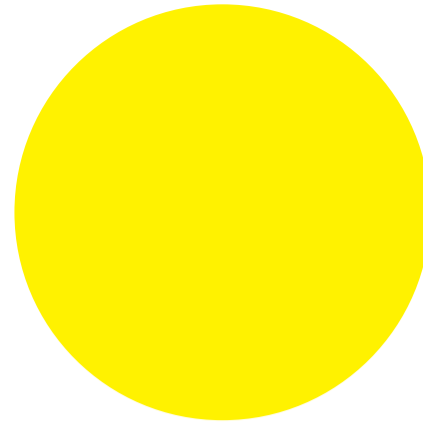


US policy on Israel at crossroad of presidential election

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SPECIAL ISSUE



Iran Daily

A deep-rooted ideology cannot be destroyed



By Mostafa Shirmohammadi
Editor-in-chief

EDITORIAL

The Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, in the wake of an unprecedented blitzkrieg on October 7 by Hamas that took Israel's intelligence apparatus off guard, has left a trail of death and destruction in the coastal enclave but has failed to achieve the declared goal of eliminating the Palestinian resistance movement. Hamas is believed to have around 30,000 fighters, and a fresh US intelligence estimate, reported by the Wall Street Journal on Sunday, indicates that only 20% to 30% of them have been killed since Israel unleashed its massive air and ground campaign on Gaza. The percentages mean that civilians, whom Israel considers as "collateral damage," make up the majority of the fatalities in the densely populated territory – between 16,000 to 19,000 – and that the bulk of Hamas forces are still fighting Israel's disproportionate military action.

More than three and a half months into the bloody war, the Israeli army, equipped with modern weaponry, is facing fierce resistance put up by Hamas fighters across the Gaza Strip, slowing the advances of the invading soldiers with simple arms.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, under immense fire domestically, seems to be pressing ahead with his war agenda to save his own political life. Netanyahu is well aware that an end to the devastating war could spell the end of his own career and thus disaster for him. Therefore, he keeps resisting any peace initiative, though the key objective of the military offensive – annihilating Hamas – remains extremely farfetched and sounds like a pipe-dream.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said on Monday that Israel's plan to take out Hamas in Gaza was not working, noting what Tel Aviv was doing in Gaza would "seal the hate for generations."

The aggression has killed more than 25,000 Palestinians, leveled many buildings, and left most of Gaza's 2.3 million people homeless. And Israel has said it will continue the war until Hamas is eradicated.

Israel's warmonger prime minister is unaware of the fact that a deep-rooted ideology cannot be crushed. Hamas has an ideology supported by many in the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank, and even beyond Palestinian territories. The more Israel kills in Gaza, the more grudge is nursed by those who lose a loved one. These Palestinians could be potential recruits, joining the ranks of the resistance movement to take up arms against Israel for revenge and fight for the liberation of their homeland.

Tehran, Islamabad to resume diplomatic ties after tit-for-tat raids

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Iran Bids Farewell to Slain Advisers

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People take part in a funeral ceremony held in Tehran on January 22, 2024, for three IRGC military advisers assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on Syria on January 20, 2024. TASNIM



Electricity supply link to Turkey, EU ready for use: Minister

Iran's Minister of Energy Ali Akbar Mehrabian said that a link built to supply electricity from Iran to Turkey and further to the European Union is ready to be used after successful tests were carried out on the transmission systems.

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Explore the enchanting beauty of Banood village's rocky shoreline

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Uzbek Tantashev appointed to referee Iran-UAE match

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Qand-e Parsi stamp unveiled to promote Persian

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili unveiled the Qand-e Parsi stamp during a ceremony on January 22 at Tehran's Rudaki Hall, recognizing the unparalleled role of the renowned poet Ferdowsi in promoting the Persian language.

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ECB staff feel Lagarde not right person to lead central bank

Reuters - The trade union representing European Central Bank staff said a majority of employees think Christine Lagarde is not the right person to lead the institution, according to a survey it conducted.

The survey by the International and European Public Services Organisation (IPSO) showed staff trust in the ECB's entire senior management team was lower than a year ago, with nearly 60% expressing a negative view.

Run to coincide with the middle of Lagarde's eight-year term as president and released on Monday, the union's survey showed ECB employees were mostly concerned with matters such as pay and working conditions.

However, IPSO said around half of those who responded expressed some doubts about Lagarde's track record on fighting inflation, the ECB's primary objective.

Lagarde and other ECB policymakers have had to grapple with a sharp surge in prices fuelled in part by the war in Ukraine and its impact on energy prices - a spike also unforeseen by many other central banks and economists.

An ECB spokesperson said the survey was flawed, and included topics "for which the Executive Board or Governing Council rather than solely the President is responsible and that are not within IPSO's remit".

The ECB said its president and board "were fully focussed on their mandate and have implemented policies to respond to unprecedented events in recent years such as the pandemic and wars".

Organisational gripes were a constant of IPSO surveys under Lagarde's two immediate predecessors Mario Draghi and Jean-Claude Trichet, but the pair received positive assessments by staff of their performance as central bankers.

IPSO said nearly 64% of the survey's roughly 1,100 respondents thought Lagarde had not improved the ECB's reputation, without specifying further.

In farewell surveys run about Draghi and Trichet, more than 70% thought they had improved the bank's reputation despite objections about other issues. IPSO did not conduct mid-term surveys of the pair.

Of the three ECB presidents, only Lagarde has had to deal with a period of sustained global inflation, which has hurt the living standards of workers, including those at the ECB. The ECB employs more than 3,500 people, opens new tab who have elected IPSO representatives to six out of nine seats on the bank's staff committee.



Electricity supply link to Turkey, EU ready for use: **Minister**

Iran's Minister of Energy Ali Akbar Mehrabian said that a link built to supply electricity from Iran to Turkey and further to the European Union is ready to be used after successful tests were carried out on the transmission systems.

Renewable electricity producers can also export electricity via the new link, Mehrabian said on the sidelines of the 19th edition of Iran's International Water & Wastewater Exhibition on Monday, according to IRNA. He said that the necessary lines

and facilities for transmission of electricity between Iran and Turkey have been constructed and tested.

The minister said the new link would also enable Iran to supply power to EU countries via Turkey. As the largest industrial and

commercial event in Iran, the international exhibition of Iran's water industry and water and sewage facilities is held annually with the participation of capable domestic and foreign companies in the field of water and sewage industry.

They showcase their latest achievements and products to the professionals and specialists of the industry and guide their future activities and innovations by considering the trend of market demand and the direction of growth of this industry.

