



President Pezeshkian (R) and Saeed Khatibzadeh, head of Iran's Institute for Political and International Studies, at the Tehran Dialogue Forum in Tehran, May 18, 2025.

## Araghchi warns ‘unrealistic’ demands from U.S. could derail nuclear talks

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned on Sunday that unrealistic expectations could derail ongoing indirect negotiations with the United States, emphasizing that uranium enrichment is a non-negotiable right of the Iranian people.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the first day of the Tehran Dialogue Forum, Araghchi said, “We are continuing our discussions with Europe. The more mutual understanding we build, the better. We want Europe to play its part, though they have unfortunately weakened their own role.”

He stressed that uranium enrichment in Iran is not something that can be halted. “It is a legitimate right, a major scientific achievement of the Iranian nation. It came at a high cost, including the lives of our nuclear scientists. No one can expect us to relinquish that.” ▶ Page 2

## Tehran, Baku launch joint military drill in Karabakh region

TEHRAN – Iran and Azerbaijan have launched a joint military exercise dubbed “Aras 2025” in the recently liberated areas of Karabakh, aimed at bolstering border security and enhancing joint preparedness against potential threats.

The drill, taking place from May 18 to 21, involves special forces from Iran’s Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces and the Azerbaijani Army.

Iranian Deputy Commander for Operations of the IRGC Ground Forces and commander of the drill, Brigadier General Vali Ma’dani, described the exercise as “a significant step toward reinforcing the security of shared borders and countering possible threats.”

A select IRGC special forces battalion, accompanied by a senior military delegation, crossed into Azerbaijan earlier today via the Bileh-Savar land border crossing in Iran’s Ardabil Province to take part in the operation.

Following an official welcome ceremony, senior military officials from both countries convened to review the objectives, scenarios, operational zones, and multi-phase structure of the joint drill.

General Ma’dani emphasized the strategic value of the joint exercise, highlighting the readiness of Iranian forces to engage in regional cooperation to address border security concerns.

Iran’s high-ranking military delegation also reiterated its commitment to future joint exercises aimed at responding to any emerging border threats. ▶ Page 2

## Iran boosts Kharg oil storage capacity by 2m barrels

TEHRAN – Iran has expanded its crude oil storage capacity by two million barrels following the refurbishment and reactivation of two major storage tanks at the Kharg operational area.

According to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the overhaul and modernization of storage tanks No. 25 and 26 at the Kharg oil terminals were completed and officially inaugurated on Saturday, May 17, during a visit by NIOC Head Hamid Bovard to Kharg Island. Each tank has a capacity of one million barrels and has been brought back into service after undergoing extensive restoration.

Tank No. 26 was fully renovated through a comprehensive process that included the replacement of its roof and floor, installation of new roof drain and earthing systems, construction of containment basins, and the deployment of upgraded safety systems such as cooling, foam fire suppression, and geomembrane and geotextile layers. The tank was also completely repainted.

Tank No. 25 underwent descaling, floor plate replacement, roof repairs, cathodic protection system installation, roof drain redesign, repainting, basin construction, and safety system implementation before reentering service. ▶ Page 4

## PKK’s historic shift: From insurgency to politics and regional outcomes

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN – The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has announced its disbandment, marking a significant shift in Middle Eastern geopolitics with major effects on Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Designated a terrorist group by Turkey, the U.S., and the EU, the PKK waged a four-decade insurgency seeking Kurdish independence.

Following a February 2025 call from its imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan, the group decided to cease armed struggle and dissolve. While this move raises cautious hope for peace, uncertainties about lasting stability remain.

### The PKK’s decision and its context

The PKK has said it was going to cease its existence from the 12th Congress that took place in northern Iraq, and has chosen to stop armed struggle and to become a political movement after many years of fighting that have claimed the lives of more than 40,000 people.

## Hezbollah’s former recruit arrested for collaborating with Israel

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON — In recent days, rumors about former Hezbollah recruit, Mohammad Saleh, some accurate and some exaggerated, have circulated rapidly, after the government commissioner to the military court, Judge Fadi Akiki, filed a complaint against him on charges of collaborating with the Israeli enemy.

Saleh was arrested on April 28, 2025, following a report filed by an agent for Whish Money (a money transfer service in Lebanon) in Ghobeiry, Beirut’s southern suburb.

According to investigative journalist Radwan Mortada, Saleh worked in currency and stock exchange trading and had built a relationship of trust with the Whish Money agent over the course of months.

Before his cover was exposed, Saleh asked the agent to transfer \$20,000, after which he disappeared, and the agent pursued him to recover his money.

## Why Syria’s President skipped Arab Summit?

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Syria’s self-appointed President Ahmad al-Sharaa was noticeably absent from the Arab League meeting in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

A brief statement from al-Sharaa’s office provided no reason for his absence. However, his invitation by the Iraqi government last month sparked fierce political backlash and reignited deep divisions across Iraq’s political landscape.

Since al-Sharaa assumed power following the abrupt fall of Bashar al-Assad in December, relations between Iraq and Syria have become increasingly fraught.

The controversy stems largely from al-Sharaa’s past: before emerging as Syria’s new leader, he was a senior member of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), a group responsible for some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Operating under the alias Abu Mohammed al-Golani, al-Sharaa played a key role in AQI’s brutal campaign, which targeted Iraqi civilians and security forces with indiscriminate, sectarian violence throughout the 2000s.

▶ Page 5

## President Trump and the name Persian Gulf

By Kourosh Ahmadi, former diplomat and author of Naming the Persian Gulf: The Roots of a Political Controversy

TEHRAN – As we noted during his stay in the region, President Trump wisely forwent tinkering with geographical names and discarded the ostensible preliminary idea of using a different name for the Persian Gulf.

A report by the AP pointing to this eventuality has stirred emotional reactions among the Iranians from all different walks of life. Had President Trump gone ahead with the reported plan, he would have deviated from the traditional and formal US policy on Gulf nomenclature that had honored the name Persian Gulf since the creation of the United States. That would also have gone counter to the norms and principles that govern the standardization of geographical names and the consensus resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. ▶ Page 3



## 18th Resistance International Film Festival kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN – The opening ceremony of the 18th Resistance International Film Festival took place on Saturday at the Persian Gulf Hall of the Sacred Defense Museum in Tehran.

The ceremony was attended by a number of military officials, cultural figures, and artists, Mehr reported.

During the opening ceremony, the festival’s secretary Jalal Ghaffari addressed the attendees, emphasizing the festival’s expanded focus on the content and form of resistance cinema since last year.

He highlighted the importance of continuity between content and form in resistance films, aligning with the directives of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to promote the resistance discourse globally through cinema. ▶ Page 8



## TEHRAN PAPERS

*In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.*

## The possibility of reviving JCPOA or a new version

Sobh-e-No wrote about the recent developments regarding the Iran nuclear file. The paper said: The recent developments in the Iran nuclear file are not limited to technical talks or disagreements over the number of centrifuges. The developments should be analyzed within a geopolitical and multi-layered context, where different actors - from the United States to Europe, the Persian Gulf states, and even China and Russia - look into the Iran file with varied interests and calculations. Iran's nod for an agreement could be an attempt to neutralize the "Iranophobia" project and rebuild Tehran's image as a flexible actor. Given the legal and political complexities of fully reviving the JCPOA in its current structure, many analysts believe that in the event of an agreement, what will happen will be "JCPOA II" or, to be more precise, a temporary agreement limited to the nuclear field with more practical guarantees and lesser obligations. This type of agreement could lift some of the sanctions in the short term and give a sigh of relief to Iran's economy without requiring a full return to the terms of the 2015 agreement.

**Ettelaat: Why is it difficult for Iran to negotiate with US today?**

Ettelaat spoke with Mehdi Zakerian, an analyst on international affairs, about the challenging atmosphere of the negotiations. He said: The fact that the Americans say "either you negotiate or we will fight" means that they have realized that they can gain the highest score in negotiations with Iran. They have built the foundation on negotiations to achieve their demands from Iran. When the negotiating party realizes this, the popular support of the other party is undermined, and they abuse it and think about imposing their own conditions. Unfortunately, in the days when our influence in the region was higher and the social capital of the political system was greater than today, many attacked the JCPOA, and therefore valuable opportunities were easily lost. But now, in a situation where Iran's position in the region has changed and the economy is in crisis, we have entered into negotiations. It is quite natural that in such a situation, America would see itself as superior and want to impose all its demands on Iran. In any case, all countries try to gain the most benefit for their country and people. The missed opportunities have caused Iran to negotiate with America in a difficult situation.

## Araghchi warns 'unrealistic' demands from U.S. could derail nuclear talks

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Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the first day of the Tehran Dialogue Forum, Araghchi said, "We are continuing our discussions with Europe. The more mutual understanding we build, the better. We want Europe to play its part, though they have unfortunately weakened their own role."

He stressed that uranium enrichment in Iran is not something that can be halted. "It is a legitimate right, a major scientific achievement of the Iranian nation. It came at a high cost, including the lives of our nuclear scientists. No one can expect us to relinquish that."

"Any negotiations that fail to accept this principle are doomed to fail," he added. "However, if the aim is to ensure Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons, that goal is entirely achievable."

Araghchi's comments come amid heightened diplomatic friction over nuclear negotiations. Steve Witkoff, the



U.S. Special Envoy to West Asia under the Trump administration, recently stated, "We cannot allow Iran to have even 1% domestic uranium enrichment. We have sent them an official written proposal, without trying to be disrespectful."

He further emphasized that "from our point of view, the agreement should include zero uranium enrichment for Iran - this is a clear red line for the Trump administration."

Iran has held four rounds of indirect talks with the U.S. on the issue of its peaceful nuclear program, with both sides describing the Omani-brokered negotiations as positive.

**Arman-e-Melli: An agreement will benefit the public**

In a note, Arman-e-Melli examined the effects of a possible nuclear agreement on Iranian society. It wrote: Negotiations between Iran and the United States are underway. And as both sides say, there is a relatively positive atmosphere in the negotiations, which has led the parties to talk about the possibility of an agreement in a short time. Now the question is what benefits the people will receive if a new agreement is reached. In the current situation, an international agreement between Iran and the United States can definitely have a significant impact on society, especially in terms of the economy. If an agreement is struck, the value of foreign currencies against national currency rial will surely decrease, and consequently, it will have an impact on the prices of goods. However, if the negotiations are disrupted, differences between political groups will increase, which in itself could be a threat to the negotiations. In addition, it could weaken people's hope for an improvement in their economic situation.

**Jam-e-Jam: Challenges of the three European countries and their reduced role**

In an analysis, Jam-e-Jam discussed the meeting of senior diplomats of Iran and three European powers (France, Germany, and England) in Istanbul and said: The three European countries are facing numerous dilemmas in these negotiations. On the one hand, they are trying to preserve the spirit of the JCPOA, and on the other, they must manage their concerns about Iran's nuclear activities. However, Europe's influence has decreased as the U.S. has entered indirect negotiations with Iran. Europe is trying to strike a balance between preserving the agreement and applying diplomatic pressure on Iran. However, the U.S. position has caused Europe's role to become somewhat marginal. This situation has limited Europe's diplomatic maneuvering power and created new challenges for the foreign policy of these countries. Iran is concerned about the efforts of some parties to apply more intense pressure in the form of the snapback mechanism, which could raise tensions to an uncontrollable level. Iran has attempted to pursue a diplomatic path that serves national interests while maintaining its nuclear positions.

# UK's 'terror plot' claims crumble as it frees all five Iranian suspects

TEHRAN – The United Kingdom's Metropolitan Police has released all five Iranian nationals arrested earlier this month on suspicion of terrorism-related activities, marking a dramatic collapse of a high-profile investigation that Iranians have condemned as a politically motivated media spectacle.

The Iranian Embassy in London swiftly responded to the news, declaring in a statement on Saturday: "According to Metropolitan Police News, all Iranian nationals who were arrested on 3 May on terrorism-related allegations have been released. Much Ado About Nothing!"

The embassy's sharp rebuke underscores Tehran's skepticism of British counter-terrorism narratives, which Iranians allege have been weaponized to malign the Islamic Republic.

