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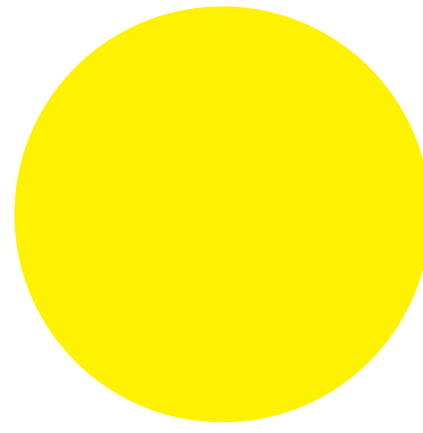
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# Iran Daily



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Smoke billows over the Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment on the Palestinian territory on December 3, 2023. JACK GUEZ/AFP

# Gaza Death Toll Mounts Amid US Arms

The US has provided Israel with large bunker buster bombs, among tens of thousands of other weapons and artillery shells, to help dislodge Hamas from Gaza, US officials said.

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## At least 700 Gazans killed in a single day as Israeli bombing intensifies

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

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## Two-state solution easier said than done

By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Following a brief lull, the sparks of conflict have once again flared up in Gaza, and Israeli offensives against the Gazan populace have recommenced. What trajectory will this conflict take? Why does Netanyahu persist in extending these hostilities? Post-war, is there a viable

formula to address the aspirations of the Palestinians? To delve into these queries, we turn to Abdolamir Nabavi, a distinguished professor of regional studies at the University of Tehran, with expertise in Middle Eastern affairs.

IRAN DAILY: Israel has

reignited hostilities following a temporary cease-fire. There's a belief that, considering the extensive criticism both domestically and internationally directed at Netanyahu's cabinet, his government might face a downfall after the conclusion of the war. Does this potential sce-

nario correlate with the ongoing continuation of the conflict?

**NABAVI:** Netanyahu is striving to retain both his authority and government even post-war. The implementation of



a robust stance against Hamas aimed at rebuilding his diminished credibility. Fortunately for him, the absence of formidable domestic rivals adds to his advantage. The uncompromising policy towards Palestinians isn't exclusive to Netanyahu's administration; any other government would likely

adopt a similarly stringent and suppressive approach. It appears there is a consensus in Israel, among regional and international actors (excluding the resistance movement), that if Hamas can't be eradicated, it should be sufficiently weakened to diminish its significant influence.

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# Optimization plan, more gas storage to help Iranians enjoy winter

Economy Desk

## PERSPECTIVE

Trying to help get through the winter easily for Iranians is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Oil, which, in order to achieve this goal,

has preventive strategies, including boosting gas and liquefied storage as well as implementing energy optimization plans.

The beginning of the cold season is always accompanied by an increase in the use of oil and gas products, especially in the household sector, while in recent years, Iran has experienced a daily gas shortage of about 250 million cubic meters.

Energy experts believe that the reasons for the gas shortage are related to indiscriminate consumption, both in the household and industrial sectors, improper planning for gas storage, reduction of investment in the energy sector, and the cheap tariffs of energy carriers.

By reviewing the experiences, the Ministry of Oil made efforts to take effective steps to pass through the winter easily, including making greater investment in the infrastructure sector, and developing gas storage plans along with implementing four big plans to optimize energy consumption.



## Smartening plans

Smartening the gas distribution network of major industries and domestic and commercial consumers is also a priority action in the agenda of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC).

The national plan for optimizing the furnace room of resi-

dential and commercial units was also put on the agenda, in line with the policies of the Ministry of Oil to optimize the consumption of natural gas and as a result reduce air pollution and the cost of users.

The plan also helps create employment in the country, with

financial and technical support for those who have a central heating system which will be checked for free.

According to the announcement of the NIGC, the number of optimization of furnace houses in the first year of implementation was 9,000, and in

the second year, the figure hit 34,000, and now it has reached about 80,000.

Replacing 4.1 million high-efficiency heaters with low-efficiency ones is on the agenda, as it has been announced that this project will be completed in three years.

## Storage of 3 bcm of natural gas

This Iranian year, in the field of storage, an unprecedented record was set in the last decade, as a total of about 3 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas were injected into the underground storage tanks of Sarajeh in Qom Province and Shourijeh D in Khorasan Razavi Province.

On the sidelines of a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Minister of Oil Javad Owji announced the increase in the daily production of 50 million cubic meters of gas since the beginning of the incumbent government in August 2021.

According to him, the volume of injected gas to storages is 3.1 bcm, as 3.2 billion liters of liquid fuel is now kept in tanks, which has increased by 15 and 21 percent, respectively, compared to last year.

Also, the Ministry of Oil and its affiliated companies have special plans for the development of storage projects, including the second phase of gas storage project in Shourijeh field as well as conducting feasibility studies on construction of other storage facilities.

## Offering incentives

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber recently announced the details of providing discounts and incentives to natural gas users, in line with encouraging gas clients for optimal consumption.

He urged ministries, organizations, institutions and state-run companies, the Armed Forces and general governorates to observe the optimal and safe consumption of natural gas.

## Expert view

The average storage capacity of natural gas in the world is 11 percent of the total gas consumption.

This figure is, on average, 23 percent in European countries, and only 1.4 percent in Iran.

The storage capacity of the country is currently about 3.4 billion cubic meters, and the capacity of using hydrocarbon reservoirs for natural gas storage is up to a capacity of over 200 million cubic meters per day.

Nersi Qorban, an energy expert, believes that the government should offer low-interest loans or incentives to industries in order to build gas storage facilities.

Our country has surplus gas in the summer, he said, adding that we can provide this surplus gas to industries in various forms including LNG, LPG, CNG, and natural gas. Gas storage by industries has a significant effect on solving the seasonal shortage of gas in winter and, at the same time,

industries can store natural gas to use when they face a gas shortage, Qorban noted. It is necessary to attract investors for gas and liquid fuel storage, Qorban emphasized, saying that measures have been initiated for gas storage, which must be developed.