Tehran, Havana keen to boost cooperation in ICT sector

Officials from Iran and Cuba emphasized enhancing cooperation in the field of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

In a meeting with First Deputy Minister of Communications of Cuba Wilfredo González Vidal, Iran's Minister of ICT Issa Zarepour stressed the readiness of Iranian ICT firms to participate in the IT market of Cuba, IRNA reported.

He noted that Iran is willing to share its experiences and know-how with the Latin American country in the fields of developing communication infrastruc-

tures, promoting electronic government (e-government), and launching mega data centers. Zarepour pointed to the significance of the development of relations with Cuba, saying Tehran and Havana share commonalities that can be used to broaden ties in all areas, especially in the field of communications and information technology.

He also referred to the unilateral US sanctions imposed against the two countries, and said these sanctions have created opportunities for Iranian companies to increase their indigenized knowledge and know-how.

Turning to the high capabilities and potentials of Iranian companies in different ICT sectors, the minister pointed out that Iranian ICT companies are ready to cooperate with Cuba in various fields such as the development of communications infrastructures, launching various platforms, implementation of the optical fiber project, and helping Cuba enhance its communications network from 2nd and 3rd generations to 4th generation.

Zarepour referred to the fruitful experiences of Iran in the field of e-government, and said it can share its experiences with the



Cuban government in this regard. The Cuban first deputy minister of communications, for his part, said his country attaches great importance to its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Since Iran has good experiences in the ICT field, Cuba is interested in enhancing cooperation with Iranian firms for the development of its ICT infrastructures, he added.

Over 98% of Yadavaran oilfield's flare gases collected



More than 98 percent of flare gases of the Yadavaran oilfield have been collected and sent to NGL 3200 plant, said the development plan director on Monday.

Mojtaba Moradi Enayat added that less than two percent of produced gases are burnt off due to safety measures and operations of the Central Treatment Export Plant

(CTEP), the Petroleum Engineering and Development Company (PEDEC) reported.

Flare stacks burnt the bulk of Yadavaran oilfield's associated petroleum gas (APG) until January 2023, he said, the gas delivery to the Persian Gulf Hoveyzeh Gas Refinery (NGL 3200 plant) started as the facility was gradually run.

Given the round-the-clock efforts made by the PEDEC employees, the downstream unit was completed and gas compressors were put into operation, making it possible to transmit around 120 million cubic feet (mcf) of gas to NGL 3200 plant, inject some 20 mcf into the field, and shut down the flare.

Iran's second-largest carmaker reports decline in output

The latest data related to the production of automobiles in Iran shows that Saipa, the second-largest carmaker in the country, saw a decrease in its output in the nine months to late December.

Saipa produced a total of 217,524 cars in Iran from March 21 to December 21, 2023, IRNA reported. The figure indicates a 3.5 percent drop from 225,380 cars in the same period last year.

A report by the Iranian exchange organization shows that Saipa's combined output of cars and pickup



trucks would reach nearly 420,000 units in the year to late March, down by nearly a half from the company's own annual production estimates.

IME monthly trade nears \$3b

The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 13.986 million tons of commodities, 29 vehicles and four apartment units with a total value of nearly \$3 billion on its physical market, registering growths of 16.7 percent in volume term and seven percent in value term during the month to January 20, compared with the month before that.

According to ime.co.ir, the ex-

change saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 11.144 million tons of commodities and 29 vehicles valued at almost \$2 billion.

On this floor the IME sold 4.9 million tons of cement, 4.249 million tons of iron ore, 1.725 million tons of steel, 520,500 tons of sponge iron, 69,725 tons of zinc, 36,206 tons of copper, 32,835 tons of aluminum, 800 tons of molybdenum

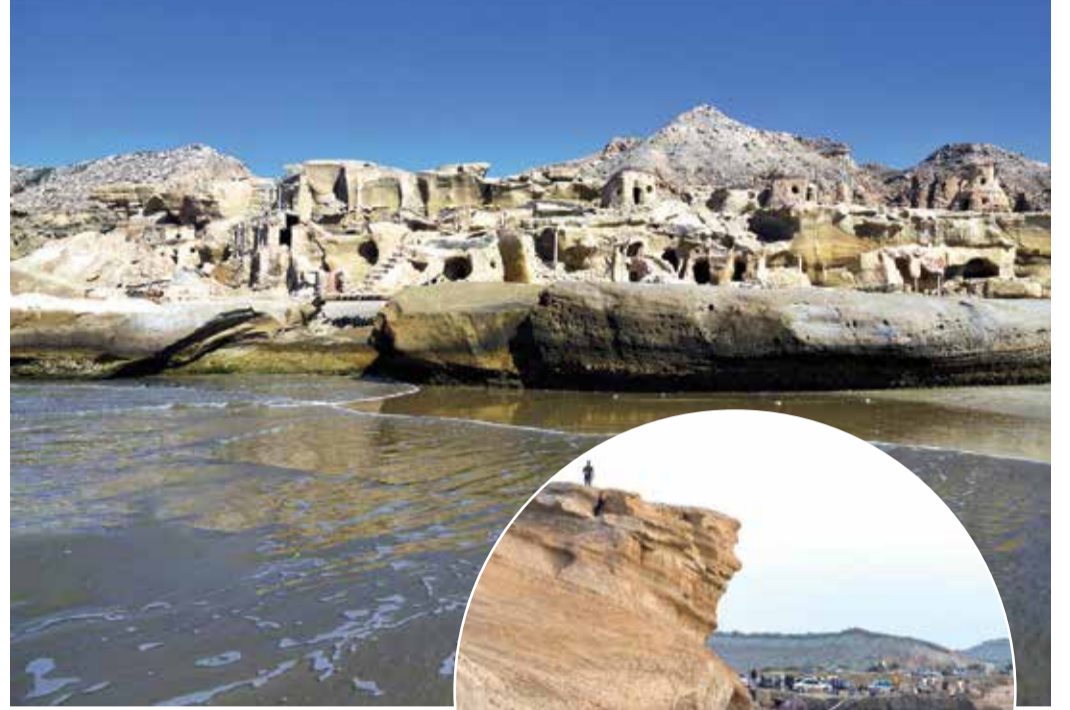
concentrate, 600 tons of coke, 200 tons of cast iron, 175 tons of lead, 57 tons of precious metals concentrate as well as 29 vehicles. The IME also traded 4 apartment units on its real estate and housing trading floor.

Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 2.361 million tons of commodities worth more than \$1 billion on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading

floor.

