

# The Philosophy Behind Iran's Mass Prison Pardons

## Ayatollah Khamenei pardoned or reduced sentences for over 60,000 inmates last week



File photo

A released inmate reunites with a family member outside the jail.

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### Arab rulers: When did you lose your dignity?

By Professor Hossein Askari

PORTLAND – Persian Gulf Arabs, what are your unelected rulers scared of? They have put all their eggs in the US basket and are ineptly trying to protect their ill-gotten wealth and to cling onto power. Instead of subservience to neo-colonialists such as the US, they should stand tall and work only to benefit you and your future generations.

Simply said, your rulers know no shame. They have afforded the United States a myriad of military bases in the region. In Bahrain there is a naval base that is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet and the US Navy's Central Command (NAVCENT). In Kuwait there is a significant US Army base for regional military operations and an air base for supplying troops and supplies. In Qatar there is the Al Udeid air base, the largest US military base in the region and the US Central Command's (CENTCOM) headquarters with over 10,000 troops, fighter and surveillance planes and sophisticated radars. In the United Arab Emirates, a top-of-the-line, US air base with the highest number of intelligence warning systems around.

### Global backlash grows over Israel's ground incursion in Gaza City

By staff writer

TEHRAN – Israel is pressing forward with its full-scale ground invasion of Gaza City following a period of intense bombardment, sparking widespread international backlash.

On Tuesday, the Israeli army initiated a long-threatened ground offensive in Gaza City, deploying tanks and remote-controlled armored vehicles loaded with explosives into the streets.

Israeli troops and tanks pushed deeper into the city on Wednesday, as Palestinians fled in large numbers from the devastated area.

Israel said air force and artillery units had struck Gaza City more than 150 times in the days leading up to the ground operation. The strikes have toppled high-rise towers in areas densely populated by displaced families living in temporary camps.

### Yemeni missile forces Netanyahu's plane to make 'emergency landing'

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Yemen announces new operations against the Israeli occupation regime in response to the Gaza genocide and the regime's ongoing aggression against the country.

According to a statement delivered by Brigadier General Yahya Saree, spokesperson for the Yemeni Armed Forces, the missile unit launched a hypersonic ballistic missile, designated Palestine 2, at a sensitive Israeli target in Tel Aviv.

Following the Yemeni missile launch, Israeli media reported that the "Wing of Zion" aircraft carrying Israeli Prime Minister and wanted international fugitive Benjamin Netanyahu was forced to make an emergency landing.

In a separate operation, the Sanaa government's drone unit targeted the Israeli regime's Ramon Airport, located in the Eilat area in the south. The statement confirmed that both operations achieved their intended objectives successfully.

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### From rice terraces to waterfalls, Bali tour highlights nature and culture

By Sedigheh Hosseini

BALI (Indonesia) – A recently-held media familiarization tour of Bali, attended by a number of Iranian journalists and social media influencers, was a journey to discover the authentic face of the country's culture and nature.

The first day began with visits to temples and village homes in Bali, a famed province of Indonesia, where traditional architecture and religious rituals play a central role in daily life.

Later, the group explored rice and coffee plantations, the grandeur of Tegenungan Waterfall, the tranquility of Lake Batur, and the panoramic views of Kintamani village. Each stop offered a rare combination of culture and nature, creating a sense of connection with the spirit of Bali. ► Page 6



### Defense ties with Saudi Arabia set to strengthen: Iran security chief

TEHRAN – Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larjani, announced on Tuesday evening at the conclusion of his visit to Saudi Arabia that positive outcomes had emerged from consultations with the Saudi officials.

During his trip, Larjani met with both Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman. He told Iranian media that a range of issues were discussed, including economic, defense, and regional cooperation.

Referring to the currently limited economic ties between the two countries, Larjani said the visit examined obstacles to expanding economic cooperation and explored strategies to promote regional stability. He also confirmed that defense collaboration was reviewed, noting: "It has been agreed that these efforts will be pursued through working groups, which, God willing, will take on a more organized structure in the future."

### Iran in no rush to resume relations with Syria: Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said on Wednesday that Iran is in no rush to resume relations with Syria, emphasizing that any restoration of ties will depend on conditions that genuinely serve the interests of the Syrian nation.

He made the remarks during his weekly press conference, and reaffirmed Tehran's longstanding support for the Syrian people in the face of Israeli aggression, while clarifying Iran's position on bilateral ties. He stressed that cutting relations between two Muslim nations with a history of deep friendship is never permanent, and said Iran continues to view itself as a friend of the Syrian people.

Baqaei added that "Whenever friendship with Iran is deemed to be in the interest of the Syrian people, we stand ready for reciprocal action," he said. ► Page 2

### Iran's industry minister visits Kabul to discuss trade barriers, joint projects

TEHRAN – A high-ranking Iranian economic delegation led by Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Seyed Mohammad Atabak arrived in Kabul on Monday for talks on boosting trade and investment with Afghanistan.

Afghan Ministry of Industry and Commerce spokesman Abdul Salam Jawad Akhundzada said the visit aims to identify obstacles hindering bilateral trade and to improve cooperation in transport and joint investment.

The delegation also met officials from the prime minister's economic office, as well as the ministries of industry and commerce, mines and petroleum, and public works, along with Afghan private sector representatives. ► Page 4

### World Patient Safety Day highlights preventing harm throughout childhood

TEHRAN – World Patient Safety Day aims to raise public awareness to improve patient safety. This year's slogan, 'Patient safety from the start!', emphasizes the urgent need to act early and consistently to prevent harm throughout childhood, and yield benefits across the life course.

The resolution WHA 72.6 'Global action on patient safety' recognizes patient safety as a global health priority and endorses the establishment of World Patient Safety Day to be observed annually on September 17. ► Page 7

Exclusive Interview

Summits without action are 'a waste of time,' warns West Asia expert

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TEHRAN PAPERS

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

Active diplomacy in shadow of Doha Summit's passivity

In a note, Javan discussed the visit of Dr. Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, to Riyadh and wrote: This visit is taking place in a situation in which only a few hours have passed since the Islamic countries' summit in Doha, a summit that, despite extensive propaganda, failed to reach a practical solution to confront the Zionist regime's military misadventures. While the Zionist regime as the main enemy of the Islamic world is continuing its aggressive actions with the open support of the West, the silence and passivity of some Islamic states have become more and more challenging to the region's unity and political power. In these circumstances, Larijani's visit to Saudi Arabia should be evaluated as more than an ordinary diplomatic trip. It can be a sign of the Islamic Republic's effort to move beyond diplomacy and create real interaction at the regional level. Furthermore, it can be evaluated not only in terms of strengthening bilateral cooperation, especially in the economic fields, but also from a strategic point of view.

Sobh-e-No: Against a common enemy

In an analysis, Sobh-e-No discussed the emergency meeting of Islamic leaders in Doha on September 15 and wrote: This meeting was a direct response to the Israeli regime's airstrike on the Palestinian resistance leaders' meeting in Qatar. The attack, which the Iranian president called an "aggression against diplomacy", exposed deep-running problem in the international system and emphasized the need to create a common Arab-Islamic unanimity. In his speech, Pezeshkian raised several key points: strong condemnation of the attack on Doha, criticism of the Israeli regime's immunity in the international arena, and a structured description of Israel's crimes as part of its doctrine of ethnic cleansing and expansionism. This tone showed that Iran was trying to take advantage of the historical opportunity to move the meeting's agenda from the level of symbolic statements to the realm of real decision-making. Although the emergency summit of Islamic leaders in Doha marked a turning point in the Arab-Islamic confrontation with Israel, the success of this summit depends on whether Arab and Islamic countries are willing to pay the price for decisive decisions.

Vatan-e-Emrooz: Convergence of Eurasian powers

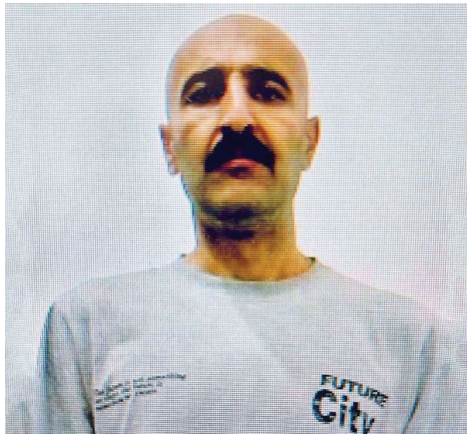
Vatan-e-Emrooz commented on the

convergence of regional powers, writing: China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran have shown greater political and military convergence in recent years. From joint maneuvers to economic agreements, the main goal is to reduce dependence on the West and weaken the position of the United States. However, conflicts of interest are also seen in this bloc; Russia and China are secretly competing for influence in Central Asia, and Iran and Russia also have conflicting interests in the energy market. Therefore, this convergence is considered a kind of tactical cooperation against the Western order rather than a long-term strategic alliance. The Zionist regime's attack on Qatar will likely lead the regional Arab countries to review their policies. Although they are trying to look at the issue calmly and reduce the escalation of tensions with the Zionists and the United States, they have realized that they are alone and must think about new security partners for themselves. This issue may bring them closer to the East and, at the very least, make them think about how to ensure their security independently or through regional cooperation.

Donya-Eqtasad: The missing link in Tehran-Riyadh ties

Donya-Eqtasad analyzed the reawakened ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia and wrote: The high-level and relatively regular meetings between senior Iranian and Saudi officials over the past two and a half years can be considered one of the important points in reinforcing this revived relationship, which, in an atmosphere of escalating tensions and the activation of regional fault lines, has been able to move step by step towards a new understanding of the characteristics and requirements of neighborhood policy. In order not to get caught in a tense atmosphere, it is necessary for security and political authorities of the two countries to first reach a common understanding on trust-building measures and then take the initial steps toward economic cooperation. Tehran and Riyadh must use Israel's tension-building in the region as an opportunity to bring their views closer together. In this context, Iran's engagement with a comprehensive regional approach is an important principle. Iran must reconsider its regional approach and move towards participatory formats. Such a shift is a necessity and a new capacity in Iran's Middle East approach.

Mossad operative executed after spying on Iran



TEHRAN – Iran has executed Babak Shahbazi, convicted of collaborating with Israel's Mossad intelligence agency and transmitting sensitive information on Iran's high-security sites, the Judiciary's Mizan news agency reported Wednesday.

Shahbazi, sentenced to death for "corruption on earth" and "waging war against God," was executed by hanging following full legal proceedings and confirmation of his sentence by the Supreme Court. Mizan described him as "a Mossad operative engaged in intelligence and security collaboration with the Zionist regime."

The convicted spy reportedly accessed industrial and military facilities through his work in designing and installing cooling systems for organizations linked to Iran's military, security, and telecommunications sectors. He provided detailed intelligence—including project locations, personnel, entry and exit points, technical specifications, and vulnerabilities—to Mossad in exchange for financial rewards and foreign residency.

Shahbazi also collaborated with Esmail Fekri, another spy executed in June, and offered information about high-ranking officials' movements in exchange for U.S. residency, security for his family, and \$120 million in cash or cryptocurrency. The Supreme Court rejected his lawyer's appeal, upholding the death sentence.