**A case built on thin air**

The arrests on 3 May, conducted across London, Swindon, Stockport, Rochdale, and Manchester, were initially framed by UK security officials as part of a "pre-planned operation" targeting a suspected plot against "specific premises."

Commander Dominic Murphy,



Head of the Met's Counter Terrorism Command, claimed at the time that the arrests were driven by "concerns about a suspected plot," adding that detectives were "working to assess all the evidence."

Yet two weeks later, four of the five men—identified only as [A-D]—were released without charge, despite being held under the Terrorism Act (TACT) and subjected to extended detention warrants.

The fifth individual, [E], had earlier been released on bail under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE).

Notably, police provided no evidence of criminal acts, operation-

al plans, or motives, nor did they clarify the alleged link to a "foreign government"—a thinly veiled reference to Iran.

**Skepticism mounts over UK's motives**

The abrupt release of all suspects has prompted Iranian officials and analysts to assert that the operation was driven more by political maneuvering than by authentic security concerns.

"These actions are the result of Britain's erroneous perspective on Iran. Accusations built on baseless conjecture are both damaging and unconstructive," an Iranian source told the Tehran Times when the arrests first surfaced.

## Tehran hosts memorial conference for martyred officials with focus on Resistance diplomacy

TEHRAN – The International Conference on Resistance diplomacy was held in Tehran on Sunday to mark the anniversary of the martyrdom of former President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

The event gathered the families of the fallen leaders, senior officials from the 13th and 14th administrations, cabinet ministers, and the heads of Iran's executive and judicial branches.

Opening the conference at the Summit Hall, Hojatoleslam Mostafa Rostami, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution's representative to Iranian universities, said late President Raisi "embodied tireless dedication and humility" at a time when certain factions were trying to fabricate a divide between the people and the authorities. He emphasized late Raisi's deep and constant commitment to the cause of Resistance.

Additionally, Jamileh Alamolhoda, wife of the late President Raisi, called on officials of the 14th administration to remain committed to the principles of the Islamic Republic. Speaking on behalf of the martyrs' families, she urged them to "defend the independence of the Islamic Republic with strength

and determination."

**Truth must be the measure: President Pezeshkian**

Iran's new President, Masoud Pezeshkian, delivered a keynote speech calling for principled leadership: "We must not unjustly pursue our own factions, wealth, ethnicity, or positions. We must make truth our criterion."

He paid tribute to late Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian, saying, "These martyrs of public service gave their lives for justice and the people, leaving the nation and the Muslim world in deep mourning."

**Raisi and Amir-Abdollahian were voices of Islam on the global stage: Hamas official**

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan praised the international role of both martyrs, declaring that "Palestine was a daily concern for Martyr Raisi," and that "his diplomacy at the United Nations was a defense of Islam that carried the voice of the ummah to the world."

He added that late Amir-Abdollahian acted immediately after the start of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, successfully countering U.S. interference and framing the operation as a legitimate form of resistance. "He gave a new meaning to diplomacy," Hamdan noted.

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Bileh-Savar land border crossing in Iran's Ardabil Province to take part in the operation.

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General Ma'dani emphasized the strategic value of the joint exercise, highlighting the readiness of Iranian forces to engage in regional cooperation to address border security concerns.

Iran's high-ranking military delegation also reiterated its commitment to future joint exercises aimed at responding to any emerging border threats.

This latest maneuver follows a similar joint exercise held in November of last year, when Azerbaijani special forces and an elite IRGC battalion conducted



He also declared that the Zionist regime's defeat in the first and second phases of the "True Promise" operations proved its fragility: "This regime cannot even protect itself, let alone others. Gaza remains defiant—besieged but unbroken. While the enemy starves children and bombs civilians, the world remains silent."

**Martyrs died for a cause—we must uphold it: Judiciary chief Ejei**

Judiciary Chief Hojatoleslam Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei reflected on the legacy of the martyrs, asking, "Why do we honor martyrs?" His answer: "To understand the cause they gave their lives for, and to continue along their path."

He criticized the West, particularly the United States,

Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi urged British officials to respect the rights of detained Iranians, while adding: "If credible allegations of misconduct are established, Iran stands ready to assist investigations."

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei dismissed British claims of Iranian ties to criminal networks in Europe as "baseless and unjust" in April, suggesting that London may have attempted to scapegoat Iran to divert attention from its own destabilizing policies in West Asia.

"Despite Iran's repeated calls for evidence, London continues to make unfounded allegations without presenting any proof," Baqaei asserted.

Analysts speculate that the timing of the arrests—amid delicate indirect nuclear negotiations between Iran and the United States—may indicate an attempt to sway diplomatic outcomes, particularly given that the UK may have felt sidelined in possible emerging developments between Tehran and Washington.

Iran has consistently warned against external pressure tactics outside formal negotiation frameworks.

for manipulating international law to justify its crimes. "The arrogant powers portray the defense of innocent people as illegitimate, while legitimizing their own support for criminals. This hypocrisy must be exposed," he said.

On May 19, 2024, a devastating helicopter crash shook Iran to its core, enveloping the nation in sorrow.

This heart-wrenching incident resulted in the loss of Iranian President Raisi and all individuals aboard, casting a profound shadow over the country.

President Raeisi and his accompanying delegation were returning from a ceremony to inaugurate a dam on the Aras River with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.



drills in Iran's Aslanduz region in Ardabil Province. The four-day drill, codenamed "Aras Joint Exercise," began on November 24 and aimed to enhance military capabilities in line with agreements made between the two sides to promote their mutual interests.

Armenia and Azerbaijan in March agreed on the text of a peace agreement to end nearly four decades of conflict between the

South Caucasus countries, with Yerevan agreeing to surrender its claim to Karabakh.

The long-disputed region of Karabakh was at the center of two costly wars between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 and the 1990s. The region has always been internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, whose troops retook it in a 24-hour offensive.



# Pezeshkian: Iran will never give up its peaceful nuclear program



First day of the Tehran Dialogue Forum in Tehran, May 18, 2025.

By Soheila Zarfam

TEHRAN – Journalists, diplomatic missions, dignitaries, and scholars took to the busy roads of Tehran in the early hours of Sunday (the second day of the week in Iran) to reach a grand international gathering in the north of the capital: the Tehran Dialogue Forum (TDF).

The venue was the School of International Relations, a well-known institution that has trained many of the country's diplomats for decades. Journalists arrived prior to other attendees, allowing them time to set up their cameras and review the schedule and locations for the day's discussions.

Then came the opening. In a hall filled with distinguished individuals, Iran's Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi welcomed the participants, including President Masoud Pezeshkian, before highlighting key developments of the past year, with a focus on the suffering in Gaza.

"Since October 2023, over sixty thousand Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have lost their lives—many of them women and children. Millions have been displaced, forced into siege conditions, and deliberately subjected to starvation and famine. What is even more distressing is the

world's failure to respond with the responsibility and urgency that such atrocities demand," Araghchi explained. He called on the attendees to use the TDF as an opportunity to start moving towards a "homegrown" regional order, one that does not sacrifice peace, human dignity, and conscience for political gains.

"West Asia is in urgent need of a fundamental reassessment of its self-perception. Years of fixation on manufactured rivalries—often fueled by the illusion of perpetual threats—have stymied meaningful cooperation, obstructed the resolution of common challenges, and opened the door to destabilizing foreign interference," he added.

Pezeshkian himself also spoke on the first day of the forum, discussing one of the most important foreign policy processes of Iran currently underway: the indirect nuclear talks with Washington. "We will never give up our peaceful nuclear program," he said, before telling his American counterparts that neither sanctions nor threats would manage to intimidate Iran. "This is our right. We will continue to flourish even if you never abandon your pressure tactics."

Following the opening, a number of panels and interviews took place. Among them, the

discussion between Saeed Khatibzadeh, head of Iran's Institute for Political and International Studies, and Nechirvan Barzani, the president of Iraq's Kurdistan region, made a splash in Iranian media.

Speaking in fluent Persian, Barzani highlighted the strong relationship between Iraq's Kurdistan region and Iran. He recalled his time as a university student in Iran and noted that Iraqi Kurds seeking refuge there in the 1940s were warmly welcomed. "We were not even treated as guests," Barzani said. "We were treated as if we were in our own home."

Barzani noted that President Pezeshkian's "historic" visit to Iraq's Kurdistan region in September 2024 ushered in a new era of relations. "We have always been thankful to Iranians," Barzani stated. "Iran was the first country that helped us in the fight against Daesh terrorists [in the 2010s], but that trip deepened ties between Iran and the Kurdistan region more than ever before."

Another notable discussion was held between Mohammad Reza Bahrami, the Iranian foreign ministry's Director General for South Asian Affairs, and Amir Khan Muttaqi, Afghanistan's acting foreign minister. The Tal-

iban official addressed the most pressing issue between Iran and Afghanistan, the Hirmand River Water Treaty. He said the Taliban does not want to uphold Iran's water rights based on "human," "neighborly," and "religious" principles. He also noted that peace in Afghanistan would be beneficial to all parties in the region.

The TDF is set to continue on Monday, with a focus on Palestine, Iran's program, the situation in Afghanistan, and regional nonproliferation. It is convening 200 delegations from 53 countries, as well as representatives of the United Nations.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e-Ravanchi said the forum so far has managed to create a valuable space for regional countries to come together, collaborate, and discuss important issues in a scholarly environment. "The Tehran Dialogue Forum has been running for several years now, and this year saw significant participation from various countries, particularly our neighbors," he told reporters on the sidelines of the first day of the event. "We believe that these discussions can help foster better understanding among countries in the region, which is crucial for making the most of our relationships."

## Iranian court concludes key case in Shiraz terror attacks, delivers firm sentences

TEHRAN – Iran's judiciary has issued decisive rulings against perpetrators involved in the 2022 and 2023 terrorist attacks on the revered Shah Cheragh Shrine in Shiraz, sentencing three individuals to death for orchestrating the assaults.

Speaking on Sunday, Sadrollah Rajaei-Nasab, Head of Fars Province's Judiciary, announced that courts in Shiraz had finalized sentences for seven defendants linked to the attacks.

"Three of the accused, identified as the ISIS-affiliated masterminds behind these heinous acts, were convicted of 'spreading corruption on earth' and 'complicity in waging war against God (Moharebeh),' " Rajaei-Nasab stated.

In addition to capital punishment, each received a 25-year prison term for their role in facilitating terrorism.

The Shah Cheragh Shrine, a revered site for Shia Muslims and one of Iran's most significant pilgrimage sites, has been attacked twice by terrorists linked to ISIS.

The first attack in October 2022 claimed 13 lives, while a second assault in August 2023 resulted in two fatalities. Both incidents drew widespread condemnation, with Iranian authorities vowing to pursue all perpetrators rigorously.

Rajaei-Nasab emphasized that the trials addressed both operational and logistical roles. Two ISIS-affiliated members received 15-year and 10-year prison terms for supplying weapons and ammunition, while two female defendants were sentenced to five years.

"In line with Islamic compassion, the women will serve their sentences under electronic monitoring within a 1,000-meter radius of

their residences," he noted.

The judiciary official highlighted that the three masterminds were central to "planning terror operations inside Iran," adding that their arrests thwarted subsequent plots.

Previous cases related to the attacks had already seen two perpetrators executed in July 2023.

Iran has repeatedly stressed its zero-tolerance approach to terrorism, particularly threats orchestrated by groups such as ISIS. The latest rulings close a significant chapter in the Shah Cheragh cases, though investigations into broader networks continue.

Rajaei-Nasab reaffirmed the judiciary's vigilance: "Iran's security and judicial institutions will relentlessly pursue anyone endangering public safety. These verdicts send a clear message: terrorism will face decisive justice."

## President Trump and the name Persian Gulf

From Page 1 ▶ Hereafter, I explain how deeply the name Persian Gulf is rooted in the tradition of the American name standardization and foreign policy traditions:

The term 'Persian Gulf' was adopted by the US specialized agencies

The US became the first government to establish an office entrusted with standardising geographical and administrative names. Created in 1890, the United States Board of Geographic Names (USBGN) was the first national body set up "to deal with contradictions and inconsistencies among many names, applications and spellings..." Decisions of the Board are accepted as binding

by all departments and agencies of the Federal Government. Official US bodies, including diplomatic, intelligence, and military agencies, rely on the USBGN for accurate names.