Items traded on this floor included 754,131 tons of bitumen, 737,400 tons of vacuum bottom, 419,600 tons of polymeric products, 223,500 tons of lube cut, 152,463 tons of chemicals, 46,500 tons of sulfur, 17,819 tons of oil, 9,612 tons of petroleum products, 1,860 tons of feedstocks, 1,148 tons of waterproofing materials and 500 tons of slop wax.

Explore the enchanting beauty of Banood village's rocky shoreline



Iranica Desk

Known for its rocky beach and close proximity to the Persian Gulf, Banood village is a popular tourist attraction in Bushehr Province. One of the reasons tourists are drawn to this pristine and beautiful beach is the rocky shoreline that opens up to the sea. Camping on the beach at night allows for the opportunity to enjoy the moonlight, light a fire, sit on the rocks, watch the bioluminescent plankton, and listen to the enchanting sound of the waves while witnessing the moon descending into the sea. Perhaps the most fascinating part of camping in the darkness of the night is the pleasure of seeing the surroundings at dawn to discover what wonders it has to offer.

After exploring the small beach, take a walk around it to reach a

small hill. If you can rappel down, you will find a small cave on the left, which leads to a larger cave where the waves of the beach and the sunlight enter through its two openings, presenting indescribable beauty to your eyes. Banood Cave is undoubtedly one of the main attractions of this area, considered a suitable place for photography and capturing unique moments. Therefore, a trip to Banood would not be complete without visiting it. Banood Beach is relatively close to Assaluyeh, free from environmental pollution. Therefore, when visiting this area, it's important not to leave any traces behind to preserve its untouched nature.

The Banood village coast, like other southern areas of Iran, can be very hot and exhausting in late spring and summer. Therefore, the best time to visit Banood

Beach is in late autumn, winter, and early spring, when the weather is mild and pleasant. It's best to plan your visit for the middle of the week to avoid the weekend crowds of local people.

As Banood Beach lacks facilities, make sure to bring your own water and food. You can obtain the necessary supplies from Assaluyeh or Banood village. If you visit during the tourist season, beware that the weather gets colder at sunset, so warm clothing is essential. Additionally, mosquitoes tend to appear at sunset, so it's advisable to bring insect repellent for protection. If you're considering camping on this beautiful beach, ensure you have all the necessary equipment.

While at Banood Beach, consider enjoying activities such as volleyball, beach football, and sandcastle building, or simply relax and

sunbathe. As the sea water here is relatively clean, ask the locals for a suitable place for swimming and water sports. Boating in this area is also enjoyable; you can rent fishing boats for this purpose from local fishermen.

If you're interested, camping on Banood Beach can offer a memorable stay in the heart of nature. Alternatively, you can head to Assaluyeh or Siraf Port (75 kilometers away) for accommodations.

The village of Banood is situated in the southernmost part of Bushehr Province, bordering Hormuzgan provinces. This village boasts a rich history, with remnants of a Sassanid dam, water mills, and the Nahire Spring. The surrounding springs, ponds, and palm trees offer an ideal setting for tourists seeking tranquility away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

IRNA

Central Asian collection at National Museums Scotland



When the Department of History and Applied Art at National Museums Scotland (NMS) underwent restructuring and the world cultures collections were established separately in 2004, the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) was created as a section independent from that of East and Central Asia (ECA).

Geographically, the Middle East was defined as an area from Turkey to Afghanistan and including the Levant and the Arabic Peninsula as well as the North Africa, whereas ECA would comprise a territory from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to Japan. This division had been set in advance through the interests the respective curators had developed over years before, although with one exception.

Central Asia, which corresponds with what was formerly Turkestan, had been a region with no clear responsibility, but rather a field of opportunistic attention.

Jennifer M. Scarce, while the curator in charge of the collections of Eastern Cultures from the early 1960s had specialised in the Middle East, with the Muslim western Central Asia being part of her remit. On her retirement in 1998, Jane Wilkinson, who had concentrated as her assistant on the Far East and subsequently become curator for these collections, took over the region of Central Asia in its entirety.

With this internal division following the national borders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Ulrike Al-Khamis, appointed curator for the Middle Eastern and South Asian collections and succeeding Jennifer Scarce, inherited all those Central Asian objects and specimens that originated from the Turkmen, Uzbeks and Tajiks who have settled in the present-day territory of Afghanistan and Iran.

Unlike North Africa which remained with its predominant Muslim population an indisputable part of the Middle East, the new allocation of responsibilities for the Central Asian holdings neglected existing cultural affiliations.

This inconsistency had to be resolved, and it was felt that for the purpose of best care the Central Asian collection should be split, taking into account Turkestan's longstanding historical and cultural relationships to its southern and eastern neighbours. Following the Arab conquest of Iran in the 7th century, Transoxiana had become a frontier area of the new Muslim empire. Its large cities of Bukhara and Samarkand were hubs of the main trade routes, facilitating the economic exchange between China and the Abbasid Iraq.

As the heart of the Timurid Empire in the late 14th and 15th centuries, this region devel-

oped into a centre for artistic innovations within the Iranian world, establishing styles and forms that continued to be standards for patronage even under the succeeding dynasties. The attempt of Russian power in the 20th century to replace the Islamic cultural tradition by a common ideology for all Soviet citizens did not prove to be successful; rather people have adhered to their ethnic identity and belief. To reflect these strong connections of western Central Asia with the Islamic world, the decision was made that the collections from Chinese Turkestan, now the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which had throughout history experienced mainly Chinese influence, would stay with ECA, while the holdings from the Central Asian Republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan would be transferred to the MESA section.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'The Central Asian Collection at National Museums Scotland: History and perspective', from a book titled, 'The Shaping of Persian Art: Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia' edited by Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



A silk carpet woven in different colours with a blossoming tree, two flower vases and cartouches with an inscription in National Museums Scotland from Iran, Kashan

US policy on Israel at crossroad of presidential election



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

The 2024 US presidential election are looming with yet another major option for the upcoming administration at hand, which is US's unwavering support for Israel that has been a bedrock belief of many American voters. But now with Gaza in the midst of bloodshed, the situation has changed. Voters are now sending conflicting signals about the direction of US policy, particularly as the war in Gaza extends into its fourth month, resulting in more than 25,000 Palestinian deaths. The American voters seem to be deeply divided on Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza. According to a New York Times/Siena College poll, the electorate appears to be of two minds on what should come next, a cease-fire, or a continuing campaign against Hamas, whose attack on Oct. 7 killed around 1,200 Israelis.



