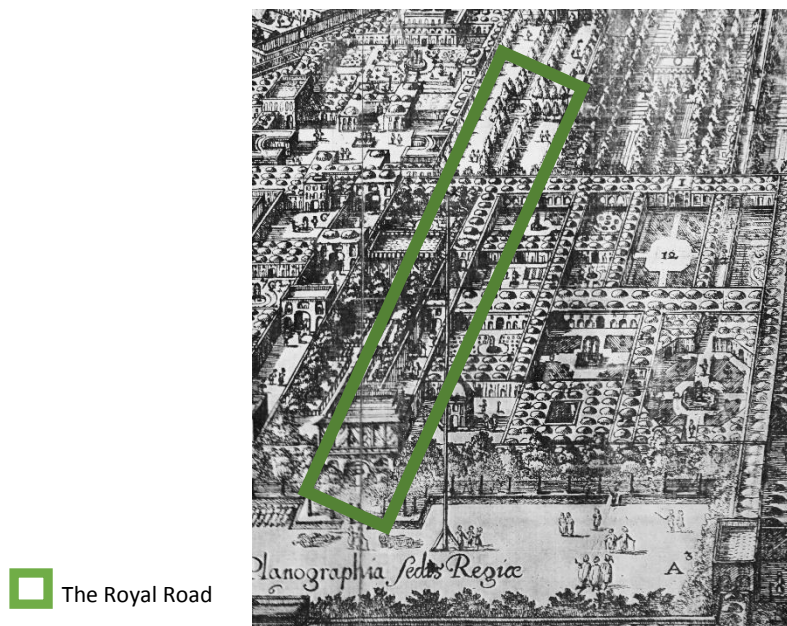


Figure 13. A sketch showing the location of Royal Road in historic documents (by Kempfer)

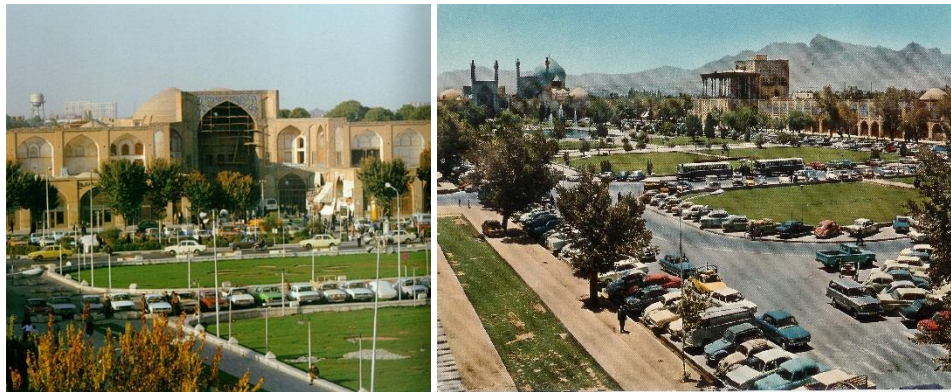
In 2003 the restoration plan of the first part of the Royal road towards Ali qapu and the reconstruction plan of the rest of it to Sepah Street approved by ICHHTO (Esfahan branch), the implementation of which finalized this year.



*Figure 14. The Royal road in restoration phase (left and middle)- completed project (right)*

### **Reorganization of the Square**

As a historic monument from the glorious Safavid era, Naqsh-e Jahan square (Meydan Emam) is inscribed in the World Heritage list. Back to 30 years, the heavy traffic all over the vicinity of the square, it could be resembled as a huge parking lot, rather than a World Heritage historic and urban phenomena. these conditions were not pursuing the status of a World Heritage class monument so a reorganization project established on the decision of the responsible officials.