Based on the recommendation of this body, the policy has always been to 'cooperate wherever possible' with foreign governments to use a local name, with the 'optional use' of conventional English names. As all US departments are generally required to use formally correct place names in their communications with foreign governments, they also rely on names decided jointly by the USBGN and the State Department. 'Persikos Kolpos' [Persian Gulf], which is the oldest toponym for a body of water, was first used around 500 BC



by Hecataeus, the Greek geographer and historian, and remained the only universally used term up to the political challenge coming from Pan-Arabism in the 1960s. This designation was sanctioned

for US government use since a decision made by the USBGN and the Department of State (DOS)'s Board of Geographical Names in 1917.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))



### IPC official Strydom praises Iranian women

TEHRAN – Ernesta Strydom, an IPC Technical Official, has commended the women of Iran's Para-athletic community.

Having traveled to Iran to oversee the country's Para athletics club competitions under official IPC supervision, Strydom expressed her satisfaction with the level of the events.

This was her third visit to Iran. She remarked about the competitions: "Over the two days of the domestic championships for both women and men, I saw many familiar faces, along with numerous young and new athletes. This was very encouraging. Iran's Para athletics has been able to identify and attract talented young athletes."

She recalled the 2023 competitions held in Iran: "I remember meeting a young athlete named Parastoo Habibi. Today, she's shining among the medalists at Paris 2024—particularly in women's F32 Club Throw. This illustrates how vital domestic competitions are, serving as a launchpad and a turning point for athletes."

Strydom highlighted the innovative club-based format: "What I found particularly interesting this time was the club-based structure of the competitions. It has injected enthusiasm and energy, boosting teamwork and camaraderie among athletes. After returning to South Africa, I plan to implement this model in my country's domestic events. Iran has set a very successful example in this regard."

She also noted the improvements in infrastructure: "Compared to my previous visits, the condition of the venues—grounds, facilities, and other aspects—has significantly advanced."

On women's participation, she said: "Women's sports worldwide have faced challenges such as limited participants and facilities. One way to develop women's sports, especially in Iran, is through continuous domestic competitions. I am very pleased to hear that a national championship-level event will be held in Iran within the next two months."

She also praised the presence of skilled female coaches: "I observed several talented coaches during this event and truly appreciated their coaching styles. Increasing the number of such coaches should be a priority."

Strydom concluded: "Overall, Iran's Para athletics and Para sports hold a strong position both in Asia and globally, with talented athletes delivering excellent performances recently. There's room for further improvement, but with the policies adopted by the Iranian NPC, progress will be smoother."

The competitions, held under IPC supervision, took place on Wednesday and Friday at Aftab-e Enghelab Stadium in Tehran, across both women's and men's categories.

### Suntory Sunbirds beat Foolad in AVC Champions League third-place match

TEHRAN – Japan's SV.League champions Suntory Sunbirds Osaka rebounded from a semifinal setback to secure bronze medal at the inaugural AVC Men's Champions League.

The home team defeated Foolad Sirjan Iranian in straight-set 25-15, 25-15, 25-19 at Shimadzu Arena on Sunday.

Star outside hitter Dmitriy Muserskiy led the charge with 20 points, including 15 kills, one block, and an impressive four service aces. Supporting him were Alain De Armas and Ran Takahashi, who contributed 10 and 9 points respectively. For Foolad Sirjan, Mohsen Delavari led the scoring with 14 points, including 13 kills.

"After the disappointment of missing out on the final, we regrouped and set a new goal to give our best in this match, for our club, our staff, and our fans. This win means a lot, and I'm happy we could finish strong," said Ran Takahashi during the post-match press conference.

Following the match, SV.League Chairman Mr Masaaki Okawa, alongside High Performance Group Senior Director Mr Masashi Nambu, presented Suntory Sunbirds with the bronze medals, trophy and US\$10,000 in prize money. Foolad won US\$ 4,000.

Al Rayyan of Qatar will meet Japan's Osaka Bluteon in the final match on Monday.

### Maral Torkaman wins Top Scorer accolade

TEHRAN – With four goals for Iran prior to the third-place playoff, Maral Torkaman added two more on Saturday against China to emerge as the AFC Women's Futsal Asian Cup and help lead her side to the FIFA Futsal Women's World Cup Philippines 2025.

The 22-year-old cemented her status as one of Asia's brightest futsal stars on her competition debut, showcasing her deadly finishing and also adding one assist.

The Palayesh Naft Abadan player's brace in the 3-1 third-place playoff win against the host made it six goals in as many matches, which took her clear of Chinese Taipei's Liu Wen Ling and Thailand's Jenjira Bubpha – both with five goals – at the top of the scoring charts.

Torkaman became the third different player in as many editions to claim the accolade after Chikage Kichibayashi of Japan (2015) and Sara Shirbeigi of Iran (2018).

Japan's Sara Oino was named named the Most Valuable Player after leading Japan to a historic triumph.

A standout campaign in goal by Nene Inoue saw her named Best Goalkeeper of the competition as she led Japan to a historic crown.

### Esteghlal goalkeeper Hosseini linked with Sepahan

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football team goalkeeper Seyed Hossein Hosseini has been linked with a transfer to Sepahan.

Media reports indicate that Payam Niazmand has not yet renewed his contract with Sepahan, leading the Isfahan-based club to consider signing Hosseini instead.

Niazmand has also been reported to be interested in a move to Persepolis.

During the 2024-25 Iran Professional League (IPL), Niazmand played a key role in helping Sepahan finish second.

### Tabiat defeat Sagesse to advance to 2025 WASL final

TEHRAN – Tabiat defeated Lebanese side Sagesse SC in a thrilling encounter, 79-73, to complete the FIBA West Asia Super League (WASL) 2025 Final at the Stade Nouhad Naufal.

Sina Vahedi led the way with a game-high 31 points, including 18 in the second half as he helped his side remain stable during the fourth quarter amidst the opposition's fight-back from as much as 18 down.

Jamaledine led Sagesse with 21 points and 10 rebounds in the loss that denied the club a return trip to the WASL Final – and an opportunity as well to bounce back after settling for a runner-up finish last year.

Sagesse still have a shot at finishing at the podium as they will face Shabab Al Ahli in the Third-Place Game on Sunday, which serves as the opening act to the finale between Al Riyadi and Tabiat.



## Thermal power capacity set to grow by 4,000 MW ahead of summer peak



TEHRAN – Iran will add over 4,000 megawatts of new thermal power capacity to its electricity grid this summer through the construction of new units, upgrades to gas turbines, and removal of production bottlenecks in existing steam power plants, a senior energy official said.

According to Nasser Eskandari, Deputy for Power Generation Operations at Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH), the country has already added 4,300 MW of new capacity over the past two years. Speaking on national television, Eskandari noted that despite achieving a 4,000-MW increase in available power compared to last year, energy consumption has risen by 13 percent in the same period.

Eskandari said a sharp decline in hydropower output has added further pressure on thermal plants. While hydropower traditionally provides about 7,000 MW during this period, current output has dropped to just 2,000 MW, forcing ther-

mal plants to compensate for the shortfall.

He attributed the surge in electricity demand to a 5.5°C rise in average temperatures compared to last year. "Each one-degree increase in temperature adds roughly 1,500 MW to the national power demand. We've seen an overall increase of 7,000 to 8,000 MW this way," he said.

Eskandari reported that thermal power plant efficiency has reached 39.68 percent, placing Iran 15th globally—ranking ahead of countries like China and Canada. This achievement stems partly from converting simple-cycle gas turbines to combined-cycle systems by adding steam units that raise efficiency without increasing fuel consumption.

He said Iran currently has 8,200 MW of potential capacity available for steam cycle expansion, and implementation of these projects is progressing well.

Eskandari confirmed that over 97 percent of the planned 102,000 MW maintenance work has been completed, and this figure will surpass 99 percent by the end of May. "We are entering the summer with high operational readiness to ensure stable power supply to consumers," he added.

Other key priorities include building high-efficiency power plants, cutting internal power consumption, and reducing transmission losses—efforts that are expected to further elevate Iran's global efficiency ranking in the thermal power sector.

## Monthly trade balance in Maku FTZ hits \$5.35m

TEHRAN – Iran's Free Zones High Council announced that the trade balance of Maku Free Trade Zone, in the northwest of the country, was \$5.35 million positive in the first Iranian calendar month Farvardin (March 21-April 21).

The council announced that the total export of goods from the zone during Farvardin reached \$7.55 million, while the value of imports from this zone was \$2.2 million, indicating a positive trade balance of \$5.35 million.

Raw materials were the major products exported from Maku FTZ during the first month.

As Iran's largest free zone, Maku stands at the juncture between Asia and Europe and has great potential to become a hub for exporting agricultural and foodstuff products from east to west.

Located in Iran's northwestern province of West Azarbaijan, Maku is one of the seven major free zones of Iran; it has 140 kilometers of shared border with the Azerbaijan Republic and 130 kilometers of border with Turkey.

Maku Free Zone is the connecting point of the East-West and North-South transit corridors and has great potential for expanding trade relations between Iran and Asian countries in one hand and with Europe on the other hand.

As reported by Iran's Free Zones High Council, the trade balance of the country's free trade zones was \$41.463 million positive in Farvardin.

The total export of goods and services from these zones in the first month reached \$100.85 million. In contrast, the imports from the free zones, excluding machinery, were announced at \$59.207 million, indicating a positive trade balance of \$41.643 million.

In mid-February, Iran's Free Zones High Council Secretary Reza Masrouh stated that regulatory restrictions in free trade zones have hindered their intended function in recent years.

He pointed to past policies, such as the ban on vehicle imports into free zones while allowing them in mainland Iran, as an example of such constraints.

However, recent government efforts have led to the removal of several limitations.

He emphasized the council's focus on enhancing the export role of free trade zones, as a significant portion of their production has historically been directed toward the domestic market, contradicting their core purpose. The new policy framework aims to steer businesses toward export-driven production.

Masrouh highlighted that while free trade zones are more service- and commerce-oriented, special economic zones focus primarily on production and exports.



To improve export performance, new incentives have been introduced for production units engaged in exports.

Additionally, the council has partnered with Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) to establish export management companies in free zones to facilitate international trade.

Masrouh addressed concerns about smuggling in free zones, stating that all import processes are recorded in official systems.

He also announced a shift in trade exhibition policies, stating that foreign exhibitions, which were previously held outside free zones, have been limited due to high costs. Moving forward, exhibitions will be held exclusively within free trade zones, ensuring they target relevant markets and yield better economic results.

The official revealed plans for a greater emphasis on technology in free trade zones, and mentioned the development of an AI assistant tailored for free trade zones.

On international cooperation, he proposed the establishment of a Supreme Eurasia Trade Council within Iran's Foreign Ministry to strengthen ties with regional economic blocs.

He noted ongoing discussions with Turkey and Pakistan about creating joint free trade zones, although such projects require parliamentary approval.

Masrouh concluded by affirming the council's commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of free trade zones, increasing exports, and minimizing smuggling, with continued government collaboration to improve policies and investment conditions.

The establishment of free trade zones (FTZs) in Iran dates back to the Iranian calendar year 1368 (March 1989 – March 1990) following the fall in the country's oil income in the preceding year which prompted the government to promote non-oil exports.

The first two free trade zones of Iran were established in the south of the country. The first one was Kish Free Trade Zone established in 1368 on Kish Island in the Persian Gulf and the second one was Qeshm Free Trade Zone established the year after on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz.

# Iran boosts Kharg oil storage capacity by 2m barrels

TEHRAN – Iran has expanded its crude oil storage capacity by two million barrels following the refurbishment and reactivation of two major storage tanks at the Kharg operational area.

According to the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), the overhaul and modernization of storage tanks No. 25 and 26 at the Kharg oil terminals were completed and officially inaugurated on Saturday, May 17, during a visit by NIOC Head Hamid Bovard to Kharg Island. Each tank has a capacity of one million barrels and has been brought back into service after undergoing extensive restoration.