Given a choice between two courses of action, a narrow plurality of voters, 44 percent, said Israel should stop its military campaign to protect civilian casualties. While 39 percent advised the opposite course: Israel should continue its military action even if it means civilian casualties in Gaza mount.

Meanwhile, as economic issues are top of mind for US voters, Israel is still a sacred cow for the US, with presidential candidates competing to surpass each other in demonstrating support for it.

However, the candidates on stage this term seemed to find a rare point of agreement on the US support for Israel, with some going as far as to call for deportations of pro-Hamas students after anti-Semitism struck universities including Cornell and Harvard.

Multiple GOP candidates say they would take punitive action, including canceling visas for international students who rally in support of Hamas, or even more broadly, "anti-American and anti-Semitic foreigners at our colleges."

Also, Joe Biden's re-election bid this year puts him up against Republicans vying to outdo one another in support for Israel.

When Biden met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet during his visit to Israel in October, the US president assured them: "I don't believe you have to be a Jew to be a Zionist, and I am a Zionist."

Voters broadly disapprove of the way Biden is handling the bloody war in Gaza, the New York Times/Siena College poll has found, with younger Americans far more critical than older voters of both Israel's conduct and the administration's response to the war.

Some experts warn that the US support policy is a formula that may lock the country into deeper military and security engagement in the Middle East as hostilities worsen and Palestinian civilians continue



to suffer. This trajectory could deviate from the country's long-term interests.

"It's a self-defeating policy," said Brian Finucane, a former policy adviser in the US State Department on counterterrorism and the use of military force.

"What may be expedient in terms of short-term domestic politics may not be in the long-term interests of the United States," said Finucane, who is now a senior adviser to the International Crisis Group research organization. "Particularly if it results in the United States involving itself in further unnecessary wars in the Middle East."

So, to be aligned with US long-term interests, the Biden administration keeps pressing Israel to work toward eventual statehood for the Palestinians. Netanyahu keeps saying no. It is the biggest disagreement between the pair. Even on actions to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian civilians, the two allies are far apart on this matter.

It goes without saying that though the United States, as Israel's closest partner and largest weapons supplier, has stronger means to apply pressure on Israel, it shows no willingness to use them seriously.

Nevertheless, the United States considers Israel crucial to its Middle East policy, and its current stance toward Israel falls in line with its long-term interests. The US seeks to pressure Israel to get it on board with its policies. The ultimate goal appears to be resolving the Palestinian issue by establishing a Palestinian state, acting as a mediator between Israel and the Arab world, and achieving stability in the Middle East, while shifting focus toward the Far East, where China has emerged as the biggest challenger to US global dominance.

So, the division among voters regarding US policy on Israel, exposed by the recent poll, seems to limit the sitting president's



and other nominees' politically favorable choices.

The findings of the Times/Siena poll hold portents not only for Biden as he enters the campaign trail but also for long-term relations between Israel and its most powerful benefactor, the United States. Biden's current approach to Israel and Gaza raises questions about whether he will steer clear of unnecessary conflicts in the Middle East, like his two predecessors. Ensuring this requires a proactive pursuit of a cease-fire.

Therefore, the nominees' election promises for the US to "stand with Israel" is crucial for the country. The two former presidents successfully avoided direct involvement in Middle East conflicts. Considering the current administration's approach to Israel and Gaza, can we be sure the upcoming government will prevent the US from entering another unnecessary and destructive war in the Middle East?



Some experts warn that the US support policy for Israel is a formula that may lock the country into deeper military and security engagement in the Middle East as hostilities worsen and Palestinian civilians continue to suffer.

Muslim, Arab American voters part ways with Biden

By Fiona André
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

Before she was elected to Georgia's House of Representatives two years ago, Ruwa Romman, the first Palestinian American to hold any office in Georgia, campaigned for Joe Biden in 2020 in Atlanta's northeast suburbs, which she now represents.

Today, Romman, who is also the first Muslim woman to win a seat in Georgia's statehouse, said her neighbors with family in Gaza are scared, scrambling to get their loved ones out of the territory and feeling betrayed by Biden's embrace of Israel in the war against Hamas.

"This isn't like a group of people that didn't get a policy they wanted or throwing a temper tantrum. This is a situation where people feel like, 'Hey, you are directly contributing to my loss, my very personal loss,'" said Romman.

Many of her constituents, like Muslim voters across the country, have already announced they won't support the president in 2024, with some joining in active campaigning against his re-election, known as the Abandon Biden movement. These voters, who, for the most part, voted for Biden in 2020, have pledged to make him a "one-term president".



Muslim community leaders from several swing states pledge to withdraw support for US President Joe Biden at a conference in Dearborn, Michigan, on December 2, 2023, citing the president's refusal to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. AP

Soon after the war began, Biden's popularity among Muslim and Arab American voters fell, from 59% in 2020 to 17% in October 2023. As more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed since October, more have joined the movement, antagonized by President Biden's refusal to advocate for a cease-fire.

They are backed by a growing number of Americans who think the president should have a more balanced approach to the conflict. According to an Arab American Institute poll, 57% of Americans think the "US should act as a fair and impartial broker between Israelis and Palestinians."

But the Abandon Biden movement goes beyond airing opinions. In early December, Muslim leaders in eight states, including the crucial swing states of Georgia, Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, began demanding that Biden push Israel to agree to a cease-fire, threatening to boycott him in the next election if he didn't. More recently they have

vowed that nothing will convince them to support the president and expanded the campaign to all 50 states.

"We would have considered not abandoning Biden maybe 10,000 Palestinians ago, but right now, it is too late," said Khalid Turani, a Palestinian American member of the movement from Michigan, during a press conference.

The movement's leaders point out that they are not calling on voters to support Donald Trump but hope they will support a third-party candidate or abstain. Hassan Abdel Salam, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota and the movement's president, said further that if Trump were elected, the group would support a Democratic majority in Congress to fight his agenda.

The Abandon Biden leaders are trying to foster partnerships with "Black, Hispanic, and young progressive allies" who were part of the coalition that elected Biden in 2020 and who, according to recent

polls, are losing faith in the president over his Israel policy.

Salam said the Abandon Biden movement has restored a sense of pride to Muslim American voters who feel the Biden White House has shown them no respect. While he doubts that either the administration or the campaign views the Abandon Biden movement as a credible threat, he takes it as a sign of their being disconnected from their voters.

"It's so strange; it has something to do with the echo chamber," he said about the disconnect.

