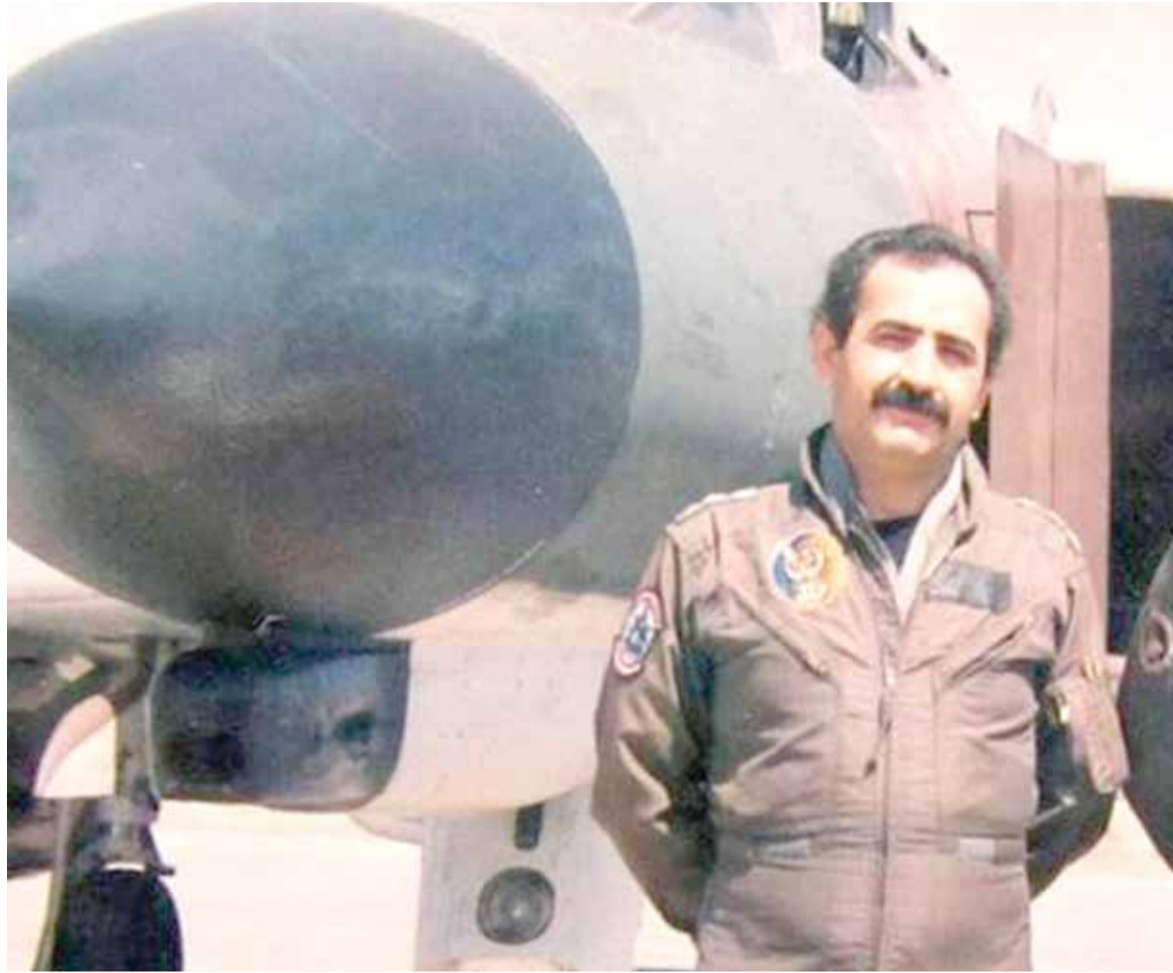


# Legend warrior of Iran Air Force



Mahmoud Eskandari, the F-4 Phantom pilot for the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force, is a name that has become synonymous with courage and heroism. He is regarded as one of the five most famous pilots of Iran, and his exceptional skills as a fighter pilot are matched only by his bravery. During the Iran-Iraq War, Eskandari played a crucial role in several important operations, including the liberation of Khorramshahr, the H-3 airstrike, and Operation Baghdad. Despite facing adversity during his years of service, he continued to serve his country with dedication and pride. Eskandari's legacy as a hero of the Iraqi-imposed war continues to inspire the people of Iran to this day.

**Social Desk**

The eight-year Iraqi-imposed war brought forth great names such as the martyrs Ebrahim Hemmat, Major General Abshenasan, Major General Babaei, Lieutenant General Sayyad Shirazi, Major General Abbas Doran, and others like them. Unfortunately, many heroes of the Sacred Defense remain lesser-known, often due to their strong ethical principles. These individuals possess a unique spirit that sets them apart. One such man is pilot Major Mahmoud Eskandari.