Tank No. 26 was fully renovated through a comprehensive process that included the replacement of its roof and floor, installation of new roof drain and earthing systems, construction of containment basins, and the deployment of upgraded safety systems such as cooling, foam fire suppression, and geomembrane and geotextile layers. The tank was also completely repainted.



Tank No. 25 underwent descaling, floor plate replacement, roof repairs, cathodic protection system installation, roof drain redesign, repainting, basin construction, and safety system implementation before reentering service.

Bovard, who also serves as deputy oil minister, said the two-million-barrel increase in storage capacity significantly boosts Iran's export flexibility, facilitates upstream production, and reduces costs associated with renting storage facilities. He

called the initiative a valuable addition to the country's oil sector.

He also highlighted the refurbishment of five decommissioned vessels, describing them as crucial assets for cargo handling and docking operations at Kharg Terminal. Bovard thanked all contributors to the project.

He emphasized that all work was carried out entirely by domestic contractors and engineers, demonstrating Iran's strong technical and engineering capabilities in developing oil infrastructure.

Abbas Asadrouz, head of the Iranian Oil Terminals Company, called the commissioning of the two tanks a testament to the expertise of Iranian specialists and a key milestone in expanding the country's strategic oil infrastructure.

"This project not only increases our national storage capacity but also represents the determination of local experts and a broader national commitment to advancing Iran's oil industry," Asadrouz said.

He underlined the strategic importance of expanding storage capacity, especially amid volatile energy markets, and said the project would help maintain stable exports, improve production flexibility, and strengthen Iran's position in global markets.

Asadrouz also emphasized adherence to safety and environmental standards throughout the project, describing it as a clear example of implementing the principles of the "resistance economy" and supporting domestic production.

## Tehran, Jakarta begin talks on overseas farming cooperation

TEHRAN – Iran and Indonesia have launched initial discussions on joint overseas farming projects, according to a member of Iran's parliamentary delegation at the 19th Islamic Inter-Parliamentary Conference.

Speaking to IRNA on Saturday, Mohammad Hossein Mohammadi said the Iranian delegation held side talks during the conference aimed at expanding cooperation with Indonesia and other Asian countries in the field of agricultural development, particularly overseas cultivation.

Mohammadi, a member of Iran's Parliament Judiciary and Legal Affairs Committee, highlighted recent meetings between Mohsen Zanganeh, head of the Iran-Indonesia Parlia-

mentary Friendship Group, and representatives from Indonesia's Chamber of Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture. He said these talks focused on exploring the potential for Iran to invest in farmland abroad.

"Initial negotiations have taken place, and further consultations with relevant authorities are scheduled. If both sides reach an agreement, the necessary steps will be pursued at higher levels," Mohammadi said.

Reflecting on the broader impact of the Islamic Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Mohammadi emphasized its role in strengthening cultural, social, and economic unity among Muslim nations. "With Muslims making up one-fourth of the world's population,

such gatherings can foster stronger cohesion among Islamic countries," he said.

He added that while many non-Muslim governments align their interests with major global powers, closer ties between Muslim populations could eventually influence their governments to shift policy direction.

On the economic front, Mohammadi underlined the potential of greater cooperation among Muslim countries, particularly in technology. "If Islamic nations adopt a unified approach, they can help solve many of each other's problems. Iran, for example, can play a key role in exporting advanced technology and high-tech industries to fellow Muslim countries," he said.

## CBI says over \$6.5b allocated for imports since March

TEHRAN – Iran's central bank announced that more than \$6.5 billion in foreign currency has been allocated to import goods and services since the beginning of the current Iranian year (starting March 20), as total commercial forex market transactions surpassed \$3.9 billion.

According to the Central Bank of

Iran (CBI), from the start of the year through May 12, a total of \$6.586 billion was provided for imports. This included \$1.788 billion for essential goods and medicine, \$4.593 billion for commercial and industrial products, and \$205 million for services.

Of the essential imports, the CBI allocated \$1.481 billion for agricultural and food commodities

and \$307 million for pharmaceuticals, raw materials, and medical equipment. These were provided at a subsidized exchange rate of 28,500 tomans per U.S. dollar to ensure affordability for consumers.

CBI Governor Mohammadreza Farzin, speaking on May 6, outlined upcoming initiatives by the Iran Foreign Exchange and Gold Center,

including launching new markets such as a personalized currency exchange for small exporters, futures and forward currency trading, and a decentralized services exchange. Farzin said the aim is to further separate trade and currency policies while boosting non-oil exports and meeting demand in areas such as travel currency through the creation of dedicated retail forex markets.

## Iran exports non-oil goods worth \$124m to Pakistan in a month

TEHRAN– Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$124 million to Pakistan in the first Iranian calendar month of Farvardin (March 21-April 21), according to data from the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

The IRICA data showed that Pakistan was Iran's seventh top non-oil export destination in the mentioned month.

Exporting commodities valued at \$43 million to Iran, Pakistan was also Iran's seventh source of non-oil import in the said month, the IRICA report added.

As previously announced by Abolfazl Akbarpour, the deputy head of IRICA for planning and international affairs, Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$2.4 billion to Pakistan in the past Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2025.

Akbarpour said that Pakistan was Iran's fifth top export destination in the previous year.

In a meeting held at the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), on May 6, senior representatives from Pakistan's Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Tehran officials discussed expanding bilateral trade through deeper port cooperation between Gwadar and Chabahar.

During the talks, which included Peyman Sanandaji, head of the Tehran Chamber's Transportation Commission, and Hessamoddin Hallaj, Deputy for International Affairs and Trade Development, both sides explored the potential for boosting goods exchange between the two strategic ports. The meeting also brought together members of Tehran's transport commission and Iranian business

leaders.

According to the TCCIMA portal, the Gwadar delegation expressed readiness to collaborate in introducing reputable companies from both countries, improving port-based trade, establishing a financial corridor, and developing customs infrastructure.

Sanandaji stressed the need to modernize overland and maritime transit infrastructure between Chabahar and Gwadar, saying the Tehran chamber is ready to engage with Gwadar counterparts to identify and develop transport opportunities.

Hallaj highlighted the growing strategic role of both ports in bilateral commerce and noted that Gwadar, which has so far operated mainly within the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, could evolve into a multilateral regional hub. He also announced Tehran's willingness to assist in introducing reliable companies and facilitating business visa requests for Pakistani and Iranian traders.

Meanwhile, speakers at a seminar on the future of Iran-Pakistan relations and regional connectivity emphasized the need for constructive dialogue between officials from both countries to navigate administrative and logistical complexities. They stressed that securing mutual benefits and improving the well-being of the Iranian and Pakistani people require strong political will and reciprocal practical measures.

The seminar, titled "Iran-Pakistan Relations: Trade Outlook and Strengthening Connectivity," was held on March 1 with the participation of the Iranian Embassy and hosted by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

The event brought together prominent experts from Pakistan's diplomatic, media, eco-

nomics, and political spheres, along with several foreign diplomats.

Among the keynote speakers were Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam, Pakistan's Ambassador to Tehran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, ISSI Chairman Sohail Mahmood, and former Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Riffat Masood.

They underscored the \$10 billion trade target and key energy projects as crucial steps toward strengthening bilateral relations.

Acknowledging the challenges hindering smooth trade between the two nations stemming from administrative complexities, logistical barriers, and regional and global developments speakers emphasized that structured engagement, fostering trust, and mutual respect form the foundation for a resilient and adaptable partnership between Tehran and Islamabad.

Pakistani experts highlighted the importance of enhancing border security, building mutual trust, and advancing projects such as linking the Gwadar and Chabahar ports and collaborating on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to unlock greater trade potential.

Addressing the seminar, Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam stated that trade and connectivity are two fundamental pillars of both global and domestic economies, significantly influencing each other. Reliable and secure transportation, he noted, is a facilitator of sustainable trade, making investment in transit corridors both essential and highly beneficial for investors.

In today's rapidly evolving landscape, the international community faces two new concepts: tariff wars and corridor wars, both targeting key economic pillars, he said.



# Why Syria’s President skipped Arab Summit?

From page 1 ▶ The group’s legacy of terror still casts a long shadow over Iraq, and al-Sharaa remains wanted on terrorism charges in Iraqi courts.

Former Iraqi Interior Minister Baqir Jabr al-Zubeidi revealed previously undisclosed details about the self-appointed Syrian President.

“During my tenure as Interior Minister, al-Golani was operating in Iraq,” al-Zubeidi stated. “At the time, I received an intelligence report indicating his presence in Diyala Province.”

However, according to al-Zubeidi, it later became apparent that U.S. forces were monitoring Iraqi communications. “They were eavesdropping on us and captured him first and took him to Bucca,” he said, referring to the U.S.-run Camp Bucca detention facility in Iraq.

Al-Zubeidi recounted contacting then-senior U.S. military commander General George Casey to request custody of al-Golani. “He refused,” al-Zubeidi said. “He told me: ‘He’s in Bucca and we won’t hand him over. We need to extract information from him first.’”

By 2014, al-Golani had been moved to Abu Ghraib prison. “You may recall the infamous prison break, when terrorists blasted open the gates and escaped in waiting vehicles,” al-Zubeidi said. “Al-Golani was among them, fleeing to Syria, where he later re-emerged as the leader of Hay’at



Tahrir al-Sham (HTS – formerly al-Qaeda’s Syrian branch).”

In the weeks leading up to the Arab League Summit, at least 50 Iraqi lawmakers filed legal complaints against the Syrian president.

The Dawa Party, which governed Iraq during AQI’s most violent years, warned strongly against his attendance. While not naming al-Sharaa directly, the party insisted that anyone invited to the summit must have a “spotless” legal record both at home and abroad.

Al-Sharaa’s presence would have

marked a major symbolic victory for Damascus, as his government seeks to rebuild diplomatic ties with its Arab neighbor, and the Arab League Summit would have been the perfect opportunity.

But growing anger inside Iraq over his terrorist past and fears for his personal safety appear to have compelled him to stay away.

Observers note that, despite his new role as head of state, al-Sharaa has yet to fully distance himself from his terror history.

Al-Sharaa has not denied his past affiliation with AQI and other terrorist groups, but claims he

was young and has since distanced himself from those actions.

Still, AQI was responsible for some of the most horrific massacres in Iraq and played a central role in the sectarian violence that plagued the country, particularly between 2004 and 2007.

“A Syrian official later messaged me on WhatsApp, claiming al-Golani was ‘just a young man caught in events,’” al-Zubeidi revealed. “I responded: ‘We reject this false narrative. He is responsible for Iraqi blood spilled by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s Daesh and al-Golani himself.’ Those killed had families demanding justice. As government officials, we must hold him accountable.”

When asked about al-Sharaa’s role in Iraq, al-Zubeidi was clear: “His path mirrors that of [Abu Musab] al-Zarqawi, (the founder of AQI). The Americans never shared the full interrogation records from Bucca. Al-Golani later became the deputy of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who would go on to lead Daesh.”

“Al-Golani eventually assumed leadership of Daesh’s operations in Syria, where he waged a brutal war until foreign powers intervened, including the Turkish military, Israeli intelligence, and U.S. forces in northern Syria. Their objective was to replace Assad with a puppet Islamist regime,” al-Zubeidi added.

“These foreign powers,” al-Zubeidi concluded, “have long-term agendas that will inevitably impact both Jordan and Iraq.”

## Hezbollah’s former recruit arrested for collaborating with Israel

From page 1 ▶ When Saleh was forced to unlock his phone to check his financial accounts, the Whish Money agent discovered emails from a person named “Louis,” asking Saleh to investigate specific individuals and information related to Hezbollah, including “types of motorcycles, ambulances, artillery, and personnel positions.”

The Whish Money agent immediately informed the party concerned with this is Hezbollah.

Saleh confessed that he had been recruited by the Israeli Mossad through a Facebook advertisement asking, “Are you a former member of Hezbollah?”

Saleh’s arrest sparked widespread public outrage among the Resistance’s grassroots, with talk of infiltration into Hezbollah’s structure increasing significantly since the Pager and Walkie-Talkie massacres and the ongoing U.S.-led Israeli aggression that followed.

