

Islamic Republic of IRAN
The Iranian Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts
IMCHTH

Nomination of
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak
Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For inscription on the World Heritage List



UNESCO
World Heritage Convention
Tehran 2024

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1. State Party

- Islamic Republic of Iran



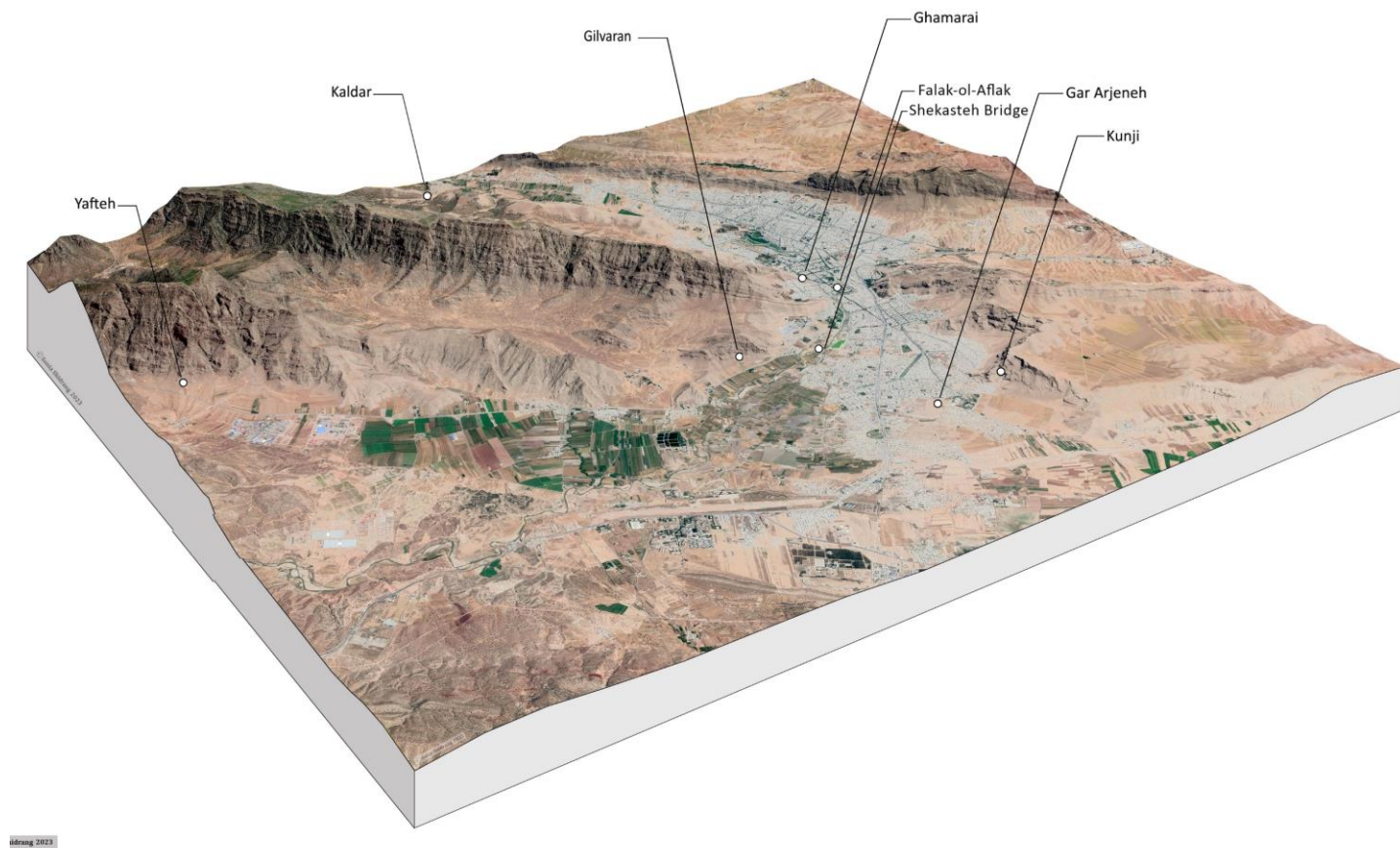
Figure 1: Iran. (Source: Archive of PCFEKV Base)

2. State, Province or Region

- Lorestan Province



Map 1: Location of the nominated Property in Lorestan Province. (Source: Archive of PCFEKV Base)



Map 2: PCFEKV Location in Khorramabad Valley (source: Shidrang)

3. Name of nominated property

- Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley (PCFEKV)



Figure 2: Aerial view of Khorramabad Valley. (Source: Zivdar)



Figure3: Arial view of Khorramabad Valley from top of castle. (Source: Mahmoodi)



Figure 4: Aerial view of Kaldar Cave. (Source: Farzanmanesh)



Figure 5: Entrance of Yafteh Cave. (Source: Mahmoodi)



Figure 6: Entrance of Ghamari Cave. (Source: Vashineh)



Figure 7: Entrance of Kunji Cave. (Source: Farzanmanesh)



Figure 8: Aerial View of Gar Arjeneh Rock-Shelter. (Source: Mahmoodi)



Figure 9: Entrance View of Gilvaran Cave. (Source: Mahmoodi)



Figure 10: Aerial View of Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble. (Source: Vashineh)



Figure 11: Aerial View of Falak-ol-Aflak Castle. (Source: Vashineh)



Figure 12: Sarbaz-Khaneh1 (Source: Safaeizadeh)



Figure 13: Dezhbani. (Source: Safaeizadeh)



Figure 14: Sarbaz-Khaneh 2. (Source: Safaeizadeh)



Figure 15: Aerial View of Gap Bridge from top of castle. (Source: Mahmoodi)



Figure 16: Haji Bridge. (Source: Mohammadi asl)



Figure 17: Shekaste Bridge or Shapouri Bridge. (Source: Seifollahzadeh)

4. Geographical coordinates to the nearest second

No	Name of Nominated Property	Coordinates of Central Point	Area of Nominated property (ha)	Area of Buffer Zone (ha)	Map Ref
1	Kaldar Cave	33°33'26.34"N 48°17'33.49"E	83.3	4973.01	B
2	Ghamari Cave	33°29'31.59"N 48°20'44.06"E	38.3		C
3	Gilvaran Cave	33°28'12.34"N 48°18'56.20"E	5.59		D
4	Yafteh Cave	33°30'29.76"N 48°12'41.24"E	252.65	1826.79	E
5	Kunji Cave	33°26'33.46"N 48°21'24.07"E	11.39	185.34	F
6	Gar Arjeneh Rock-shelter	33°26'30.65"N 48°20'21.64"E	3.23	43.14	G
7	Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble	33°29'1.13"N 48°21'11.82"E	19.4	38.2	H
8	Shekaste Bridge	33°28'4.28"N 48°20'18.93"E	0.84	37.4	I

Table 1: Coordinates of nominated components

5. Textual description of the boundaries of the nominated property

Introduction

The property is consisted of five Prehistoric Caves and the Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley (PCFEKV) as well as a rock-Shelter and the Shekaste bridge. An integrated buffer zone has been defined for the cave complex and the rock-shelter but two different buffer zones have been outlined for the Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble and Shekaste Bridge. The boundaries of the buffer zone and the proposed property have been specified in such a way that they can protect all the values of the nominated property and can be easily distinguished.

Description of the Buffer Zone of the Prehistoric Caves and Rock-shelter

The buffer zone of the prehistoric caves and rock-shelter has been defined in order to protect the values of the property, including the physical and natural values related to prehistoric caves and shelters. This area has been specified in such a way that, in addition to protecting the values and the core zone of the nominated property, it will also include plant and animal diversity and hunting grounds, as well as the main bed of water resources. Also, it can protect all the natural landscapes that show the relationship between humans and their surrounding environment.

In this area, the mountains overlooking the Khorramabad Valley and the hills where there were prehistoric settlements have also been considered. *Sefid Kooch* mountain range in the west of the valley, the Gar Arjeneh hill in the center of the valley and *Modbeh* mountain in the east of the valley are located within this buffer zone. Kaldar, ghamari, Gilvaran and Yafteh caves are located in Sefid Kooch mountain, and the Kunji cave is situated in the *Modbeh* mountain. Additionally, the Gar Arjeneh Rock-Shelter is located in a hill with the same name.

The buffer zone of the caves in *Sefid kooch* mountain range starts from Yafteh mountain in the south and extends to the north. This area begins from point B1 (X: 237465.309, Y: 3712453.163) and continues to point B41 (X: 249008.700, Y: 3706103.109). The buffer zone of the area extends from the crest-line of the mountain to the thalweg of the valley. Accordingly points B3 (X: 238912.372, Y: 3713742.470) to B11(X: 247384.434, Y: 3707741.093) as well as points B34 (X: 243020.483, Y: 3717424.116) to B41 (X: 249008.700, Y: 3706103.109) are on the crest line of *Sefid kooch*. Also points B12 (X: 247060.447, Y: 3706691.629) to B18 (X: 238036.557, Y: 3712133.758) as well as points B19 (X: 249140.200, Y: 3705709.471) to B33(X: 246150.759, Y: 3719487.107) are on the thalweg of *Sefid kooch*. Therefore, the buffer zone covers the main areas of Rock-Shelter and cave dwelling. Moreover, the buffer zone covers the entire area of Gar Arjeneh hill starting from point B42 (X: 252215.849, Y: 3703839.602) and ending in point B47 (X: 252020.476, Y: 3703428.257). Additionally in the vicinity of the *Modbeh* mountain, the buffer zone begins at point B48 (X: 254491.395, Y: 3701929.893) and ends at point B57 (X: 254273.836, Y: 3702537.916). The area encompasses a gorge in which the Kunji cave is located, also it contains all the natural sections that played a major role in the prehistoric settlement of this cave.

Description of the Core Zone of Kaldar Cave

The core zone has been outlined in such a way that it not only covers the main physical body of the cave but also major areas related to prehistoric settlement in it. As the cave overlooks a gorge

which satisfied the security and subsistence needs of cave dwellers, the whole gorge has been added to the core zone because it played a key role in cave dwelling. Therefore, the southern section of the core zone passes through the ridge line of the hill overlooking the gorge containing points C6 (X: 249261.689, Y: 3716330.310) C7(X: 249132.395, Y: 3715780.484) C8 (X: 249048.965, Y: 3715492.461). The entire elevation north of the gorge and the hill containing the cave, has been specified as the core zone as far as the break point of the two elevations. For this reason, points C2(X: 248050.625, Y: 3716496.075) , C3 (X: 248219.149, Y: 3716783.027) , C4 (X: 248578.812, Y: 3716928.312) are located in northern core zone upon the break point of the two elevations.