Referring to the very low cost of energy in the country, Qorban said that gas consumption in the winter season can be lowered by increasing the price of energy.

## Iran, Russia witness growth in maritime transport

A senior official at Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization announced a significant increase in maritime transport between Tehran and Moscow in recent months.

Khosrow Saraei, the director general of the PMO office of transit, logistics, and agreements noted that Iran has offered an 80-percent discount on the roll-on/roll-off (RO-RO) ships to accelerate the process of transport between the two countries, IRNA reported.

Referring to the exchange of delegations between the two countries and the visit of the Russian delegations to the northern and southern Iranian ports, Saraei harbored hope that such exchanges and visits would expand bilateral maritime cooperation. "Iran's maritime transport is ready to transit 20 million tons of goods."

## Economic growth in dire need of boosting insurance industry



By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writer

The insurance industry is a vital part of the Iranian economy, providing financial protection and risk management services to individuals and businesses. The insurance industry is regulated and supervised by the Central Insurance of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is an institution

established in the form of a state-owned company. The Central Insurance of the Islamic Republic of Iran is also empowered to carry out compulsory and non-compulsory reinsurance business.

According to the latest available data, there are over 25 direct insurance companies and two reinsurance companies operating in the Iranian market, most of them established in the last 10 years. The insurance companies offer a variety of products and services,

including life, health, property, liability, motor, marine, aviation, engineering, and agricultural insurance. The insurance companies render their services through over 1,000 branches, a network of 34,000 agents and nearly 600 brokers.

The insurance industry plays an important role in the economic growth of Iran by mobilizing savings, facilitating investment, enhancing financial stability, and supporting social welfare. It also contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP) of Iran by generating added value, creating employment, and paying taxes. The insurance industry also helps to diversify the economy and reduce its dependence on oil revenues, which are volatile and subject to external shocks.

The industry also supports the development of other sectors of the economy by providing risk transfer and risk sharing mechanisms. For example, the insurance industry enables the expansion of trade and commerce by covering the risks of transportation and credit. The insurance industry

also fosters the development of capital markets by investing in securities and providing long-term funds. Moreover, it promotes social welfare by providing health insurance, pension plans, and social security plans.

In Iran, the insurance industry has faced several challenges and opportunities in recent years, such as the impact of sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and technological innovations. The insurance industry has shown resilience and adaptation to these changes by adjusting its products, prices, and distribution channels. Furthermore, it has also benefited from the government's reforms and policies, such as the health transformation plan, the development plan, and the compulsory health insurance coverage law.

The insurance industry in Iran has a great potential for further growth and development, given the low insurance penetration and density, the large population, the young and educated workforce, and the rich natural resources of the country. It can leverage the

opportunities offered by regional and international markets, especially the neighboring countries and China. However, the insurance industry also faces some challenges and threats, such as the gap between private and public medical expenses, the lack of international credit ratings, competition from foreign insurers, and regulatory and legal uncertainties.

To achieve its full potential, the insurance industry in Iran needs to overcome these challenges and seize these opportunities by implementing effective strategies and policies. Some of the possible strategies and policies include: improving the quality and efficiency of insurance services, enhancing the financial and technical capacity of insurance companies, developing new and innovative products and services, expanding the coverage and benefits of insurance schemes, strengthening the supervision and regulation of the insurance market, increasing public awareness and trust in insurance, and fostering cooperation and integration with other sectors and countries.



The photo shows the building of the Central Insurance of IR Iran in Tehran.

# Mahalat's autumn splendor, a catalyst for tourism and economic growth

## Iranica Desk

Few experiences rival the enchanting sound of rustling autumn leaves beneath one's feet, especially when those leaves come from majestic plane trees that have stood tall for centuries. In the historic city of Mahalat, Markazi Province, autumn and plane trees come together to create a symphony that captivates tourists, eagerly awaiting the chance to complete this mesmerizing performance. The delightful sound of rustling autumn leaves stirs up countless memories in the minds of all who encounter it.

With approximately 5,300 plane trees, ranging from 700 to 1,200 years old, Mahalat's neighborhoods are transformed into a mesmerizing wonderland, as a carpet of vibrant autumn leaves covers the ground, ISNA wrote.

Visitors have a unique opportunity to explore these neighborhoods and indulge in a delightful autumn experience, knowing that this is just one of the many enchanting moments this beautiful city has to offer. As autumn sets in, tourism officials and neighborhood authorities should seize the opportunity to invite people from across the country to visit Mahalat, encouraging them to spend a few days immersing themselves in the wonders of this season through diverse programs designed to boost tourism.



● IRNA

Of course, the fallen leaves of the plane trees and other leafy trees in the city serve various purposes. They attract customers, ranging from florists seeking decorative foliage to farmers collecting leaves for fertilizer.

Municipal workers diligently clean the streets and water channels, ensuring the city remains pristine amidst the colorful foliage. Some travelers

may even be drawn to Mahalat, especially for its renowned autumn scenery, having heard tales of its breathtaking neighborhoods. And, of course, the residents themselves take immense pleasure in the arrival of autumn, reveling in the beauty of fallen leaves and allowing their souls to be filled with the magic of the season in their beloved city. While the municipality

strives to preserve the fallen leaves in Sarcheshmeh Park, ensuring the park remains adorned with nature's carpet for a few days of people's recreational enjoyment, this effort alone is not enough. Creative measures must be taken to fully harness the potential of autumn's natural splendor, increasing social enjoyment and, ultimately, boosting tourism. Organizing an autumnal festival

could be a simple yet meaningful step in this direction, bringing communities together to celebrate the season and further highlighting Mahalat's allure as a tourist destination.

This festival of a thousand autumn colors only seems to yield family photos, selfies, and social media posts. Unfortunately, this output fails to truly capture the potential of this occasion.