During the investigation, Saleh admitted to receiving money from Israeli intelligence agencies and receiving more than \$20,000. His accumulated debts, resulting from losses in stock market trading, had prompted him to



work for the Israeli enemy. Saleh was asked to rejoin Hezbollah, but security sources confirmed that the information Saleh possessed after leaving his organizational work within Hezbollah was not dangerous, but rather personal observations or statements he had heard from some of his friends and acquaintances. What he relayed to his handlers was neither sensitive nor exceptional in nature.

The security sources categorically denied the circulated allegations of Saleh’s responsibility for the martyrdom of some of his comrades, contrary to what was circulated in some media outlets or social media platforms.

The sources also denied the presence of any women among the detainees suspected of

collaborating with the enemy, stressing that they had no connection to Saleh.

Furthermore, investigations did not reveal the involvement of other persons linked to him.

Security services have previously arrested dozens of collaborators working for the Israeli enemy, belonging to various sects, regions, and political factions, who were recruited to gather information, to perform operational roles, or even simply to score points against the Lebanese resistance and security services in the open security war.

Muhammad Saleh is not the first agent of the Zionist enemy from within the popular resistance base, and he will not be the last, nor will he be the most dangerous.

A security source confirmed to Tehran Times that the Israeli enemy, after the exposure of its extensive spy networks over the past years, continues to employ collaborators, fearing Hezbollah’s rapid and secretive restructuring of its system. Seemingly, the Israeli enemy’s focus has become more focused on the human element after resistance agencies became aware of the technical breaches.

## PKK’s historic shift: From insurgency to politics and regional outcomes

From page 1 ▶ News organization Firat News Agency said this change was inspired by a plea issued in February from imprisoned leader Ocalan that peaceful methods should meet the Kurds’ new demands. The organization that has always fought for an independent Kurdish state, in recent years, has been focusing on autonomy and cultural rights within Turkey; however, their use of violence has been the cause of Turkey, the US, and the EU to name them terrorists. The PKK’s decision followed a variety of issues, such as recent Turkish military pressure and changes of regional alliances, although indeed all of those had been preceded by a unilateral ceasefire in March 2025.

### Implications for Turkey and the region

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hailed the PKK’s decision as a “critical threshold” toward a “terror-free Turkey,” though he emphasized that the disbandment must extend to all PKK affiliates in Iraq, Syria, and Europe. The move could enable political reforms for Turkey’s Kurdish minority, which constitutes roughly 20% of the

population, and reduce tensions in northern Syria, where Turkish forces have clashed with PKK-linked Kurdish militias. However, skepticism persists: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan noted that the government would monitor the group’s compliance, signaling that trust remains fragile.

In Iraq and Syria, the PKK’s dissolution may reshape local power dynamics. Iraqi Kurdish leaders, who have long balanced cooperation with Turkey against solidarity with Kurdish causes, could face pressure to distance themselves from residual PKK elements. In Syria, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which include PKK-aligned units, may need to recalibrate their strategy amid Turkish demands for demilitarization.

### Iran welcomes PKK dissolution as regional security gain

Iran, which shares a border with Turkey and hosts its own Kurdish minority, welcomed the PKK’s disbandment as a positive development for regional security. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei stated that Iran views the move as “an important

step toward rejecting violence and strengthening security,” expressing hope that it would foster stability in Turkey and the broader region.

This stance aligns with Iran’s broader strategic interests in maintaining stability along its western borders. The disbandment of the PKK reduces the potential for cross-border insurgencies and contributes to a more secure environment in the region.

### Implications for regional peace and stability

The PKK’s dissolution marks a critical juncture with significant implications for regional stability and peace in the Middle East. Particularly in northern Iraq, where the PKK maintained longstanding bases, a structured disarmament process is expected to begin, supervised by intelligence agencies from Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. This process will involve cataloging weapons and organizing their surrender, aiming to reduce armed conflict in the region.

Beyond security, the disbandment opens avenues for economic development in conflict-affected

Kurdish areas. Turkey may prioritize integrating these regions into national development plans, while Iran could leverage the opportunity to strengthen cross-border economic cooperation, fostering broader regional collaboration.

However, challenges remain. Doubts persist regarding the full disarmament of PKK fighters and their reintegration into society. The risk of splinter groups continuing armed resistance cannot be ignored. Moreover, Turkey’s complex political environment—with ongoing restrictions on pro-Kurdish parties and opposition arrests—raises concerns about the inclusivity of the peace process.

Despite these obstacles, the PKK disbandment offers a rare chance for de-escalation and regional cooperation. For Iran, a more stable western border enhances national security and economic ties. Success will depend on effective disarmament, inclusive political dialogue, and sustained international support for transparent peace-building that prioritizes minority rights and long-term conflict resolution.

## Israel launches ‘extensive’ ground operation as 135 killed in Gaza

Israeli military says it has begun extensive ground operations throughout northern and southern Gaza as part of its “Operation Gideon’s Chariots.”

By Sunday evening, the relentless bombardment of Gaza had killed at least 135 Palestinians and rendered all the public hospitals in northern Gaza out of service, Gaza’s Health Ministry said.

The Israeli strikes come as the regime resumes ceasefire talks with Hamas in Qatar.

Addressing the strikes that happened overnight, a Health Ministry spokesperson said: “Complete families were wiped off the civil registration record by Israeli bombardment.”

## 5 more Palestinian journalists killed in Israeli strikes in Gaza

Five more Palestinian journalists were killed in Israeli air strikes in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, a medical source said, Anadolu reported.

The source said a woman reporter was among the victims, who lost their lives along with members of their families in attacks on houses and tents for displaced civilians in various areas across Gaza.

He identified the slain reporters as Abdul Rahman Al-Abaadela, Khaled Abu Seif, Azeez Al-Hajjar, Ahmed Al-Zaytani, and Nour Qandil.

The new fatalities brought the number of journalists killed in Israeli attacks in Gaza since October 2023 to 222, according to Gaza’s government media office.

## WHO looks ahead to life without US

Hundreds of officials from the World Health Organization will join donors and diplomats in Geneva from Monday with one question dominating their thoughts – how to cope with crises from mpox to cholera without their main funder, the United States.

The annual assembly, with its week of sessions, votes and policy decisions, usually showcases the scale of the UN agen-

cy set up to tackle disease outbreaks, approve vaccines and support health systems worldwide.

This year – since U.S. President Donald Trump started the year-long process to leave the WHO with an executive order on his first day in office in January – the main theme is scaling down.

“Our goal is to focus on the high-value stuff,” Daniel Thornton, the WHO’s director of coordinated resource mobilization, told Reuters.

Just what that “high-value stuff” will be is up for discussion. Health officials have said the WHO’s work in providing guidelines for countries on new vaccines and treatments for conditions from obesity to HIV will remain a priority.

## Putin outlines results Moscow seeks in Ukraine

Russia is seeking to achieve “lasting and sustainable peace” by eliminating the root causes of the Ukraine conflict, President Vladimir Putin has said, in an extract of an interview released by Russia 1 TV on Sunday.

In a clip posted by journalist Pavel Zarubin on Telegram, Putin stated that Russia has “enough strength and resources to bring what was started in 2022 to its logical conclusion” while accomplishing Moscow’s key goals.

Russia wants to “eliminate the causes that caused this crisis, create conditions for long-term sustainable peace and ensure the security of the Russian state and the interests of our people in those territories that we always talk about,” he added.

## 100,000 protest in The Hague against Gaza war

Tens of thousands of protesters marched through The Hague on Sunday demanding a tougher stance from the Dutch government against Israel’s war in Gaza, Reuters reported.

Organiser Oxfam Novib said around 100,000 protesters had joined the march, most dressed in red expressing their desire for a “red line” against Israel’s siege on Gaza, where it has cut off medical, food and fuel supplies.

The march also passed the seat of the International Court of Justice, which is hearing a case brought by South Africa accusing Israel of genocide and last year ordered Israel to halt a military assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah

## Growing rift between Trump and Netanyahu

By Amir Hossein Saremi

TEHRAN – The tensions between Trump and Netanyahu are growing day by day during Trump’s second presidential term. At the beginning of his presidency, Trump lifted the arms export bans imposed by the Biden administration and provided Netanyahu with the heaviest and most lethal bombs, so they could, as he put it, “finish the job.” However, Trump now appears to be taking a different path, with plans for the future that don’t quite align with Netanyahu’s goals.

The first issue is the Gaza crisis. Early in his term, Trump had promised to turn Gaza into a resort area through development efforts and succeeded in pressuring the Israeli government to agree to a ceasefire with Hamas forces. However, the ceasefire and the subsequent prisoner exchange did not last long, and today Israel has launched large-scale attacks on Gaza.

Trump is strongly opposed to this action, knowing that the key to advancing relations and investments with Arab countries lies in maintaining a stable ceasefire in Gaza. On the other hand, Yemen’s Ansarullah has demonstrated its ability to threaten American and Israeli interests in the Middle East with a missile strike on Ben Gurion Airport. Recent U.S. and Israeli attacks have had little impact on their stance, so the U.S. still

sees a ceasefire as the only solution.

The second reason for the growing tensions between Trump and Netanyahu is the issue of Iran. In recent months, Netanyahu has tried to push the U.S. toward launching airstrikes on Iran’s nuclear and missile sites, but Trump has so far rejected the request. Netanyahu believes that following the deaths of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, the fall of Syria, and claims of an airstrike on Iran that destroyed its air defenses, now is the best time to destroy Iran’s nuclear program. But Trump has not agreed to this suggestion so far. Netanyahu is deeply frustrated by this, especially since Trump recently stated that he has not yet decided whether the new nuclear agreement will allow Iran to enrich uranium.

Netanyahu is working hard to increase pressure on Trump to stop negotiations, using support from the pro-Israel lobby within the Senate and the House of Representatives. Following Trump’s statements, senators Tom Cotton and Lindsey Graham declared that the only acceptable deal with Iran is one that completely prevents Tehran from enriching uranium. They also urged Trump to submit any nuclear deal document with Iran to the Senate for approval, which would require a two-thirds majority.

(See full text at [tehrantimes.com](https://tehrantimes.com))



## Iran is a roofless museum, deputy cultural heritage minister says



Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage  
Ali Darabi

TEHRAN – Iran is like a roofless museum in terms of cultural and historical assets and values, said the country’s Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage.

Addressing the eighth gathering of Iran’s collectors, which was held at Ferdowsi Hall of the House of Thinkers, Ali Darabi added that Iran’s cultural heritage is beyond the country’s borders and includes Cultural Iran, Mehr news

agency reported.

“Keeping collection has a people-oriented nature and is of high importance. Identifying, collecting, preserving, and keeping these collections is a complex process and requires an inquisitive and value-oriented spirit. This act is a kind of knowledge and responsibility toward preserving the cultural assets.”

Pointing to the ancient link between collection management and museum keeping, he said, “Often the purpose of creating a museum is to protect and display collections. In today’s world that the cultures and their cultural differences are fading due to the increasing development of technologies and globalization process, the activity of collectors helps preserve cultural and local identity of societies which are in transition to industrialization. Responsible collecting is not only a cultural activity but also a protective mission.”

At end, he said that the collectors can help preserve the cultural heritage for future generations with cooperation of museums, governments and international organizations.

## Iran to open eight new ‘Sacred Defense’ museums by 2028

TEHRAN – Iran plans to inaugurate eight new museums dedicated to the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War—referred to in the country as the “Sacred Defense” –by the Iranian year 1407 (March 2028), a senior official announced on Sunday.

Brigadier General Bahman Kargar, head of the Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values, made the announcement during a ceremony at the National Museum of Iran marking International Museum Day, observed globally on or around May 18.

According to Kargar, the number of Sacred Defense and Islamic Revolution museums across the country will increase from 29 to 37 within the next three years. He also noted that plans are underway to establish an international museum in Tabas, a city historically significant in the context of post-revolutionary events.

“Museums are not only guardians of history but also cultural hubs that foster education and intergenerational dialogue,” Kargar said. “In today’s world, modern museums are part of the creative economy and function as instruments of cultural diplomacy.”