Description of the Core Zone of Ghamari Cave

The core zone of the cave covers the cave body as well as its peripheral areas which served as the main source of livelihood for cave dwellers. The area encompasses a gorge in its north and an hill in its south of which the southern hill overlooks the valley and has served as the venue for prehistoric settlement including the Pa-Sangar area. As a result, points C1 (X: 253419.701, Y: 3709474.834) to C8 (X: 253845.870, Y: 3708454.870) are located within the eastern limits of the core zone on the edge of the urban area and cover the natural virgin lands. Moreover, points C9 (X: 253815.405, Y: 3708351.976) to C12 (X: 253149.578, Y: 3708680.315) are in the south on the edge of the urban area and upon the thalweg of the hill. Also points C12 (X: 253149.578, Y: 3708680.315) to C14 (X: 253183.514, Y: 3709301.167) are on the crest-line of an elevation which contains the Ghamari Cave.

Description of the Core Zone of Gilvaran Cave

The core zone of the cave covers its physical body as well as its circumferential areas which served as the main source of livelihood for cave dwellers. This area encompasses water sources as well as temporary shelters which had direct relation with human dwelling in the cave. Accordingly, points: C4 (X: 250684.895, Y: 3706637.057) to C7 (X: 250430.920, Y: 3706719.454) are located on the ridge line of the cliff above the cave and points C1 (X: 250362.780, Y: 3706503.036) to C3 (X: 250659.915, Y: 3706475.778) are on a historical stream flowing south of the cave.

Description of the Core Zone of Yafteh Cave

The core zone includes the body of the cave as well as its surrounding area which is considered the main place to supply the basic needs of those living in this area. In this area, in addition to water resources, there are hunting grounds and temporary Rock-Shelters like Sorkhe lizeh and Gachi that were directly linked to living in this cave. All of them are located in a gorge, which is considered the main source of livelihood in this area. Therefore, the points C1 (X: 240534.462, Y: 3711164.075) to C4 (X: 242290.509, Y: 3709315.091) are located in the south of the core zone on the edge of the Khorramabad Road to *Koohdasht*. In the north of the core zone, points C6 (X: 242712.824, Y: 3711015.813) to C9 (X: 240921.766, Y: 3711609.331) are located on the ridge line of a rock overlooking the gorge and the Yafteh Cave.

Description of the Core Zone of the Kunji Cave

The core zone of Kunji cave includes the body of the cave as well as its surrounding area which is considered the main place to supply the basic needs for living in this area. This area includes a gorge that not only provided access to the cave from the valley but also supplied necessary resources for living in the cave as well as security. Therefore, the points C1 (X: 253932.721, Y: 3703558.992) to C4 (X: 254183.550, Y: 3703241.453) are located in the south of the core zone on the thalweg of the gorge. Also, points C4 (X: 254183.550, Y: 3703241.453) to C10 (X: 254060.000, Y: 3703633.920) are on the crest line of the gorge.

Description of the Core Zone of Gar Arjeneh Rock-Shelter

The core zone of Gar Arjeneh includes the body of the Rock-Shelter as well as its surrounding area, which is considered the main place to provide the basic needs of living in this area. Because the Rock-Shelters are located in the wall of a height, their core zone also includes its natural bed. Consequently, points C1 (X: 252556.458, Y: 3703528.279) to C3 (X: 252695.311, Y: 3703494.515) are on the crest line of a cliff where the shelter is located. Points C4 (X: 252745.860, Y: 3703378.715) to C7 (X: 252498.799, Y: 3703409.942) are also located in the south of the core zone on the thalweg of the hill.

Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble

Description of the Core Zone

The core zone has been determined according to the values of the property as well as its relevant components. The area is consisted of the castle which is located on top of a hill, the historical military buildings that are situated below the castle or within its surrounding area, as well as part of the Gelal river and historical bridges.

Therefore, points C1 (254126.500, Y: 3708320.764) to C5 (X: 253972.797, Y: 3707740.412) of the core zone extend to the west of the ensemble and include the Haji Bridge in the south. In the east of the core zone, points C6 to C8 (X: 254363.811, Y: 3708316.337) cover part of the river, and in the north, points C8 (X: 254363.811, Y: 3708316.337) to C1 (254126.500, Y: 3708320.764) cover the Gap bridge.

Description of the Buffer Zone

According to the topography of the castle, which is located on top of a natural hill, the east of the ensemble has a large height difference with its west. Also, to the west of the castle is the historical fabric of the city of Khorramabad. As a matter of fact, part of the interactions of the Ensemble was with this urban fabric. Because of the topography of the castle and the height difference in its east and west, the boundaries of the buffer zone in parts A and B have different height regulations and various specific criteria. Accordingly, points B6 (X: 253661.170, Y: 3707665.980) to B10 (X: 253837.515, Y: 3708541.221) are located in the west of the falak-ol-aflak ensemble at a greater distance from the ensemble in order to provide physical, landscape and functional conservation. They also include that part of the historical fabric of the city of Khorramabad which was related to the castle. Points B1 (X: 254393.032, Y: 3708478.175) to B4 (X: 254389.164, Y: 3707725.346)

in the east of the ensemble are closer to it due to the height difference between the east and the west of the ensemble; this implies physical, functional and visual conservation of the ensemble.

The shekaste Bridge:

Description of the Core Zone

The core zone of the shekaste bridge has been determined according to its body. Therefore, the area is enclosed within four points: C1 (X: 252810.227, Y: 3706263.233), C2 (X: 252818.711, Y: 3706290.934), C3 (X: 252510.776, Y: 3706393.221) and C4 (X: 252501.379, Y: 3706369.999).

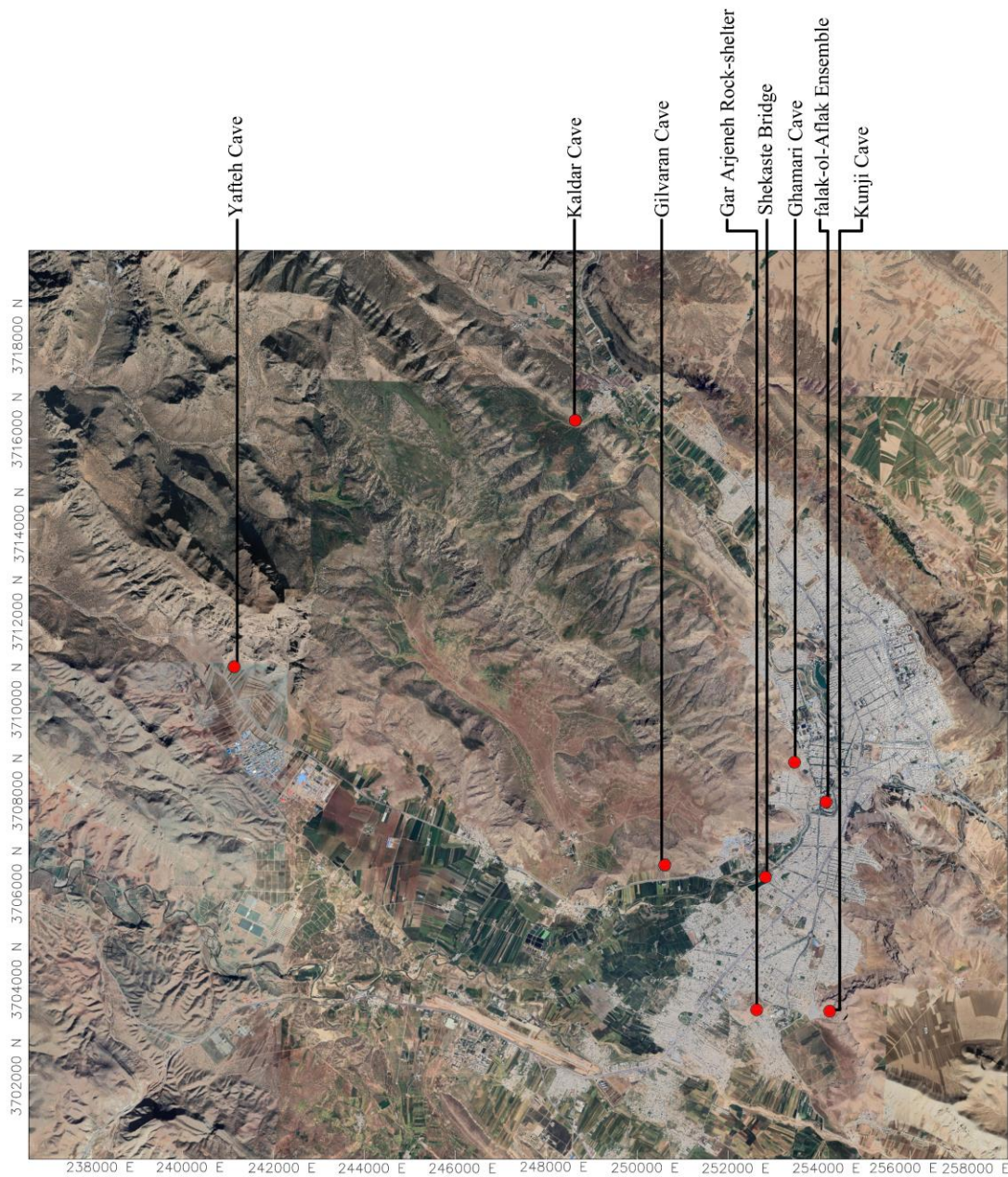
Description of the Buffer Zone

The buffer zone of the shekaste bridge has been determined according to the values of the property as well as the characteristics related to it. The buffer zone boundaries of the shekaste bridge have been formulated in such a way that, in addition to the physical, visual and functional conservation of the bridge, it can also be easily recognized.

Accordingly, points B3 (X: 252510.426, Y: 3706033.865) to B5 (X: 253204.167, Y: 3706550.004) in the east of buffer zone, extend from the vicinity of the riverside as far as the end of Shapuri Park parallel to *Baharestan* Boulevard. Also, the extension of points B5 (X: 253204.167, Y: 3706550.004) to B6 (X: 252765.568, Y: 3706725.625) in the north of buffer zone has continued parallel to *Behesht* Bridge. In the west of buffer zone, the extension of points B1 (X: 252165.586, Y: 3706171.549) to B6 (X: 252765.568, Y: 3706725.625) continues parallel to the end of farmlands.

Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Location of the Nominated property in Khorramabad Valley



0 1 2 3 4 5 KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:



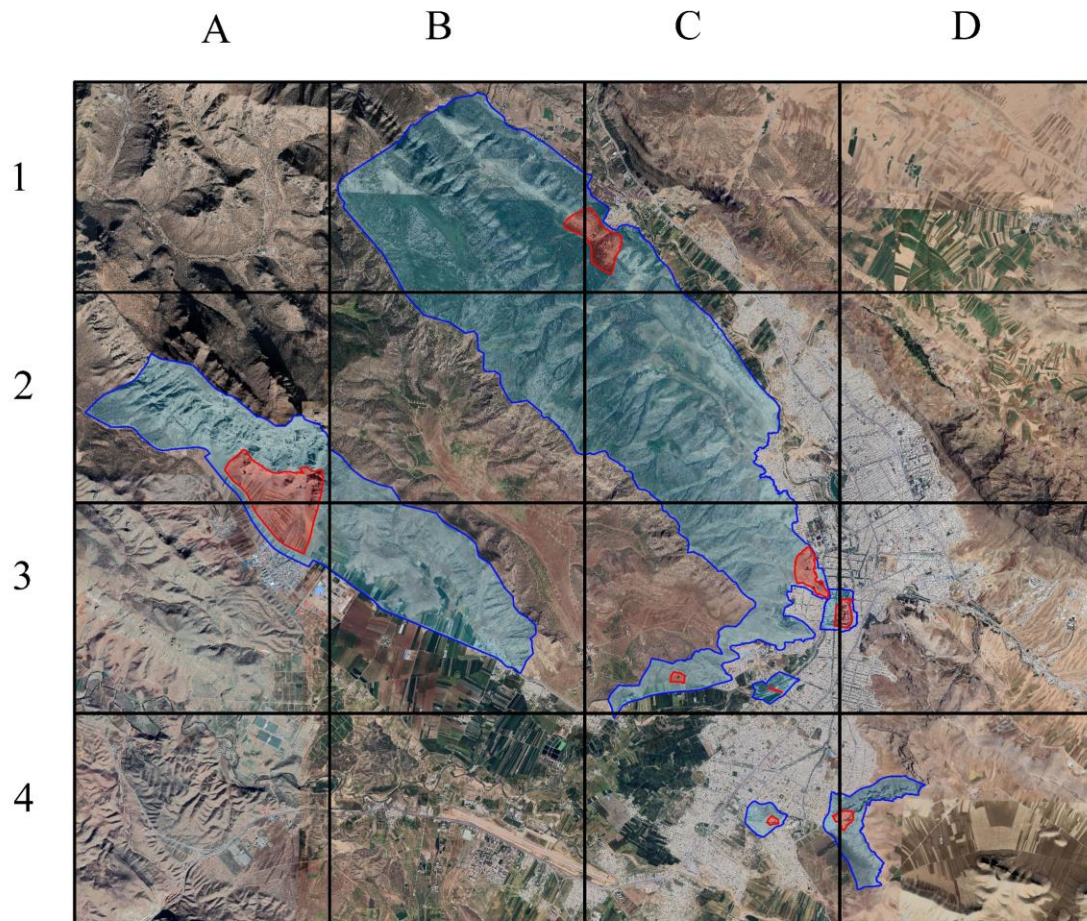
Nominated Component



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Guide Map



0 1 2 3 4 5 KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

 Nominated Property

 Buffer Zone

 Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



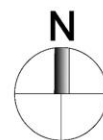
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone A-1**

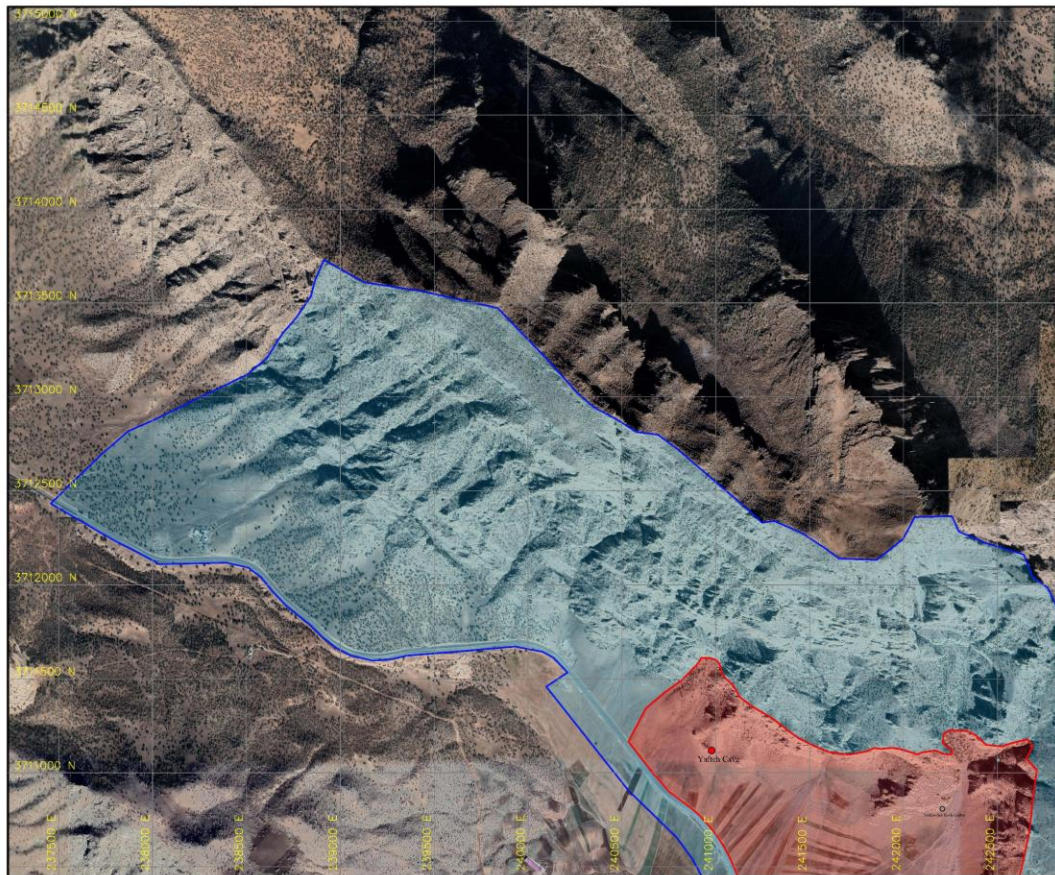
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Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter




Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone A-2**

0 1 2KM

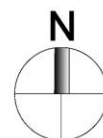
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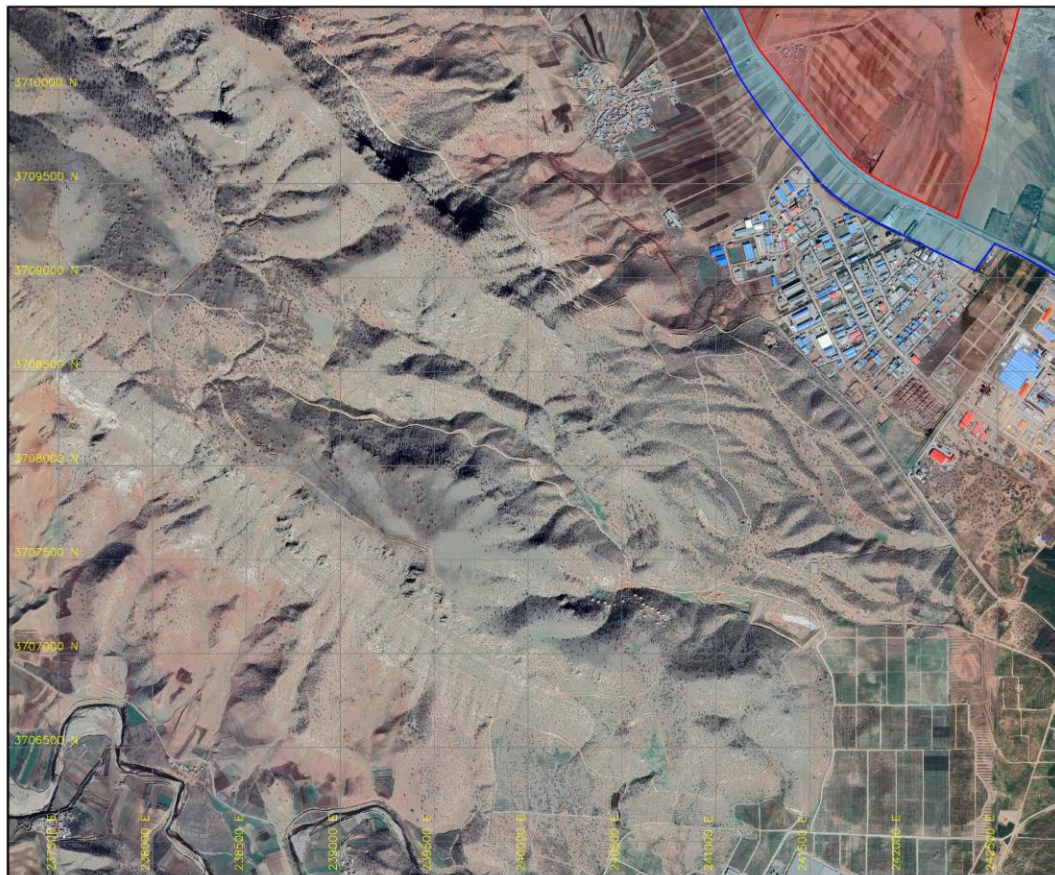
Key Plan:

 Nominated Property

 Buffer Zone

 Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



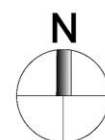
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone A-3**

0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Zone A-4

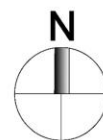


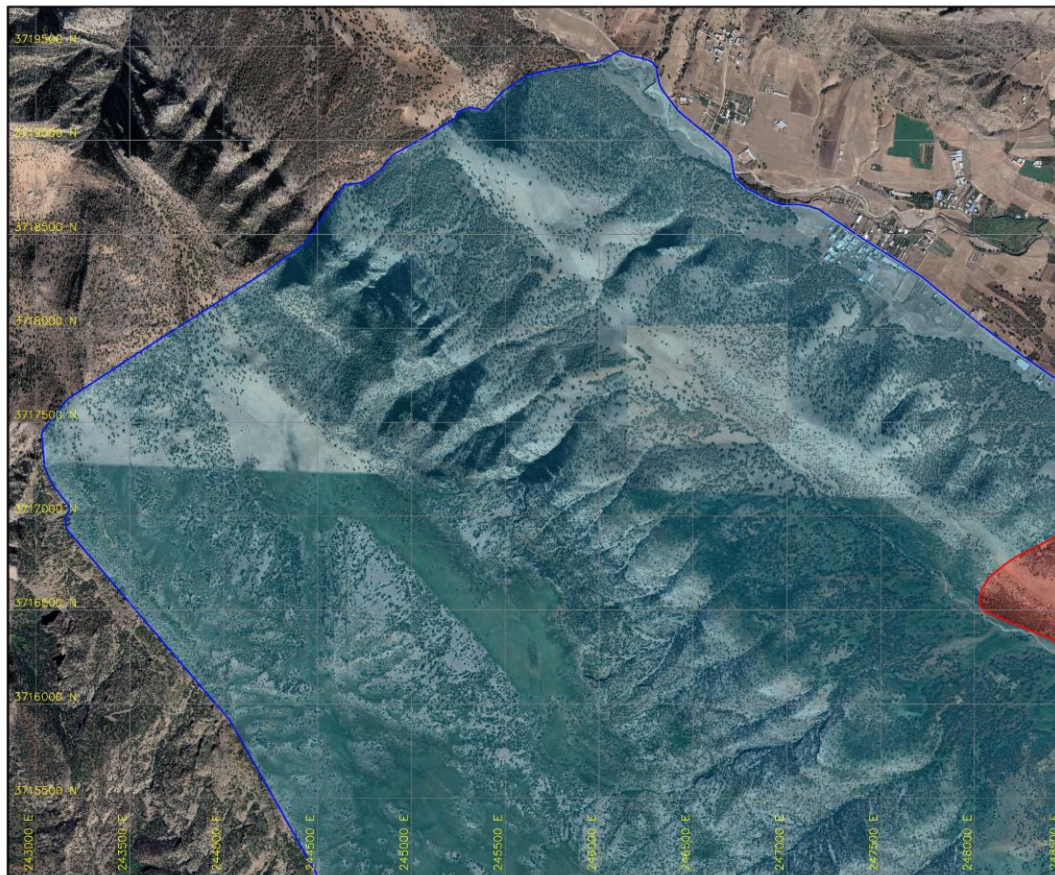
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Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter






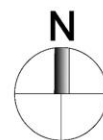
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone B-1**

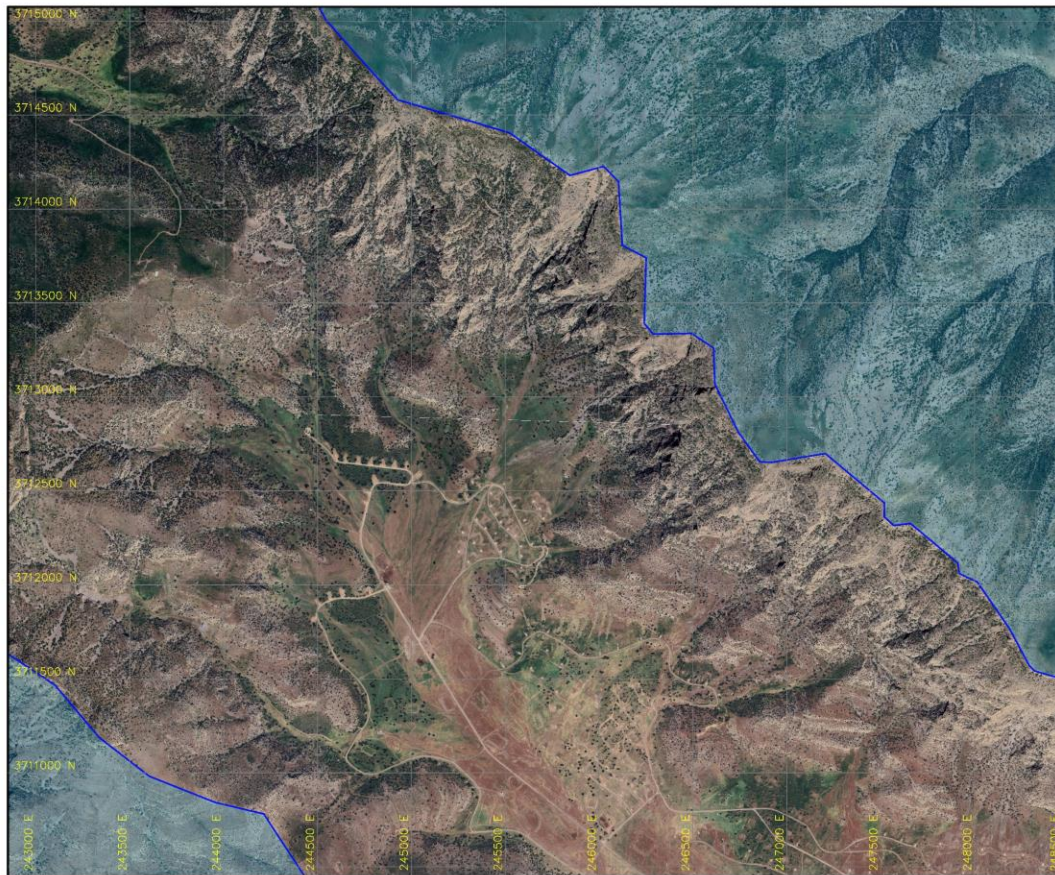
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Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

-  Nominated Property
-  Buffer Zone
-  Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



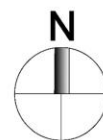
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone B-2**

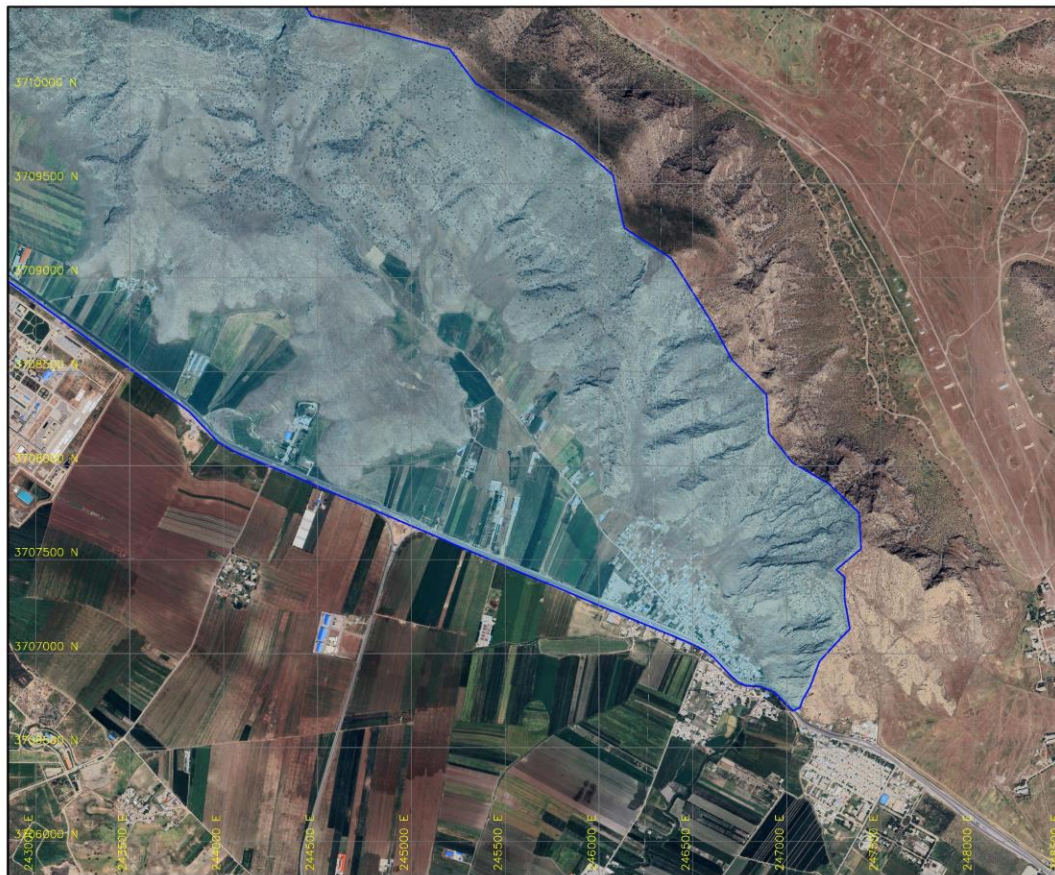
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Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



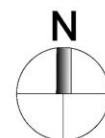
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone B-3**

0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter






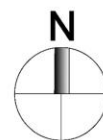
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone B-4**

0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

-  Nominated Property
-  Buffer Zone
-  Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Zone C-1

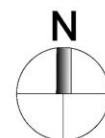


0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Zone C-2



0 1 2KM

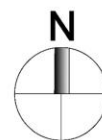
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Key Plan:

 Nominated Property

 Buffer Zone

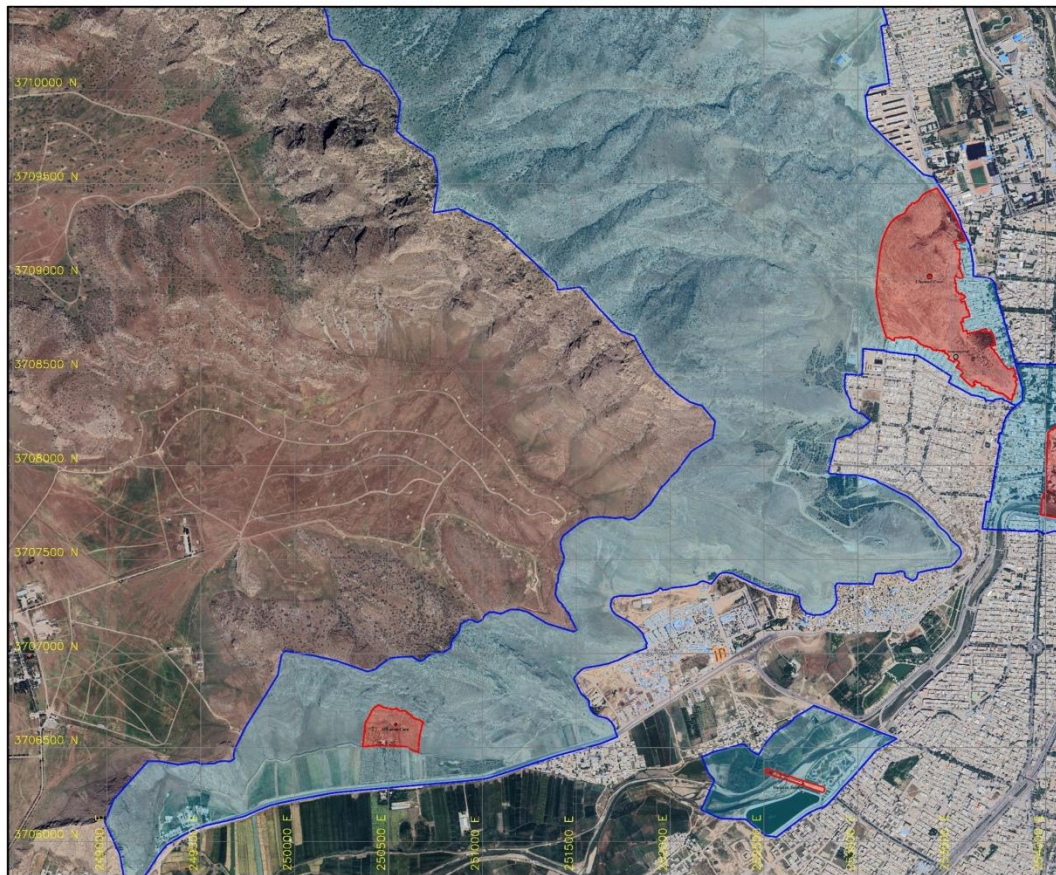
 Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone


Zone C-3



0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

 Nominated Property

 Buffer Zone

 Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Zone C-4

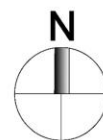


0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



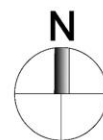
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone D-1**

0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



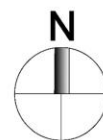
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone D-2**