Even after many years, no one has come up with an idea to fully utilize this unique opportunity. While it is true that the geographical slope of the neighborhoods and the possibility of rain and flooding preclude leaves from lasting long, this does not detract from the opportunity at hand. In fact, locals engage in an unwritten competition over collecting leaves, especially during off-hours when traffic is light. Pickup trucks are often seen gathering the leaves to transport them to farms or greenhouses.

Seeing how the tourism industry can heavily rely on creative ideas and attention to existing potentials, it is clear that exploiting this natural opportunity doesn't require heavy expenses. Rather, it presents a chance to generate income, promote economic growth, and create social enjoyment. In short, this occasion should be properly leveraged to boost local urban economies and livelihoods alike.

## Qajar Bathhouse, a window into Qazvin's history and culture

### Iranica Desk

The Qajar Bathhouse is a historical monument and one of the prominent tourist attractions in Qazvin, the capital city of Qazvin Province. It was constructed during the Safavid period and is now registered on Iran's National Heritage List. Currently, the Qajar Bathhouse serves as the Qazvin Anthropology Museum, offering visitors the opportunity to not only appreciate its architectural and historical features but also to gain insights into the culture and customs of the people of Qazvin, IRNA wrote. The Qajar Bathhouse, located in the Obeid Zakani neighborhood, is one of the oldest and

largest bathhouses in Qazvin. In the past, it served as a popular bathing place for the city's residents, serving various practical purposes. However, over time its popularity waned, and it fell into a state of neglect and obscurity. Fortunately, the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization of Qazvin Province stepped in, purchasing and restoring the bathhouse to its former glory. The construction of the Qajar Bathhouse was commissioned by Shah Abbas II and carried out by Amir Goneh Khan, one of his ministers. Initially known as Shahi Bathhouse, it earned its current name during the Qajar period due to the fact that the architect belonged to

the Qajar dynasty. In 2,000, the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization of Qazvin Province acquired the historical structure, overseeing its restoration process with the support of the Qazvin Municipality and the Municipality Renovation Organization. The Qajar Bathhouse spans an area of approximately 1,045 square meters and is divided into separate sections for men and women. It follows the typical layout of Iranian bathhouses, consisting of three main parts: the entrance hall (*sarbineh*), the intermediate area (*miandar*), and the thermal room (*garmkhaneh*). These bathhouses are architecturally designed in accordance with

traditional medicine, gradually increasing temperature and humidity from the entrance hall to the thermal room. The main entrance of the bathhouse faces south and leads to the entrance hall through a captivating spiral staircase. There is another entrance from the west, possibly intended for women. The intricate tilework adorning the bathhouse is a prominent feature of Iranian architecture. Alongside the formal arches, this tilework serves as one of the main decorative elements of the Qajar Bathhouse. The floor is elegantly covered with marble, adding to its visual appeal. A notable feature of the bath-

house is its grand brick dome, which encompasses a central section with a distinct skylight. This skylight allows natural light to permeate throughout the entire complex, creating a serene atmosphere. In the past, bathhouses were constructed slightly lower than street level, and cupolas were incorporated into their ceilings to provide both lighting and ventilation, enhancing the aesthetic charm of Iranian bathhouses. Currently, the Qajar Bathhouse, which has been transformed into the Qazvin Anthropology Museum, has three sections: the Hall of Ethnicities, Occupations, and Traditions. Each section showcases

the vibrant daily lives of people through meticulously crafted life-sized wax sculptures. The entrance hall specifically highlights the predominant ethnicities residing in Qazvin, including Tat, Kurd, Lor, and Turk. The museum has taken great care in accurately portraying these ethnic groups, documenting their traditional attire down to the finest details. Moreover, the occupations and traditions depicted in the museum are based on well-documented and reliable information. Extensive research has been conducted to establish this museum, ensuring a comprehensive and authentic representation of the region's historical and cultural heritage.



● IRNA

## Two-state ...

Does this imply that the war will persist indefinitely?

**Page 1 >** Not indefinitely. Israel will persist in the conflict until it attains a sense of security or receives assurances from regional and international actors regarding its safety. The post-war future for Gaza has generated various proposals, all converging on the notion that Hamas should not retain significant power and influence. The involvement of Iran and Hezbollah could escalate the conflict into a regional war, but, as of now, both have exercised restraint. Despite the destructive nature of the Gaza war, it may pave the way for a new phase in the normalization of Arab-Israeli relations. Talks about normalizing Saudi-Israeli relations, postponed during the conflict, could potentially resume and progress more swiftly after the war subsides.

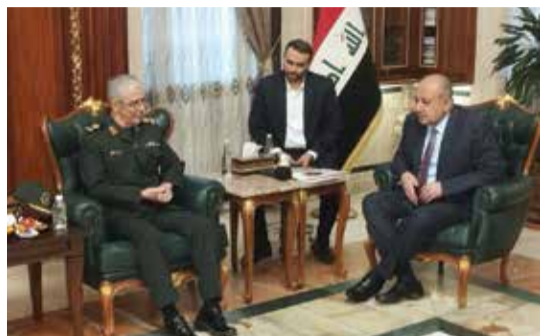
**Given the substantial losses suffered by Israelis in Gaza, particularly the high casualties on October 7, coupled with the widespread global sympathy for Palestinians, there is speculation that regional and international actors, notably the United States, may be inclined to engage with the Palestinian issue. What do you foresee for the future in this context?**

Numerous proposals have been put forward to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict, with the two-state solution emerging as the most widely discussed option. This solution is supported by UN resolutions and has garnered global consensus. However, implementing the two-state solution faces challenges. Israel has not embraced this approach, with certain political factions resisting the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Additionally, internal disagreements among Palestinians, exemplified by the problems during the Palestine Liberation Organization's rule in the West Bank, have hindered the creation of an effective governance model. Hamas rose to power amid problems within the self-governing entities, characterized by senior politicians maintaining control through repressive measures and the absence of free political competition. Criticisms, including administrative and financial corruption, have further complicated the situation. The division among Palestinians benefits Israel, making the realization of two separate states challenging.