The case follows a broader crackdown on Israeli spy networks in Iran. In July, Iranian authorities arrested 20 Mossad operatives and affiliated agents across Tehran and other provinces.

Shahbazi's execution comes amid heightened regional tensions following Israel's June 13 aggression in Iran, which targeted senior commanders, nuclear scientists, and civilians. Iran responded within 24 hours with missile and drone strikes, followed by Operation True Promise III, a series of retaliatory actions.

The case follows a broader crackdown on Israeli spy networks in Iran

The United States further escalated by striking three Iranian nuclear sites on June 22, a move Tehran described as an unlawful violation of international law. Iran responded with a missile strike on Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the largest U.S. military base in West Asia.

Tehran's response compelled Israel to accept a unilateral truce on June 24, ending the immediate military escalation.

Iranian FM holds talks with European counterparts on nuclear issue, sanctions relief

TEHRAN – Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a joint telephone conversation on Wednesday with the foreign ministers of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as well as the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, focusing on the Iranian nuclear program and the lifting of unjust international sanctions.

During the call, Araghchi underscored Iran's principled commitment to diplomacy and dialogue as essential tools to prevent regional and international escalation. He criticized the efforts by the three European nations to reactivate previously lifted UN Security Council sanctions, describing them as legally and logically unfounded.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged constructively with the International Atomic Energy Agen-



cy (IAEA), developing a clear framework to implement its safeguards obligations under the current circumstances," Araghchi said. "The significance and value of these measures must be fully recognized by all parties. It is now incumbent upon the European partners to seize this opportunity to sustain

the diplomatic path, avoid an unnecessary crisis, and demonstrate seriousness and commitment to dialogue."

The Iranian foreign minister stressed that Tehran is prepared to pursue a fair and balanced solution that safeguards the mutual interests of all parties involved. He

emphasized that achieving such an outcome requires a responsible and independent approach by the European countries, free from the influence of external actors who disregard diplomacy, international law, and established norms.

During the discussions, both sides exchanged views and proposals aimed at continuing constructive diplomatic engagement, with a shared acknowledgment of the need for sustained dialogue to address ongoing tensions related to Iran's nuclear activities and international sanctions.

This round of talks comes amid ongoing European scrutiny of Iran's nuclear program and heightened tensions over international sanctions, highlighting Tehran's insistence on engagement through dialogue while rejecting unilateral punitive measures.

Exclusive: Summits without action are 'a waste of time,' says political commentator

Munir Daair says Arabs and Turkey must join Iran in security pact or face continued Israeli attacks



The emergency Arab-Islamic Summit that followed Israeli airstrikes on Doha produced only a harsh statement

By Sahar Dadjoo

TEHRAN- In the aftermath of Israel's recent airstrike on Doha, which targeted Hamas leaders under the shadow of U.S. military presence, questions are rising over Washington's role in regional affairs. Analysts say the attack exposes a repeated pattern of deception, echoing previous strikes on Iran and Yemen, and highlights the danger posed by American bases in the Persian Gulf.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, political commentator Munir Daair offers a stark critique of U.S. and Israeli strategies, describing the Doha summit as largely symbolic while regional threats continue unabated. He warns that Muslim states' inaction—despite \$20 billion in annual trade with Israel—has emboldened Tel Aviv, and urges practical steps, including freezing trade, closing airspace, and ending diplomatic ties, to halt further aggression.

The analyst also calls for a unified Arab-Iranian-Turkish security arrangement, emphasizing that Palestine is a political issue over stolen land, not a religious one. Without decisive action, the region remains vulnerable to repeated cycles of violence.

The following is the text of the interview:

**How do you assess the significance of the recent emergency summit in Doha, convened by Qatar with Arab and Muslim leaders in response to Israel's attacks? What impact might it have on regional diplomacy and security?**

The conference itself was significant. It is the results that bothers me. Although not entirely surprising, yet very disturbing nevertheless.

**Qatar's role seems pivotal in hosting and leading this summit. How do you view Qatar's foreign policy strategy in the current West Asian dynamics, particularly regarding its support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause?**

I think Qatar and it's fellow PGCC countries have been served a very

big wakeup call. What I and many others have been warning about for a long time has happened. The U.S. has not only betrayed Qatar but the entire PGCC and has demonstrated clearly that it cannot be trusted.

The Zionist regime's attack could not have happened without a U.S. green light and the reports coming out show that Donald Trump not only knew about it but actually gave the go ahead. With that reality, it is evident that the U.S. military base in Al Udeid, Qatar was used to coordinate the attack. That is why Qatar's multibillion dollar American made air defences went silent during the attack. They were shut down to facilitate the attack, and you don't need to be a genius to know who was responsible for the shutdown at that critical moment. Those American military bases in the region are the most potent threat not only to the countries that host them but to the security of the entire region. And the attack on Qatar is evidence of how dangerous the bases are. One does not allow a snake to live in one's bedroom.

That attack was a replay of the attack on Iran. In the case of Iran, Donald Trump was selling the idea that a peace meeting will take place in Muscat with Iran to resolve the nuclear issues. We were all optimistically awaiting that meeting, not knowing that all the time Trump and Netanyahu were planning an attack on Iran. The same playbook for Qatar. Donald Trump talking about an American peace proposal, which attracted HAMAS leaders to meet to seriously consider the American proposal, while all the time the Americans and the Jews were planning an attack. Lessons learned. Next time you hear America talking peace you should prepare for war.

**Iranian President Pezeshkian and Foreign Minister Araghchi have called for Muslim unity and boycotting Israel. What practical steps do you foresee Muslim countries taking in response, and how realistic is sustained unity given the diverse interests in the region?**

In the Qatar summit conference, Arab League Secretary General, Abul Ghaith called upon the world to take measures, including economic, to pressure the Zionist entity. The irony is, some of the countries meeting in Doha to whom Abu Ghaith was talking are themselves doing business with the Zionist entity to the tune of almost 20 billion dollars a year. And this has been continuing even as the Gaza genocide continued and even as Doha was attacked only a short distance from where the meeting was held. Meanwhile, outside those countries meeting Doha, as far away as Spain and Norway, real and practical steps are being taken to impose punitive economic sanctions on the Zionist entity. Perhaps Mr Abul Ghaith is not aware of what's happening around. At age 83 people tend to lose awareness sometimes.

I sat listening to every speech in that conference. The speakers gave a repeat news broadcast of what the Zionists were doing. We know all that. It is why they are meeting. I was keenly waiting to hear what the summit meeting will do in response. This is the fourth summit held since the Gaza genocide started. Every meeting was a total waste of time and resources.

You ask about the practical steps? Ok, let's see. The 57 Muslim countries can immediately freeze all of the 20 billion dollars trade some of them do with the Zionist entity. They can ban flights going or coming from Zionist controlled airports from overflying the airspace of the Muslim world. They can do the same for ships. They have asked for the UN to freeze the membership of the Zionist entity. That's excellent, but how about starting with themselves breaking off diplomatic and trade relations first. These are practical steps that will not only completely paralyse the Zionist entity, but also send a strong message to others that we are serious. They will also immediately disable the continuation of this genocide. These are steps that should have been taken right from the first meeting in Jeddah.

**The OIC has condemned the Israeli strike on Hamas members in Doha. What role do you think the OIC and Arab League can play effectively in influencing international responses to Israeli actions?**

The OIC, the Arab League and similar organizations are bureaucrats, just a bunch of glorified clerks. An effective role can only come from the power centers controlling such organizations. When Iran was attacked, Iran did not call for a summit or economic sanctions or make diplomatic pleas. Iran retaliated forcefully, swiftly and decisively making plain what the consequences for the Zionist

entity will be.

What Iran did was a shock to everyone who had mistook Iran's patience for weakness and doubted Iran's retaliatory capabilities. You might remember how many calls for restraint came out of London and Paris and Berlin and the EU. That was clear evidence that the Zionist entity was being severely punished beyond anything it or its supporters expected. Had it been the other way around, and Iran was being destroyed, you would not have heard calls for restraint. Iran showed how a country stands up to its enemies.

**Given the recent attacks on Muslim countries, including Qatar, Lebanon, Iran, and Yemen, some suggest a rising trend of Israeli aggression beyond Palestine. How might this shape future conflicts and alliances in West Asia?**

I will rephrase your question if you don't mind. What should be the best outcome, not only from the recent Doha summit, but also from lessons learned in the behaviour of the Zionist entity and its western supporters. At the regional level, and I mean the countries that are in the immediate line of attack, there is a desperate need for a regional security arrangement.

An Arab, Iranian Turkish alliance is of utmost importance. I have written and said this before more than once. I cannot say this enough times. The mistrust has to end. This sectarian useless divide must end. Palestine is not a religious issue. It is political issue of land usurped by foreign settlers and the land must be liberated. Period. There is no religious angle to that political reality.

If the other side, Jewish or Christian have some expectations of a second coming or first coming, that is their problem, not ours. For us Palestine an Arab political issue, primarily an Arab land that must be liberated, primarily by Arabs themselves. On the other hand, regional security, and the threats from the Zionist entity, the U.S. and their western supporters are directed not just towards Arabs, but to Iran and Turkey. And those common threats can only be countered by strong security arrangements between the indigenous nations of the region, the Arabs, Iran and Turkey.

The three sides have enough human resources, close to 700 million people, with substantial human capital, technology, financial and economic resources that enables the creation of a very strong security perimeter. What they lack is trust. That weakness is being fully exploited by their enemies.

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



# The philosophy behind Iran’s mass prison pardons

*Ayatollah Khamenei pardoned or reduced sentences for over 60,000 inmates last week*

By Staff Writer

TEHRAN – Mahmoud was sentenced to five years in prison after being arrested with drugs in 2023. His offense is considered small-scale drug possession in Iran, as he used the drugs himself and sold them to a small number of acquaintances after obtaining them from a large distributor.

During the two years he has spent in a Tehran prison, the 32-year-old has managed to become clean, frequently attend NA sessions organized by the prison, and learn new skills through the prison's training program. He had told his inmates that he hopes to become a welder upon his release in 2028.

Mahmoud has frequently contacted his mother during his sentence, keeping her updated on his life behind the bars. She was also the first person he called when he learned he had been pardoned by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and will no longer have to serve the rest of his sentence.

“More than for myself, I am happy for my mom,” Mahmoud told an Iranian reporter. “She has been so worried about me throughout my 20s. Now that I am clean, have a skill to earn a living, and will soon be out of jail, she is the happiest she has been in years.”

Mahmoud is one of approximately 70,000 inmates who were either pardoned or had their sentences reduced by Ayatollah Khamenei last week. The Leader announced the clemency on the Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) birthday anniversary, after the judiciary chief presented him with a list of clemency criteria. Upon Ayatollah Khamenei’s approval, these criteria were then circulated to judicial authorities across the country.



*The ultimate authority for clemency rests with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, as stipulated in Article 110, Paragraph 11 of the Iranian Constitution*

Iran’s national television has broadcast numerous reports since the pardons were announced last week. Some videos show groups of inmates jumping and shouting with joy after hearing the announcement on TV. Others depict family members crying over the phone upon receiving the news from their loved ones in prison.