0 1 2KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

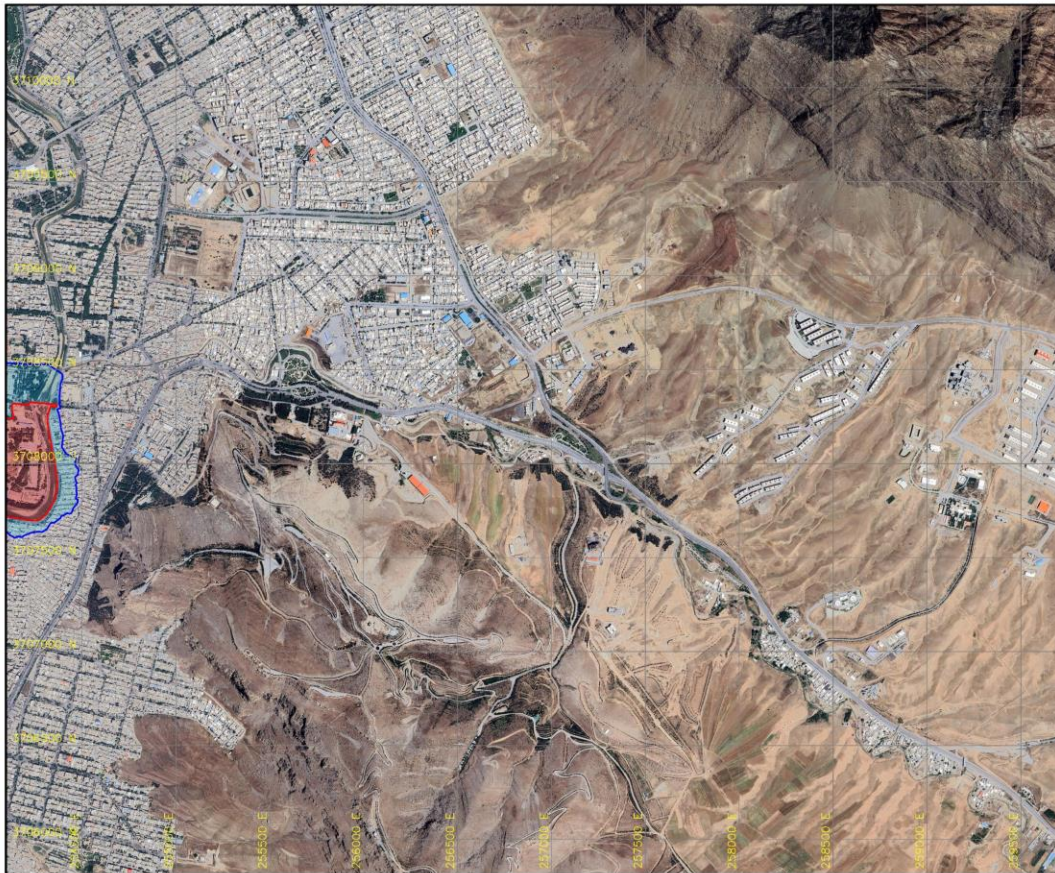
- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone

Zone D-3

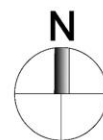


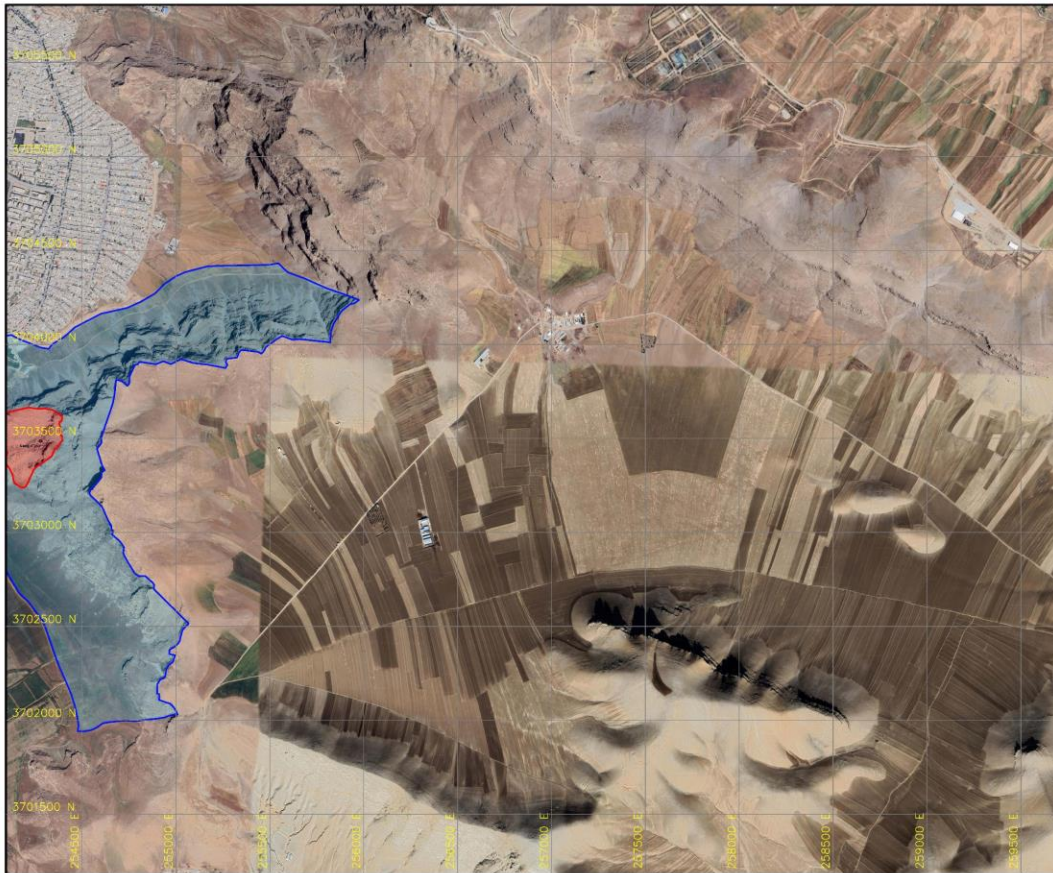
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Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



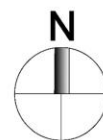
Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley**Boundary of Nominated Property and Buffer Zone****Zone D-4**

0 1 2KM

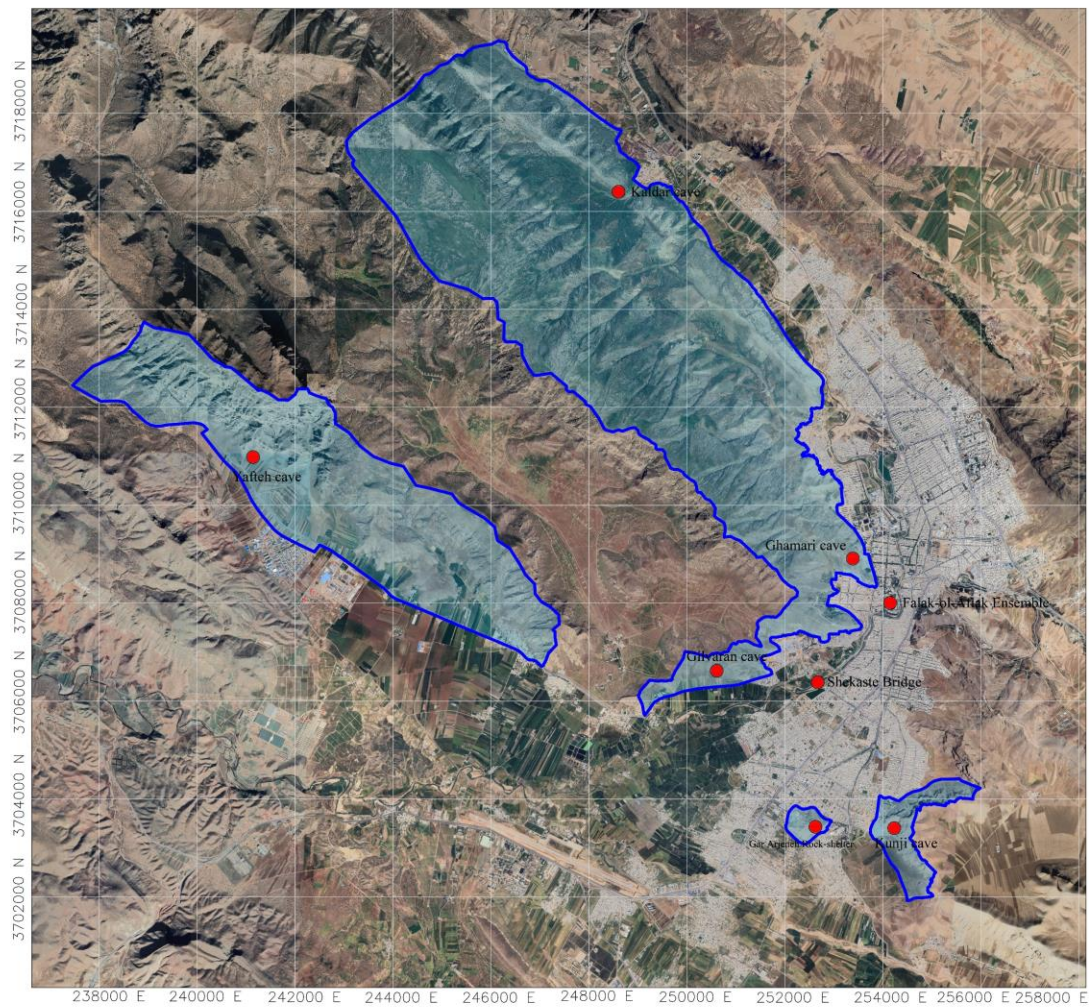
Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