**In the absence of the implementation of the two-state solution and the persistence of the option of war, Israelis will endure ongoing hardships and live in perpetual fear. Palestinians, in turn, will remain subjected to continued attacks.**

After a brief period, if the Gaza war concludes and a cease-fire is established, relief and aid will enter Gaza, and measures addressing Israel's security concerns will likely be implemented. There's a possibility of defining a buffer zone between Gaza and Israeli-occupied territories. However, the ultimate fate of Gaza remains uncertain. While tensions may ease, after the war Israel aims to secure several outcomes in its favor: Firstly, ensuring its security. Secondly, minimizing Hamas's influence in political and military processes. Thirdly, Israel seeks a return to normalcy in its relations with Arab countries. Arab nations generally support the two-state solution, but not all their plans hinge on the Gaza war. Despite the pursuit of the two-state solution, achieving it poses significant challenges.

## Iran, Iraq share 'very close' stance on Gaza war: Top general



Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri (R) meets with Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet Mohammed al-Abbasi in Baghdad on December 3, 2023. **IRNA**

Iran's top military commander said Iran and Iraq pursue a "very close" stance on the Palestinian issue, particularly the ongoing Israeli large-scale war on the Gaza Strip. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri made the announcement in a meeting in Baghdad on Sunday with Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet Mohammed al-Abbasi, Press

TV reported. Baqeri said the common stances of the Iranian and Iraqi governments, nations and religious authorities on leading regional and international developments are very important.

He highlighted Iraq's high position in Iran's foreign and defense policies, saying Tehran and Baghdad need to strengthen security and defense cooperation, given the current situation of the two countries and the region.

Pointing to the great achievements of the Iranian Armed Forces in tactical, strategic and technical spheres, the top general expressed the country's readiness to share its knowledge, experiences and capabilities with Iraq.

Baqeri also said the Iranian Armed Forces are prepared to stage bilateral or multilateral naval rescue and relief drills in the Persian Gulf.

The Iraqi defense chief, for his part, said his country's people, with different political views, feel bound to stand with the Palestinian people in the face of the Israeli regime.

In a meeting with Iraqi Minister of Interior Abdul Amir al-Shammari on Sunday, Baqeri hailed the measures taken by the Iraqi government to control border areas between the two neighboring states.

He noted that joint activities of the two countries' border guards can help establish full security along the borders.

He added that 1,500 kilometers of common border between Iran and Iraq "should be the border of friendship, trade and safe tourism."

## AEOI unveils nuclear achievements: Microwave radiation, advanced gamma systems

### National Desk

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran on Sunday unveiled its two nuclear achievements, including a microwave radiation system and an improved self-shielding gamma radiation system.

The microwave radiation system, with the aim of atomic analysis of elements, along with the improved self-shielding gamma radiation system for the eradication of agricultural pests were unveiled in the presence of the organization's chief, Mohammad Eslami.

As a sign of advancements in nuclear technology and radiation systems, the microwave radiation system was built for the first time in the world with the most advanced technology for the purpose of atomic analysis of materials by the specialists of an Iranian company.

This system offers si-



**IRNA**

multaneous and rapid analysis of several elements, regardless of their concentration levels, with high accuracy, and has many applications in sectors such as environmental, pharmaceutical, food, chemical and other industries.

Also, with the ability to irradiate bulk agricultural products such as grains and legumes, the unveiled self-protection gamma radiation system causes disinfection, control of germination and

reduction of storage pests, and increases the storage time of products by reducing the microbial load and destroying food spoilage microorganisms.

Irradiation method has many advantages compared to other pest control methods, such as the use of poisons, chemical pesticides, etc., including high reliability, permeability, ease and simplicity of use, fast and continuous process, while not having any harmful residue.

## At least 700 Gazans killed in a single day as Israeli bombing intensifies

US VP: Gaza images, videos are devastating

### International Desk

Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip sought shelter in an ever-shrinking area of the south on Sunday as Israel stepped up its bombing from air, sea and land across the enclave, killing at least 700 in a single day.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza announced on Sunday that more than 700 Palestinians were killed in the past 24 hours, as a result of Israel's ongoing aggression on the besieged strip. The renewed warfare fol-

lowed the collapse on Friday of a seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas fighters. The Israeli Army also ordered more areas in and around the enclave's second-largest city of Khan Younis to evacuate. Heavy bombardments were reported overnight and into Sunday in the area of Khan Younis and the southern city of Rafah, as well as parts of the north that had been the focus of Israel's blistering air and ground campaign. US Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday reiter-

ated Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but said international and humanitarian law must be respected, noting that too many Palestinians have been killed.

"Frankly, the scale of civilian suffering, and the images and videos coming from Gaza are devastating," Harris told reporters. "So, we all want this conflict to end as soon as possible, and to ensure Israel's security and ensure security for the Palestinian people. We must accelerate efforts to build an enduring peace."

### 'Too much to bear'

The UN human rights chief urged for an end to the war, saying the suffering of civilians was "too much to bear."

Many of the territory's 2.3 million people are crammed in the south after Israeli forces ordered civilians to leave the north in the early days of the two-month-old war, sparked by an Oct. 7 attack by Hamas that killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in southern Israel.

### Gaza deaths over 15,000

The Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said the death toll has surpassed 15,200, and 70% of those killed are women and children. With the resumption of fighting, hopes for another temporary truce receded. A week-long cease-fire, which expired Friday, had facilitated the release of dozens of Gaza-held Israeli and foreign prisoners and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Britain's Defence Ministry confirmed at the weekend that its military will conduct surveillance flights over Gaza to help locate prisoners held by Hamas. Hamas fighters seized



**AFP**

around 240 Israelis and foreigners, according to Israeli authorities. Around 110 have since been freed, mainly during the recent week-long truce.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday that France was "very concerned" by the resumption of violence in Gaza, and that he was heading to Qatar to help in efforts to kickstart a new truce.