This form of pardoning is unique to Iran. The country has two types of clemency: one is case-specific, focusing on individual justice and rehabilitation; the other, like the recent one, is criteria-specific and designed for collective implementation. Ultimate authority for both forms rests with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, as stipulated in Article 110, Paragraph 11 of the Iranian Constitution, who exercises this power upon the recommendation of the Head of the Judiciary.

“Case-specific clemency is more intricate. It is initiated by a request from the convict, their family, their lawyer, or prison authorities,” said Asghar Jahangir, spokesman for Iran’s judiciary, in remarks to the Tehran Times. “Even if the request is approved, it takes significantly more time compared to criteria-based

clemency. There is a preliminary commission that reviews the request. Then it is sent to the district court, followed by the province’s main court. After that, the case goes to the central court in Tehran before being approved by the Leader.”

In the case of criteria-based clemency, individual cases are not reviewed. Instead, the judiciary chief establishes specific criteria and rules, and the only required approval comes from the Leader.

Iran has two types of clemency. One is case-specific; the other is criteria-specific and designed for collective implementation

Inmates convicted of non-intentional crimes, minor offenses, and certain financial crimes may qualify for release or sentence reduction if they have served a portion of their sentence, demonstrated good behavior in prison, and are deemed unlikely to repeat their offenses upon returning to society, Jahangir ex-

plained. “Special consideration is often given to vulnerable groups, including women who are heads of households, the elderly, and individuals with incurable diseases.”

Iran has utilized criteria-based clemency three times so far: once this year, once in 2018—when between 60,000 and 70,000 inmates qualified—and once in 2022, when around 100,000 were eligible for release or sentence reduction. Jahangir, who holds a PhD in criminology, says Iran’s dual system, which allows mass pardoning of low-risk inmates, benefits both prisoners and authorities. “The process enables inmates to reintegrate into society more quickly and with fewer complications. At the same time, authorities can devote more time, energy, and resources to maintaining public safety.”

Beyond being a sound and effective strategy, Iran’s clemency policy reflects the humanitarian Islamic values upon which its judiciary system is founded. This stands in contrast to frequent accusations by Western states of human rights abuses against prisoners in the country.

“I think instances like this prove that human rights are not merely decorative aspects of Iran’s judiciary, unlike the case in many Western nations,” said Dr. Hesamuddin Boroumand, a human rights expert and scholar. Iran’s criminal law is based on Islamic teachings, which affirm that prisoners have rights just like all other human beings. It also mandates that the dignity and humanity of prisoners must be preserved, regardless of the crime, he added.

“Compare this to how Western states treat people: they support what amounts to a literal genocide in Gaza while simultaneously accusing Iranians of human rights abuses and demonizing Islam.”



have been killed in the past two years. “It is unacceptable for the world to turn a blind eye to this massacre while allowing representatives of the aggressor to compete freely,” he said.

**‘US measures undermine its obligations as host of UN Headquarters’**

Baqaei also criticized Washington’s restrictions on Iranian representatives attending the UN General Assembly, calling them “unprecedented” and contrary to America’s obligations as host of the UN Headquarters.

“Such measures undermine the credibility of the United States,” he said, adding that while some visas had been issued, Tehran is awaiting further updates from its missions in New York and Geneva.

**‘Mahdieh Esfandari’s case is a hostage-taking’**

On the detention of Mahdieh Esfandari in France, Baqaei described the case as “political hostage-taking” rather than an ordinary legal matter. He said Esfandari’s social media posts, framed by the other side as “incitement to terrorism,” were in fact expressions of solidarity with Palestinians.

“The Ministry has worked tirelessly over the past seven to eight months to provide consular support,” Baqaei said. “Her case cannot be compared to the legal proceedings involving two French nationals in Iran.”

**‘Iran’s defensive capabilities are non-negotiable’**

On Iran’s nuclear program, Baqaei dismissed

U.S. and European claims as politically motivated, stressing that no credible IAEA report supports such allegations. “The West’s approach is aimed at hindering Iran’s progress, not ensuring security,” he said.

He confirmed that Tehran has reached a new understanding with the IAEA to improve implementation of safeguards obligations, welcomed by the agency’s director general despite opposition from some European states.

On missiles, Baqaei said Washington had no right to comment: “Iran’s defensive capabilities are non-negotiable and not subject to U.S. approval.”

While acknowledging that some regional states have explored ways to facilitate indirect communication between Tehran and Washington, Baqaei said no official mediator has been designated.

He added that recognizing Palestine without concrete measures to protect its people is “symbolic at best and meaningless at worst.”

**‘Iran condemns terrorism under any circumstances, regardless of motive’**

The spokesman also condemned the assassination of U.S. political figure Charlie Kirk, stressing Iran’s principled opposition to terrorism “under any circumstances, regardless of motive.”

## IRAN IN FOCUS

SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

Straight Truth  
TEHRAN TIMES

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## SPORTS

### Sports minister Donyamali meets Uruguay ambassador to Tehran

TEHRAN – Iran’s Minister of Sports and Youth, Ahmad Donyamali, met with Ambassador Nicola Flaniguen, on Tuesday at the Iran’s ministry’s headquarters.

In the meeting, Donyamali expressed his happiness at Flaniguen’s visit and said: “It is a good opportunity for me since I love Uruguay for the way they play football. In fact, football is a part of Uruguayan life.”

Referring to Iran’s interest in developing sports relations with various countries, including Uruguay, Donyamali added: “The government’s policy is to expand relations with countries around the world, especially South American countries. With the new government in Uruguay, it seems there is a better atmosphere for cooperation between the two countries.”

“Iran and Uruguay share many commonalities, and we would be happy to have more interactions. We are ready to host the Uruguayan Minister of Sports and to sign a memorandum of understanding with this country,” he further noted.

### Sepahan lose to Jordan’s Al Hussein: ACL Two

TEHRAN – Sepahan football team of Iran lost to Jordan’s Al Hussein 1-0 in their opening match at the 2025-26 AFC Champions League Two on Tuesday.

In the match held at the Amman International Stadium, in Amman, Jordan, Mahmoud Khrouba scored the winner in the 28th minute.

Sepahan will host Indian side Mohun Bagan on September 30 in Isfahan in Group C.

Another Iranian team Esteghlal will meet Al Wasl of the UAE at the Zabeel Stadium in Dubai, the UAE in Group A.

The 2025–26 AFC Champions League Two is the 22nd edition of the Asia’s second-tier club football tournament, organized by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), and the second under the AFC Champions League Two title.

### Amouzad avenges Paris loss to Kiyooka: UWW

TEHRAN - Revenge was the theme of the night on Tuesday at the Zagreb World Championships, with Rahman Amouzad playing the starring role.

Amouzad not only avenged his loss to Kotaro Kiyooka of Japan from the Paris Olympics, he did it in an overwhelming fashion, blitzing his way to a 10-0 victory in the 65kg final on the final day of the freestyle competition at Arena Zagreb.

“I worked really hard and had been waiting for this moment for almost a year, and I’m happy this championship is mine,” Amouzad said. “I put in a lot of effort physically, mentally, and with analysis.”

It was just over a year ago that Kiyooka came seemingly out of nowhere and snatched the 65kg gold in Paris with an inspired 10-3 victory over Amouzad.

But on Tuesday, the outcome could not have been more different. From the outset, it was all Amouzad, the 2022 world champion who won three straight Asian titles from 2022 to 2024.

“I have more plans and bigger goals ahead,” Amouzad said. “This is just the beginning for me, and my work isn’t finished yet. In two months, I’ll compete in the Islamic Games and I’ll participate in any tournament the coaching staff believe I should.”

“I’m also really happy that Iran’s team be-

came the champion,” Amouzad said. “This title was well deserved. For the past 12 years we couldn’t win but now, with seven medals, it finally happened. I’m glad the people of Iran are happy, and that makes me even happier.”

Iran, which was already assured of winning the team title for the first time since 2013 before the night began, finished with 145 points, 11 ahead of the United States in second place. Japan placed third with 111 points, UWW.com reported.

### Iran into FIBA U16 Women’s Asia Cup -2025 Division B SFs

TEHRAN – Iran completed the FIBA U16 Women’s Asia Cup 2025-Division B Semi-Finals cast following a dominant 62-33 conquest of Malaysia, on Wednesday at the Karisma Arena in Seremban, Malaysia.

That loss couldn’t get any more heart-breaking as it foiled their bid of securing the Division A promotion, but there’s renewed hope this year after returning to the Semi-Finals where they’ll face Hong Kong.

The Semi-Finals are set on Thursday, Sept. 18, with the other bracket featuring the unbeaten India and Indonesia, who earned their spot by way of a 77-52 victory over Uzbekistan earlier.

Elina Kazemevini starred for Iran with 25 points, netting an efficiency of 22 as she shot 11-of-18 from the floor and also collected 3 rebounds, 3 assists, and 6 of the team’s 27 steals in 28 minutes of action.

Asma Shadrrouh made 9 points, while Hasti Khazaei came close to a double-double with 8 points and 13 rebounds as all but two of Coach Serveh Zarghamyan’s players contributed at least a point in the win.

Chin Jo Xin, meanwhile, was the lone double-digit scorer for Malaysia with 12 points in the loss, which crushed their hopes of returning to the podium after taking home the bronze during the 2023 competitions.

The young Harimau will instead look to finish their campaign strongly when they take on Uzbekistan on Thursday as well in the Classification 5-6 game, with the winner sealing a fifth-place finish.

### Dragan Skocic pleased with result against Shabab Al Ahli

TEHRAN - Tractor head coach Dragan Skocic was pleased with the resilience shown by his side in match against Shabab Al Ahli in the opening AFC Champions League Elite 2025/26 match on Tuesday.

10 men Tractor was held to a 1-1 draw against the Emirati side.

“I congratulate my players for their good performance against a strong opponent. The weather conditions were very difficult. This caused the players to have problems during the match. Playing in such weather conditions is not easy and the red card (for Domagoj Drozdek in the 51st minute) made it even harder,” said Skocic.

“In the first half we controlled the game and created good chances on the counter-attacks but we didn’t take them. After that, we received a red card which made it more difficult. However, my players fought and made me proud,” he added.

Elsewhere, Shabab Al Ahli head coach Paulo Sousa also showed satisfaction for his team’s performance.

“We faced difficulties in the first half due to the weather conditions, but overall, we controlled much of the game. We corrected ourselves at halftime and created several opportunities in the second half. I congratulate my players for a strong performance,” said Sousa.



## Iran's industry minister visits Kabul to discuss trade barriers, joint projects

From Page 1 ► Atabak told reporters upon arrival that Iran and Afghanistan share deep historical and cultural ties. He said the Pezeshkian administration has prioritized stronger relations with all neighbors, with Afghanistan regarded as a particularly important partner.

The delegation, which includes Iranian lawmakers and private sector members, will also travel to Herat province to inspect the railway, mines and the Islam Qala border crossing.