- Nominated Property
- Buffer Zone
- Entrance of Cave/Rock-shelter



Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of Khorramabad Valley

Boundaries of Caves and Rock-shelter Buffer Zone

0 1 2 3 4 5 KM

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

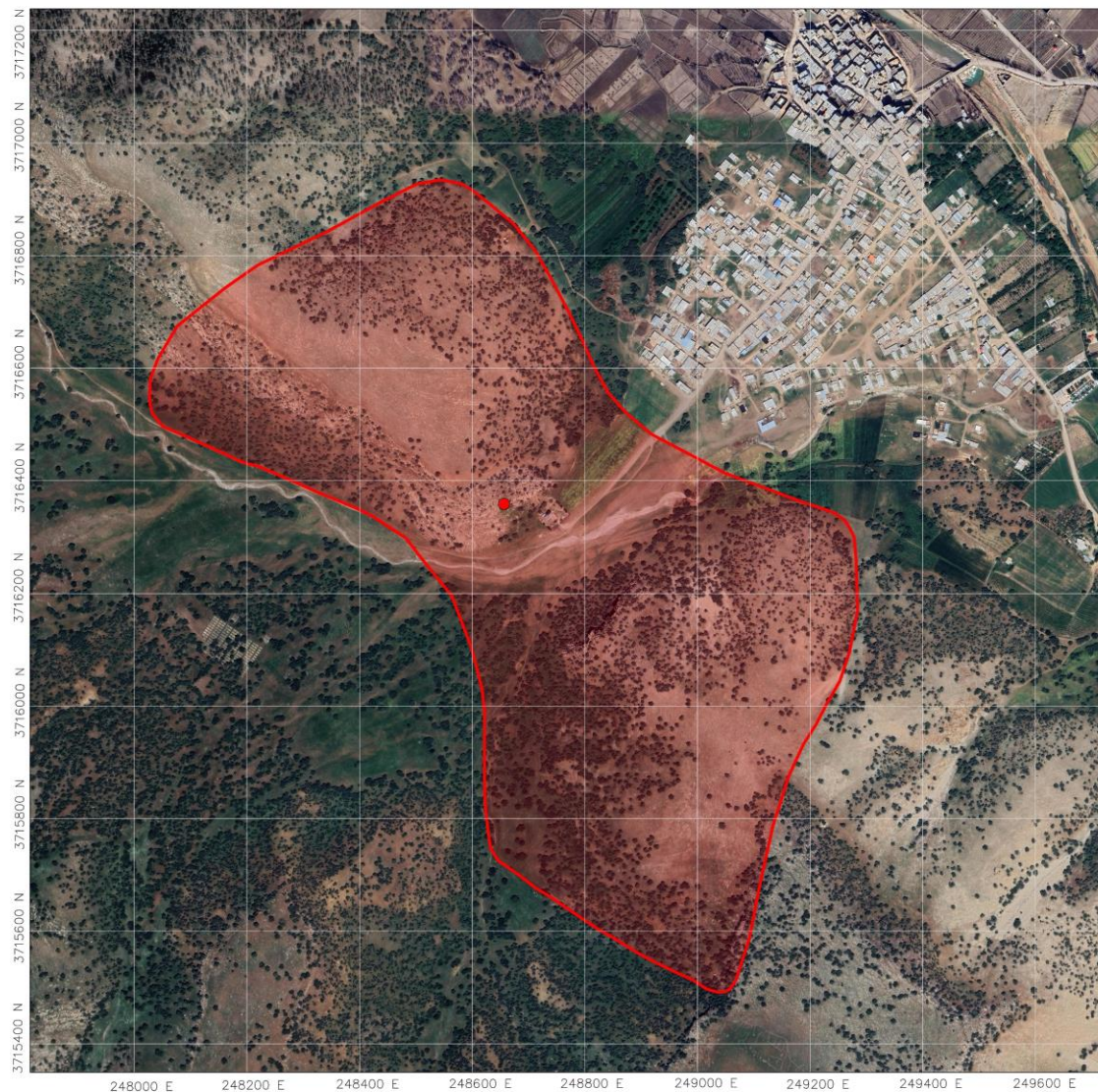
Key Plan:

