

# Assyrian martyr: A son and brother to us all

Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Jani Bet Oushana was a child of Iran's Assyrian community, born on a hot summer day in August of 1964. As a member of the ancient ethnic group, he was raised in the bustling Makhsoos neighborhood of Tehran, where the streets were then alive with the sounds of commerce and chatter. From a young age, Jani displayed a deep reverence for the Christian faith, which was shared by the vast majority of his Assyrian peers.

From an early age, Jani was determined to make the most of his education. He poured himself into his studies, earning a diploma in literature from his high school. His love for knowledge and literature was evident to all who knew him, and he often spent hours lost in the pages of books.

But Jani's true strength lay not only in his intellect but also in his unwavering moral compass. He was known among family and friends as a young man of great character and integrity, always willing to lend a helping hand or offer a kind word to those in need.

Jani had always been passionate about serving his country, and when the Iraqi-imposed war broke out, he knew that someday he had to do his part. When the time came, he enlisted in the army and was assigned to the 55th Airborne Brigade of the Iran Army.

Jani was a skilled soldier. He was determined to



defend his homeland and protect his fellow countrymen from the invading Iraqi forces.

In 1985, Iran launched a massive offensive known as Operation Badr. Jani and his fellow soldiers were tasked with recapturing lost territory and pushing back the Iraqi forces. They were given advanced weaponry and sent into battle with a fierce determination to succeed.

The fighting was intense, with heavy casualties on both sides. Jani and his comrades fought bravely, pushing forward despite the danger. They advanced

through several key Iraqi cities including Basra and Baghdad, dealing a devastating blow to the enemy's military capabilities.

But tragedy struck during the operation. Jani was martyred in eastern Tigris, and his remains were left behind enemy lines. He was considered missing in action for a long time, and his mother awaited his return until the time of her passing.

Finally, a probing task force uncovered Jani's remains last winter, and after DNA testing was conducted, his identity was confirmed. The nation held its breath in antici-

pation of his long-awaited homecoming. For years, Jani had been missing in action, leaving his family and fellow soldiers in a state of perpetual grief and uncertainty.

Sadly, Jani's immediate family members had all passed away in the intervening years, leaving no one to welcome him back with open arms. His parents and three brothers had gone on to the next life, leaving Jani to be mourned by a nation that had never forgotten his sacrifice.

But even in death, Jani was not alone. His compatriots, those who had fought

alongside him and those who had only heard of his bravery, came together to honor him at a glorious funeral. It was a bitter-sweet moment, for while Jani was finally laid to rest with the dignity and respect he deserved, none of his immediate family members were there to pay their respects.

Yet, the funeral was a testament to the fact that all the martyrs of the country are esteemed the same, regardless of their faith or background. Jani had given his life for his country, and in death, he had become a symbol of its strength and resilience.



Remains of martyr Jani Bet Oushana is laid to rest at a glorious funeral after the Friday Prayers in Tehran, on April 28, 2023.

● MORTEZA ZANGENE/ISNA

## Iran faces overlooked environmental quandary: Soil erosion

EXCLUSIVE



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Iran faces significant challenges related to soil erosion, with the country ranking first globally in this regard. Despite the magnitude of the threat, environmental hazards such as soil erosion are often overlooked when discussing the impact of human activities and development methods on the environment. Soil erosion is caused primarily by water and wind, and it results in the detachment of soil particles from their substrate, resulting in a loss of fertility. This phenomenon can lead to the depletion of agricultural lands and fields, deforestation, and a decline in underground water levels.

Soil is a non-renewable resource that takes thousands of years to replenish. It takes about 500 years to produce one centimeter of soil on the ground, but a staggering 2 billion tons of fertile soil can be destroyed in just one year in Iran, with direct consequences for the nation's food security. While water resources can be managed by spending huge sums on building dams and transferring water, there is no such possibility for the loss of soil. The soil required for agriculture and the growth of species in nature is only 20 to 30 cm thick, underscoring the pressing need for soil preservation.