In her district, Romman has tried to engage voters on the issue of Gaza, conversations she said she hoped are happening elsewhere in the Democratic Party, particularly at the national level. "I'm hoping that that changes in the future, as more and more people reach out to their elected officials in the new year," she said.

It's not clear how much Muslim Americans can impact the outcome of the 2024 presidential race. Youssef Chouhoud, an assis-

tant professor of political science at Christopher Newport University, has compiled data from various sources — the 2020 US Census and US Religious Census, as well as the Arab American Institute — to quantify the effect of mass abstention or third-party votes from Muslim, Middle Eastern, and North African voters.

He argued that although the Muslim and Arab Americans' share of the total US population is relatively small — 3.5 million, according to the 2020 Census — their voting power is amplified by the Electoral College.

"Under that system, swing states are really what it comes down to. And it turns out that Muslims and Middle Eastern and North Africans have an outside influence in a number of swing states," said Chouhoud.

According to his findings, if even half of Muslim and Arab American voters in Arizona and Georgia alone fail to vote for Biden, it would be enough to swing those states to his opponent in November.

But for Chouhoud, the drop in support for Biden among these communities can't be attributed solely to the Israel-Hamas war. Before it became a salient issue in the campaign, voters from these communities had already distanced themselves from the Democratic Party over disagreements on cultural issues, such as debates over inclusive school curriculums.

Soon after October 7, 2023, the Muslim American advocacy group Emgage began to track Muslim Americans' intentions in the next election. In a survey released in November, only 5.2% of Muslim Americans said they would vote for Biden in 2024.

But counting Muslim votes alone may not capture the risk Biden has taken in backing Israel so strongly. He may also lose volunteers from the community who, like Romman, helped deliver voters in his 2020 campaign.

The full article first appeared in Religion News Service.

Netanyahu is turning against Biden



By Thomas L. Friedman
New York Times columnist

OPINION

It looks as if President Biden will be running in two races this year: one in America against Donald Trump and one in Israel against Benjamin Netanyahu. Maybe Trump could name Netanyahu his running mate and we could save a lot of time. Biden's support for the Israeli leader is costing him his own progressive base, while Netanyahu is now turning on Biden in ways that could win Trump fresh support from right-wing American Jews. Trump-Netanyahu 2024 — that has a certain ring to it, not to mention an air of truth. Why do I say this? Because at a televised news conference on Thursday, Netanyahu made clear something he had only hinted at in recent weeks. Despite the disastrous Hamas attack on October 7 happening on his watch, he is going to frame his campaign to stay in power with this argument: The Americans and the Arabs want to force a Palestinian state down Israel's throat, and I am the only Israeli leader strong enough to resist them. So, vote for me, even if I messed up on October 7 and the Gaza war is not going all that great. Only I can protect us from Biden's plans for Gaza to become part of a Palestinian state, along with the West Bank, governed by a transformed Palestinian Authority.

I know what you're asking: You mean Netanyahu would actually run for re-election by positioning himself against the American president who flew over to Israel right after October 7, where he put a protective arm around Bibi and the whole Israeli body politic and basically gave Israel a green light to try to destroy Hamas in Gaza, even if it led to thousands of Palestinian civilians' being killed in the process? You mean to save his own political skin, Netanyahu would actually run on a platform that would guarantee Israel had no American, Palestinian, Arab, or European partners to help Israel govern or exit Gaza or get its hostages back?

Yes, I am seeing and saying both. Although Israel has been at war with Hamas for over 100 days and still has over 100 captives to recover, Netanyahu's No. 1 focus is Netanyahu.

He's searching for the most emotive political message to get him

just enough votes from the far right to remain prime minister and stay out of prison, should he lose any of the three corruption cases against him.

Let me walk you through the sequence of events that transpired this week that led to this conclusion, as I was a close-up witness to part of them.

On Wednesday, I interviewed US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, first offstage for this column and then before a large audience at the Davos World Economic Forum. In the public session, I asked him to briefly explain something I had discussed in private with him: why it feels as if Israel is losing on three key fronts and why Israel could turn things around on those fronts if it had a legitimate, effective Palestinian partner.

The three fronts where Israel is losing:

First, Hamas seems to be winning the global narrative war on social media because of the thousands of

civilian casualties in Gaza caused by the Israeli bombing of Hamas fighters who had deliberately embedded themselves in tunnels and next to homes of Palestinian civilians.

Second, Netanyahu still has not defined a political outcome for Gaza, a plan for keeping the peace and overseeing governance and security, or a legitimate Palestinian partner to help make it all happen. Without that, Israel could be stuck in Gaza forever.

And third, Israel is being attacked from afar by pro-Iranian non-state actors, particularly the Houthis from Yemen and Hezbollah from Lebanon. And the only way for Israel to deter and counter their threats, particularly when it is still tied down fighting in Gaza, is with the help of global and regional allies.

The answer to all three challenges, I argued to Blinken at the public session, was for Israel to find and help build a credible, legitimate, effective Palestinian partner,

whether that is a reformed version of the current Palestinian Authority based in Ramallah — which has embraced the Oslo peace accord with Israel and worked with Israeli security forces — or some completely new institution named by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. If the PLO — with the help of the Americans, the Europeans, and the pro-American Arab states and the encouragement of Israel — is able to help stand up and sustain an effective Palestinian governing authority that has legitimacy in the eyes of Palestinians, this could answer all three of Israel's problems. It would seize the narrative by proving that Israel was not out for just revenge or conquest in Gaza. It would provide Israel with a political authority to govern Gaza for the long run that Israel could work with to ensure that a defeated Hamas could not come back.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) shakes hand with then-US president Donald Trump at a press conference in Washington. MICHAEL REYNOLDS/EPA

In response to this argument, Blinken said at our public discussion: "You now have something you didn't have before, and that is Arab countries and Muslim countries even beyond the region that are prepared to have a relationship with Israel in terms of its integration, its normalization, its security, that they were never prepared to have before and to do things, to give the necessary assurance, to make the necessary commitments and guarantees, so that Israel is not only integrated but it can feel secure."

But the only way to achieve that alliance-in-waiting, Blinken added, is by respecting the "absolute conviction by those countries — one that we share — that this has to include a pathway to a Palestinian state because you're not going to get the genuine integration you need, you're not going to get the genuine security you need, absent that. And of course, to that end as well, a stronger, reformed Pales-

tinian Authority that can more effectively deliver for its own people has to be part of the equation."