On the second day of the visit, Atabak met Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, deputy prime

minister for economic affairs, along with Afghan ministers of commerce, energy and water, mines, and public works. He welcomed Afghanistan's stance during Iran's recent 12-day conflict with Israel and said the upcoming seventh session of the Joint Economic Committee would be an opportunity to advance cooperation in rail, road and trade.

Talks also covered banking ties, greater use of Iran's Chabahar port, expansion of cargo movement via the Khaf-Herat railway, and joint work in the mining sector. Atabak is due to continue his trip with a visit to Herat's industrial city.

## TCCIMA delegation visits China's Khorgos trade hub

TEHRAN – A high-level delegation from the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) visited the Khorgos Free Economic Zone in China after completing meetings in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to explore opportunities for expanding economic ties.

The group, led by TCCIMA Head Mahmoud Najafi Arab and joined by representatives from Iran's Customs Administration and business associations, traveled to Khorgos, a fast-developing hub linking China with Central Asia and Europe.

Over the past decade, Khorgos has grown

into a major transit and trade center. The Iranian delegation toured three key facilities: a solar panel and energy storage battery plant built with significant investment, a state-run logistics company managing cargo transfers between rail and trucks for cross-border transit, and a commercial complex tied to an online sales platform showcasing domestic and foreign goods.

Officials said the visit was aimed at assessing Khorgos' infrastructure and exploring prospects for deeper cooperation in logistics, energy, and e-commerce to strengthen Iran's regional trade links.

## South Pars refineries ready to meet winter gas demand, official says

TEHRAN – Iran's South Pars Gas Complex has accelerated strategic projects and boosted efficiency to ensure stable gas production for the coming cold season, a senior official said.

Mohammadreza Joulaei, director of coordination and production oversight at the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), said reliable power supply systems remain a critical priority for the refineries and require constant monitoring.

Speaking at a review meeting, he underlined South Pars' central role in providing much of the country's gas, electricity and gasoline. "With the expertise of our specialists and experienced staff, we must once again guarantee uninterrupted energy supply," Joulaei said.

He added that full preparedness of processing units before winter and regular inspections of critical equipment are essential to prevent disruptions in output.

## Veteran industrialists call for stronger international ties to boost Iran's economy



TEHRAN – Veteran industrialists meeting at the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) urged the government to improve international relations and attract foreign investment, calling it essential for economic recovery.

The gathering, attended by ICCIMA leaders and long-time business figures, also included senior government advisers, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Participants emphasized that decades of experience in production and trade should guide policymakers in addressing structural economic problems.

Abolfazl Roghani, adviser to ICCIMA's head on associations, said reviving the veterans' assembly was aimed at ensuring the voices of seasoned businesspeople are heard.

"They are the real owners of the chamber, who have long developed industry, production, and trade," he noted.

Mohammad Nouri, aide for special projects, recalled how private sector unity helped sta-

bilize the country during the war years. He stressed that government must step back in areas better handled by business and grant the private sector a larger role.

Masoumeh Aghapour, adviser on economic cooperation, praised recent state-private sector collaboration, calling it vital during sanctions and international competition. She highlighted government efforts to streamline and reform economic structures and asked entrepreneurs to help steer these changes. "The private sector should be the architect of Iran's prosperity," she said.

Business leaders presented their own demands. Tea industry veteran Mohammadreza Movasaghi urged regular meetings with policymakers to ensure the private sector's voice is heard, stressing that "economic security is the basis for investment."

Ahmad Pourfallah, head of the Iran-Italy Chamber of Commerce, said the new veterans' forum builds on past consultative councils, and argued that consistent dialogue with officials could unlock the economy's potential.

# Isfahan holds first investment expo to attract domestic, foreign capital

By Afshin Majlesi

ISFAHAN – The first Isfahan International Investment Expo (ISINEX 2025) opened on Wednesday in the central Iranian city to attract domestic and foreign investment.

The two-day event opened with remarks by Amir Keshani, president of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, who said the province faced a choice between growth and decline. "The only way to overcome water, soil and air crises is responsible investment, development of low-water, high-tech and clean industries, and innovation," he underlined.

Keshani said Isfahan had seen years of capital flight and a sharp decline in investment growth. He added that three priorities were shaping the chamber's policies: renewable energy, artificial intelligence and tourism.

He further outlined three main investment principles: developing industries with minimal water use, promoting high-tech industries with efficient labor use, and supporting clean industries that do not pollute land or air.

Keshani then urged policymakers to preserve opportunities for high-speed rail development, including connections from the Persian Gulf coasts to Shiraz, Isfahan, Tehran, Mashhad, Tabriz and Khuzestan.

Keshani expressed hope that the government and private sector would start a serious cooperation on the project, which he called it a potential national model.



Isfahan Governor-General Mehdi Jamalinejad speaks at the opening of the two-day Isfahan International Investment Expo (ISINEX 2025) at the Chamber of Commerce in Isfahan, Iran, September 17, 2025.

Pointing to investment opportunities in advanced industries, tourism, medicinal plants, non-water-based farming, wastewater treatment and green industries, he underlined: "We hope from today there will be no more capital flight and that responsible investment will help rebuild the whole Isfahan province....," he said.

Isfahan Governor-General Mehdi Jamalinejad, the second speaker at the event, said 287 economic and investment projects in fields such as tourism, low-water industries, modern agriculture and knowledge-based sectors would be introduced during the two-day event.

He said that Isfahan province's four-year economic plan includes 1,000 projects, many already approved for implementation. "Isfahan must move toward industries that consume little water and are

not polluting," Jamalinejad said.

He cited the province's agricultural and industrial capacities, noting that Isfahan accounted for 15% of the country's protein production despite holding only 3% of Iran's farmland. It ranks first nationally in raw milk, egg, turkey, camel meat and ornamental fish production, he said.

Jamalinejad said Isfahan hosts more than 10,000 industrial units, giving it the country's second place after Tehran in industrial employment and active mines. He listed its central location, transport infrastructure, more than 100 universities, cultural heritage and solar energy potential as key advantages.

He added that Isfahan was preparing 50 major economic projects to support annual growth of 8% and forecast an investment of 2900 trillion rials (about \$2.9 bil-

lion) in technology and innovation between 2025 and 2028. Tourism goals include 20 million domestic and 1 million foreign visitors, he added.

The governor-general further noted that Isfahan has been selected as the Asian capital of tourism in 2025. "This title reflects Isfahan's ability to turn historical heritage into a platform for a sustainable and creative economy," he said.

According to organizers, the expo is designed to present investment opportunities, promote an investment culture and connect investors with entrepreneurs. It is also being held virtually for those unable to attend in person. "The event brings together domestic and foreign investors, knowledge-based companies, government institutions, banks and financial bodies. Key areas include transport, environment, clean energy, tourism and new technologies."

Once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy, the ancient city of Isfahan remains one of Iran's most prominent tourist destinations. Isfahan is largely renowned for its breathtaking Islamic architecture, including stunning mosques, palaces, and bazaars.

Visitors may also explore genuine samples of Persian gardens and walk along the city's tree-lined boulevards, soaking in the beauty and history at every turn. The city's architectural marvels, such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square -- one of the largest squares in the world -- make it a jewel of town planning.

## Agreement reached with Iran in all desired economic fields: Pakistani minister



TEHRAN– The Minister of Commerce of Pakistan stated that an agreement and understanding had been reached with Iran in all desired economic fields and announced that the 23rd session of the Joint Economic Committee of the two countries would be held as soon as possible to follow up on the agreements.

Jam Kamal Khan, on Tuesday (September 16) at the conclusion of the two countries' Joint Economic Committee meeting, thanked Iran for its hospitality towards the Pakistani delegation hosting this joint meeting and added: "We had numerous meetings over these two days with Iranian officials and authorities, including the Minister of Transport and Urban Development, the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, the Minister of Agriculture, and the First Vice President of Iran."

He said: "In addition to the bilateral talks and understandings, on the sidelines of this meeting, 50 Pakistani companies were also with us and held business meetings with their Iranian counterparts."

The Pakistani Minister of Commerce noted: "These advancements were achieved solely through the attention of the two countries' leaders; namely, Shehbaz Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, and Masoud Pezeshkian, the President of Iran."

Referring to the 22nd session of the Joint Economic Committee of the two countries, he stated: "Fortunately, we reached an agreement on all matters under consideration."

Kamal Khan explained: "The related protocols of this joint meeting encompass a wide range of services and cooperation between the two countries in various fields, and our goal in reaching this agreement is for the people of both countries to achieve mutual benefits in the coming months."

He recalled: "Iran and Pakistan have shared borders for centuries; we share various cultural, linguistic, religious, lifestyle commonalities, etc., and these commonalities have led

the people of the two countries to also want to achieve tangible economic results."

The Pakistani Minister of Commerce emphasized: "The goal of both countries is to hold the 23rd session of the Joint Economic Committee as soon as possible and to follow up on the agreements made during the 22nd session."

The 22nd meeting of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Committee commenced in Tehran on September 15, co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Transport and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh, and Pakistan's Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan.

In her opening remarks, Minister Sadegh hailed the meeting as a significant step towards enhancing bilateral economic and commercial ties.

She announced that a roadmap for achieving a \$10 billion bilateral trade target would be finalized and signed by the relevant ministers within the next three months.

"This goal reflects the strong political will of both nations to deepen cooperation," Sadegh stated. She emphasized that reaching this target would require strengthening banking relations and establishing secure, mutually agreed financial channels.

Highlighting the longstanding fraternal relations between the two nations, Sadegh expressed hope that the meeting would pave the way for expanded collaboration in economic, trade, banking, transit, energy, agricultural, and cultural fields.

She also thanked Pakistan for its supportive stance towards Iran at bilateral, regional, and international levels.

A major focus of the discussions was on improving transport infrastructure.

Minister Sadegh stressed the necessity of developing border facilities, increasing parking capacity at the Mirjaveh and Taftan border crossings, and constructing the Zahedan-Taftan-Quetta railway line.

Other vital projects include launching shipping routes between the ports of Karachi (including Port Qasim) and Gwadar in Pakistan, and Chabahar and Bandar Abbas in Iran, she said.

The recent launching of direct Tehran-Islamabad flights was noted as a positive step, with both sides agreeing on the need to increase flight destinations and enhance aviation cooperation, the minister added.

In a significant regional development, Sa-

degheh revealed plans to launch a monthly ECO train on the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul route, calling it a strategic regional rail project.

Addressing the same meeting, Pakistani Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan expressed his country's readiness to expand cooperation with Iran in the economic, technical, and regional fields.

Echoing the sentiment of cooperation, the minister emphasized the deep historical, cultural, and religious bonds between the two countries.

"The people and government of Pakistan stand with the people of Iran and seek a shared future based on prosperity, security, and development," he declared.

Minister Khan acknowledged that current trade volumes still fall short of the true potential.

He identified specialized committees, joint chambers of commerce, and the joint committee as key to boosting exchanges.

He proposed collaboration in new areas such as border markets, technical and engineering services, livestock, and agriculture, offering to share Pakistan's expertise in irrigation and modern agricultural technology.

Referring to the extensive capacities of the two countries in the energy sector, Pakistan's minister of commerce stated that solar and wind energy could form the basis of strong partnerships for sustainable development in both countries and the region.