Experts outside of government suggest that soil erosion costs around \$50 billion annually in Iran. The head of the Iranian Chamber of Agriculture has said that the rate of soil erosion in Iran is three to five

times higher than the world average, with Lorestan Province experiencing three times the country's average. Unfortunately, the country lacks a comprehensive plan to prevent soil erosion, which has resulted in an alarmingly high annual average of soil erosion in recent years. Laws and programs to tackle the issue are still nonexistent, with no comprehensive plan for soil protection in place.

To counter soil erosion, experts emphasize the importance of strengthening vegetation and developing gardens in sloping lands, preventing the wastage of surface water, building dams and diverting dams, and transferring water to sloping lands for orchard development. The implementation of aquifer and watershed management plans are also crucial in mitigating soil erosion. The most scientifically sound and cost-effective approach to safeguarding the soil is through the execution of natural resources and watershed management practices, afforestation, and strengthening of vegetation. Preventing livestock from entering pastures too early, restraining land destruction, and plowing in sloping lands in the direction of slope are also important.

A Natural Resources Department official says the implementation of watershed structures, including the erection of stone-mortar and gabion check dams, plays a crucial role in preventing soil erosion and ensuring its preservation. Watershed management and operations are fundamental strategies in the realm of

water and soil conservation. By recognizing the distinct capacities and capabilities of a geographical area within a watershed, various ecological, infrastructural, human, and biological problems can be resolved for the betterment of the residents and the sustainable development of the watershed.

The extravagant pumping of groundwater has escalated soil exploitation, leading to the depletion of water resources and the detrimental subsidence of the earth. Environmental activists believe that this practice will persist, leading to the loss of pastures and cultivated lands. The destiny of water and soil are inseparable, and people must play an active role in ensuring their conservation. As water users, people often exhibit inappropriate behavior, leading to a decline in groundwater and land subsidence. Hence, changes in behavior are necessary to ensure that people have a correct understanding and recognition of the vulnerability of groundwater.

Soil erosion constitutes a significant peril and environmental quandary in Iran. It is imperative that comprehensive plans and programs are developed and implemented to prevent manmade phenomena and ensure its preservation.

Addressing soil erosion requires a multi-faceted approach that takes into account environmental, social, and economic factors. By taking action now, we can ensure the sustainability of our soils and secure a better future for generations to come.

## IRAN READS

### David Beckham reveals impact of OCD in new documentary



● WIREIMAGE

David Beckham has revealed how living with his "tiring" obsessive compulsive disorder leads him to spending hours cleaning and organizing his home while the rest of his family are in bed.

The former England football captain, 47, says in a forthcoming Netflix documentary: "The fact that when everyone's in bed I then go around, clean the candles, turn the lights on to the right setting, make sure everywhere is tidy. I hate coming down in the morning and there's cups and plates and, you know, bowls, The Guardian reported.

"I clip the candle wax, I clean the glass, that's my pet hate, the smoke around the inside of a candle," he says. "I know, it's weird."

When the camera crew comments on how clean his kitchen looks, Beckham says: "I clean it so well, I'm not sure it's actually appreciated so much by my wife, in all honesty." In response, Victoria Beckham tells the crew "He's just so perfect" and tells David he is "appreciated". He says he finds the cleaning rituals "tiring" but he feels compelled to do it.

Beckham has discussed living with the condition in the past. He told the Daily Mail he would count clothes and place magazines in straight lines and symmetrical patterns. He also said that one of the reasons he kept getting tattoos was because he was addicted to the pain.

In an interview with ITV in 2006, he said he could not stop acting on his compulsions despite having tried. He said: "I've got this obsessive compulsive disorder where I have to have everything in a straight line or everything has to be in pairs. I'll put my Pepsi cans in the fridge and if there's one too many then I'll put it in another cupboard somewhere ... everything has to be perfect." Netflix confirmed last July that a documentary series about the former footballer's career was in production. The series will feature unseen archive footage as well as interviews with Beckham, his family and friends, and other people who played an important role in his story.