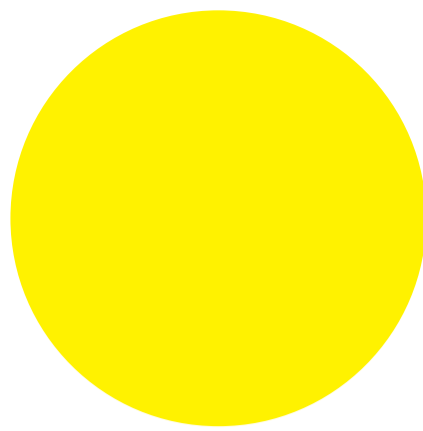


# 'I will no longer be complicit in genocide'

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# Iran Daily



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## High turnout to guarantee Iran's independence



By Mohammad-Mehdi Abd-Khodaei  
Leader, Fada'iyan-e Islam Party

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution stands out as a unique phenomenon globally. Rooted in both domestic and international arenas, this revolution waged a battle against domestic tyranny while striving to secure and uphold the cherished freedoms of its people. At the same time, the revolution emerged as a flag-bearer of resistance against colonialism and imperialism, endowing it with a global significance.

The birth of the Islamic Republic of Iran marked a watershed moment following the unparalleled revolution. Diverging from major revolutions like the French Revolution, the 1917 October Revolution in Russia, or the Cuban Revolution, Iran's Islamic revolution is distinguished by its distinct ideological underpinnings.

The Iranian revolution sprang forth from within the fabric of society, challenging foreign-imposed tyranny and rejecting its shackles. Unlike certain revolutions confined to specific societal segments, Iran's revolution engaged a broad spectrum of society, encompassing intellectuals, laborers, business-people, etc., all contributing to its inception and the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

In its mission to combat foreign domination, the Islamic Revolution not only succeeded in its primary objective but also served as a catalyst for awakening other oppressed nations in the region. This stands in contrast to many other revolutions around the world that failed to ignite similar fervor beyond their borders.

The Islamic Revolution championed the cause of anti-colonialism, with the founder of the Islamic Republic unequivocally asserting, "America cannot do a damn thing." Despite lacking state-of-the-art weapons Iran's military might has advanced significantly. The US soon felt the danger of the revolution and therefore pushed Saddam Hussein to fight an eight-year war with Iran, and provided all kinds of military support to the Iraqi Baath regime. As a dominant global imperialist power, the US has unleashed a barrage of sanctions against Iran over the past four decades, in response to the Islamic Revolution's anti-hegemonic stance. Yet, resolute in the face of diverse pressure, the Islamic Republic has remained steadfast, unwavering in its commitment to its ideals.

Elections in Iran are held in a situation where the country has weathered all sorts of enemy conspiracies over the years. Despite facing sanctions and economic pressure, and being surrounded by foreign powers, the nation has stood firm. It even withstood an all-out war for eight years, bravely confronting Saddam's regime, which was backed by numerous world powers.

Now is the time to draw on past experiences to mend the country's wounds, pave the way for a brighter future, and elevate Iran's reputation. The key here is for the people to rally behind the Islamic Republic and the revolution, as they have done in the past, by turning out massively in the upcoming elections. This will demonstrate that the Islamic Establishment still derive their strength from the people's support and will, without compromising on the nation's ideals such as the fight against colonialism and will follow the path of progress.

The Iranian nation stands as the sole independent entity that resists global arrogance and hegemonic powers without bowing down to them, enduring numerous hardships and sacrifices for this independence. To uphold and advance this independence, and to progress toward implementing pure Islamic laws and a truly Islamic government, the masses must turn out in large numbers for the upcoming elections, just as they have done in the past. I am confident that our people will once again participate actively in the two parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections on Friday, emerging from the electoral challenge with pride and dignity.



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Iran bracing for big elections

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Brazilian Motta Paes named Iran volleyball head coach

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Geopolitical, strategic layers of conflict unfolding in Greater Mideast



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# Leader: Strong voter turnout to help Iran progress

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said that if the Iranian nation shows the world that they are present in 'decisive scenes,' they will save the country and contribute to Iran's progress.