He also identified transportation as one of the key areas of cooperation, adding that given the existing capacities in road, rail, and sea transport, developing a transportation network could turn Iran into a gateway to South Asia and West Asia, thereby strengthening the regional roles of both countries.

Jam Kamal Khan further highlighted the importance of developing new technologies, innovation, and the digital economy, stating that the establishment of innovation centers would not only contribute to employment and economic growth but also enhance the international competitiveness of both countries.

He also prioritized cooperation in information technology, tourism, sports, and cultural and social affairs, noting that population growth and climate challenges have exposed both countries to common threats. Therefore, cooperation in water resource management, health resilience, medicine, and healthcare could be highly impactful.

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



# Global backlash grows over Israel’s ground incursion in Gaza City

From page 1 ▶ The Israeli army says hundreds of thousands have fled south from Gaza City. At the end of August, the UN estimated that about one million people, that account for about half of the Gaza population, lived in the city and surrounding areas. Since the ground offensive began, dozens more Palestinians have been killed, bringing the total death toll from Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, which started in October 2023, to nearly 65,000. The actual number is believed to be higher, with thousands buried in Gaza's ruins after nearly two years of relentless bombardments.

Israel's ground offensive comes despite international criticism and a UN commission's finding that the regime has committed acts amounting to genocide in the Palestinian enclave.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the “systematic destruction” of Gaza City on Tuesday. European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas warned that the offensive would worsen conditions in the enclave. “It will mean more death, more destruction, and more displacement,” she wrote on X.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said it “firmly opposes Israel's



Displaced Palestinians flee northern Gaza due to Israel's brutal ground offensive. Mahmoud Issa/Reuters

escalation of military operations in Gaza and condemns all acts that harm civilians and violate international law,” spokesman Lin Jian stated.

Qatar's Foreign Ministry called the assault “an extension of the war of genocide against the brotherly Palestinian people.”

Saudi Arabia also condemned Israel's offensive, criticizing the international community for failing to take effective measures to end what it described as violations of international and hu-

manitarian law.

French lawmaker Mathilde Panot, head of the left-wing La France Insoumise party's parliamentary group, called Israel's attack “not a war but a genocide” and urged France to impose sanctions or risk accusations of complicity.

Pope Leo XIV highlighted the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, describing their living conditions as “unacceptable” amid forced displacement. “I express my deep solidarity with the Palestinian

people in Gaza who continue to live in fear and survive in unacceptable conditions, being forcibly displaced once again from their lands,” he said.

Israel's army stated that the Gaza City offensive could take “several months” to complete, marking the first timeline given for the operation in the besieged territory's largest population center.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the offensive aims to “defeat the enemy (Hamas) and evacuate the population.” However, critics say the statement omits any mention of securing the release of the remaining Israeli captives—a key stated objective of the war. Families of captives protested near Netanyahu's residence in Jerusalem (al-Quds) on Tuesday, accusing him of abandoning the captives.

Since the war began nearly two years ago, Netanyahu has vowed to defeat Hamas and free Israeli captives, but neither goal has been fully achieved. Dozens of captives taken during the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack in southern Israel still remain in Gaza.

## Protesters in London: ‘We charge you with genocide’ in Gaza

### ‘Stop Trump, stop fascism’



Protesters gathered outside BBC headquarters in London on Wednesday to demonstrate against Donald Trump's state visit to the UK.

Some at the protest said the US president was “the world's leading racist, bigot and sexist”, standard.co.uk reported.

Demonstrators came from across the UK, including Yorkshire and Oxfordshire, to oppose the US president's second state visit.

Protesters held signs with anti-Trump slogans such as “No to racism, no to Trump”, and “Stop Trump, stop fascism”.

They shouted chants including “Donald, Donald, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide”, in reference to the US support of Israel.

Lewis Nielsen, an “anti-fascist officer” at Stand Up to Racism, said: “We're here today because Trump is the world's leading racist, bigot and sexist.

“We think what he stands for gives confidence to the far-right in Britain.

“We're matching here in our thousands to say that Trump's not welcome and neither is his racism or bigotry.”

Sylvia Jones travelled from Dublin to protest against Trump's state visit because she said it “makes her blood boil”.

Dressed as a baby, Jones said: “I identify as a baby but he's a bigger one than I am.

“I'm not in favor of the Trump presidency. He is so unpredictable and dangerous. He is not a very sound leader.

“The state visit is an absolute embarrassment for the British people. It makes my blood boil.”

Steve Eaton Evans, 64, often impersonates Trump and came to the protest dressed as the US president.

The retired drama teacher from Woodstock in Oxfordshire, said: “I think Trump is the worst leader probably in the world.

“He is the least qualified man to be in charge of a nuclear button.”

## EU proposes suspension of trade concessions with Israel over Gaza war

The European Commission, the European Union's main executive body, presented a much-anticipated and delayed proposal to “suspend certain trade-related provisions of the Association Agreement between the EU and Israel” in response to Israel's war on Gaza, Al Jazeera reported.

The sanctions, however, do not currently have enough support among the EU's 27 member countries to pass. The proposals

announced on Wednesday also included suggested sanctions on “extremist” Israeli ministers and violent settlers.

Growing numbers of protesters have taken to the streets across Europe in recent months to demand action from their governments to pressure Israel to end its war on Gaza, which a United Nations inquiry on Tuesday found to be genocide.

## Tel Aviv’s wars fuel decline in immigration to Israel, surge in emigration



Around 79,000 Israelis left Israel last year, a figure significantly up from a year earlier, amid rising regional tensions over Tel Aviv's ongoing war on the Gaza Strip.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Israel's population reached around 10.148 million people, with a growth rate of 1.0%.

Of this figure, roughly 7.758 million are Jews (78.5 percent), about 2.13 million are Arabs (21.5 percent), and around 260,000 are foreign nationals.

The count also includes some 400,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem(al-Quds), which Israel occupied in 1967 and unilaterally annexed in 1980 — a move not recognized by the UN.

The bureau said about 25,000 new immigrants arrived in Israel and 5,000 others entered under the family reunification program.

In addition, nearly 21,000 Israelis who had previously emigrated returned while some 79,000 left.

In 2023, around 55,300 Israelis emigrated, while about 27,000 returned or moved to Israel, according to official figures.

Tensions have grown inside Israel and with neighboring countries over Tel Aviv's ongoing war on Gaza, where more than 65,000 people have been killed since October 2023.

Israel also launched a war against Iran in June, near-daily strikes in Lebanon and Syria, and military assaults in the occupied West Bank.

## Yemeni missile forces Netanyahu’s plane to make ‘emergency landing’

From page 1 ▶ Hebrew news outlets stated that a missile launched from Yemen triggered air raid sirens in occupied al-Quds (Jerusalem), as well as in central areas. Sirens also blared around Ramon Airport and across southern territories following the drone strike.

Yemen reiterated its call for the Arab and Islamic nations to fulfill their religious, moral, and humanitarian responsibilities

toward the people of Gaza. It warned that the continued silence in the face of these crimes would only embolden the Israeli occupation regime to escalate its aggression against the entire region.

The Yemeni Armed Forces emphasized that they will continue carrying out their duties until the genocide against Gaza stops and the blockade is lifted.

The statement came shortly after Israeli warplanes launched airstrikes on Yemen, targeting the port of Hodeidah with 12 air raids. Saree later stated that the Arab country's air defenses had responded to the regime's warplanes forcing them to retreat.

The Yemeni Armed Forces continue to wage operations, striking various Israeli regime's targets, including Ben Gurion Airport, and have imposed a maritime block-

ade on Israeli ports in support of Gaza until the U.S.-backed Israeli genocide ends and the suffocating blockade is lifted.

The regular Israeli aggression against Yemen, including the capital Sanaa, has failed to deter the poorest nation in West Asia from imposing a Red Sea blockade against Israeli and Israeli-affiliated ships as well as launching attacks against Israeli targets in solidarity with Gaza.

## Arab rulers: When did you lose your dignity? It’s high time to stand up for your people and protect their land!

From page 1 ▶ And finally, in Saudi Arabia, although there is no official US base so as not to invite domestic anger, there are a few thousand US military and intelligence advisors. All of these bases and American military personnel are “supposedly” to protect you while costing you hundreds of billions of dollars.

And that's not all. Your six countries that formed the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981 in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution have directed much of your oil and natural gas revenues to the United States—as investments, purchases of military equipment and support services, preferential business arrangements for US corporations and donations to US universities and other non-profits. These revenues (derived from the sale of your natural resources) are the

rightful heritage of ALL your citizens and your future generations and you are largely squandering them away. These revenues from the extraction of your depletable oil, gas and minerals should not be handed over to the benefit of foreigners and for the lavish lifestyles of your rulers. Your rulers have by and large allowed the US free access to your airspace for reconnaissance and military operations and toed the US line in international institutions. All in all, the countries of the GCC are America's allies in name but subservient in fact.

The United States has received financial, economic and strategic benefits from the GCC and has used its numerous regional bases to dominate the entire neighborhood for its own benefit and the benefit of its surrogate—Israel.

What have the GCC and other Arabs gotten in return?

Not much. Protection from outside aggression? Hardly! Israel brazenly attacked a residential house in Doha in order to assassinate Hamas leaders, regardless of collateral damage, individuals who were official guests of Qatar and involved in negotiations. But it gets worse. Not only did the United States not attempt to protect its host from foreign incursion but it did the opposite, it turned off the sophisticated radars it had sold to Qatar and gave the Israelis a toll-free open highway! Alert systems from Kuwait and Bahrain were not operating. Other US eyes in Jordan and Saudi Arabia were “blind.” The AWACS flying over the Persian Gulf did not alert Qatar. British planes cooperated by refueling Israeli planes

in midair! Israel attacked Qatar's sovereignty with US approval and support from the UK, the world's paramount colonialist. In the process, Israel trashed the basic tenet of the UN charter, aided by both the United States and the United Kingdom! Two Permanent UNSC members helping a brazen attack on a sovereign nation? What about the international rule of law? What kind of a world are these two powers creating?

In the aftermath of the illegal attack in Doha, the Israeli Prime Minister added insult to injury by vowing to continue more such incursions to get all of Hamas anywhere and everywhere. In the process, is he inciting ever more acts of violence by empowering Palestinians and their sympathizers to do the same?

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

## The UN crumbles as Gaza burns

By Muhammad Akmal Khan

ISLAMABAD - For around eight decades, Palestine has been the world's question that won't be answered; a place where justice claims have been examined and found wanting. The UN Charter, which was born after the devastation of the World War II, committed to peace, equality and protection for the oppressed.

But in Palestine, those promises have been written and erased, spoken and undone, over and over again by Israel. The explanation is not hard to find: when Israel is held at bay Washington's veto bears all but formal testimony that international law amounts to a charade—it plays well, speaks loudly, and signifies nothing.

Since 1972, the United States has used its veto to shield Israel from accountability, more than 50 times roughly half of all vetoes it has ever cast in the Security Council.