I totally understand why Biden, a true friend of Israel, insists on uttering them. Because every trend around Israel is only going to get worse — more non-state actors, more super-empowered angry men with drones, and more powerful Iran, and more TikTok haters warped by streaming videos of dead Palestinian babies in Gaza. Forging a legitimate, unified, effective Palestinian partner for a two-state deal with Israel that could defuse those threats may be impossible to achieve, but believing that abandoning any effort to do so is in the long-term interest of the Jewish state is a dangerous illusion. And that is exactly what Netanyahu is peddling for his own cynical purposes. Shame on him. Shame on his enablers.

The full article first appeared in the New York Times.

Terrence Shannon Jr. returns for Illinois after judge's ruling, scores 16



REUTERS

Terrence Shannon Jr., in his first game back after a judge's ruling allowed him to rejoin No. 14 Illinois, scored 16 points in an 86-63 victory over Rutgers. Shannon came off the bench and played 28 minutes. He had four assists and made 8 of 10 shots from the free throw line, ESPN wrote.

He was suspended by the university on Dec. 28 after he was arrested on a law-breaking for an alleged September incident in Lawrence, Kansas. US District Court Judge Colleen Lawless, however, ruled Friday that the university had violated Shannon's civil rights and granted a preliminary injunction that required Illinois to reinstate Shannon to the team.

A preliminary hearing in the criminal case has been set for Feb. 23.

Illini fans showed support for Shannon by cheering when the guard entered the court for pregame warmups and giving him a standing ovation when he checked into the game with 17:37 to go in the first half.

"Our team feels whole again," teammate Justin Harmon said after the game. "We have our best player back."

Illinois coach Brad Underwood said he was pleased with Shannon's performance considering he hadn't practiced with the team or played for three weeks.

"You could tell he was tired at times," Underwood said. "He integrated in a nice way. He was pretty solid."

Shannon's lawyers had requested the injunction earlier this month, claiming the school had made a "rush to judgment" and used an "unfair" process when it decided to suspend Shannon indefinitely late last month after a warrant was issued for his arrest. A woman at a bar alleged that Shannon had inappropriately touched her and sexually assaulted her.

The Illini (14-4, 5-2 Big Ten) were 4-2 in six games without Shannon, who hadn't played since Illinois' 97-73 victory over Missouri in St. Louis on Dec. 22.

Illinois will next play on Wednesday at Northwest-

Uzbek Tantashev appointed to referee Iran-UAE match

Uzbekistan's Ilgiz Tantashev was appointed as the referee of the match between Iran and the UAE football teams.

The match will be held in Al Rayyan's Education City Stadium in Group C of the 2023 AFC Asian Cup on Tuesday.

The 39-year-old official has been active as a professional referee since 2012.

Tantashev has officiated football matches in the Uzbekistan League, Asian Champions League and AFC World Cup qualifiers.

Iran booked their place in the Asian Cup last 16 when they beat Hong Kong 1-0 in a Group C game on Friday at the Khalifa International Stadium where Mehdi Qayedi scored the winner.

The result moved Iran to six points at the top of the group where they will be guaranteed a top-two finish. They sit two points above the United Arab Emirates while Palestine are

third with one point.

Iran broke the deadlock in the 24th minute when Milad Mohammadi released Qayedi into the box where the 25-year-old took his shot from a tight angle and beat the keeper as he guided the ball into the far bottom corner.

Iran dominated possession and had several opportunities to extend their lead but failed to convert their chances as Hong Kong frustrated their more illustrious opponents, much to the disappointment of Iranian coach Amir Qalenoee.

Hong Kong, who made their return to the Asian Cup after 56 years and are 129 spots below Iran in the rankings, remain winless and are bottom with no points after losing to UAE in their group opener.

Iran-UAE game on Tuesday will effectively decide who tops the table and gets a more favorable draw in the knockout stage.



REUTERS

Iranian climber achieves historic summit in Antarctica



Elite Iranian climber Amin Aziznia achieved a remarkable feat by becoming the first Iranian man to climb Vinson Massif, the highest peak in Antarctica, which stands at 4,892 meters (16,050 feet).

The challenging expedition was led by the experienced Nepali climber and expedition leader, Jangbu Sherpa, according to IRNA. Sherpa, aged 42, is not only a Nepali climber but also an international mountain guide.

He has successfully summited Everest five times, as well as Lhotse and Dhaulagiri. A leading figure in the third generation of Iranian elite climbers, Aziznia has been focusing on summing high-altitude mountains outside Iran, particularly in the Himalayas and South America. It's noteworthy that the first Iranian woman to climb Vinson Massif in Antarctica is Sara Safari.

Iran learn fate at 2024 IWBF Repechage



Iran's men's wheelchair basketball team discovered their opponents at the 2024 IWBF Repechage tournament.

Team Melli have been placed in Pool A along with hosts France, Canada, and the Netherlands, wrote Mehr News Agency.

Pool B consists of Colombia, Germany, Morocco, and Italy.

Iran finished as runners-up at the 2024

IWBF Asia Oceania Zone (AOZ) Championships, which was held in Bangkok, Thailand from Jan. 12 to 20.

Australia directly qualified for the Paris 2024 as the winner.

The 2024 IWBF Repechage Tournament for Men, will take place in Antibes, France, from April 12 to 15. The tournament is the final qualification event for the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games.

Injured Egypt star Salah to have 'rehab' at Liverpool

Mohamed Salah will return to Liverpool for treatment on the leg injury he suffered at the Africa Cup of Nations, but Egypt is hopeful he can come back for a potential semi-final.

Salah was injured in Egypt's 2-2 draw with Ghana on Thursday in Group B, BBC wrote.

"It makes sense that he's doing the rehab with us," said Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on Sunday, before Egypt confirmed the forward's return.

The Egyptian football association had initially said on Friday that Liverpool forward Salah would only feature in the tournament again if his nation advances to a quarter-final on 2 or 3 February.

Asked if the 31-year-old would go back to Afcon should his country progress, Klopp added: "I would say if Egypt qualifies for the final, if he's fit before the final, then probably yes."

Klopp had suggested on Friday that Salah's hamstring problem



GETTY IMAGES

was likely to be severe, given the forward had missed just 10 league games for the Reds in more than six seasons.

"He was shocked and couldn't see why he was hit by something so intense," said the German.

"You have these hamstring injuries in a different way. He felt it and we know how rarely Mo goes off, or needs to go off, so it

is definitely something."

The last of Egypt's seven titles at the Cup of Nations came in 2010, a year before Salah made his international debut and they finished runners-up in the 2017 and 2021 editions.