"Strong and fervent elections constitute one of the pillars of running the country properly," the Leader said. "If we can show the world that the nation is present in the country's critical and decisive scenes, we have saved and moved the country forward," Press TV wrote.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting on Wednesday with a visiting group of the families of Iranian martyrs as well as first-time voters at the country's elections for the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) and the Assembly of Experts on March 1. Pointing to some people's indifference to the vote, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "I am not accusing anyone, but I remind all that we should look at the elections from the perspective of national interests, not from the viewpoints of factions and groups."

The Leader stressed, "Anyone who loves Iran, their nation and security should know that if the elections are poorly held, no one will benefit and everyone will be hurt."

Ayatollah Khamenei stressed

that the presence of Iranian voters at the polls bespeaks "national power," noting that the country's adversaries are closely watching the event.

"National power supports national security. If the enemy feels that you are not capable, [and] the Iranian nation has no power, they will threaten your security in every way," the Leader said. He added, "National security is all that matters. If there is no security, there remains nothing [else]. The enemy is opposed to our national power. Therefore, they oppose everything that is a manifestation of national power, including elections."

Ayatollah Khamenei hailed elections as an "opportunity" that should be seized, saying the vote not only benefits the country, but also disappoints the country's enemies.

"Whoever loves Iran, loves the Islamic Republic, loves the Islamic Revolution, anyone who loves national power, anyone who loves progress should be active in the elections and enthusiastically participate in the vote," the Leader said.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Leader touched on Israel's months-long aggression on Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip and said the issue of Gaza introduced Islam to the world



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei speaks at a meeting with a group of first-time voters and families of martyrs in the capital Tehran on February 28, 2024. ● leader.ir

as an element which encourages people not to give up and promotes resistance in the face of Zionists' crimes. The Leader noted Gaza developments also showed the true

color of Western culture and civilization, saying their leaders in practice failed to halt Israel's aggression by vetoing UNSC resolutions that called for a Gaza cease-fire.

Pointing to the recent self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the US Air Force, in protest at Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "An Air

Force officer sets himself on fire; which means that even a young person who was brought up in that culture finds it burdensome, and even his conscience is offended."

## Moscow works effectively with Tehran within OPEC+ framework: Deputy PM



Russia is efficiently cooperating with Iran within the OPEC+ framework, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said on Wednesday during a visit to Tehran.

He added that Russia and Iran need to strengthen work to reduce risks to gas transport infrastructure, reported Reuters. Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji and Novak, the co-chairs of the 17th Joint Economic Commission between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, exchanged their views on the expansion of bilateral cooperation in Tehran on Wednesday.

The two sides discuss the measures taken to promote their cooperation in different areas, including the oil and industry, roads, housing, standards, and free trade zones, wrote Shana.

Putting great emphasis on Tehran-Moscow cooperation in the oil and gas sector, Owji said the two countries will hold more talks in this regard. Iran and Russia can cooperate in all economic fields, he underlined and added Iran's

First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber has also held constructive talks on promotion of cooperation with Russia.

Novak, for his part, referred to his meeting with Mokhber held earlier on Wednesday, saying their talks revolved around trade and economic issues.

He said, "During their meeting in Moscow last December, Iran's President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin pointed to the energy sector's key role in broadening bilateral cooperation."

The deputy prime minister expressed hope that the presence of big Russian oil and gas companies in the meeting will help follow up bilateral cooperation in trade and economic fields.

Shifting to the 7th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit of Heads of State and Government slated for March 2 in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, Novak said a considerable time has been so far taken to prepare the upcoming sum-



A meeting of the 17th Joint Economic Commission is held between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation in Tehran on February 28, 2024. ● SHANA

mit's declaration aimed at paying more attention to transmission of natural gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG). He also pointed to Iran-Russia close cooperation in the OPEC+ alliance.

"We are ready to hold constructive talks on formation of an energy hub on Iran's initiative within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," Novak underlined.

He touched upon the participation of Russian companies in Iran's oil projects, naming ZN Vostok (ZNV), which is cooperating with Iran on development of five oil fields.

Iran and Russia signed six cooperation documents in the presence of the commission co-chairs.

From the psyche to the canvas:

## Exhibition explores role of art therapy in mental health recovery



By Sadeq Dehqan

Staff writer

In an inspirational approach to psychotherapy, Roozbeh Hospital, the first psychiatric and mental disorders center in Tehran, is hosting an outdoor exhibition featuring watercolor paintings created by a group of patients with psychiatric disorders.