He emphasized that Sacred Defense muse-

ums are vital for preserving authentic documentation of the war period, combating historical distortion, and strengthening national identity. “The real victors of the Sacred Defense were the people,” he stated.

Highlighting the broader memorial landscape, Kargar noted that Iran currently hosts 58 Sacred Defense monuments in seven provinces, including Bushehr, West Azarbaijan, and Kermanshah, along with over 3,000 memorial sites dedicated to unidentified martyrs.

The ceremony also featured the launch of 271 cultural programs across museums in Iran, with 10 events inaugurated online. These included the exhibition “unfinished narrative” at Reza Abbasi Museum, a knot-themed exhibition at the Carpet Museum of Iran, and a single-object exhibit at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Isfahan.

The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense Works and Values, affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran, aims to safeguard war relics, promote the culture of resistance, and support activities such as war-related museum development, memorial ceremonies, and cultural festivals rooted in the Iran–Iraq War.

## Cave with natural significance discovered in southern Iran

TEHRAN — A natural cave has been discovered in Khabr National Park, located in Baft County, Kerman province, during a recent research program, according to the director-general of Kerman’s Department of Environment.

Mohsen Jafarinejad added that the finding occurred in line with a plan to identify and survey the local caves under the management of the province, ISNA reported.

A team comprised of the secretary of the speleology working group, environmental experts, and members of Kerman Caving Association recorded the cave’s opening and completed the bolting and surveying operations, he said.

He recalled that the cave had been identified by environmentalists Ebrahim Alidadi-Soleimani and Hafez Rezvani for the first time during last year’s census and introduced to the Secretariat of Speleology Working Group.

Jafarinejad also said the difficult route leading to cave’s opening was followed and after recording the coordinates of the location, the technical team headed by Zeynab Yousefipour, representative of Kerman Caving Association, conducted the rolling and rope laying operations.

The operation resulted in recording the depth of 150 meters for the well inside the cave, he added. Mehrangiz Heydarian, who is in charge of Secretariat of Kerman Speleology Working Group, said choosing a suitable name and protection rating for this cave is on the agenda of the related working groups.

Planning for optimum exploitation of this natural phenomenon in Khabr National Park will be one of the future measures, she added.

Khabr National Park has an area of about

12,000 hectares. There are five wildlife refuges called Ruchun (Ruchan) inside the park. The total area of Khabr National Park and Ruchan Wildlife Refuge is 150,000 hectares.

This area has high biodiversity, which is due to the high altitudes, numerous plains, and diverse watersheds. Groundwater is the main resource supplying the water of the park.

Khabr National Park gained the title of “protected area” in 1971. In 1975, Iran added more sections to the park. It was in the same year that the area was entitled “Khabr and Ruchan Wildlife Refuge”. UNESCO inscribed the area as a Cultural Tourism Attraction in 1991. In addition, most of the area was changed into a national park. Khabr National Park has a variety of landscapes, habitats, wildlife, and vegetation.

The climate of Khabr National Park and Ruchan Wildlife Refuge is mostly temperate, in some parts subtropical and tropical. High mountains alongside the flat and low plains are a feature of the region. The area has also dry, rocky and impassable mountains, valleys, ridges, mountainous forests, plains, and steppes.

Three types of cold, temperate and tropical climates in the park have led to the formation of different ecological systems. There are about 750 plant species identified in the area. The park had suffered drought for several years. However, vegetation and animal life were well resilient during drought.

There are four main habitats within the boundaries of the Khabr National Park and the Ruchan Wildlife Refuge. These habitats include the cold plain, cold highland, temperate part, tropical plain and subtropical highland.

# Commemorative stamp honoring Persepolis Fortification Tablets unveiled

TEHRAN – On Sunday, May 18, coinciding with International Museum Day, a ceremony was held at the National Museum of Iran to unveil a commemorative stamp honoring the Persepolis Fortification Tablets.

The event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, the Head of the National Committee of Museums (ICOM), the Deputy Minister of Communications, the CEO of the Post Company, and the Director of the National Museum of Iran.

The Persepolis Fortification Tablets were discovered about 90 years ago during archaeological excavations at Persepolis and were later entrusted to the University of Chicago’s Oriental Institute for further research.

These clay tablets contain records of daily events and administrative activities from the middle of Darius I’s reign, dating back to 509–493 BC. The documents were written and sealed in cities,



villages, storerooms, and way-stations across a region that includes modern-day Fars province and parts of Khuzestan.

Most of these tablets provide detailed reports on essential supplies such as food and drink, as well as the transportation, storage, and distribution of barley, wheat, wine, beer, fruit, poultry, and livestock. They also offer insights into the complex adminis-

trative system of the Achaemenid Empire, detailing the lives of workers, artisans, officials, travelers, the king and his court, as well as religious activities.

The tablet chosen for the commemorative stamp is of the tongue-shaped type, featuring an inscription on one side and the impression of a seal depicting two lions hunting a deer on the other. The text mentions an

individual named Kambarma (Gobryas), who received three rations of drink in places called Besitme and Lidoma.

This tablet dates back to the winter of 498 BCE and served as a travel document sealed with the king’s mark, carried by Kambarma.

This clay tablet is part of a collection of at least six texts documenting the journey of Kambarma and another individual named Radushdukiya over the course of a month. Radushdukiya is referred to as the wife of Mardonius (a son-in-law of the king) and possibly as the daughter-in-law (pilpia) of Gobryas.

The high ration quantities and Kambarma’s familial connections suggest that he is the same figure known as Gaubaruva (in Old Persian) and Gobryas (in Greek)—one of the six Persian nobles who, according to the Behistun Inscription and Herodotus’s histories, helped Darius I secure the Achaemenid throne.

## Hegmataneh Museum unveils golden artifacts to mark Intl. Museum Day



TEHRAN – In celebration of International Museum Day, the Hegmataneh Museum in Hamedan province has unveiled three exquisite golden artifacts, offering visitors a rare glimpse into Iran’s rich cultural heritage spanning millennia.

The unveiling ceremony, held on Saturday under the global theme “Museums for a Sustainable Future,” was led by the provincial tourism chief Mohsen Masoum-Alizadeh.

The objects comprised a gold earring from the Achaemenid era, a gold bracelet inlaid with agate stones from the (early) Islamic period, and a gold necklace also

adorned with agate stones from the Qajar era.

All three pieces were discovered in the Hamedan region and are being publicly exhibited for the first time under the title “gold and time: golden narratives from Iran’s history.”

“These artifacts are not only artistic masterpieces but also powerful historical documents that reflect the deep cultural and historical roots of Hegmataneh,” Masoum-Alizadeh said, emphasizing their role in preserving the identity of this ancient city.

Hegmataneh—also known as Ecbatana—is a UNESCO-registered

site and one of Iran’s most storied ancient cities, renowned for its archaeological and cultural significance dating back to the Median Empire.

Masoum-Alizadeh also announced progress on the establishment of the West Iran Regional Museum, which will showcase additional archaeological discoveries from the broader region, further expanding public access to Iran’s historical treasures.

According to the official, the unveiling marked the beginning of Iran’s Cultural Heritage Week, which aims to promote public appreciation for the country’s diverse historical legacy through exhibitions, events, and educational programs.

Located in the suburban area of modern Hamadan, Hegmataneh spans approximately 50 acres, with its rich archaeological deposits offering a glimpse into millennia of human civilization. Despite its vast historical significance, large portions of the site remain unexplored, promising future discoveries that could further illuminate our under-

standing of ancient Iran.

Hegmataneh is universally celebrated as the site where the Median Dynasty was first established. Serving as the capital of the powerful Median Empire, Hegmataneh later became a significant center for the Achaemenid Empire, one of the most influential empires in history. The city’s historical significance is further enriched by its role during subsequent periods, including the Seleucid, Parthian, Sassanid, and Islamic eras. Each era left its indelible mark on Hegmataneh, shaping it into a vibrant tapestry of cultural evolution.

The site is a treasure trove for archaeologists and historians alike. The site houses an impressive array of remains from various dynasties, including the Medes, Achaemenid, Parthian, Sassanid, and Islamic periods, particularly the Buyid dynasty. While the majority of the remains belong to the Parthian era, the site also features urban architectural systems that are considered masterpieces of their time.

## Khayyam; distinguished thinker who merged science, art

TEHRAN--The National Day of Omar Khayyam, a distinguished figure in Persian literature, mathematics, and astronomy, is celebrated in Iran on May 18.

Khayyam was born in Neyshabur, an Iranian city in Khorasan, the cradle of knowledge and science. He moved to other cities and worked as a mathematician and astronomer of the medieval period, Mehr news agency wrote.

The celebration honors Khayyam’s contributions to literature, science, and mathematics, recognizing his global influence. The repeated emphasis on May 18 across the search results underscores the importance of this date for commemorating the esteemed figure.

His Rubaiyat (quatrains) are renowned worldwide for their depth, wit, and exploration of existential themes, influencing both Persian and global literature.

Khayyam made significant advancements in calendar reform, notably contributing to the development of the Jalali calendar, which was very accurate for its time.

He worked on algebra, including solutions to cubic equations, and contributed to the development of geometric methods.

His poetry often reflects themes of skepticism, the transient nature of life, and the pursuit of joy amid life’s fleetingness.

Khayyam’s enduring legacy

stems from his profound contributions to diverse fields: his globally acclaimed Rubaiyat, famed for their wit and existential themes; his significant role in developing the highly accurate Jalali calendar; and his advancements in algebra and geometry, including solutions to cubic equations.

A keen observer of the human condition, his poetry reflects the transience of life and the pursuit of joy.

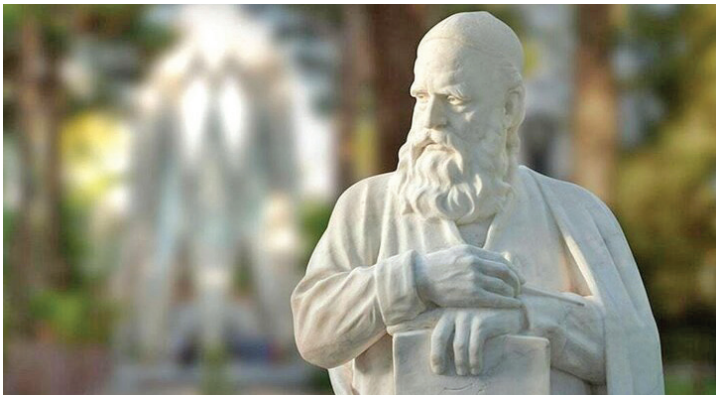
Khayyam’s work, blending scientific rigor with artistic expression, solidifies his position as a true Renaissance man.

The National Day serves as an inspiration, encouraging contemporary scholars and artists to emulate his interdisciplinary approach and reflect on his profound impact on multiple disciplines across generations, reminding us that the combined pursuit of knowledge and beauty leaves an indelible mark on the world.

Omar Khayyam was a Persian polymath, philosopher, mathematician, astronomer, and poet. He also wrote essays on mechanics, geography, mineralogy, music, and Islamic theology.

He is also one of the most important writers of algebra, in addition to philosophy.

In Europe, Edward Fitz Gerald (1809–1883) rendered Khayyam’s quatrains in English, which have become popular among different gen-



erations of readers since then.

He passed away in Neyshabur and was buried in the city, where his mausoleum is a masterpiece of Islamic-Iranian architecture, and it is visited by many people every year.

Khayyam’s influence extends far beyond his scientific achievements. His Rubaiyat, though popularized in the West through Edward Fitzgerald’s interpretation, offers profound reflections on life, death, and the search for meaning.

These verses, often tinged with a melancholic acceptance of fate, invite readers to contemplate the ephemeral nature of existence and to savor the present moment.

While the exact number of quatrains definitively attributable to Khayyam remains a subject of scholarly debate, the enduring appeal of the Rubaiyat lies in its universal themes.

The poems grapple with questions that have resonated across

cultures and centuries, exploring the mysteries of the universe, the limitations of human knowledge, and the allure of earthly pleasures.