Macron also told a press conference at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai that the situation required the doubling down on efforts to obtain a lasting cease-fire and the freeing of all prisoners. He said Israel "must more precisely define" what it seeks to accomplish in its war as the full elimination of the Hamas resistance group would take a decade. Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein

Amir-Abdollahian said the United States' supportive policies are the main factor encouraging the Zionist regime to continue the massacre of civilians in the besieged strip.

In a Saturday phone call with the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, Amir-Abdollahian stressed the necessity of putting an immediate end to Israel's crimes against Palestinians.

"The Zionist regime's military attacks against the people of Gaza must stop as soon as possible to pave the way for the dispatch of humanitarian aid," he said. More than 1.7 million people have been displaced, most of them from northern Gaza, since Israel launched its military offensive on Gaza.

**Reuters, AP, Al Jazeera, and Press TV contributed to this report.**



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist





# US providing bunker buster bombs for Israel's war on Gaza

The US has provided Israel with large bunker buster bombs, among tens of thousands of other weapons and artillery shells, to help dislodge Hamas from Gaza, US officials said.

The surge of arms, including roughly 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells, began shortly after the Oct. 7 attack and has continued in recent days, the officials said. The US hasn't previously disclosed the total number of weapons it sent to Israel nor the transfer of 100 BLU-109, 2,000-pound bunker buster bombs, The Wall Street Journal reported. The airlift of hundreds of millions of dollars in munitions,

primarily on C-17 military cargo planes flying from the US to Tel Aviv, shows the diplomatic challenge facing the Biden administration. The US is urging its top ally in the region to consider preventing large-scale civilian casualties while supplying many of the munitions deployed.

"I made clear that after a pause, it was imperative that Israel put in place clear protections for civilians, and for sustaining humanitarian assistance going forward," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Dubai on Friday.

Some security analysts say the weapons transfers could undercut the administration's

pressure on Israel to protect civilians.

Unlike in Ukraine where the US has published regular updates on some of the weapons it has provided to support Kiev's fight against the Russian invasion, Washington has disclosed little about how many and what types of weapons it has sent to Israel during the current conflict. US officials say the lack of disclosure is a result partly of the fact that Israel's weapons come through a different mechanism, including military sales. Israel also is one of the largest recipients of US military aid, receiving \$3.8 billion every year. The arsenal of artillery, bombs

and other weapons and military gear have been used by the US in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Libya, among other places, usually to target large groups of gathered enemy forces. In Gaza, by contrast, Israel is battling fighters who are among civilians in dense urban environments.

"They are kind of the weapons of choice for the fights we had in Afghanistan and Syria in open, nonurban areas," said Mick Mulroy, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense and officer in the Marine Corps and CIA. "The US may use them in more urban areas, but first it would do a

lot of target analysis to make sure the attack was proportional and based on military necessity."

President Biden initially expressed full support for Israel and its military campaign against Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack, but the soaring civilian death toll in Gaza has caused the administration to shift in recent days.

More than 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza since the war began, according to the authorities in Gaza. The number doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants.

Among the munitions the

US has transferred to Israel are more than 5,000 Mk82 unguided or "dumb" bombs, more than 5,400 Mk84 2,000 pound warhead bombs, around 1,000 GBU-39 small diameter bombs, and approximately 3,000 JDAMs, which turn unguided bombs into guided "smart" bombs, according to an internal US government list of the weapons described by The Wall Street Journal by US officials.

The BLU-109 bunker buster carries a 2,000 pound warhead and is designed to penetrate a concrete shelter. The US military also used the bombs in the Persian Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan.

## Will the US cause Iran to lose trust in it once again?



By Zohreh Qanadi  
Staff writer

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always had justified reasons for harboring a lack of confidence in the United States and its policies over the past decades. This distrust has manifested in various intensities, with one notable instance being the impactful withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), by former president Donald Trump in 2018. Trump claimed that the deal – which resulted in the lifting of many Western-led sanctions on Tehran in return for curbs on its nuclear activi-

ties – undermined the security of the American people, which he had sworn to protect, and, accordingly, ended US participation in it. He got the United States out of the agreement, and subsequently re-imposed those sanctions and more on Tehran. He also made it challenging for the European parties of the deal to keep it alive and closed the long-drawn diplomatic path that took years to yield results.

He did this despite a lack of evidence that Iran was violating the agreement. The International Atomic Energy Agency had verified Tehran's compliance numerous times.

It was the United States that was in violation of

an agreement that the international community believed was working. The US put the agreement under serious threat and prompted Tehran to retaliate by ramping up its nuclear activities to levels beyond what was allowed under the JCPOA. Trump's withdrawal raised doubts about US credibility and its ability to stick to international commitments.

In July 2021, upon Biden's administration taking office, Iran's Leader criticized the US as an untrustworthy partner, urging the new government to "learn" from the previous administration's experience of engaging with them.

"The US has no hesitation in violating its promises and commitments, just as it violated the [nuclear] agreement, making it completely useless," said Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

### Shooting itself in the foot

Once more, the recent move by the US House of Representatives, passing a measure against another agreement with Iran, could undermine potential future agreements

with the country for years.

On Thursday, the House passed a bipartisan measure that would block the Islamic Republic from accessing the \$6 billion transferred by the US in a prisoner swap. This step was taken by the Democrats in response to Iran's alleged role in the deadly attacks last month by Hamas on Israel. Almost half of the Democratic congressmen voted against endorsing President Biden's prisoner deal with Iran, undermining his effective negotiations with Tehran. If it passes into law, it would be another instance of the US shooting itself in the foot, eroding diplomatic leverage and credibility once again.

The US and Iran reached an agreement in August that eventually saw the release of five detained Americans in Tehran, and an unknown number of Iranians imprisoned in the US, after billions of dollars in frozen Iranian assets were transferred from banks in South Korea to Qatar. But days after the October 7 attack by Hamas, the US and Qatar agreed that Iran would not be able to access the money in the meantime, with officials stopping short of a full

refreezing of the funds.

