

Two Iranian actors awarded in Tunisian theater festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Two Iranian actors, Amin Zendegani and Elham Hamidi, were awarded at the Carthage Theatre Days, according to Iran's Cultural Attaché in Tunisia Hadi Ajili.

The actors received accolades for their memorable roles in the Iranian film, 'The Kingdom of Solomon,' and the TV series, 'Prophet Joseph,' respectively, during the festival being held from December 2 to 10, IRNA reported.

He explained that their roles in showcasing Iran's Islamic culture received significant attention, emphasizing the positive representation of Iranian culture. Ajili elaborated on the significance of Carthage Theatre Days, noting its 40-year history and its status as one of the most significant film festivals in the Arab world. The event, originating from the ancient Carthage name of Tunisia, is recognized as the primary and most important film festival in North Africa, with its top award named the Golden Tanit.

Speaking about Iran's prominent presence at the festival, Ajili mentioned that among the 28 countries participating, including Russia, France, Australia, and the US, Iran's cultural influence was notably strong.

Despite objections from some people who argued against Iran's participation, citing the Arab and African nature of the event, others familiar with Iran's cultural power believe that Iran's presence adds credibility to the festival.



- License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
- Managing Director: Ali Kakadezfuli
- Editor-in-chief: Mostafa Shirmohammadi
- Int'l & National Desk: Javad Mohammad Ali, Zohreh Qanadi, Ebrahim Beheshti, Amir Mollae Mozaffari
- Economy Desk: Reza Abesh Ahmadi, Sadeq Dehqan
- Sports Desk: Amirhadi Arsalanpour
- Iranica Desk: Leila Imeni
- Arts & Culture Desk: Hamideh Hosseini
- Social Desk: Ali Amiri
- Language Editor: Ali Mehran

Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA)
Ali Kakadezfuli
Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Javad Mohammad Ali, Zohreh Qanadi,
Ebrahim Beheshti, Amir Mollae Mozaffari
Reza Abesh Ahmadi, Sadeq Dehqan
Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Leila Imeni
Hamideh Hosseini
Ali Amiri
Ali Mehran

Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran

- Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711171
- ICPI Publisher: +98 21 88548892-5
- Advertising Dept. Tel: +98 21 88500601
- & Email: irandaily@iranagahiha.com
- Website: www.irandaily.ir
- Email: newspaper.irandaily.ir
- Email: irandaily@icpi.ir
- Printing House: Iran Cultural & Press Institute

Iran Daily



irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7451 | Monday, Dec. 04, 2023 | Price 40,000 Rials | 8 Pages

More than 100 Gaza heritage sites damaged or destroyed by Israeli attacks



Palestinians search the destroyed annex of the Church of Saint Porphyrius, damaged in a strike on Gaza City on Oct. 20.
● DAWOOD NEMER/
GETTY IMAGES

In the weeks since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip have killed more than 15,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry, and destroyed thousands of homes in the territory.

And there have also been tremendous losses to the region's ancient and globally significant cultural heritage. The region was a hub for commerce and culture under Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine rule. It remained influential for centuries thereafter, NPR reported.

A recent survey by the group Heritage for Peace details the damage done so far to more than 100 of these landmarks in Gaza since the start of the present conflict.

The casualties include the Great Omari Mosque, one of the most important and ancient mosques in historical Palestine; the Church of Saint Porphyrius, thought to be the third oldest church in the en-

tire world; a 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery in northern Gaza excavated only last year; and the Rafah Museum, a space in southern Gaza which was dedicated to teaching about the territory's long and multi-layered heritage — until it was hammered by airstrikes early on in the conflict.

In the Heritage for Peace report's introduction, the Catalonia-based nonprofit describes itself as maintaining "a neutral stance, with our programs focused on empowering heritage specialists to confront unique challenges, such as safeguarding artifacts, sites, museums, and libraries during times of armed conflict." It added the survey was generated in response "to the requests and desires of numerous concerned individuals, researchers, and local residents to shed light on the status of cultural heritage."