He scored a late penalty last Sunday to help Egypt draw 2-2 with Mozambique to avoid an embarrassing opening defeat earlier in the tournament.

Salah is convinced he will win the Afcon "sooner or later".

"I would love to win it, absolutely," he said. "It will happen somehow - that is what I believe. Whatever I believe, I achieve - so sooner or later, it will happen."

"I have won everything possible but this one, not yet. Everybody knows what it means to any player to win an Africa Cup."

"The players are very motivated to win the tournament. I believe that, with hard work, everything is possible, so we just need to win one game to qualify and we go from there."



Iran bids farewell to slain advisers

International Desk

Hundreds of mourners gathered on Monday in Tehran for the funeral of members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) assassinated in an Israeli attack in Syria. The strike in Damascus on Saturday killed five members of the IRGC, the military force said. The funeral processions in Tehran were planned for three of the five IRGC members killed in Syria. Another funeral cere-

mony for the other two IRGC members was held in the holy city of Qom. In a statement on Saturday, the IRGC said that five of its members serving on a military advisory mission in Syria were assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on a residential building in the tightly guarded Mezzeh neighborhood, west of Damascus. Military intelligence authorities in Syria have reportedly arrested four members of a security

detachment in wake of the Israeli attack. Speaking to Asharq Al-Awsat, Rami Abdulrahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, confirmed that a colonel, his assistant, a non-commissioned officer, and a civilian have been arrested. Mezzeh is considered "almost completely secure" due to the presence of high-ranking military, political figures, and embassies in the area.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said Israel's terrorist act is indicative of the regime's failure to achieve its malicious goals and the depth of its frustration with the fighters of the resistance front, warning that the targeted killing will not go unanswered. The strike came four days after the IRGC said it hit an Israeli intelligence headquarters in Erbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Region.

The IRGC said its Iraq strike was in response to the recent actions of Israel which assassinated IRGC commanders and the resistance front in the region. Last month, an Israeli strike in Syria killed Razi Mousavi, a senior commander of the IRGC's foreign operations arm, the Quds Force. Mousavi was the most senior Quds Force commander to be killed outside Iran in four years. In early January a strike



People take part in a funeral ceremony held in Tehran on January 22, 2024, for three IRGC military advisers assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on Syria on January 20, 2024.

● **TASNIM**

in southern Lebanon's capital Beirut killed the Hamas resistance movement's deputy leader, Saleh al-Aroui. A US defense official has told AFP that Israel carried out that strike. Days later, a strike in southern Lebanon killed Wissam Tawil, the highest-ranking Hezbollah member to be killed since Israel began its onslaught on the Gaza Strip on October 7. Hezbollah blamed Israel for the attack.

Iranian FM to visit Egypt: Report

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reportedly plans to visit Egypt in the coming days as the two countries are taking steps to restore their diplomatic ties after decades.

Arabi 21 website has said that the top Iranian diplomat's upcoming visit is expected to strengthen ties between Iran and Egypt and comes at a sensitive time in the region.

In recent months, Tehran and Cairo have been taking steps to restore their relations which were severed in 1980 after Egypt welcomed the deposed Pahlavi ruler of Iran and recognized the Israeli regime.

The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Nasser Kanaani on Monday described as "positive" the atmosphere of negotiations between delegates from Iran and Egypt on restoration of diplomatic ties, stressing that the two regional heavyweights have outlined a road map to resolve existing disputes.

"We are currently in a good situation and have made good progress on [bilateral] relations. Consultations are positive, and previous meetings between officials [from the two countries] are indicative of the new positive atmosphere," Kanaani said.

Tehran, Islamabad to resume diplomatic ties after tit-for-tat raids

Iran and Pakistan announced Monday that their ambassadors would resume their duties after the two countries agreed to de-escalate tensions following an exchange of deadly strikes last week.

"It has been mutually agreed that the ambassadors of both countries would return to their respective posts by January 26," said a joint statement by the foreign ministries in Tehran and Islamabad.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is due to visit Pakistan on January 29, following an invitation from his Pakistani counterpart Jalil Abbas Jilani, the statement said. The decisions were an-

nounced following a phone call between Jilani and Amir-Abdollahian. The two neighboring countries witnessed an escalation of cross-border tensions over Iran's counter-terrorism operations.

On January 16, Iran launched drone and missile attacks on two bases of Jaish al-Adl, an anti-Iran terrorist group that was formed in 2012 and has conducted several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years. The group claimed responsibility for an attack in December 2023 on a police station in the southeastern city of Rask that killed at least 11 Iranian police offi-

cers. On January 10, another attack by the group on a police station in the city killed one officer. The Iranian strikes in Pakistan drew a sharp rebuke from Islamabad, which recalled its ambassador from Tehran and blocked Iran's envoy from returning to Pakistan. Pakistan also carried out strikes on Thursday against what it called bases of the separatist Baloch

Liberation Front and Baloch Liberation Army in regions close to Iran's border. Tehran condemned the attack as unacceptable and unbalanced and summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires over the strikes on Thursday, which left at least nine people dead. On Friday, Jilani and Amir-Abdollahian agreed in a phone conversation "to de-escalate the situation" between the two countries.

Borrell: Israel cannot build peace by military means

International Desk

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Monday insisted on a

two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, as he told Israel it could not build peace "only by military means" ahead of talks with Israeli

and Palestinian diplomats. Borrell repeated the United Nations' condemnation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "unac-

ceptable" rejection of calls for a Palestinian state after the war in Gaza.

"What we want to do is to build a two-state solution. So, let's talk about it," Borrell said.

He told Israel that "peace and stability cannot be built only by military means... Which are the other solutions they have in mind? To make all the Palestinians leave? To kill them off?" Borrell said.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on Sunday denounced Israel for the "heartbreaking" deaths of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and called it unacceptable to resist statehood for the Palestinian people.

"Israel's military operations have spread mass destruction and killed civilians on a scale unprecedented during my time as secretary-general," Guterres said at the opening of a summit of the

G77+China in the Ugandan capital Kampala.

"This is heartbreaking and utterly unacceptable. The Middle East is a tinder-box, we must do all we can to prevent conflict from igniting across the region."

Israel's assault on Gaza has left over 25,000 Palestinians dead, the vast majority women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The Health Ministry said Monday at least 25,295 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory. The toll includes 190 fatalities in just 24 hours, a ministry statement said, while some 63,000 people in Gaza have been wounded in the conflict since October 7.

EU foreign ministers on Monday pressed Israel for an eventual two-state solution with the Palestinians after the war in Gaza, at meetings with the top diplomats from the two

sides and key Arab states in Brussels.