- Nominated Component
- Caves and Rock-shelter Buffer Zone



Kaldar Cave

Boundaries of the Nominated Property



0 100 200 300 400 500 M

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

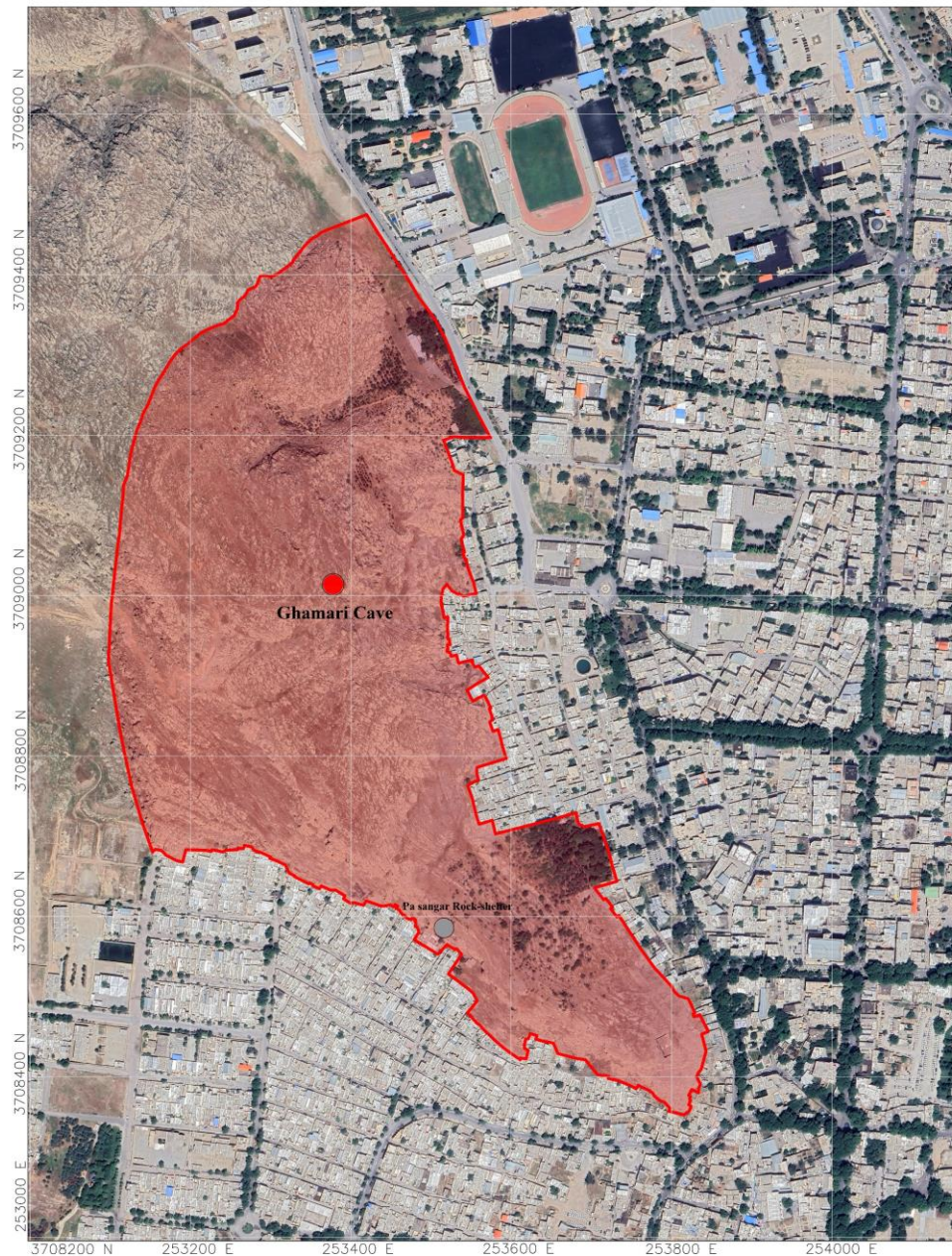
 Nominated Property

 Entrance of Cave



Ghamari Cave


Boundaries of the Nominated Property



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

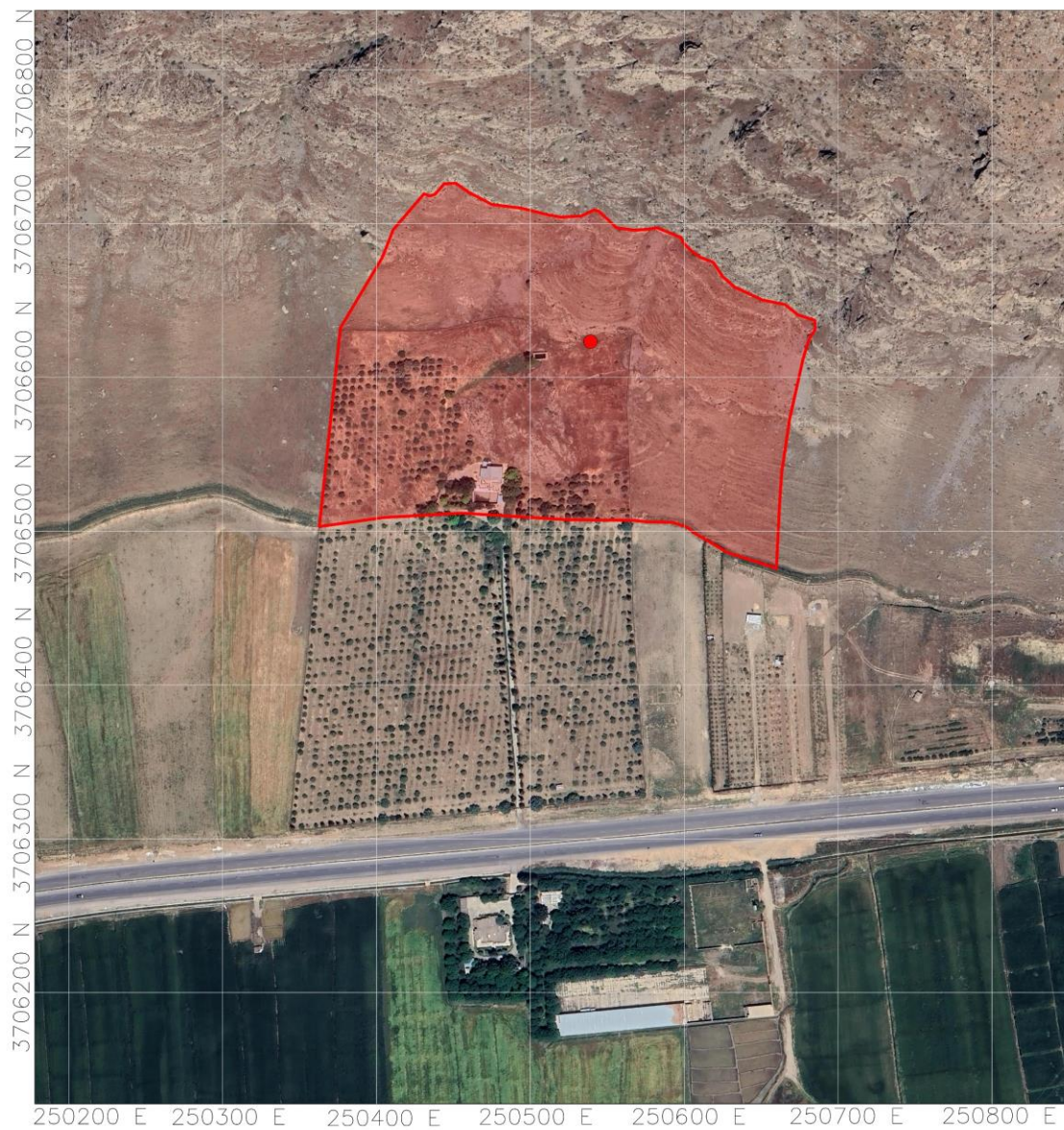
 Nominated Property

 Entrance of Cave



Gilvaran Cave

Boundaries of the Nominated Property



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

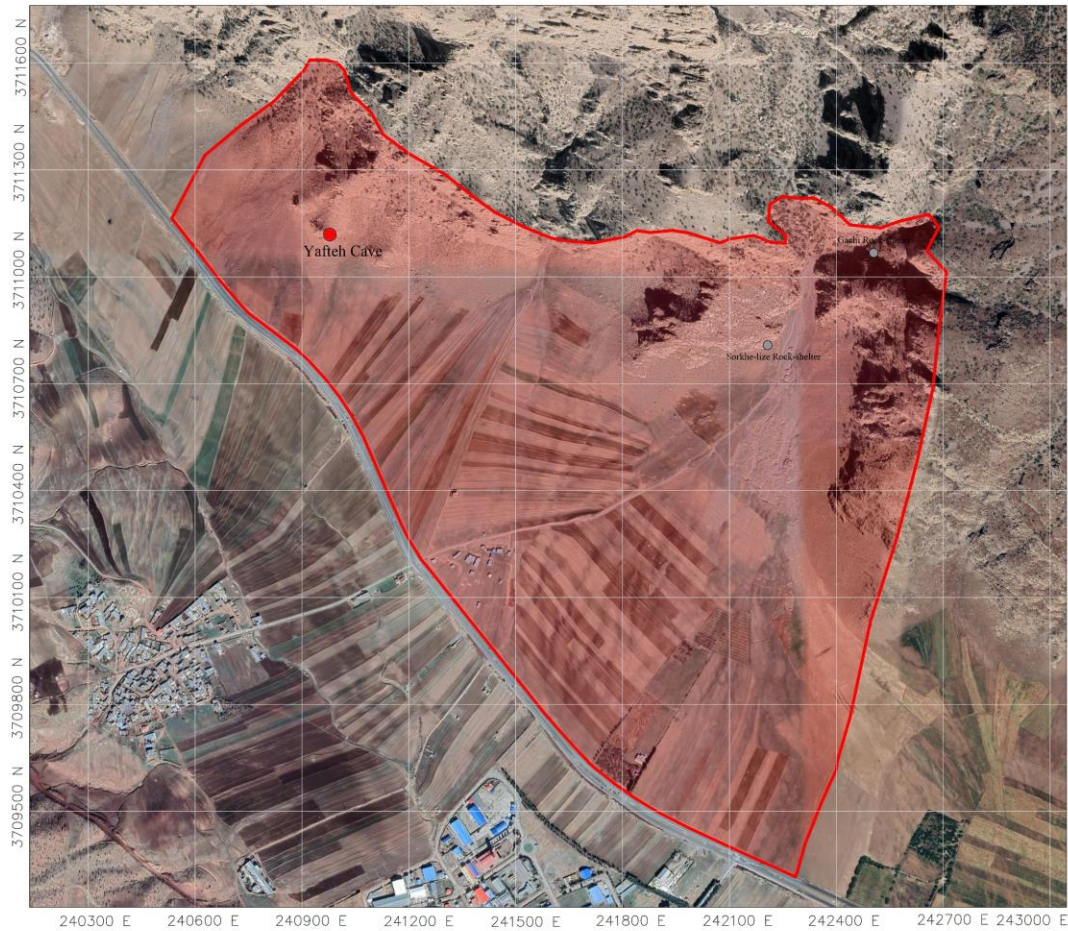
Key Plan:

-  Nominated Property
-  Entrance of Cave



Yafteh Cave

Boundaries of the Nominated Property




0 100 200 300 400 500 M

Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

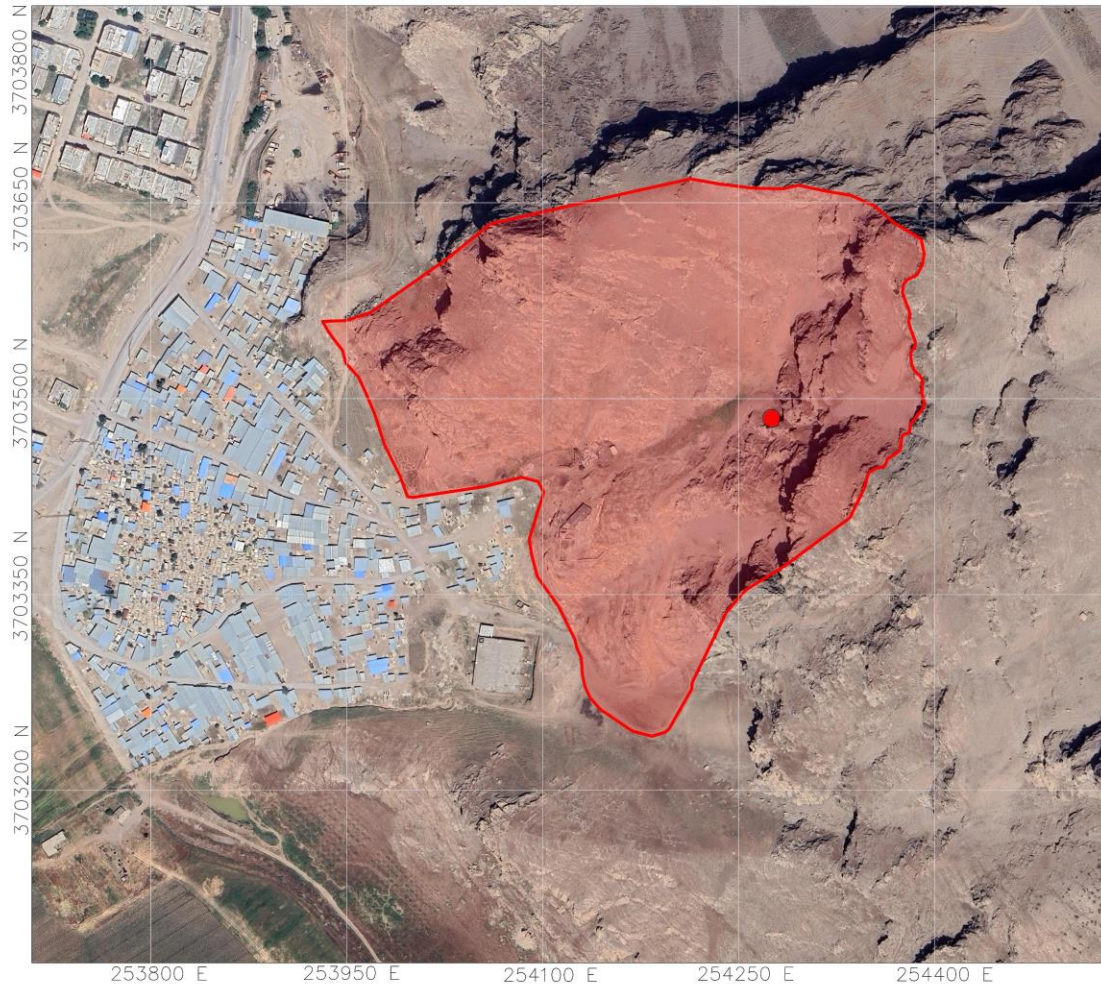
 Nominated Property

 Entrance of Cave




Kunji Cave


Boundaries of the Nominated Property



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

 Nominated Property

 Entrance of Cave





Gar Arjeneh Rock-shelter

Boundaries of the Nominated Property



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

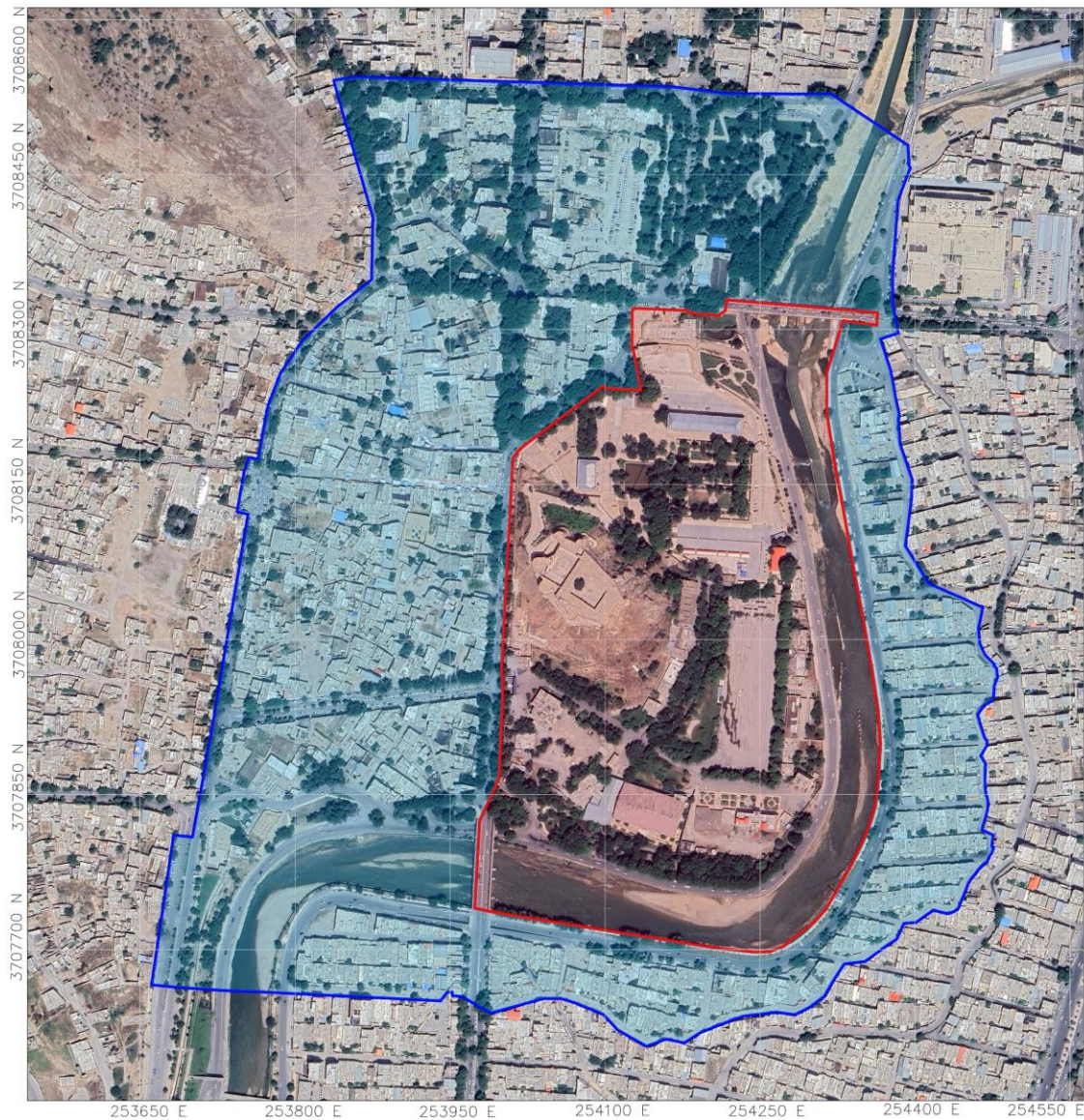
Key Plan:

-  Nominated Property
-  Entrance of Rock-shelter



Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble

Boundaries of the Nominated Property and Buffer Zone



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

-  Buffer Zone
-  Nominated Property



Shekaste Bridge

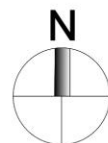
Boundaries of the Nominated Property and Buffer Zone



Reference : UTM WGS84, Zone 39

Key Plan:

-  Buffer Zone
-  Nominated Property



6. Criteria under which inscription is proposed (and justification for inscription under these criteria)

“Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley” including Caves of Yafteh, Kaldar, Ghamari, Kunji, Gilvaran and Gar-Arjeneh Rock-Shelter on one hand and the Falak-ol-Aflak Castle and Shekaste bridge on the other hand. The nomination has its justification in the itemized criteria (iii) and (v) in the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (September 2023) in paragraph (II.D) 77.