"If this heritage be no more in Gaza, it will be a big loss of the

identity of the people in Gaza," said Isber Sabrine, president of Heritage for Peace, in an interview with NPR.

Sabrine said his organization plans to continue the work of surveying and monitoring the status of cultural landmarks in Gaza over the coming months, both on the ground in collaboration with locals, as well as using satellite imagery.

"The people in Gaza, they have the right to keep and to save this heritage, to tell the history, the importance of this land," he said.

The 1954 Hague Convention, agreed to by Palestinians and Israelis, is supposed to safeguard landmarks from the ravages of war. But landmarks in Gaza have been destroyed by Israeli strikes in earlier rounds of fighting. Dozens of sites, including the now-obiterated Great Omari Mosque, suffered damage in 2014. A report by UNESCO, the United Nations

body that designates and protects World Heritage sites, cites further destruction to cultural and historic sites in Gaza in 2021.

"UNESCO is deeply concerned about the adverse impact of the ongoing fighting on cultural heritage in Palestine and Israel," said a UNESCO spokesperson in a statement sent to NPR. "Our organization calls on all parties involved to strictly adhere to international law. Cultural property should not be targeted or used for military purposes, as it is considered to be civilian infrastructure."

UNESCO has as yet been unable to survey the extent of the damage to the area's cultural heritage. "Due to the ongoing fighting and the impossibility of accessing the area, UNESCO is not in a position to assess the damage itself on site," the agency's statement said. "At this stage, our experts can only monitor the situation remotely, using satellite data and information transmitted to us by third parties. This information must then be scrupulously verified."

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities did not respond to NPR's request to share information about the current status of Gaza's cultural heritage sites or salvaging plans. According to a report in The Art Newspaper, the ministry said it is "at present unable to carry out a full assessment given the conditions on the ground."

Israel's military did not immediately respond to NPR's request for comment on the Heritage for Peace report.

Locals are only now starting to take stock of the damage caused by the present fighting. "When we move around Gaza, we feel very angry and very sad as well," said Gaza City Mayor Yahya al-Sarraj in a video report by Al Jazeera. "We can discover now how much damage has been inflicted on the infrastructure of the city, on the cultural centers, on the main libraries of the city, and on the public."

Iran nominates three cultural heritage cases for UNESCO recognition



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran submitted three of its cultural heritages for possible inclusion in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage, according to Ali Darabi, the deputy tourism minister. The nominees include iftar and its socio-cultural traditions (jointly with Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan), the art of tahzib (illumination) (jointly with Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan), and the ancient festival of Sadeh (jointly with Tajikistan). The nominees will be examined at the 18th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, scheduled to take

place in Kasane, Botswana, from December 4 to 9, 2023, according to IRNA.

The opening ceremony, set for December 3, will be presided over by Mustaq Moorad, ambassador and permanent delegate of the Republic of Botswana to UNESCO.

The session follows an information exchange meeting held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on October 2, 2023, where committee work methods and practical information regarding the upcoming session were presented.

Speaking at a recent conference, Darabi announced the development of a multinational dossier focused on iftar, the evening meal to break the fast during the month

of Ramadan.

He highlighted the associated social and cultural traditions and expressed Iran's intent to submit the comprehensive dossier to UNESCO.

In addition to iftar, Iran has confirmed two other nominees for UNESCO consideration. The art of tahzib, an intricate skill in creating illuminated manuscripts, and the Sadeh festival, an ancient celebration, are also in competition for the global registration.

"We are hopeful that by registering these three cases, we will take significant steps towards introducing Iran's tangible and intangible cultural richness to the world," stated Ali Darabi during

the announcement.

Earlier in September, Iran invited Saudi Arabia to join a possible UNESCO listing for iftar and its socio-cultural traditions, which are shared among Muslim-majority countries. The invitation was made by Darabi in a meeting held in Riyadh with the Kingdom's Rakan bin Ibrahim al-Touq, general supervisor of cultural affairs and international relations.

"The iftar feast is a very treasured and common heritage among all Muslims. This tradition has been left by the beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as a remembrance for us Muslims," Darabi said.