Fatemeh Arabshah, the exhibition curator and superintendent of one of the sections of the hospital, told Iran Daily, explaining that 70 watercolor paintings from 20 patients with psychiatric disorders are on view.

The exhibition opened on February 27 and will end today. Arabshah highlighted the significance of art therapy in the therapeutic process for psychiatric patients, emphasizing the integration of creative processes with psychological therapeutic techniques.

Art therapy, particularly painting, plays a role in helping individuals suffering from conditions

such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorders to express their emotions and thoughts, ultimately reaching a state of calmness.

The curator elaborated on the positive impact of painting instruction as an art therapy technique used in the hospital to improve the mental well-being of patients.

"Painting not only contributes to a sense of peace and uplifts the spirits of ordinary individuals but also brings joy and tranquility to patients with psychiatric disorders, instilling in them a sense of usefulness." She noted. Arabshah continued, pointing out that through the paintings created by these patients, one could trace elements of their thoughts and emotions, such as joy, hope, peace, and even distress, reflected in the colors, shapes, and subjects of the artwork.

Regarding the social challenges faced by psychiatric patients, Arabshah explained that engagement in artistic activities, including painting, and other

forms of art helps boost their self-confidence, revealing their talents and playing a crucial role in their therapeutic process.

The primary goal of organizing such art exhibitions for psychiatric patients, according to Arabshah, is to change society's perception of these individuals as incapable, showcasing that psychiatric patients can succeed in various artistic and non-artistic fields.

Arabshah concluded by stating that another objective is to support the empowerment of psychiatric patients through the sale of their artworks, providing them with a sense of usefulness and belief in their ability to contribute to society.

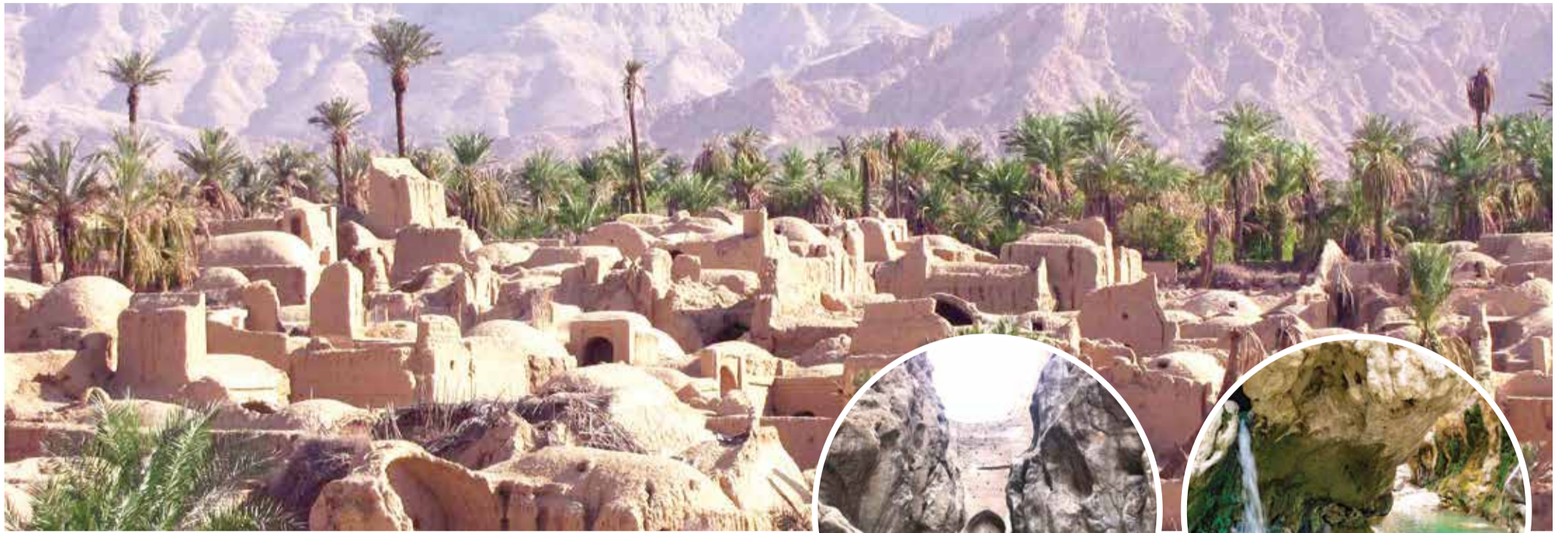
Additionally, the proceeds from the sales will be allocated to improving the quality of psychiatric services offered to these patients.