The Thursday bill — titled the No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act — passed 307-119, as the voters sought to hold the Biden administration accountable for what they call their complicity in funding Iranian-backed terrorism in the Middle East.

This is while US officials have rebuffed this criticism, noting that not a single dollar has yet to be made available to Iran, and insisting that when it is, it can only be used for humanitarian purposes.

Critics like McCaul say that despite the money being restricted to aid, it is "fungible," and could free up other funds for Tehran to provide support to Hamas, as they believe it did before it attacked Israel in early October. Iran's Leader at the time praised the Palestinian youths and masterminds of the operation for achieving a remarkable victory, rejecting as "miscalculations" the claims that the "epic" act was not a "Palestinian job."

US officials also acknowledged that there was no concrete evidence of Iranian involvement in the Hamas attack from Gaza, with White House national security spokesman John Kirby saying that "Iran has long supported Hamas... but in terms of

specific evidence on this, these sorts of attacks, no, we don't have anything."

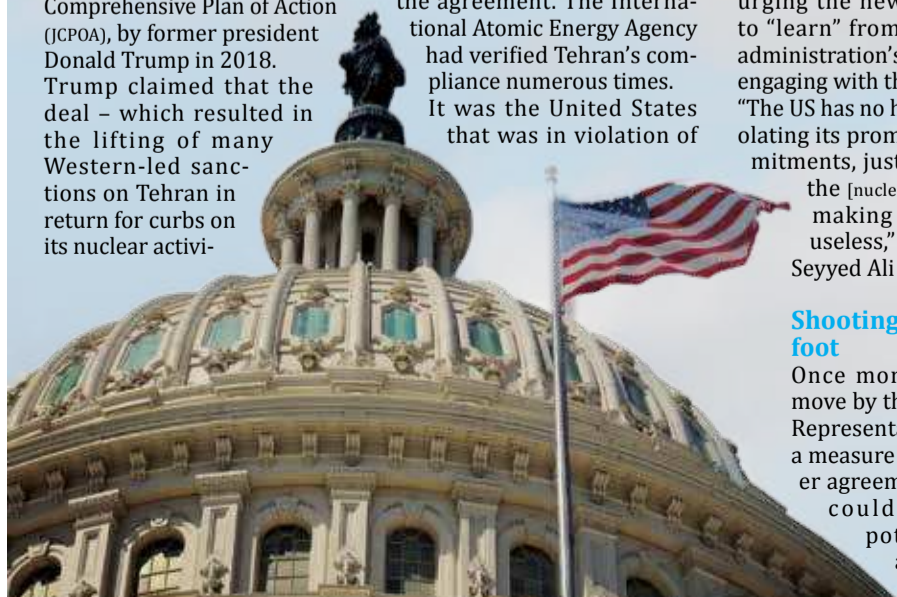
Also, a spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said at the time that "Iran is a major player but we can't yet say if it was involved in the planning or training."

### Iran's own money

Moreover, Republicans are accusing the Biden administration of allocating funds to Iran that rightfully belonged to the country.

Ultimately, should this measure be passed as law, aside from undermining Tehran's partially-regained trust in Washington and closing diplomatic channels, it would also disrupt humanitarian acts for the Iranian people. That law would force the US to impose sanctions on Qatari banks and any other entities engaged in transactions, preventing Iran's assets from being spent on the purchase of food and medicine.

The unfolding events will reveal whether the Biden administration will support these amendments in becoming law, potentially dismantling half-hearted diplomacy with Iran once again.



# AFC Champions League: Sepahan, Persepolis up for crunch group finales



MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA



PAYAM SANI/IRNA

## Sports Desk

Two last-16 spots will be up for grabs when Sepahan and Persepolis head into Matchday 6 of the group stage in the AFC Champions League today and tomorrow. Saudi Pro League giants Al Ittihad, Al Hilal, and Al Nassr plus Emirati club Al Ain have already secured a place in the knockouts, with eight other West Zone teams still fancying their chances of progress in the Asian elite clubs' competition. Sepahan visits Mecca's King Abdulaziz Sport City today to take on Group C leader Al Ittihad, knowing a single point will all but guarantee a first knockout berth in

11 years for the Persian Gulf Pro League side as one of the three best runner-up teams across the five West groups – thanks to a far superior goal difference. A victory will see Sepahan leapfrog the Saudi heavyweight into the top spot in the group, though Jose Morais's men have bigger reasons to go all out for maximum points, as they felt hard-done by when the AFC handed them a 3-0 loss – banning the club from playing at home for three matches – in the aftermath of the canceled reverse fixture in October, for what the Asian football governing body described as the Iranian side's failure to “act in a politically neutral manner” at Isfahan's Naqsh-e

Jahan Stadium. Sepahan bounced back from the verdict disappointment in style, demolishing Uzbekistan's AGMK 9-0 before edging out Air Force Club of Iraq 1-0 last week in Tehran, though the latter triumph proved costly for the Iranian team, as young international midfielder Mohammad-Javad Hosseinnejad and center-back Hadi Mohammadi received their marching orders and will miss today's encounter. Al Ittihad, meanwhile, will be without former Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema after the French talisman was forced out injured during a domestic league victory over Al Khaleej on Thursday.

Moroccan Abderrazak Hamdallah will lead the line for the host today, with the prolific striker in flying form this season, bagging 12 goals in 16 matches – including three in as many matches in the Asian club event.