*Figure 15. The previous condition of the square in 80s when the entry of cars and parking in the site was permitted- ©ICHHTO- Esfahan branch*

Form the early 90s, the municipality of Esfahan conducted an operation to block motor vehicle entrance to the southern parts of the square and changed the platform to footpaths and carriage passage route, the process of which finalized by 1994. In a way that the motor vehicles were not allowed to turn around the square and their access to the central and southern parts of the square were limited. This resulted in traffic congestion in northern part of the square. In other words, the vehicle zone of the square was limited to the space between Hafez street and the portico of Qeyssariyeh, as the motor vehicles could enter the square area and exit from it along

Hafez and Sepah streets. The area between Sepah street and Qeyssariyeh was assigned as a parking lot by the time.

After 2000 Esfahan's Urban Development and Revitalization Organization pursued the limitation of car access within the square area. This time, it excluded parking in the northern side of the square and in front of Qeyssariyeh, which was covering a vast area of the square's open space, by changing to a green area. Thus, the parking lots restricted for all of the motor vehicles to the area between Hafez and Sepah streets.

In the 10 years between 1990s and 2000s positive activities were done to restrict the motor vehicles' access to Naqsh-e Jahan square (Meydan Emam) comparing to those of Pahlavi era. But even this limited motor vehicle movement in the northern part of the square, effected in numerous troubles in the open space of the square including the disturbance of the atmosphere, landscape and noise pollution. These inconveniences made the Higher Council of Traffic Management of Esfahan Province to approve a restricted access plan for any kind of motor vehicle to Naqsh-e Jahan square, on March 13th, 2014. Hereafter Esfahan's Urban Development and Revitalization Organization prepared the essentials to alter the paving of the square in the asphalted areas. The authorities implemented this resolution in 2015. This way after about 80 years, the traffic status of the Naqsh-e Jahan reverted to its previous conditions in the early times of Pahlavi I and before that. Later, the landscape is purified from other disturbing elements such as bus stops, traffic signs, piles, metal barriers, etc.



Figure 16. the Asphalt coverage of the square and its condition within the northern side- before reorganization of the site- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive



Figure 17. the coverage of the square within the northern side in reorganizing phase- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive



Figure 18. the coverage of the square within the northern side after reorganization- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive

### Reorganization of lightings in Meydan Emam

In 1936 the first modern lightings applied to Meydan Emam Square, thereafter it improved two more times. In 2015, considering the undesirable lighting system of the square and rising the risk possibilities, almost a million-dollar budget assigned from the associated municipality branch to undertake a modification in the electric system, lamps and their associated guards, etc. the phases of which are approaching to its end.



Figure 19. reorganization of lightings within Meydan Emam

### Education and promotion measures

Establishment of a room presenting each element of the World Heritage Site and their Outstanding Universal Values for the visitors and tourists in Ali qapu pavilion in 2015.



Figure 20. Presentation room

### Installation of presenting signboards

In 2015-2016 several signboards added to the complex to help the visitors with the information of each space, the visitor pathways, etc. There, also, several barriers installed for limiting approaches towards vulnerable elements and to keep a proper preservation condition for the work of arts.