The surprise Hamas attack on October 7 on the occupied territories and the subsequent devastating military response from Israel has plunged the Middle East into fresh turmoil and sparked fears of a broader conflict.

But while Israel's bloodshed appears to have driven a long-term solution further out of sight, EU officials insist the time is now to talk about finally resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The 27 EU ministers met first with Israel's foreign minister Israel Katz before they were due to sit down separately with the Palestinian Authority's top diplomat, Riyad al-Maliki.

The foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia were also holding talks with the European ministers.

Netanyahu has drawn condemnation from the United Nations and defied key

backer the United States by rejecting calls for a Palestinian state.

Netanyahu has vowed "complete victory" over Hamas after the attacks by the resistance movement's fighters on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures.

Hamas fighters also seized about 240 hostages, and Israel says around 132 remain in besieged Gaza.

The EU has struggled for a united stance on the conflict in Gaza as staunch backers of Israel such as Germany have rejected demands for an immediate cease-fire made by the likes of Spain and Ireland.

But there is overall backing in the bloc for a two-state solution.

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said Israel's "continuation of measures to undermine the two-state solution is dooming the future of the region to more conflicts and more war".

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Gender distribution in births shows 52% boys born in nine months



Social Desk

IRNA – Iran's Civil Status Registration Organization revealed that 52% of newborns in the country this year are boys, marking a slight increase in the birth of male infants during the nine-month period from March 21 to December 21.

According to the data from the organization and the National Population Monitoring Center, out of the total births during this period, 51.8% were boys, while 48.2% were girls.

The organization reported a total of 798,550 registered births in the country from the beginning of the Iranian calendar year (March 21) until December 21. Tehran Province had the highest record of births, with 99,633 newborns, while Semnan Province recorded the lowest with 5,201.

The report also detailed that out of the total births, 36.4% were firstborns, 38.9% were second-born, 17.6% were third-born, 5.1% were fourth-born, and 2% were fifth-born.

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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
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Qand-e Parsi stamp unveiled to promote Persian

Culture Ministry committed to preserving Persian language: *Esmaeili*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili unveiled the Qand-e Parsi stamp during a ceremony on January 22 at Tehran's Rudaki Hall, recognizing the unparalleled role of the renowned poet Ferdowsi in promoting the Persian language.

Speaking at the event, Esmaeili emphasized the ministry's commitment to preserve and promote the Persian language. He highlighted the significance of the Persian language as a key factor in shaping the identity of a powerful Iranian government and nation.

Esmaeili praised the cultural heritage left by Persian literary figures such as Ferdowsi, Saadi, and Hafez, expressing hope that Iranians would remain faithful guardians of this valuable legacy, IRNA reported.

The first national Qand-e Parsi conference was attended by cultural figures, artists, media representatives, and Persian-speaking ambassadors.

Esmaeili acknowledged the challenges but noted with pride that

despite difficulties, the younger generation easily reads classical Persian literature such as Saadi's 'Bustan' (The Orchard) and 'Golestan' (The Rose Garden), showcasing an impressive linguistic continuity even after nearly 800 years passed from the publication.

The minister stressed the responsibility to honor the contributions of Persian literary figures in calligraphy and linguistic structures.

He criticized the incorrect use of diacritical marks in Persian scripts and condemned the brevity and broken form of words in online spaces.

Esmaeili expressed gratitude to those defending the Persian language, especially highlighting the efforts of colleagues at Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), urging against the use of foreign words by senior officials. Addressing historical places, Esmaeili pointed out instances where city names were written in non-Persian script, emphasizing the importance of using Persian names alongside English for cities but denouncing the exclusive use of foreign words.



Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili (R), unveils Qand-e Parsi stamp during a ceremony at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on January 22, 2024, marking the role of renowned poet Ferdowsi in promoting the Persian language. ● IRNA

The first Qand-e Parsi Awards ceremony, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, celebrated creative achievements in advertising,

social responsibility, cultural advertising, and various media, with winners honored at Tehran's Rudaki Hall on May 12. Commemorating Ferdowsi and

Persian Language Day on May 15, the event highlighted the ongoing commitment to preserving and enhancing the rich cultural heritage of the Persian language.

FADJR INTERNATIONAL THEATER FESTIVAL IN PHOTOS



The 42nd Fadjr International Theater Festival kicked off in Tehran on January 21, 2024, and will be running until February 1, 2024. The festival's stage shows are being held at various venues, including Vahdat Hall, City Theater Complex, Sangelaj Theater, Hafez Hall, Art Hall, Mehrab Theater Complex, and Iranshahr Hall. ● IRNA

Winning images from 2023 Travel Photographer of the Year contest reveal world's beauty and tragedy



Tuscan hills shrouded in mist

Mist rising from the Tuscan hills, a tiny fish staring at the neck of a glass bottle, and a pangolin tucked contentedly under the chin of her carer are among the winning entries from the 2023 Travel Photographer of the Year competition. Shot all around the globe, the images illuminate both the beauty and tragedy that arise when humans interact with the natural world, CNN reported. Judges crowned Slovenian photographer Andreja Ravnak the overall winner for her depictions of dream-

like European landscapes, after considering more than 20,000 images submitted by photographers from more than 150 countries. Ravnak, an architect by trade, acknowledged the "complex task" faced by the judges and thanked them in a statement for recognizing her work. "I've seen many excellent and creative photos in this year's TPOTY final and it's such a great honour to find my work recognized," she said. "Congratulations to all the winners; together, we are enthusiastically documenting this wonderful world, and perhaps this is a small con-

tribution, a reminder to preserve its wonder for future generations." Other winners included Athanasios Maloukos in the "People and Cultures" category for his photos of shamans performing rituals to connect with spirits in Siberia; Martin Broen in the "Nature, Wildlife & Conservation" category with his photo series of the Mobula ray migration in Mexico; and Armand Sarlangue for his images of Iceland's roiling landscapes in the "Landscape and Environment" category. Meanwhile, 14-year-old Cadan Shepard Choi won the

Young Travel Photographer of the Year award for her black-and-white series of photos depicting the Navajo people of Chinle, Arizona herding sheep, shearing them and then weaving with the wool. Her fellow American, Lilly Zhang, 17, won the 15-18-year-old category with her ethereal images of a Pennsylvania lake, and the wildlife drawn to it, in the early morning light. All the winning photos can be viewed online, or at an exhibition held at the NEC in Birmingham, UK from March 16-19 and at Xposure in Sharjah, the UAE.