His contributions to mathematics, particularly in algebra, were revolutionary for his time. He provided geometric solutions to cubic equations, anticipating later developments in algebraic geometry. His work on the parallel postulate also laid the groundwork for non-Euclidean geometry.

Omar Khayyam stands as a towering figure of the medieval period, a testament to the flourishing intellectual landscape of Persia during the Seljuk era.

His legacy as a scholar, a poet, and a philosopher continues to inspire and captivate those who seek wisdom and beauty in equal measure.

His tomb in Neyshabur serves as a tangible reminder of the enduring power of his contributions to human knowledge and artistic expression.



# Tehran, Moscow discuss boosting counter-narcotics co-op

TEHRAN –Iranian and Russian officials have explored the potential of promoting joint efforts in combating drugs.

During a meeting held in Tehran on Saturday, Yuri Alexeev, the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Mohammad Narimani, Interim Director General of the International Relations Office of the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ), conferred on the latest development and emerging trends in global and regional drug trafficking, IRNA reported

The officials also discussed ways to expand collaborations in the fight against drug and drug-related crimes.

The two sides also discussed and exchanged views on developing practical cooperation among Caspian coastal states to suppress drug trafficking through the sea.

### UNODC lauds Iran's efforts

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has lauded the Iranian government for its substantial efforts and steadfast commitment to tackling drug trafficking.

On December 8, 2024, Alexander Fedulov, the UNODC Iran Country Representative, attended a high-level meeting which was held



at the DCHQ on the occasion of the successful seizure of 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

During the meeting, Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi, Commander of the Iranian Border Guard, shared details of a major drug seizure in Sistan-Baluchestan Province.

On September 10, Iranian forces successfully seized 2,400 kilograms of methamphetamine. This operation underscored the relentless commitment of Iran's border forces, who are at the forefront of combating the production and trafficking of drugs, particularly those originating in Afghanistan.

Brigadier General Goudarzi emphasized that the seizure not only reflects the escalating challenges posed by methamphetamine production in the region but also the dedication of Iran's border guards, law enforcement, and customs officials in addressing this issue.

Fedulov, for his part, expressed his gratitude to Iranian authorities for their invaluable contributions to this global challenge.

Fedulov stressed the importance of strengthened regional cooperation, and emphasized the need for further international support to bolster collective efforts in combating drug trafficking across West Asia.

The UNODC Country Representative stated that this successful operation will be presented to the international community as a testament to Iran's noble resolve in combating drug trafficking and its dedication to regional security.

To enhance the operational capacity of the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police, the UNODC has provided them with two Medical Devices, including a portable Doppler sonography, and a veterinary anesthesia machine to support drug supply reduction activities in Iran.

In this line, an event was organized at the premises of the DCHQ in Tehran, with the presence of representatives from the UNODC Iran, DCHQ, and Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police (ANP), the UNODC website announced in a press release on November 18, 2024.

Iran remains one of the major transit routes for drug trafficking from Afghanistan to European countries. UNODC has built a strong partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in several areas including the capacity building for the Iranian law enforcement forces and has been providing technical assistance to the Iranian Government in their fight against illicit trafficking of drugs and precursors.

## Iran to attend Nevsky Intl. Ecological Congress

TEHRAN – An Iranian delegation will participate in the 11th Nevsky International Ecological Congress which is planned to be held from May 22 to 23 in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Ministers of environment from more than 40 countries, including Azerbaijan, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Belarus, Serbia, Indonesia, Jordan, Cambodia, and Kenya, will attend the Congress.

Iranian officials are planning to use the opportunity to raise and discuss the Caspian Sea's major environmental and ecological challenges, such as water level reduction, pollution, fishing, and fisheries, IRNA reported.

Iran will also take the chance to set the time for the Tehran Convention, which is going to be held in Tehran this year.

The head of the Department of Environment, Shina Ansari, is scheduled to deliver a speech. On the sidelines of the event, the Iranian delegation will hold meetings with the chairman of the Russian Federation Council, the deputy prime minister of Russia, and the other ministers of environment at the congress.

Participation in the meeting of Environment Ministers of the Caspian Sea, as well as the BRICS panel, is among other programs of the Iranian delegation.

### Nevsky International Ecological Congress

The 11th Nevsky International Ecological Congress will take place under the motto 'Planet Earth: Living in Harmony with Nature'.

The main goal of the Nevsky International Ecological Congress is to create effective sustainable development mechanisms to preserve the environment in a changing climate.

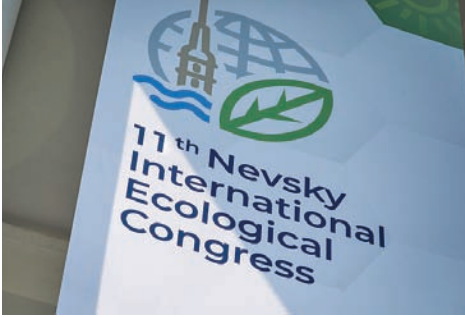
The Congress 2025 will once again host inter-state, intersectoral dialogue on important environmental issues, with representatives from international organizations, government authorities, and business, scientific, and expert communities from across the globe already having confirmed their intention to attend the event.

The 11th Nevsky International Ecological Congress will kick off on 22 May with a Youth Programme, which will become an important part of the business agenda.

Participants will be treated to open dialogues and thematic sessions on youth engagement in the resolution of climate issues, the promotion of environmental awareness, the development of a culture of environmental volunteering, the inclusion of children in the 'green' agenda, and the role of youth climate initiatives in a more sustainable future.

A meeting of the State Council Commission of the Russian Federation on Ecological Well-Being will be held on the first day of the Congress and will be attended by representatives of the authorities and scientific and business communities. Discussions will focus on strategic guidelines for environmental policymaking under modern conditions.

The roundtables and sessions slated to take place on 22 May will focus on food security and climate risks, sustainable ecotourism, how artificial intelligence and digital solutions can be applied to benefit the environment, international cooperation within BRICS, conditions in the Caspian region, the development of the circular economy, the role of women in promoting eco-initiatives, green investment,



the management of mineral resources, and low-carbon technologies.

The Congress will continue on 23 May; regional heads, mayors, and experts will discuss the modern sustainable development practices of megacities, the process of making transport more environmentally friendly, the preservation of green areas, and new approaches to health preservation.

A special United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) session will shine a light on the management of Natural World Heritage Sites and the development of transboundary conservation areas, with participants also discussing the prospects of water and energy cooperation between Russia and Central Asia, water resource allocation, the modernization of infrastructure, and how to adapt to climate change.

The highlight of the Congress will come in the plenary session, 'Ecology of the New Reality: Challenges and Opportunities', a strategic discussion of global and national environmental challenges, new opportunities for the development of the green economy, and international cooperation.

## ENGLISH IN USE

### LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

## Precipitation forecast to reach above normal in next 3 months

The country is predicted to receive above normal rainfall over the next three months (February 20-May 21), head of the climatological research institute affiliated to Iran's Meteorological Organization (IMO) has said.

The whole country will meet normal and above normal rainfalls, the northern parts will receive above normal rainfall while southern provinces will receive normal to lower-than-normal rainfall, IRNA quoted Iman Babaeian as saying on Sunday.

This month, northern and eastern provinces will receive rain above normal averages, while in the first month of spring precipitation will be at normal amounts across the country, he noted, adding, during the second month of spring rainfall will reach its peak.

## بارش‌های کشور در سه ماه پیش رو بیش از نرمال است

رئیس پژوهشکده اقلیم‌شناسی سازمان هواشناسی گفت: پیش‌بینی‌ها نشان می‌دهد میزان بارش در کشور در سه ماهه پیش رو (اسفند ۹۷، فروردین و اردیبهشت ۹۸) در حد نرمال و متمایل به بیش از نرمال خواهد بود.

ایمان باباییان روز یکشنبه در گفت‌وگو با خبرنگار ایرنا افزود: مجموع بارش‌ها در سطح کشور نرمال و متمایل به بیشتر از نرمال است اما در نیمه شمالی، بیشتر از نرمال و در نیمه جنوبی در محدوده نرمال تا کمتر از نرمال خواهد بود.

وی اظهار داشت: بارش‌ها در اسفندماه ۹۷ در نیمه شمالی و شرقی بیشتر از نرمال است، در فروردین ماه ۹۸ نیز بارش‌ها در محدوده نرمال و برای اردیبهشت بیشتر از نرمال پیش‌بینی شده است.

## Youth population key priority for health ministry



TEHRAN – Youth population is the top priority of the health ministry and the current administration, an official with the health ministry has said.

In today's world, where the competition among countries relies more than ever on the productivity of knowledge and human resources, no factor other than the youth population can contribute to a hopeful future for any nation, IRNA quoted Alireza Raeisi as saying.

The official made the remarks on the occasion of the national population week.

Iran is going through a population window of opportunity – a period in which a large proportion of the population is the working age. Known as a unique opportunity for economic, social, and cultural growth, it requires comprehensive policies in the fields of health, employment, education, welfare, and family.

However, ignoring this opportunity may lead the country to face numerous demographic challenges such as an aging population, a shrinking workforce, and disruptions in the intergenerational balance in the not-so-distant future.

The official went on to elaborate on services being provided by the health ministry; these include providing free educational courses to young couples, supporting over 300 non-governmental anti-abortion centers, training of trainers to develop a health-oriented family culture, and establishing a digital birth registration system in hospitals.

Free natural childbirth services to promote safe and physiological childbirth, extensive insurance coverage (up to 90%) for infertility treatment, free pregnancy consultation, and education programs are among other measures taken by the health ministry in line with

## World Family Doctor Day: building mental resilience in a changing world

### By Ebrahim NooriGoushki

TEHRAN – People face pressures and adverse situations at all stages of their lives, which can threaten their mental and physical health. However, humans have the ability to cope with these pressures and continue their lives.

Resilience is a necessity of life in today's world. Various problems and pressures arising from the workplace, personal life, rapid social changes, natural disasters, etc. are among the issues that impose great pressure on individuals. Resilience is a suitable skill for overcoming life's problems, even when there are unfavorable and difficult conditions. It can help people maintain themselves in this difficult situation. Resilient behaviors help people overcome negative experiences and turn them into positive experiences.

Since family medicine is a type of medicine in which family doctors are in direct contact with families and are responsible for preventive care and are health-oriented physicians, that is, in addition to treating the disease, they also pay attention to physical and mental health and the environment and all factors affecting the health of the people under their care.

In other words, they are well acquainted with all aspects of family and population health and factors affecting the health of people, such as water, air, environment, etc.

They understand the feelings and behaviors of those around them and have a positive effect on themselves, their surroundings, and their environment. By having a close relationship with the people under their care, patients talk to them about their concerns and challenges.

Based on individual and social responsibility, they teach their population that obstacles are part of every human life, and therefore, they should deal with problems in a completely

the youth population law.

Observed from May 14 to 20 under the theme 'children, life assets', the days of the national population week have been named as follows: Wednesday, May 14, 'Father, mother, good sense of life'; Thursday, May 15, 'Motherhood, elixir of youth'; Friday, May 16, 'Desiring a child'; Saturday, May 17, 'My lonely child'; Sunday, May 18, 'I want to stay alive'; Monday, May 19, 'My life in old age'; Tuesday, May 20, 'Child-friendly society.'

### Iran's transition into an aging country 'inevitable'

Considering the fact that the fertility rate in Iran is stabilized at around 1.6 children per woman, which is much lower than the rate required to replace its aging population, the transition of society from young to middle-aged has become inevitable.

According to the first five-year national development plan (1989-1993), the policies focused on lowering the total fertility rate from 6.4 children in the Iranian year 1365 (1986) to 4 children in 1390 (2011) and reducing the population growth rate from 3.2 to 2.3 percent in the same period, IRNA quoted Mohammad-Javad Mahmoudi, an official with the National Institute for Population Research, as saying.

However, the measures taken back then led to a wide transformation and change in population indicators and a noticeable decrease in population growth and fertility rate far beyond the set goals of the first development plan in the country, the official noted.

According to the latest census, the number of aged citizens in the country is growing by 3.62 percent, five times faster than the total population growth rate, which is 1.24 percent.