The first came in September 1972, when it blocked a resolution condemning Israel's

bombardment of Lebanon. That set the tone for decades. Washington vetoed measures censoring settlement expansion, rejecting Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, condemning its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and even a 2011 draft declaring settlements “illegal,” despite admitting it agreed with the content.

In 2017, America stood isolated 14 to 1 vetoing a resolution rejecting Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. In 2023 and 2024, it blocked repeated calls for a Gaza ceasefire, even as thousands of civilians were killed. A single raised hand has erased the will of the world, again and again.

This is not balance. It is complicity.

The General Assembly, not subject to the veto, has condemned Israel repeatedly. Between 2015 and 2023 it approved, in all, 154 resolutions condemning Israel compared to a mere 71 against all other member states combined. Another 17 resolutions were ad-

opted in 2024, including a historic one calling for Israel to leave the territories it occupied within a year.

The deeper reality is that America is not powerless to restrain Israel; it is simply unwilling. Israel is seen as a strategic ally, a “democratic outpost” in the Middle East, and a partner in military technology and intelligence. In Washington, domestic politics make any move to condition aid or arms politically costly. Successive administrations frame their vetoes as blocking “unbalanced” texts. In truth, they block justice.

This shield has given Israel the confidence to project its power well beyond its borders. Israel has gone to war with Egypt and Jordan since 1948, invaded Lebanon multiple times, bombed Syria, blew up Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981, killed PLO leaders in Tunisia in 1985 and conducted the astonishing Entebbe raid in Uganda in 1976.

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



## From rice terraces to waterfalls, Bali tour highlights nature and culture



By Sedigheh Hosseini

BALI (Indonesia) – A recently-held media familiarization tour of Bali, attended by a number of Iranian journalists and social media influencers, was a journey to discover the authentic face of the country's culture and nature.

The first day began with visits to temples and village homes in Bali, a famed province of Indonesia, where traditional architecture and religious rituals play a central role in daily life.

Later, the group explored rice and coffee plantations, the grandeur of Tegenungan Waterfall, the tranquility of Lake Batur, and the panoramic views of Kintamani village. Each stop offered a rare combination of culture and nature, creating a sense of connection with the spirit of Bali.

Walking into Bali's rice terraces feels like stepping into a living canvas of green in countless shades. These fields, like a carpet stretching between earth and sky, have for centuries provided not only the staple food but also shaped the cultural identity of the island.

The morning air, cooled by breezes from the mountains, refreshed the spirit, while the gentle sound of water set a soothing rhythm.

Our local guide explained that rice cultivation in Bali is not just agriculture but also a sacred tradition. The Balinese believe in the rice goddess who blesses and protects the harvest. This reverence has preserved the island's ancient irrigation system, a UNESCO World Heritage site, showing how people and nature can live in harmony.

As we walked along the terraces, every step revealed a new perspective. Farmers were transplanting seedlings after plowing with ox-drawn ploughs, smiling warmly at us as if proud to host distant guests. The smell of wet soil and freshly cut stalks created an unexpected calm. Drinking coconut water by the fields became an unforgettable part of the experience.

Lunch was served in a rustic village restaurant, where fresh Balinese rice accompanied tropical fruits and aromatic spices. The flavors revealed the richness of the island's cuisine, though the unfamiliar tastes may challenge some visitors.

For us, the rice terraces were more than a tourist attraction; they were a profound encounter with the way land, culture, and spirituality interweave in Bali.

Our next stop was Kintamani, a highland village with breathtaking views of Mount and Lake Batur. The cool mountain air greeted us upon arrival, and narrow streets lined with thatched-roof houses reflected traditional Balinese life.

Locals welcomed us with warm smiles. In the small market, villagers sold fresh produce, handicrafts, and spices. The guide explained that the market opens around 5 a.m. with morning prayers, marking the start of the day. The bright colors of clothing and the aroma of spices created an energetic atmosphere.

Kintamani is famous for its scenery. Visitors frequently paused to capture the landscapes on their cameras. Temples decorated with carved stone and wood testified to the villagers' strong religious traditions. Rituals and festivals still revolve around these sacred places.

By the time we left, the midday sun was high, blending humidity, cool breezes, and the occasional sound of passing motorbikes into the rhythm of the village.

Visiting a Balinese coffee plantation felt like traveling back in time. The air carried the scent of damp earth, rain-washed leaves, and ripe coffee cherries. Glossy green trees bore clusters of red berries, sparkling like rubies.

Our guide explained that coffee in Bali is not only a crop but also a way of life. Generations of farmers have cultivated the trees with patience and respect. We watched a villager harvest and grind beans by hand.

After observing drying, roasting, and grinding, we sampled various flavors—vanilla, chocolate, coconut coffee, and local herbal teas. The first sip carried a deep, earthy taste with a pleasant bitterness unlike any coffee we had tried before.

Overlooking forests and distant mountains as rain fell lightly, we sipped fresh brews while the breeze carried the aroma of roasted beans. It was more than a farm visit; it felt like each cup told a story of land, labor, and enduring culture.

By afternoon, in light rain and lingering mountain mist, we headed toward Lake Batur. Nestled inside the crater of Mount Batur, the lake shimmered like a mirror reflecting shades of gray and blue.

Our guide noted its vital role as the main water source for surrounding fields and as a center for traditional fishing. Mount Batur's volcanic soil has enriched agriculture despite its history of eruptions, symbolizing the balance of danger and life, fire and water.

Around the lake, vendors and small markets catered to visitors, adding a familiar touch of local commerce. The lake, however, remained more than a destination. It was a reminder of nature's power and beauty.

Tegenungan Waterfall was our next destination, where we in advance heard its roar echoing through the forest. The trail down wound between lush trees, with humidity thickening as we approached.

Tourists crowded the area, some swimming in the murky water, others perched on rocks to watch. The sound of the falls drowned all else, leaving only a sense of freedom.

Our guide explained that the site's accessibility makes it one of Bali's most popular waterfalls, also visited by locals for rituals, as water is considered sacred.

The media tour was part of Indonesia's cultural diplomacy. Starting Sept. 14, it hosted a delegation of Iranian media representatives and social media influencers to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

### EMBASSY OF BRAZIL IN TEHRAN

#### Job offer

Administrative Officer for Administrative work. Persian, English and Portuguese (or another Italian, Spanish, French) are required. Resumes to be sent to [administ.teera@itamaraty.gov.br](mailto:administ.teera@itamaraty.gov.br) by October 5th, 2025 (Mehr 13th, 1404). Further details on the job position at <http://teera.itamaraty.gov.br>.

# ‘Face of Iran’ unveiled at Iranology Foundation

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – A new geotourism documentary series named “Face of Iran” was unveiled on Tuesday at the Iranology Foundation in Tehran, with the aim of promoting the country's cultural and natural heritage as a tourism and economic asset.

The ceremony was attended by Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Iranology Foundation, who praised the production team and highlighted the role of cultural identity in promoting the ancient land. “Iran is a vessel that we must protect with all our being. If the pillar of Iran is removed, nothing remains under this tent,” Salehi said.

Referring to Iran's history, Salehi said that during the Achaemenid Empire more than half of the world's population lived under Iranian rule. He described Iran as a “mosaic” of diverse cultures, dialects, foods and landscapes from east to west and north to south.

Salehi said the foundation has broad audiences ranging from children to scholars and expatriates, and one of its major programs is producing “Face of Iran”



documentaries for each province to showcase lesser-known aspects of the country.

Kambiz Mahdizadeh, media adviser to the foundation and director of the documentary, said the project aims to highlight Iran's landscapes, myths and traditions at a time when, he said, negative perceptions of the country are spreading internationally.

Our economy relies mainly in petrodollars, but oil will run out, Mahdizadeh said. “They can sanction our oil, but they cannot

sanction our mountains, forests, deserts and plains.... The future of Iran's economy lies in culture and tourism.”

He added that the first episode of the series, dedicated to Lorestan province, includes footage from sites mainly filmed for the first time in the country.

Mahdizadeh concluded that the documentary's message is that Iran's natural and cultural beauty constitutes a sustainable wealth. “Let us rediscover Iran, and re-introduce it to the world,” he said.

## Ban on exports of Iranian backgammon lifted

TEHRAN—An official with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts announced the lifting of the ban on backgammon exports.

According to Mehr News Agency, Farzad Ojani said that after many years, this ban will be lifted with the approval of the Trade Promotion Organization and will be announced soon.

Referring to the long process of pursuing this demand, he said that extensive correspondence and follow-up was carried out with the relevant agencies and finally, based on a recent inquiry from the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Trade's Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Department, the ban on backgammon exports will be lifted.

“Currently, correspondence has been conducted with Mohammad-Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization, and we are awaiting the official announcement of this decision from the Exports and Imports Laws and Regulations Department.”

Ojani said that provinces such as Isfahan,



Fars, Kermanshah, and Kordestan which are considered the main centers of backgammon production in the country, were unable to exploit this economic potential for years due to legal restrictions, despite the high demand from neighboring countries' markets.

He continued that lifting this ban could pave the way for sustainable employment for artists and handicraft producers. It is predicted

that with the development of legal exports of backgammon, the export value of this product will reach one million dollars, and an important step will be taken towards strengthening the export of Iranian wooden products, he added.

In conclusion, Ojani expressed hope for the future of this field, adding: “With the official announcement of the lifting of the ban, domestic producers can benefit from new opportunities in global markets and Iranian backgammon, as one of the noble symbols of the country's art and industry, will gain a more worthy position in the global export arena.”

Director general of Kordestan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department Mansour Mehrzad said in April 2025 that six tangible and intangible heritages of Kordestan province have been registered on the National Heritage List this year.

He said backgammon has been registered on the National Heritage List. “We proposed backgammon for national registration in 2011. The backgammon geography was titled by the name of Kordestan province in 2016.”

## Iran's ethnic diversity on display at National ‘Ash’ Festival

TEHRAN--The National Iranian Ash Festival as the largest food festival in Iran, is a chance for Iranians of all different ethnic groups, cultures, and languages to share their own way of cooking local foods with their compatriots.

National Iranian Ash Festival is a cultural and entertaining event in Iran which has begun work in 2005. The festival is annually held at the Gavazang (El Daghi) recreational center in Zanjan, north-western Iran, Mehr news agency wrote.

This year, chefs from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and India have also participated in the 18th National Iranian Ash Festival, showcasing more than 14 types of traditional dishes.

Being the largest food festival in the country, the event is not only a food festival but also a four-day chance for Iranian ethnic groups to gather together in a national event so as to improve their unity and national spirit despite having different local clothes, rituals, and traditions, cultures, dialects, and languages.

Throughout the festival, some cooks from almost all provinces of the country who are showcasing and selling their local foods, potages, audible souvenirs as well as the craftsmen and artists who are making valuable handicrafts in pavilions draw everyone's attention.

Being famous with the slogan of “Iranian Food, worldwide

Food”, the festival is basically focused on the Iranian delicious dish, called ‘Ash’ in the Persian language, which is a traditional slow-cooked, thick soup made with chickpeas, beans, noodles, and fresh herbs.

Ash sometimes transliterated as ash, aash, or ?sh, is usually served hot and is part of Persian cuisine. It is also found in Afghan, Azerbaijani, Caucasian, and Turkish cuisine.