## Red-hot day at Azadi

Things will be more complicated when Persepolis welcomes Al Duhail to Tehran's Azadi Stadium in Group E on Tuesday. While even a win against the Qatari champion could be followed by the group-stage exit for the Tehran Reds, a draw might prove to be enough to see Yahya Golmohammadi's men go through, should the results in other groups

go their way. Plagued by injuries and a flu virus, Persepolis has been struggling with form in recent weeks as the goalless stalemate against Al Nassr in Riyadh last Monday was a fourth draw in a five-game winless run for the Reds. Midfielder Milad Sarlak and skipper Omid Aalishah remain doubts for the game after walking out injured against Al Nassr, while young striker Mohammad Omri will face a race against time to recover from a minor problem. Aalishah's second-half strike led his side a 1-0 victory over Al Duhail in October's game, in which Persepolis was by far the better of the two sides but wasteful in

the opposition box and Golmohammadi hopes his frontline, inspired by international winger Mahdi Torabi, will be more clinical on Tuesday. Persepolis boss, who steered his team to the 2020 final, will also be eager to see a raucous crowd at the Azadi Stadium play its part in pushing the Reds forward in the must-win contest. Persepolis fans have fond memories of the last time playing the Qatari side at home, when Branko Ivankovic's short-handed side, trailing a first-leg 1-0 loss and a halftime one-goal deficit, pulled off a brilliant comeback by scoring three in the second half to progress to the semifinals.

# Germany v Scotland in Euro 2024 opener, Italy drawn with Spain

REUTERS – Hosts Germany will face Scotland in the opening match of Euro 2024 in Munich following the draw on Saturday and defending Champions Italy will be in the same group as Spain. The Germans, three-times winners, will kick off the one-month tournament in Munich on June 14, with the final on July 14 at Berlin's Olympic stadium. Germany will also play Hungary, who came through the qualifying campaign unbeaten, and Switzerland in Group A. “It's no group of death but a very strong group and we are looking forward to it,” Germany manager Julian Nagelsmann said. The hosts appointed Nagelsmann as manager in September after parting ways with Hansi Flick following a 4-1 home defeat by Japan, their fourth loss in five games. They beat France under Rudi Voeller, but after Nagelsmann began with a win over the United States they lost to against Turkey and Austria. “I am optimistic that if we do some things in the coming few months then we will play a good Euro. The first game also has a special kind of pressure,” said Voeller, the national team director. “We still have some problems but I am convinced that Julian Nagelsmann will do it,” Voeller added. Italy faces a tough task to de-



The photo shows the groups during the Euro 2024 draw in Hamburg, Germany, on December 2, 2023.  
KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

fend their title, drawn in Group B along with Spain, Croatia and Albania. Italy defeated Spain on penalties in the semi-finals on their way to winning Euro 2020, but lost 4-0 to the Spanish in the 2012 final. Croatia reached the semi-finals at the last World Cup. “Yes, it could have been better,” Italy manager Luciano Spalletti said. “Being in the fourth pot makes

you realise that you have teams ahead of you but nothing should distract us from the fact we are Italy. “A tough group, Albania showed that they know how to stay on the pitch. Croatia is strong and experienced. Spain? Anyone who loves this sport must play it, the taste if challenge and comparison.” Spalletti added. Spain's opening game is against Croatia, before they take on Italy.

“If it's not the toughest group, it's one of the toughest,” Spain manager Luis de la Fuente said. “Italy are European champions, Croatia always reach the later stages and although they are not at their best, they are two historic teams. And don't forget Albania, top of their group.” France and the Netherlands will meet again after coming through qualifying in the same group, drawn in Group D along-

side Austria and the winners of playoff A. France, who won both games against the Dutch on their way to topping the qualifying group, kick off their Euro 2024 campaign against Austria in Duesseldorf. “The Pot 3 team we'll be facing are The Netherlands... We won both our games against them but it makes our group harder. We also faced Austria during the lat-

est Nations League campaign and it was far from easy. It's a dense and difficult group,” France coach Didier Deschamps said. England, runners-up at Euro 2020, are in Group C alongside Denmark, Slovenia and Serbia. England, who needed extra time to see off Denmark in the 2020 semi-finals, start the tournament against Serbia. “You look at Serbia with a centre forward like Aleksander Mitrovic and then you have to be careful not to assume anything when you see these draws, that's for certain,” England manager Gareth Southgate said. “You can look at it on paper but the games aren't played on paper. There are some teams that you are glad to avoid in Pot 3 and Pot 4 but all of the teams that we play are more than capable.” In Group E, Belgium faces Romania, Slovakia and the winners of playoff B, Israel, Bosnia, Ukraine or Iceland. Portugal are in Group F, alongside Turkey, Czech Republic and the playoff C winners, one of Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan or Luxembourg, who finished third in Portugal's qualifying group. The top two in each of the six Euro 2024 groups proceed to the round of 16 along with the four best third-placed finishers. The draw was held at the Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg, one of the 10 host cities of the tournament.



# Minister warns of irreversible damage of subsidence in Iran



**Social Desk**

Iran's Minister of Interior has expressed concern over land subsidence, stating that it is one of the most severe phenomena that can occur in the country, and once it happens, it cannot be reversed. Ahmad Vahidi, speaking at the National Coordination and Command Headquarters of Crisis Response Operations, emphasized the need for preparedness and utilization of scientific expertise to prevent land subsidence.

He highlighted that the current measures are insufficient, especially in Isfahan Province, which is particularly affected by this issue. Vahidi stressed the importance of prioritizing resources and taking swift preventive actions to address this critical issue. He also emphasized the necessity of establishing crisis management headquarters in every organization and ensuring competent individuals are appointed to make timely decisions in such situations. In other news, governor of Teh-

ran highlighted the seriousness with which the authorities are pursuing measures to reduce land subsidence in the city. Ahmad Qayyumi mentioned that a bill concerning the responsibilities of institutions regarding subsidence is currently being considered by the parliament. He further stated that effective plans to combat subsidence, such as water recirculation, balancing initiatives, restoration of water resources, and decommissioning of unauthorized wells, will be pursued vigorously under the

governor's directives. During the meeting, various organizations including the Country Mapping Organization, Management and Planning Organization of Tehran Province, Geological Organization, Housing and Urban Development Research Center, Tehran City Crisis Prevention and Management Organization, Regional Water Company, Agricultural Organization, and Water and Wastewater Company presented reports on this issue. Helia Sadat Hosseini, the head of the General Department of

Environment and Sustainable Development of Tehran Municipality, previously described land subsidence as a silent earthquake or the earth's cancer. She highlighted that the southern, central, and western plains of Tehran Province are particularly affected by subsidence. Furthermore, she emphasized that Tehran holds the unfortunate record for the highest rate of land subsidence globally. To address this issue, she suggest-

ed measures such as reducing water consumption, promoting renewable resources to replenish aquifers, conserving water in the agricultural sector, injecting excess water into underground aquifers, efficient use of water resources, restricting excessive use of underground water basins, purifying urban water for reuse, and constructing absorption wells. These solutions are considered vital for managing subsidence in Tehran metropolis.