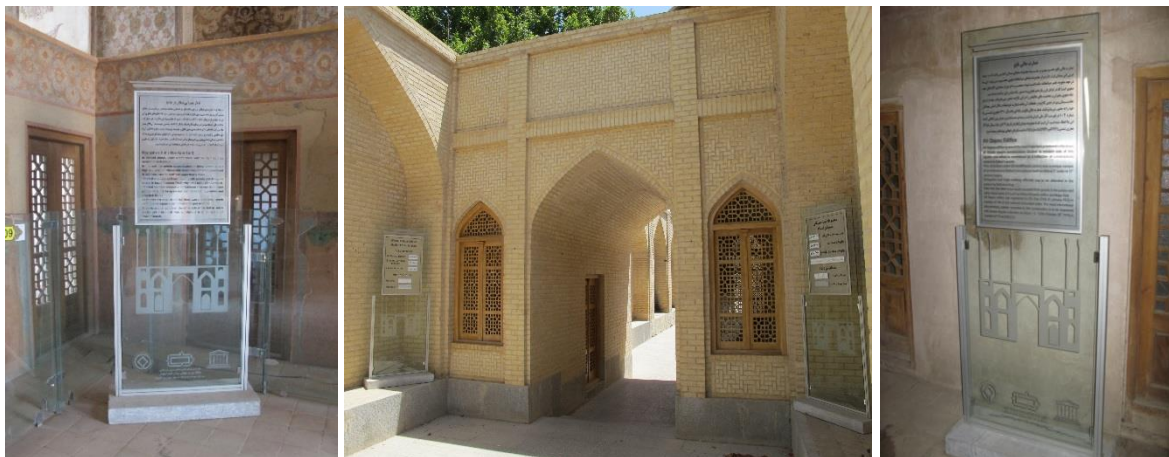


Figure 21. Signboards



Figure 22. Barriers



## **Awareness raising for publics regarding the historic and cultural significances of Meydan Emam World Heritage Site**

- Publishing Tourism Guide Maps and Drawings
- Organizing Educational Programs for students
- Encouraging young people to visit the complex
- Organizing Painting Contests inside the World Heritage Site to promote its Outstanding Universal Values
- Benefiting from Audio Guides for tourists
- Organizing several exhibitions about the Islamic culture and civilization of Iran in Ali qapu pavilion



*Figure 23. Organizing Educational Programs and Visits for Students- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive*



*Figure 24. Organizing an exhibition on the historical myths of Iran- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive*

## **Security and monitoring enhancement measures**

A camera control system with closed circuit television cameras as well as audio control systems are established in Ali qapu pavilion as a pilot project in 2015, to help with the monitoring process.

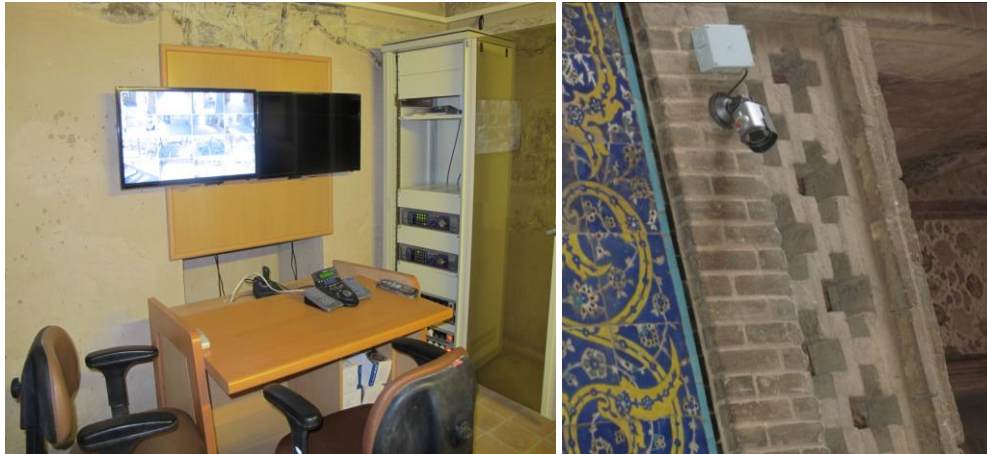


Figure 25. camera and audio control systems

## Tourism-related monitoring of Meydan Emam since 2014

### Tourism statistics of Meydan Emam in 2014

No.	Name of destination	No. of International Tourists	No. of Domestic Tourists
1	Masjed Emam	57988	119365
2	Ali Qapu Pavilion	49883	195823
3	Sheyx Lotfollah Mosque	54253	82042

### Tourism statistics of Meydan Emam in 2015

No.	Name of destination	No. of International Tourists	No. of Domestic Tourists
1	Masjed Emam	48860	119677
2	Ali Qapu Pavilion	45542	219180
3	Sheyx Lotfollah Mosque	48803	79771

### Tourism statistics of Meydan Emam in the first six month of 2016

No.	Name of destination	No. of International Tourists	No. of Domestic Tourists
1	Masjed Emam	48280	86151
2	Ali Qapu Pavilion	47026	197438
3	Sheyx Lotfollah Mosque	46335	62437

## Development of a spatial structure for the tourists' pedestrian/ roadways within the core and buffer zone of the square:

In order to develop a plan to guide the visitors' paths spatially, several studies on the current drawings as well as historic documents carried out with a focus on socio- economic aspects, the Outstanding Universal Values of the complex as a unique entity for the whole world and

traffic and physical status of the neighborhood, based on which an ideogram proposed. The aim of the final plan is to sustain the historic structure of the World Heritage Site, offering proper services to the tourists and involving the relevant organizations and institutions to reduce traffic jams and further inconveniences for the locals as well as tourists by defining tourism pathways (axis) with attracting outset, route and outtrace.