As there are dozens of recipes for this traditional dish, Iranian people from different ethnic groups attend this festival so as to display their specific recipe for cooking different types of Ash as well as other local foods.

Based on different recipes and tastes, this nutrient food is designed with fried meat, onion, garlic, yoghurt, whey, dried herb, and fruits as well as almond, nuts and etc.

Usually, at the closing ceremony of the festival, the organizers introduce the winners of different sections, including cooking Ash, making handicrafts, and as well as other amusing competitions.

If you wonder what is the reason behind advocating Ash as the main meal of a food festival on such a large scale. The answer is here.

The procedure of cooking this food, from providing the ingredients to preparing them, cooking the food, and serving it, requires a cooperative measure by every-



one.

As cooking Ash brings people together and enhances friendship, unity, and kindness among neighbors and fellow citizens, therefore, the food has got a particular cultural role in Iranian society.

Since old times, Iranian people cook Ash on happy occasions in order to share their happiness with their beloved ones. Also, they cook this food to express their sympathy on a sad issue such as losing a person.

The roots of holding such food festivals in Iran can be traced back to ancient times during which Iranian people and farmers used to share their happiness with each other through holding ceremonies to give thanks for the blessing of the earth, successful harvests in Autumn, and for the hope of a good growing season in the early spring.

Elsewhere in his remarks Salehi turned the spotlight on the Pre-historic Sites of the Khorramabad Valley, which was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list earlier this year.

This marks a historic first for Iran -- the first time a cluster of sites primarily representing the Paleolithic period has received this prestigious recognition -- and a transformative moment for the global archaeological community, Salehi underlined.

Home to various nomads and tribal communities, Lorestan was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC. The Luristan (Lorestan) Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Moreover, Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid dynasties.



# Afghan envoy, UNAMA official meet in Tehran on situation of refugees

TEHRAN - Mawlawi Fazal Mohammad Haqqani, the ambassador of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in Tehran, met with Bojidar Vasilyev, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Liaison Office in Iran, reviewing the situation of Afghan refugees in Iran.

The main focus of the meeting was to discuss how to provide aid and organize returning refugees from Iran. The two sides also exchanged views on how to address and provide services to those affected by the recent earthquake in the east of Afghanistan, Afghan Voice Agency (AVA) reported.

The Afghan Embassy in Tehran has emphasized that the process of voluntary and forced return of refugees from Iran continues, and hundreds of thousands have returned to the country so far.

According to official sources, the majority of returnees from Iran have settled in the eastern and central provinces of the country.

UNAMA plays an advisory and coordinating role in supporting migrants and providing humanitarian assistance.

According to experts, the continued return of migrants from Iran requires careful planning for accommodation, provision of services and economic support. Studies show that coordination between the embassy, international institutions and local government can facilitate the process of return and integration of migrants and reduce the pressure on families and local



institutions.

A meeting of the local core group of Solution Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) was held in Tehran on September 3.

The head of the National Organization for Migration, Nader Yar-Ahmadi, in cooperation with the Director-General for International Environmental and Sustainable Development Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mohammad Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi, co-chaired the meeting, ISNA reported.

Dutch Chargé d'affaires to Iran, as the head of SSAR group; Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator in Iran; and representatives from different international institutions including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration, United Nations Development Program

(UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as representatives from the embassies of Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, Switzerland, Denmark, and South Korea participated in the meeting as the members of SSAR.

Addressing the meeting, Yar-Ahmadi said Iran has hosted Afghan refugees for almost five decades, including the massive wave of Afghan migration into the country in recent years. However, the contribution of the international community, Western countries, and SSAR member states has been inadequate and ineffective.

For his turn, Hassani Nejad Pirkouhi highlighted the country's unparalleled humanitarian measures, particularly in hosting refugees, saying that the international community, including European countries, has failed to fulfil their international commit-

ments and responsibilities under international refugee law. They have negatively affected the conditions by adopting political and selective approaches, as well as imposing unilateral sanctions and coercive measures against the government and people of Iran.

The representative of international organizations, like the UN resident representative, elaborated on outstanding actions taken by the country in dealing with the large number of refugees who are residing in Iran.

During the meeting, the UNHCR representative proposed holding trilateral talks with Iran and Afghanistan. The Iranian officials voiced the country's readiness to hold quadrilateral talks with the presence of Pakistan, stressing that the trilateral talks would require greater coordination.

The Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR) was drafted in 2012 by Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, with the support of UNHCR. The strategy advances a regional approach to solutions and promotes burden and responsibility-sharing for refugees at the regional and global levels.

The SSAR emphasizes enhancing the resilience of Afghan refugees and their co-existence with host communities and advocating for greater and more equitable responsibility-sharing by the international community – in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). As such, it remains to date as a regional blueprint for governments, international

## World Patient Safety Day highlights preventing harm throughout childhood

From page 1 ▶ Every child has the right to safe, quality health care — from the very beginning. Yet, newborns and young children face higher risks due to their rapid development, evolving health needs, and different disease patterns. They rely on adults to speak up and make decisions for them. Children may also face added challenges depending on their socio-economic circumstances, such as not being able to get the care they need. These factors make them more susceptible to harm if care isn't specifically adapted to their age, size, health condition, and context.

A single safety incident can have lifelong consequences for a child's health and development. That's why World Patient Safety Day 2025 is dedicated to ensuring safe care for every newborn and child, with a special focus on those from birth to nine years old.

Under the slogan 'Patient safety from the start!', the World Health Organization (WHO) calls for urgent action to eliminate avoidable harm in paediatric and newborn care. Addressing this challenge requires comprehensive efforts across key patient safety areas, such as safe childbirth and postnatal care, medication safety, diagnostic safety, immunization safety, infection prevention, and early recognition of clinical deterioration. World Patient Safety Day 2025 aims to drive meaningful improvements and reaffirm every child's right to safe and quality care.

It calls on parents, caregivers, health practitioners, health care leaders, educa-

tors, and communities to unite in action to prevent avoidable harm in paediatric care and to build a safer, healthier future for every child, as part of the global effort to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3.

The main objectives of World Patient Safety Day 2025 are to:

1. Raise global awareness of safety risks in paediatric and newborn care in all health care settings, emphasizing the specific needs of children, families, and caregivers.
2. Mobilize governments, health care organizations, professional bodies, and civil society to implement sustainable strategies for safer care for newborns and children as part of broader patient safety and quality initiatives.
3. Empower parents, caregivers, and children in patient safety by promoting education, awareness, and active participation in care.
4. Advocate for strengthening research on patient safety in paediatric and newborn care.

The Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030 recognizes paediatric and newborn safety across multiple strategic objectives, including designing safe clinical processes, strengthening health workforce competencies, engaging patients and families, and establishing learning systems to prevent harm. It also calls for patient safety education, including a dedicated curriculum for older school-aged children, equipping them with essential knowledge on safety principles and self-advocacy in health care.

## Deepfakes and democracy: Can we trust what we see online?

By Soroush Saki

TEHRAN - In the past, the saying “seeing is believing” carried weight. A photograph or a video was considered proof of reality. But in today's digital age, even our eyes can deceive us.

Thanks to the rapid development of artificial intelligence, particularly deepfake technology, images, videos, and even voices can now be fabricated so convincingly that distinguishing fact from fiction becomes nearly impossible. This technological shift is forcing us to question not only what we see online but also how it may affect trust, democracy, and social stability.

Deepfakes are created using advanced AI models that can learn to replicate human faces, voices, and movements with astonishing precision. At first, this technology seemed like an entertaining novelty. Social media platforms became flooded with humorous clips of celebrities singing songs they never performed or actors appearing in roles they never played. But beneath the humor lies a far darker reality. When deepfakes are weaponized, they can spread misinformation, damage reputations, and even influence political outcomes.

The danger of deepfakes is most evident in the political arena. Imagine a video of a world leader announcing military action or conceding defeat in an election, shared widely before fact-checkers can respond. In a polarized environment where misinformation already spreads faster than truth, such fabrications could spark panic, unrest, or even conflict. The 2024 elections in several countries have already witnessed growing concerns about manipulated media, and the stakes will only rise as the technology becomes cheaper and more accessible.

The problem extends beyond politics. Individuals are also at risk, as deepfakes can be used for harassment, blackmail, or identity theft. A convincing fake video can ruin a person's reputation in minutes, long before they have a chance to defend themselves. For journalists and news outlets, the challenge is even greater. If the authenticity of every photo or video can be questioned, how do we maintain trust in media as a source of truth? This erosion of trust is perhaps the most insidious consequence of deepfakes. It creates an atmosphere where people can dismiss in-

convenient truths as “fake” while malicious lies gain traction.

Yet, as with most technologies, deepfakes are not inherently evil. The same tools that can mislead can also be used for creativity and progress. In film production, deepfake technology reduces costs by allowing realistic effects without expensive reshoots. In education, historical figures can be brought “back to life” to engage students. In medicine, AI-driven facial reconstructions can assist patients recovering from trauma. These examples remind us that technology itself is neutral—it is how we choose to use it that defines its impact.

Addressing the ethical and societal risks of deepfakes requires a multi-layered approach. Technology companies are already developing detection tools to identify manipulated content. However, the race between deepfake creators and detectors is constant, and often the fakes spread faster than the truth. Legal frameworks are also beginning to evolve, but laws struggle to keep pace with the speed of innovation. Most importantly, digital literacy among the public is critical. Citizens must learn to question what they see online, verify information from multiple sources, and resist the urge to share sensational content without scrutiny.

At its core, the deepfake debate is not just about technology but about trust. In democratic societies, trust is the glue that holds institutions together, trust in elections, in journalism, in leaders, and in each other. If that trust collapses under the weight of fabricated realities, the consequences could be severe. At the same time, dismissing deepfakes as purely destructive ignores the opportunities they provide for art, education, and innovation.

We now stand at a crossroads. Either deepfakes become yet another weapon in the arsenal of disinformation, or society learns to adapt, creating safeguards and cultivating resilience. The future will depend not only on new technologies to detect the fakes but also on our collective ability to remain critical, thoughtful, and responsible consumers of information. In an era when seeing is no longer believing, perhaps the real challenge is to build new forms of trust that go deeper than images and videos.

## 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 Babaiean 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.





SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

## GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*How wonderful is the situation of a believer. There is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity comes to him, he expresses gratitude to God and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him.*

**Prophet Muhammad (S)**

Prayer Times > Noon:11:58 Evening: 18:25 Dawn: 4:26 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:50 (tomorrow)

## “We All Live Here” published in Persian

TEHRAN- “We All Live Here,” a novel by British novelist Jojo Moyes, has recently been published in Persian.

Fatemeh Hamedifar is the translator of the book, which has been published by Milkan publications in Tehran.

“We All Live Here” is a slow-paced but heart-felt family drama that explores themes of love, second chances, and unexpected connections. The story centers on Lila Kennedy, a woman overwhelmed by life’s challenges. Her marriage has ended, her two daughters are drifting further away, her house is in disrepair, and her elderly stepfather has quietly moved in without much warning. Her career is faltering, and her love life is tangled in complications, leaving her feeling exhausted and lost.