## Official explains Iranian Judiciary's Sejam System



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

The Sejam System in the Judiciary serves as an efficient and rapid communication channel between the public and the government. Operating under judicial supervision, it has received 116,000 reports and demands from citizens, all of which have been promptly addressed. This nationwide platform, accessible at [Sejam.scpd.ir](http://Sejam.scpd.ir), aims to proactively prevent crimes and offenses by engaging the public and ensuring swift intervention by the judiciary. In an interview with Iran Daily, Sejam's manager Arman Ahmadi states that approximately 166,000 users nationwide have enrolled in the Sejam system within the Social Deputy of the Judiciary. These users have volunteered as observers, actively contributing to the registration of offenses and crimes, aiding the ju-



diary in promptly addressing and resolving issues. Ahmadi emphasizes that all citizens of the Islamic Republic can serve as observers by registering in the Sejam system and actively participating in the prevention of crimes, damages, and various offenses. Citizens can swiftly report incidents such as overpricing, abuse of power by officials, solicitation of bribes in institutions, or illegal drug sales in specific areas through the Sejam system, utilizing internet platforms and mobile phones. Observers' identities are safe-

guarded as confidential by the judiciary. Ahmadi emphasizes the unequivocal confidentiality of the identities of individuals reporting (observers) to the judiciary. Upon registering a report, the judiciary assumes the role of defenders of citizens, promptly addressing and following up on complaints and demands, and delivering the outcomes of the investigations. Manager of the Sejam System in the Judiciary adds that 58 national organizations and institutions across 31 provinces of the country have dedicated folders in the Sejam judiciary system, streamlining the swift handling of demands. Ahmadi underscores the vital role of the government's responsiveness to people's demands in fostering public trust and legitimacy. He asserts that the primary objective of adversaries is to erode the social capital of the system. To achieve this, our enemies attempt, through their media, to insinuate that the government of Iran

is corrupt and inefficient, intending to undermine people's trust in the system. Social capital, a contemporary concept widely used in various human sciences, particularly in sociology, political science, and economics over recent decades, pertains to the relationships and interactions among members of society. Simply put, social capital can be encapsulated in interpersonal relationships and trust among individuals. The foremost objective for any government seeking legitimacy is to bolster social capital. Ahmadi emphasizes that advancing social capital stands as the chief objective for any government to secure legitimacy. This social capital, he asserts, is the cohesive force uniting citizens and the broader society in the face of challenges like floods, earthquakes, and in addressing crimes and other societal issues. The judiciary official explains that every visible problem in any corner is a consequence of

officials neglecting their duties. For instance, if you leave your house one morning and unexpectedly find your car wheels in a pit right outside, multiple agencies could be at fault – ranging from the entity that dug the hole to those responsible for filling it, beautification, and information dissemination. In such scenarios, citizens can promptly capture and digitally submit a photo of the scene, along with the address, time, and a description of the incident. The judiciary then conducts a swift investigation to identify the responsible agency, whether it is related to road maintenance, provincial authorities, municipality, telecommunications, or the gas department. Subsequently, they follow up on the matter and report the results to the citizen. "In such cases," he states, "the judiciary assumes the role of advocating for the people, defending their rights against implicated agencies, utilizing the legal right granted by Article

156 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which empowers the judiciary to prevent crimes." To illustrate their approach to handling people's complaints, Ahmadi provides an example: "In the realm of narcotics, a parent in a village in Kurdistan reported the existence of a hookah lounge next to two boys' high schools, claiming that this place encourages smoking among students and sometimes involves the sale of drugs. As you know, the presence of such establishments near schools is legally prohibited." He continues, "Immediately through the intelligent system and data mining, the location map and existence of such a place near schools were verified. Subsequently, an electronic letter was sent through the Social and Crime Prevention Deputy of the Kurdistan Province's judiciary to the head of the police overseeing public places in Kurdistan Province, leading to the swift sealing of the location by judicial authority."

**Notice Of international tender for export sale No ۱۴۰۲/۱۵**

**MINAKAN Co.**

Minakan Co. announces selling and export 3000 metric tons of Copper-Gold Concentrate (Sulfide) on basis of F.O.B at Bandar Abbas- Iran. Interested bidders should contact with the email [info@minakan.ir](mailto:info@minakan.ir) regarding tender documents. The deadline for obtaining documents is Monday 18/12/2023. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 12:00 P.M. on 03/01/2024 to Minakan Co. in Birjand Province. Bidders are invited to the transactions commission of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 14:00 P.M. on 03/01/2024 at the office of the Seller.

Content /item	Analysis Range
Cu%	15%-17%
Au, g/MT	Min 4ppm
Ag, g/MT	Min 300ppm
Pb%	Max 6%
S%	Min 25%
As%	Max 0.25%
Cd	Max 0.05%
F%	Max 0.1%

**MINAKAN Co.**

**PIC OF THE DAY**

The ceremony to plant two million saplings in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, as part of the nationwide initiative to plant one billion trees and saplings, took place on Saturday December 2, 2023, in the province's national lands, specifically in the city of Gachsaran.

● **BAHAR BAHADORAN/IRNA**

## 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.



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# 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.