The studies defined some of the current pathways which needed to be reorganized, some of which are as follows:

1. Charbagh
2. Charbagh Khajoo and Hasan abad market
3. Kohne Bazar square and the portico of Qeyssariyeh
4. Jahan nama and Sepah Street
5. Charbagh, Hasht behesht and Shahid Amini Nezhad Street
6. Takhti junction, Sheykhol Eslami Alley, Hakim and Bazaar
7. Kermani parking, Khalife Soltani alley and Sheyx Lotfollah Mosque
8. Charbagh-e Payeen, Consulate alley and Ghalandarha Market
9. Charbagh-e Payeen, Arbab alley, Hakim Davood alley, Hakim Street and Bazaar

For defining these axis, it is tried to accent the entrances of the square, the routes overlap the border of quarters and those paths to be chosen, have historic properties and pass through the center of quarters with their local specifications. Thus, with the reorganization of these axes and their infrastructures, the tourism pressure will be better distributed in the vicinity of the World Heritage Site.

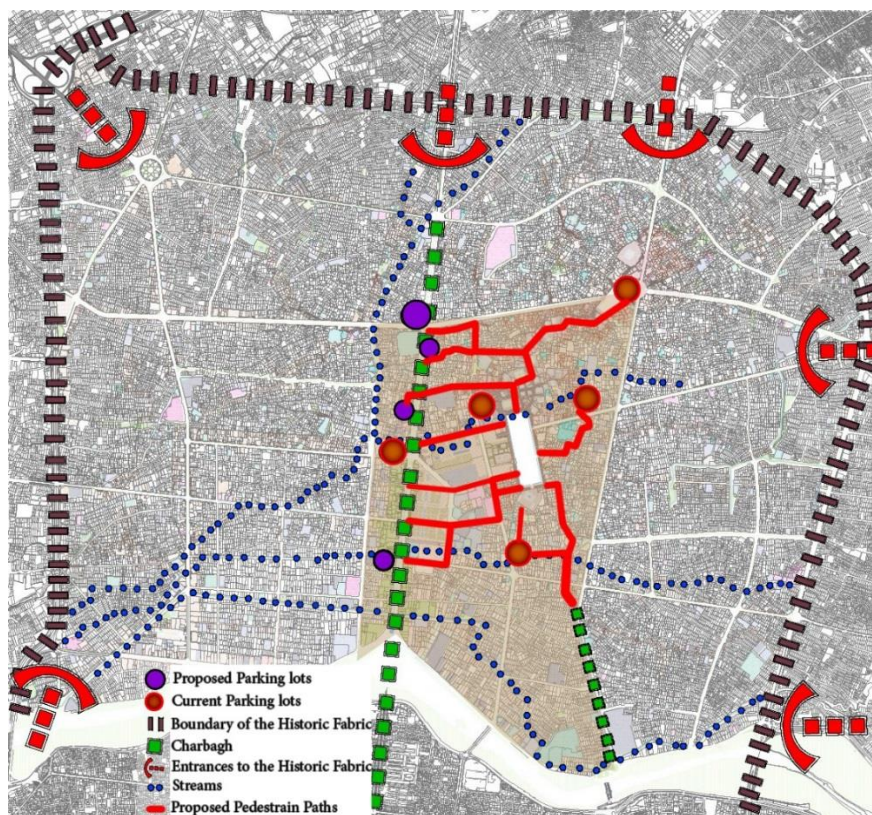


Figure 26. spatial structure for the tourists' pedestrian/ roadways within the core and buffer zone of the square- ©Meydan Emam Base's Archive