Twenty years after his death in a traffic accident, Eskandari is undoubtedly one of Iran's five bravest pilots. His fellow soldiers have always spoken highly of him, describing him with a single phrase: Legend and warrior of Air Force. Regrettably, his exceptional morals and refusal to accept orders that conflicted with his principles meant that he remained a major throughout the eight-year war. From the very first week of the war, Eskandari took on the most challenging missions. His fearless approach to danger de-

terred many co-pilots from accompanying him. His name is mentioned in every significant operation, often as the second-in-command. One such operation was the attack on H-3, the westernmost airbase in western Iraq, located near the border with Jordan. Eskandari's crowning achievement was striking the bridge over the Arvand River during the Operation Beit ol-Moqaddas. The logistics line of the 3rd Iraqi Corps relied on this bridge to support the Iraqi defenders of Khorramshahr, the Iranian city

which they had previously occupied. Using unguided bombs, Eskandari targeted the narrow connection between the two sides of the Arvand River. When the bridge was destroyed, over 10,000 Iraqi soldiers had no choice but to surrender. In the summer of 1982, during the operation to cancel the Baghdad Conference, Eskandari was the wingman of the martyr Abbas Doran. Witnessing the fiery demise of his close friend Duran's plane, Eskandari evaded six Iraqi MiGs and returned to Hamedan, even as his



Mahmoud Eskandari, the F-4 Phantom pilot, was a major player in striking the bridge over the Arvand River during the Operation Beit ol-Moqaddas  
● WJC

co-pilot lay unconscious. One of his most daring feats, seldom discussed, was flying an F-4 without ammunition or equipment from Syria to Iran. During the attack on H-3, one of Iran's Phantoms had landed in Syria due to a technical malfunction. Returning the plane posed a challenge, as it had to traverse Iraqi territory. Brigadier General Mohammad Javanmardi, the co-pilot of this incredible flight, recalls that some Syrian officers, influenced by pan-Arabism, did not want the Phantom to return to Iran. Despite multiple attempts and warnings from Tehran about the readiness of the Iraqi Air Force, Eskandari did not hesitate to fly directly through the heart of Iraq using a still-secret method. It is said that Saddam Hussein dispatched 16 fighter jets to locate the Iranian Phantom that day. Sadly, Eskandari faced numerous reprimands for various reasons and even remained grounded at times. However, in 1985, when few pilots dared to fly to Baghdad (except for one or two, such as Sirus Baheri), he undertook a solo flight to the city in retaliation for Tehran's missile attacks.

In the final years of his service, this remarkable man was dismissed from the force. For many years, his whereabouts remained unknown until his death in a car accident in 2001. A decade later, with the efforts of fellow pilots, his name resurfaced, his contributions remembered, and even his family received his posthumous medal of honor.

**From the very first week of the war, Eskandari took on the most challenging missions. His fearless approach to danger deterred many co-pilots from accompanying him. His name is mentioned in every significant operation, often as the second-in-command.**

## Spanish police make arrests over racism in football



● GETTY IMAGES

Spanish police have arrested three people in connection with racist slurs directed at Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior and detained a further four in connection with a mannequin of the footballer found hanging under a bridge in January. Police said three people had been arrested in Valencia in connection with the abuse during Sunday's match at the eastern city's Mestalla stadium. An investigation was opened into the chants on Monday, on the same day the head of Spain's football federation admitted the country had a problem with racism, The Guardian reported.

In a separate operation, four people were detained in relation to the discovery in January of an effigy wearing Vinicius's No. 20 shirt that had been hung from a bridge in front of the training ground of Real Madrid, the player's club team.

Both incidents are being investigated as possible hate crimes.

Officials, players and former players in Brazil and Spain showed solidarity with 22-year-old Vinicius, who on Sunday considered leaving the field after facing racist taunts from fans during Real Madrid's 1-0 loss at Valencia in the Spanish league.

"We have a problem of behavior, of education, of racism," Luis Rubiales of the Royal Spanish Football Federation said on Monday. "And as long as there is one fan or one group of fans making insults based on someone's sexual orientation or skin color or belief, then we have a serious problem."

Valencia said it had banned one of its fans for life and was looking to identify others. "The club has analyzed all the available footage, working alongside the authorities as rapidly as possible to clarify what happened," it said in a statement.

Real Madrid said it strongly condemned the incident, which it believed to be a hate crime. "These events represent a direct attack on the social and democratic model of coexistence of our state based on the rule of law," the club said.

Speaking after Sunday's game, Real Madrid's Italian manager, Carlo Ancelotti, said the racist abuse – in which Vinicius was repeatedly called a "monkey" – highlighted how "something bad is happening in this league".



**PIC OF THE DAY**



Every year, from late Ordibeheht (April/May), the migration of nomads from tropical regions, especially Khuzestan Province, to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province begins. The Bakhtiari nomads settle in the plains and pastures of the province until early autumn. The Bakhtiari people are one of the largest and most prominent tribes in Iran, and their migratory traditions are still alive today. The Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari nomads consist of 25,110 households and a population of over 124,173 people. Their migration – known as kuč in Persian – is one of the most fascinating examples of migratory traditions among nomadic tribes around the world. The Bakhtiari have been migrating each year in April and October between the high plateau pastures of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province and the 300 km distant plain in northeastern Khuzestan Province with their flocks of goats, sheep, and cattle.  
● MORTEZA SALEHIFAR/FARS