In the next 30 years, the population aged 60 years or older is projected to hold a 32 percent share of the whole population; that is, the elderly will account for one-third of Iran's population by 2050, the official noted.

Currently, men and women aged above 60 constitute some 11.5 percent of Iran's population, an official with the health ministry has said.

For the time being, elderly women account for 52.3 percent of the total population, outnumbering men (47.7 percent), ISNA quoted Saber Jabbari as saying.

flexible manner. They teach that each person is responsible for their own circumstances and should not blame external sources, although some obstacles are beyond human control, such as natural disasters, floods, earthquakes, loss of loved ones, etc.

Family doctors teach individuals and families to positively influence their situation and future by finding effective solutions. They teach problem-solving skills to their population.

They teach self-awareness and conscious decision-making and transfer this awareness to their population.

They teach their population to always imagine themselves as a survivor when they are faced with a crisis so that they can overcome the situation.

They teach them to seek help from a counselor or those around them whenever necessary.

Therefore, family doctors are resilient individuals in the world's health system who act consciously, have an internal source of control, have problem-solving skills, have strong social connections, take responsibility for their actions and decisions, and can teach resilience to society.

The slogan of World Family Doctor Day on May 19, 2025, is "Building Mental Resilience in a Changing World". For this reason, the central role of the family physician in supporting mental health has been given this name.

At the end, a poem by the great Iranian poet, Hakim Omar Khayyam Neyshaburi, is presented to you:

Until we join our hands in one delight,  
Let's not be slaves to sorrow, lost in night.  
Let's share a breath before the break of day-  
For many dawns will rise, and we'll decay.





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MAY 19, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Be not like the hypocrite who, when he talks, tells lies; when he gives a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he proves dishonest.*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times > Noon:12:01 Evening: 19:26 Dawn: 3:16 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 4:56 (tomorrow)

## Jean-Paul Sartre's "Nekrassov" on stage at Iranshahr Theater



TEHRAN –The play “Nekrassov”, a satirical play by Jean-Paul Sartre, is on stage at the Iranshahr Theater Complex in Tehran.

Mostafa Kushki has directed the 80-minute play. The cast includes Amir Ahmadi, Saeed Ahmadi, Puya Ansari, Meysam Abdi, Farzam Ranjbar, Mohammad Abdolvand, Alireza Karami, Atefeh Kushki, Mehdi Kushki, Dariush Movafagh, and Mahya Mehdizadeh, Honaronline reported.

Written in 1955, “Nekrassov” is a farce in eight scenes. It takes place in the 1950s Paris. It shows the life of the unfortunate journalist Sibilot who works at the right-wing newspaper of France, Soir à Paris.

His work is mostly to write anti-communist propaganda. When he cannot come up with any great idea, his boss, Jules Palotin, tells him that if he does not find any news, he will be fired.

However, during his depression, the luck comes to his house in the person of Georges De Valera, an internationally wanted swindler. De Valera's main talent is to use his words to manipulate almost everyone around him to his own benefit.

De Valera tells Sibilot, he has a story which can save the journalist's career but only if Sibilot rejects to give him to the police.

After that we can spectate the way of Georges De Valera becoming Nikita Nekrassov -

an escaped soviet minister - and how he made his life to the level of the national hero of France.

In Nekrassov, the reader can spectate several issues which exist in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre.

The question of identity as Georges fights with himself to decide which identity is the stronger (Nekrassov or Georges) is one of the key elements.

However, the issue of power and the structure of the hierarchy also appears in the hierarchy of the Soir à Paris.

The human folly and that we try to manipulate and own other people, and how it affects our moral life also play a great deal in the work.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic, considered a leading figure in 20th-century French philosophy and Marxism.

Sartre was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism (and phenomenology). His work has influenced sociology, critical theory, post-colonial theory, and literary studies.

He was awarded the 1964 Nobel Prize in Literature despite attempting to refuse it, saying that he always declined official honors.

Sartre wrote successfully in a number of literary modes and made major contributions to literary criticism and literary biography. His plays are richly symbolic and serve as a means of conveying his philosophy.

Despite their similarities as polemicists, novelists, adapters, and playwrights, Sartre's literary work has been counterposed, often pejoratively, to that of Camus in the popular imagination.

“Nekrassov” will remain on stage through June 20 at the Iranshahr Theater, located at the Artists Park, North Mousavi Street, Taleqani Street.

## Cartoon of Day

CHILDHOOD DREAMS IN GAZA



Children In Gaza  
Cartoonist: Fahd Bahady from Syria

# 18th Resistance International Film Festival kicks off in Tehran

TEHRAN – The opening ceremony of the 18th Resistance International Film Festival took place on Saturday at the Persian Gulf Hall of the Sacred Defense Museum in Tehran.

The ceremony was attended by a number of military officials, cultural figures, and artists, Mehr reported.

During the opening ceremony, the festival's secretary Jalal Ghaffari addressed the attendees, emphasizing the festival's expanded focus on the content and form of resistance cinema since last year.

He highlighted the importance of continuity between content and form in resistance films, aligning with the directives of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to promote the resistance discourse globally through cinema.

“Our current festival theme echoes the justice for the brave people of Gaza, and we are committed to confronting this discourse openly through film,” Ghaffari stated.

The festival now features over three times the number of valuable entries compared to previous years, underscoring its growing influence, he added.

According to the directives of the Leader, in the emerging world order, Iran can hold a special position by proposing the theory of resistance, he said and added: “In this context, the relationship between resistance and cinema must be given particular attention.”

Reflecting on technological advancements, Ghaffari mentioned that over 5,000 works have been submitted to the festival's portal this year.

A special highlight is the innovative use of artificial intelligence in film production, with around 400 entries exploring this cutting-edge domain, he mentioned.

Furthermore, the festival has been granted Category A Artistic status by the Iran's National Elites Foundation, enabling young filmmakers under 30 to join as permanent members, he stated.

Additionally, regional screenings have been organized in over 20 provinces, broadening the festival's reach, he concluded.

There was a particularly awkward silence at the Cannes Film Festival's first press conference on Tuesday when the entire jury, led by French star and jury president Juliette Binoche, declined to answer a journalist's question on the fest's passivity in regard to the war in Gaza.

When Binoche was asked about the open letter penned by over 350 filmmakers and industry members — including Richard Gere, Susan Sarandon and Javier Bardem — condemning Cannes for its lack of support, she baffled with her response on why she was not a signatory: “You will maybe understand it a little later.” She refused to say any more. But on Friday, the news came via Variety that Binoche had added her name to the letter alongside Joaquin Phoenix and Pedro Pascal, among others.

The letter refers to the Israel's genocidal war on Gaza that has so far killed over 50,000 people since October 7, 2023, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

It may be that the fest has, in official terms, decided to stay quiet on the matter. But that hasn't stopped the Marché du



For his part, Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, head of the Basij Volunteer forces, paid tribute to martyrs on the eve of the anniversary of the martyrdom of the President Ebrahim Raisi.

He underscored the ongoing resistance of the Palestinian people, who have endured 65 major massacres by Zionist

## The theme of Resistance Film Festival echoes the justice for the oppressed people of Gaza and Palestine through cinema.

groups over recent years, and noted that following the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, nearly 60,000 people were martyred.

He highlighted the historical context of colonial manipulation, noting how Britain and the Ottoman Empire partitioned the region, leaving Palestine under British control with a Jewish mandate.

Soleimani emphasized, “The occupation of Palestinian land and displacement of its people are monumental injustices. Iran's resilient stance today is rooted in historical resistance.

Cinema plays a vital role in

echoing the suffering of Palestinians and must serve as a cultural front against Zionism.”

He further asserted that resistance cinema must be a voice for the oppressed, portraying their plight and struggles. “This festival is not merely an artistic event but a cultural front to strengthen the global resistance discourse against Zionism,” Soleimani concluded.

Moreover, renowned figures including film producer Mohammadreza Sharafeddin, director Homayoun Asadian, actress Zhalah Sameti, poet Mehdi Faraji, and filmmaker Ruhollah Sohrabi were introduced as main competition judges for the “Martyr Qassem Soleimani” section.

Back in March, the festival secretary announced that this year's festival aims to transcend geographical boundaries in resistance cinema, offering a fresh perspective and transforming it into a powerful tool for cultural and media diplomacy.

He also noted that the festival has become one of the most important cinematic events in the region in the areas of resistance and justice-seeking in recent years.

“This year's edition, with a broader approach and a deeper insight into regional and global developments, aims to convey the message of resistance, justice, and the pursuit of truth to the world through cinema.”

The festival's secretariat has received more than 6,000 works

from 50 countries in various categories of documentary, fiction, and animation, he explained.

Additionally, in the humanities category, more than 460 works, including books, articles, and research related to humanities and resistance cinema, have been submitted, he mentioned.

“The main theme of this festival is the oppressed, Palestine, Gaza, and the voices of those who are less heard in cinema.

This is the unique feature of the Resistance Film Festival,” he stated.

This year's edition also has a new award, the Morteza Badge. The prestigious award aims to recognize documentarians whose works resonate deeply with the ideologies of the legendary Martyr Seyyed Morteza Avini, known as the master of martyred writers.

The Association of the Revolution and Sacred Defense Cinema and the Revayat Foundation organize Resistance International Film Festival annually.

The 18th International Resistance Film Festival, which will run until May 24, is a vital platform for the promotion and dissemination of cinematic works that embody the spirit of resistance against injustice, oppression, and inequality.

This year's festival promises to be an unforgettable experience, as it seeks to honor the principles of resistance and promote the freedom of thought and expression.

## Palestine Film Institute drums up support in Cannes for films, Gaza

Film welcoming the Palestine Film Institute (PFI) at the international village on the other side of the Palais. Public programmer Mohanad Yaqubi said that the hub is not a celebratory affair.

“We're not celebrating being in Cannes,” he begins. “There's nothing to celebrate for us... it's really, how can we orient the narrative surrounding Palestinian cinema, Palestinian stories through the filmmakers themselves? We feel the responsibility, and it's very hard,” he continues. “Some of our members actually have families in Gaza now, and they are here in Cannes. It's uncomfortable, but this is not an industry only for rich people. We have to make that industry accommodate us and accommodate our needs of an oppressed and underrepresented [group].”

The Pavilion Program in Cannes this year is the organization's “most ambitious to date” following its first in 2018. Under the banner #HereThereAndForever, the program spans showcases, screenings, producer talks and meet and greets. These include a spotlight session on Palestinian producers and a reception with Arab and Tarzan

Nasser, filmmakers behind the Un Certain Regard picture “Once Upon a Time in Gaza”.

As well as this, the PFI have a screening and reception on From “Ground Zero,” an initiative for Gaza films launched by filmmaker Rashid Masharawi. The final product is an anthology film consisting of eight short documentaries and two feature-length movies from 22 Palestinian directors about life under air strikes on the Gaza Strip.

The crowning jewel of the PFI's presence in Cannes this year is the official launch — alongside founding partners the IDFA Bertha Fund, International Media Support and Arab Fund for Arts and Culture — of the PFI Film Fund. “This is one of our dream projects,” says Yaqubi. “Basically, the aim for the first three rounds is to fund or support four to six projects in different formats, at least, to give them a base so that they can start working.”

The team also has an exhibition at the pavilion, Yaqubi adds, by Fatma Hassouna, a Palestinian photojournalist and artist. A protagonist in Sepideh Farsi's Cannes-premiering documentary “Put Your Soul on Your Hand

and Walk,” Hassouna was killed in April by a direct Israeli military strike on her family home in Gaza City.

“There is a big separation between the [Cannes] institute and the people,” Yaqubi responds when asked how supported they feel by the festival. “We recognize these differences, the institute — the board members — [are] following a general geopolitical French position... The people working here are very empathetic and live in solidarity.” He continues: “Obviously, we wouldn't be here without all of the solidarity we get from the festival, and it's important to note that this is not something that has happened only from the last war. We've been working together since 2016.”

The PFI is mainly funded through donations. And while the projects they've come to showcase at the Marché are not solely dedicated to the Palestinian cause, they are intricately intertwined with the wider political and social ramifications of putting Palestinian voices on a major international stage in film.