Just when it seems things cannot get any more overwhelming, her world is turned upside down when her biological father, a man she barely remembers—who left her for Hollywood thirty-five years ago—suddenly appears at her doorstep. His return feels like the last straw, threatening to unravel her already fragile sense of stability. However, as the story unfolds, Lila begins to discover that even the family she thought she could never forgive or understand holds lessons about love, forgiveness, and what truly constitutes family.

Through quiet, honest moments, the novel delves into the complexities of fractured relationships and the healing power of unexpected reunions. It reveals that sometimes, the most meaningful connections are found in the most unlikely circumstances.

Jojo Moyes is a renowned English journalist and bestselling romance novelist. Since 2002, she has published award-winning books that have sold over 40 million copies worldwide and been translated into 28 languages. She is a two-time winner of the Romantic Novel of the Year



Award from the Romantic Novelists’ Association.

Before her writing career, Moyes worked various jobs, including typist, brochure writer, and journalist. She earned degrees from Royal Holloway and City University, working for The Independent for a decade, ultimately becoming Assistant News Editor. Her first novel, “Sheltering Rain”, was published in 2002, marking her transition to full-time writing.

Her breakout hit, “Me Before You”, sold six million copies and was adapted into a successful film. Moyes has also written two sequels, “After You” and “Still Me”. She has received numerous awards, including the Romantic Novel of the Year and recognition from the American Library Association.

# Iran submits “Cause of Death: Unknown” to 2026 Oscars in best international feature film category

TEHRAN – The psychological mystery thriller “Cause of Death: Unknown” directed by Ali Zarnegar has been officially selected as Iran’s submission to the 2026 Academy Awards in the best international feature film category.

The decision was made after the selection committee at the Farabi Cinema Foundation, which operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, evaluated all the eligible movies screened locally since last October, ISNA reported.

The nine-member committee unanimously chose “Cause of Death: Unknown” from among the five final contenders to represent Iran at the 2026 Oscars.

The panel comprised figures in Iranian cinema including directors Abolhassan Davoodi and Mostafa Kiaei, documentary filmmaker Azadeh Mousavi, actress Pantea Panahiha, actor Ali Dehkordi, screenwriter Farhad Tohidi, director of photography Hooman Behmanesh, sound designer Mohammad Reza Delpak, and deputy of the international affairs at Farabi Mohammad Reza Tashakori.

The other finalists included the feature films “The Old Bachelor” directed by Oktay Baraheni, “Woman and Child” by Saeed Roustayi, “Call Me Ziba” by Rasul Sadr Ameli, and “Raha” by Hesam Farahmand.

The film follows a group of strangers traveling through Iran’s Lut Desert. When one of them suddenly dies in the middle of the night, emergency services refuse to send an ambulance because the cause of death hasn’t been verified by a doctor. Searching the body, the men find no ID but a lot of money and are forced to confront a moral and ethical dilemma: Do they bring the body to a hospital or bury the corpse and split the cash?

Set against the backdrop of a life-and-death crisis, the film delves into themes of morality, survival, and the complex interplay of human nature when faced with an unknown and dire situation.

The movie examines the social



A scene from “Cause of Death: Unknown”

realities of the era in which it was produced, showing the struggles and crises that people must overcome in order to uphold their morality and humanity. It provides a representation of social history and cultural identity that reflects the moral principles of the Iranian people.

“Cause of Death: Unknown” addresses social problems that are pervasive in Iranian society and provides a critical analysis of the struggles that both individuals and communities encounter. The movie sheds light on Iran’s cultural and historical context by demonstrating morality and humanity.

The 106-minute film has Banipal Shoomoon, Alireza Sanifar, Neda Jebraeli, Ali Mohammad Radmanesh, Zakieh Behbahani, Reza Amouzad, Soheil Bavi, Saeed Rezaeikia, Milad Moradi, Ashkan Ashoori, and Sahar Babaei in the cast among others.

“Cause of Death: Unknown” premiered at the Shanghai Film Festival in 2023, where it won the best cinematography prize for cameraman Davood Malek Hosseini.

Earlier this year in February, the movie won the Audience Favorite Film Award at the 3rd Iranian Film Festival New York.

The film has also garnered international recognition, with screenings at festivals like the Torino Underground Cinefest in Italy, the Pigeon International Film Festival in Iceland, the Girona Film Festival in Spain, and the Monadnock International Film Festival in the U.S., as well as winning Best Feature Film at the Iranian Film Festival of Zürich.

A total of three films submitted by Iran have so far secured Oscar nominations in the best foreign film category: Majid Majidi’s “Children of Heaven” in 1999, and Asghar Farhadi’s “A Separation” and “The Salesman,” both of which won in 2012 and 2017, respectively.

Submissions to the Best International Feature Film category for the 98th Academy Awards have been rolling in at a steady pace since mid-August, with the battle heating up in the category earlier than in past years.

An international feature film is defined as a feature-length motion picture (over 40 minutes) produced outside the U.S. with a predominantly (more than 50%) non-English dialogue track and can include animated and documentary features.

Submitted films must have been released theatrically in their respective countries between October 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025. The deadline for submissions to the Academy is October 1, 2025.

A total of 86 countries submitted films to the category for the 97th Academy Awards, with 15 making the shortlist and five eventually nominated. Brazil’s “I’m Still Here” directed by Walter Salles scooped the Oscar in the category.

The Academy will announce the first shortlist of 15 films in contention for the 2026 best international feature Oscar on December 16, 2025. The final nominations will be announced on January 22, 2026. The 98th Academy Awards Ceremony will take place in Los Angeles on March 15, 2026.

## New York’s first Gaza Biennial is an urgent cry for humanity

By its own ambitions, the Gaza Biennial is not just a group exhibition, but a tremendous cry for humanity. The intact heart will hear it—and appreciate the gallery attendant’s gentle warning that tissue boxes are available for use.

The full version of this roving biennial was on view at the Brooklyn nonprofit art space Recess through this past Sunday, though it remains on view in an abbreviated version until December 20. It features the work of 25 artists from Gaza, most of whom remain in the besieged strip, ARTnews reported.

Their perspectives on nearly two years of carnage have been poured into painting, video installation, drawing, and oral and written testimony. The exhibition is hosted in an alternative space, not a mainstream museum—notable, given that New York institutions such as the Whitney have faced allegations of anti-Palestine censorship. There will likely be no greater show of consequence in the city during its run.

The Gaza Biennale was conceived in April 2024 in Palestine by Gazan artists and developed throughout the war in collaboration with the Forbidden Museum of Jabal Al Risan. Prior to arriving in Brooklyn, the biennial was staged in 17 pavilions—or jinnahs, meaning branches or wings—worldwide, reflecting the diasporic reality of Palestinians post-Israeli occupation.

The biennial was unable to be hosted in Gaza, so its model, the biennial has said, is itself “displaced,” just like Gazans. Artworks are not



“Noise of Death” by Murad Al-Assar

to be considered reproductions but presented ex situ, or ripped from their natural setting. Created in rubble, under fire, and in improvised tents, they are testaments to the mundane miracle of survival.

Visitors to Recess will have ample opportunity to hear from the artists too. Alongside printed transcripts of artists’ interviews, most wall texts include messages from these creators musing on their practice and its context.

In the short film “Live Broadcast” (2025), the journalist Emad Badwan chronicles the daily struggles of reporters in Gaza, from the search for an internet connection, to the queues for basic necessities which may or may not materialize, all while anticipating the next drone strike.

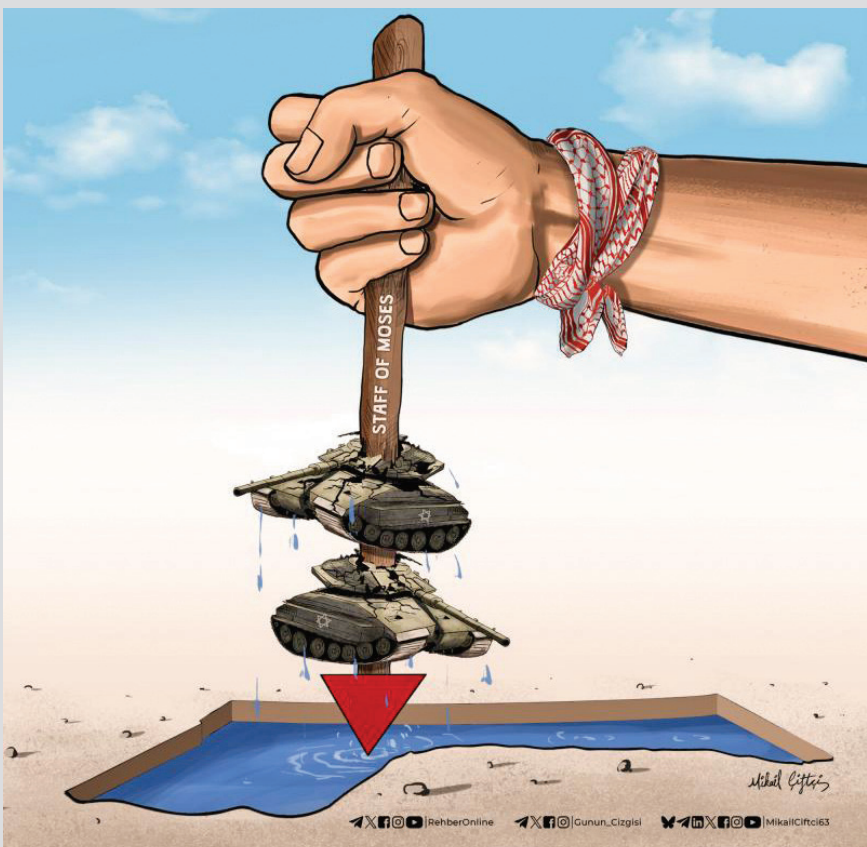
This year the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs’ Costs of War project reported that

tion-rich collection of artworks on view for numbers, even those that feature only the suggestion of hands and hearts. Take Ghanem Alden’s video installation “The Rocket and the Carrot” (2025): A satire of the diplomatic approach favored by colonial powers in which threat and reward are simultaneously incentivized. In the gallery, carrots dangle above a symbolic refugee camp. Photographs of paltry meals and necessities gathered by Gazans are displayed on the adjacent wall. Alden likens the carrots to the humanitarian aid some 2,400 Gazans have died trying to collect. A screen above the pool of burlap, nylon, and pots shows video of furious eyes staring back at the viewer, who is invited by the artist to take a carrot home—literally.

Works such as this one provide a sense of what Gazans face daily, in the absence of the firsthand reporting made difficult by a prolonged media blackout. These conditions reportedly worsen by day. Earlier this month, Israel intensified its military assault on the Gaza Strip, an act that the Government Media Office in Gaza condemned in a statement as a “systematic bombing” of civilian structures, with “extermination and forced displacement” as the aim.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, Israeli forces have killed nearly 65,000 Palestinians and injured more than 164,000.

## Cartoon of Day



Resistance in Gaza

Cartoonist: Mikail Çiftçi from Turkey