Criterion (iii): “Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley” is the Prehistoric caves and rock-shelter of the Khorramabad Valley which among them are the most important caves having the remains of Upper Paleolithic Baradostian culture. Among these sites, the Yafteh cave and Kaldar cave have preserved the best-known evidence of Baradostian culture regarding chronology and lithic artifacts, faunal remains, and symbolic objects in the world. The discoveries made in the Baradostian strata of Yafteh cave offer compelling evidence for the emergence and development of symbolic communication, a crucial aspect of modern human cognitive evolution, in the Zagros region. Notably, ornamental items appear to have served as distinguishing marks for both individuals and entire communities. This finding shed light on the emergence and evolution of symbolic communication in this region. These reference sites produced the most complete image of Baradostian culture, the outstanding Upper Paleolithic culture of Zagros. Therefore, the combination of the landscape, caves, and artifacts collectively presents a rare and exceptional illustration of an ancient cultural tradition that has since become extinct.

Criterion (v): According to Criterion (v) of Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (September 2023) in paragraph 77 (II.D), the nominated property should be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change. The “Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley” is of Outstanding Universal Value because of its topography and geological features, particularly due to the role of the Karst system, which provided the basis for the formation of Neanderthals and Anatomically Modern Humans settlements. Later on, was home to other communities of Epipaleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages, historical and Islamic Periods until the modern city of Khorramabad which their evidence is preserved in the archaeological hill of Falak-ol-Aflak and the Castle itself is the most outstanding of this settlement continuity in the valley. The caves and Rock-Shelters provide significant characteristics that enable us to comprehend and interpret the traditional ways of life of both Neanderthals and Anatomically Modern Humans in the same environment. The archaeological discoveries in the Khorramabad Caves and rock shelters offer valuable insights into the adaptive strategies employed by Neanderthals and modern humans in response to their environment. This nominated series of properties also shed light on the evolution of cave functions during later periods, such as the Bronze Age, when they transformed from settlements

to burial sites. As it is evident in the Kunji cave burials which serve as a testament to these transformations in the settlement patterns of different archaeological periods.

Also, the Khorramabad Valley holds significant strategic importance due to its role as a crucial intersection in the ancient world, facilitating political, economic, and social connections between the civilizations of the Iranian plateau, Khuzestan, and Mesopotamia. Its location on a vital communication route linking Mesopotamia to the western highlands of Iran and connecting with the Great Khorasan route underscores its significance. The necessity for military fortifications along these roads is imperative given their importance. The geomorphological landscapes of the Valley have been shaped by tectonics, but the folding and concentration of karst water flow toward the springs have also played a crucial role. This has led to an abundance of water resources in the region, which has attracted settlement concentration from Prehistory to Modern days in the narrow Valley of Khorramabad. Man-made geomorphosites such as Falak-ol-Aflak Castle are other important landscape features in the region that have a significant connection with water rock and karst resources. The Golestan spring and the karst outcrop of Falak-ol-Aflak hill are obvious examples of this combination.

The construction of Falak-ol-Aflak castle on this karstic hill and also the Shekasteh (Shapouri) Bridge are examples of human interaction with karst resources during a time of shifting settlements from caves to the Valley's floor. This unique Castle on a Karst system is an outstanding testimony of engineering and technological genius and values due to its location as a defensive fortification at the strategic point of a valley overlooking the main Shahi Road. The genius behind building an excellent architectural design encompassing a hydraulic system, gardening, earthquake resistance, and almost an impenetrable military-governmental fortification on the highest central point of the Valley with an exceptional view over the whole area is of an outstanding universal value.

The nominated property is indeed an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement beginning from the Middle Paleolithic and consisting of the remains of all the forthcoming archaeological periods, and is representative of a complete sequence of cultures that adapted and interacted with their environment and survived the effect of irreversible changes during their history until today.

7. Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

a) Brief synthesis

The proposed heritage site encompasses five caves, a rock-shelter, and notable landmarks such as Falak-ol-Aflak Castel and Shekaste Bridge in the Khorramabad valley and surrounding areas. The region's alluvial plain, abundant water sources, suitable stone resources, and dense oak forests have facilitated human settlements since the Late Pleistocene. Most of the archaeological sites in the area are formed in karst and have evolved during dissolution development processes at the end of the Quaternary. Tectonics, fractures, and dissolution have influenced the development of karst geo-sites, particularly prehistoric caves. The region's man-made geomorphosites, such as Falak-ol-Aflak Castle, have a significant connection with water rock and karst resources. In fact, the "Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley" is a remarkable cultural sequence spanning over 63,000 years in the Karst Valley landscape. It begins with the Middle Paleolithic Period and continues through the Baradostian culture, and the Epipaleolithic period with Zarzian culture. This sequence provides insight into human evolution from a cultural perspective from the time of Neanderthals until the present day. Furthermore, the cultural evolution of this landscape can also be traced back to the Bronze Age through Falak ol-Aflak Castle, which serves as a testament to the enduring presence of humans in the valley until contemporary times. This unique castle built on a Karst system is an outstanding testimony to engineering and technological genius and values due to its location as a defensive fortification at a strategic point overlooking the main Shahi Road. The exceptional architectural design encompassing hydraulic systems, gardening, earthquake resistance, and an almost impenetrable military-governmental fortification on the highest central point of the Valley with an exceptional view over the entire area is of outstanding universal value.

b) Justification for criteria

Criterion (iii): The nominated property "Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley" encompasses a sequence consisting of three spatially distinct sections. One of these sections is the Prehistoric caves and rock-shelter of the Khorramabad Valley, which includes some of the most significant caves representing the Upper Paleolithic and its related culture called "Baradostian". Among these sites, Yafteh cave and Kaldar cave have preserved the most comprehensive evidence regarding chronology, lithic artifacts, faunal remains, and symbolic objects associated with Baradostian culture. The artifacts discovered in the Baradostian layers of Yafteh cave provide compelling evidence for the emergence and evolution of symbolic communication in the Zagros, a crucial aspect of modern human cognitive development, in the region. Notably, decorative items appear to have served as distinguishing marks for individuals as well as entire communities. These reference sites offer a complete portrayal of Baradostian culture, an outstanding Upper Paleolithic culture of Zagros, which has since become vanished. The collective presentation of the landscape, caves, and artifacts provides a rare and exceptional illustration of an ancient cultural tradition that has since perished.

Criterion (v): According to the Criterion (v) of the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the "Prehistoric Caves and Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble of the Khorramabad Valley" is of Outstanding Universal Value due to its representation of traditional human settlements, land-use that reflect cultures or human interaction with the environment. The property's strategic location, topography and geological features, including the Karst system, have facilitated settlements by Neanderthals and Anatomically Modern Humans, as well as communities from Epipaleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages, historical and Islamic periods, and modern city of Khorramabad. The archaeological hill of Falak-ol-Aflak and its Castle are particularly significant in demonstrating this continuity of settlement after settlement shift from caves and rock-shelters. The caves and Rock-Shelters provide insights into traditional ways of life for both Neanderthals and Anatomically Modern Humans in the same environment. Archaeological discoveries in the Khorramabad Caves and Rock-Shelters shed light on adaptive strategies employed by these populations in response to their environment. The Khorramabad Valley holds significant strategic importance due to its role as a crucial intersection connecting civilizations in the Iranian plateau, Khuzestan, and Mesopotamia in ancient times. Its location on a vital communication route linking Mesopotamia to the western highlands of Iran and connecting with the Great Khorasan route highlights its significance. Military fortifications along these roads are necessary due to their importance. The construction of Falak-ol-Aflak Castle on the underlying karstic hill and Shekasteh Bridge demonstrate human interaction with karst resources during a time of shifting settlements from caves to the Valley's floor. This unique Castle on a Karst system is an outstanding testimony of engineering and technological genius and values due to its location as a defensive fortification at the strategic point of a valley overlooking the Shahi Road. The nominated property is indeed an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement beginning from the Middle Paleolithic and consisting of the remains of all forthcoming archaeological periods, representing a complete sequence of cultures that adapted and interacted with their environment and survived the effect of irreversible changes during their history until today.

c) Statement of integrity

The nominated property is consisted of five prehistoric caves and a Rock-Shelter, the Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble and the Shekaste Bridge (or Shapouri Bridge). Location of prehistoric caves in the valley truly shows a deep relation between them and nature. Due to this special bond with nature, human settlement took place in these caves a long time ago. All the main components related to the caves and cave-dwelling have remained intact in the surrounding environment which is still fully connected with these components.

Water sources, hunting grounds, vegetation and animal diversity (flora and fauna) in the area are among the main components of this relation. This connection between nature and the property can be vividly seen in Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble and also the Shekaste Bridge. All components of this nominated property have already been registered on the national heritage list of Iran and are under the conservation, monitoring and management of the IMCHTH through a set of laws

and regulations. Therefore, a series of effective research, conservation and restoration measures have been constantly carried out by the IMCHTH to protect the values of these components. Despite the development of human settlements in Khorramabad Valley and gradual urbanization of the area, the caves and its surrounding have remained safe from these factors due to their location on steep slopes.

Also, not only the natural landscape around this property has remained untouched but also the diversity of flora and fauna in this area has been protected and this tradition has been preserved by contemporary residents. Regarding the Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble and the Shekaste bridge, which are located in the center of a valley, it can be said that the development of urbanization and contemporary street constructions have not affected the integrity of them.

d) Statement of authenticity

In general, all the components of the property have acceptable authenticity. As an example, due to the location of prehistoric caves in areas where human development and settlement did not occur, they are in a good condition in terms of authenticity. Considering that the Falak-ol-Aflak Ensemble has always been under the management and conservation of the IMCHTH, any changes in its design or materials have been prohibited. As for the Shekaste bridge, the restorations were done completely according to standard principles and/or based on the Nara document; furthermore, no interference has been done to distort the authenticity of the Property.

e) Requirements for protection and management

The nominated property has been registered on the List of National Monuments of Iran, also all of its outstanding monuments have already been registered separately on this list in the past. Therefore, the proposed property in its entirety is legally under full protection of the registration act of national monuments and related laws, including the property and buffer zones regulations, the Management Plan, as well as the short, medium, and long-term conservation plan to preserve the values and respect the authenticity and integrity of the property. It has been for about two decades that a permanent multidisciplinary national base has been established by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts for the comprehensive conservation of the PCFEKV.

8. Name and contact information of official local institution/agency/organization

Official Local Institution/Agency

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