Roozbeh Hospital is the oldest educational neurology and psychiatry hospital in the country and the Middle East, affiliated with Tehran University of Medical Sciences.





# Discover wonders of Tabas: Bride of the Desert



Tabas Citadel  
safarzon.com

Shah Abbas Arch  
wikipedia.org

Morteza Ali Spring  
safarzon.com

## Iranica Desk

If you examine the map of Iran with its geographical features and communication routes of its cities, you will notice that its cities have accommodated the population based on their geographical location. In the northern regions and along the coast of the Caspian Sea and the northwest, there is a large number of cities and villages located very close to each other, resulting in a significant population concentration within these areas.

One of the reasons for the high population density in the capital city of Tehran is its location in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains and the presence of rivers that are crucial for the plains of Tehran, Rey, Varamin, Shahriar, and others, enabling agriculture and habitation for a large portion of the population. When observing the map of Iran, you can identify a triangle with its apex pointing towards the southeast - despite its vastness compared to other regions, it contains very few cities. This triangle is where the two

major deserts of Iran, Kavir and Lut, are situated.

The arid climate and scarce water resources have rendered these areas uninhabited. Consequently, one should not anticipate rivers flowing or dams existing in this region of Iran. However, defying this expectation, nestled almost at the center of this desert expanse, lies a pristine freshwater river with a dam for water storage.

Known as the Bride of the Desert, Tabas stands as a radiant gem amidst the desert, a city whose true essence can only be grasped up close. If you revel in exploration and savoring unspoiled locales, seize the chance, for the optimal period to behold this city's beauty spans from autumn to mid-spring.

Presently, this enchanting desert city ranks as the second-largest in South Khorasan Province, following Birjand. Encompassing an area of 55,460 square kilometers, Tabas thrives in a desert climate zone, at an elevation of approximately 690 meters above sea level. Situated 540 kilometers from Mashhad, and 270 kilometers

from Birjand, Tabas epitomizes a desert oasis awaiting discovery.

If you arrive in Tabas, your preconceived notions of deserts, salt marshes, and sandy hills will quickly fade away, especially if you approach from the west or south. Upon entering the city, you will be greeted by a spacious square adorned with palm and orange trees. If you're fortunate enough to experience the fresh scent of spring rain, the delightful aroma of orange and lemon blossoms will enchant your senses.

The streets of Tabas are lined with an abundance of date and orange trees, creating a unique blend of citrus fruits and palm trees that is truly a marvel of the region. With its highest mountain rising to 2,912 meters, shielded from heavy rain-bearing winds by sandy hills, Tabas offers a picturesque setting where the combination of oranges and dates thrives beautifully.

The historical remnants of Tabas suggest a rich history dating back to the Elamite period. The presence of water, fertile soil, and warmth has been fundamen-

tal to the city's civilization since ancient times. Signs also point to Tabas being densely forested millions of years ago, with abundant marshes and rich coal mines providing evidence of its past.

The Tabas Citadel, situated in this desert city, boasts a history spanning over 1,000 years as documented by historians and references from the early Islamic centuries.

Another noteworthy location in Tabas is the mountainous Kharv village, located 22 kilometers east of Tabas, amidst the mountains. The fertile soil and favorable climate in this region give rise to lush gardens producing a variety of fruits like apricots, plums, walnuts, cherries, and figs. This village offers suitable

recreational and accommodation facilities, along with its picturesque mountainous setting, making it a welcoming destination for both locals and travelers, especially during holidays and Nowruz (Iranian New Year).

## Golshan Garden

One of the must-visit attractions in Tabas is the Golshan Garden, known for its stunning beauty. This historic site dates back to the Zand and Qajar periods and spans across seven hectares. Alongside the date palms and colorful flowers, a central pool adds a unique charm to the garden. Tabas may surprise you with its diverse landscapes, where you can find a flowing river, rice paddies, and fruit orchards all in one place.

## Morteza Ali Spring

Morteza Ali Spring is another famous spot in the eastern part of Tabas, featuring a series of springs flowing from the southern slopes of Kash Siyah Mountain towards the west. This spring is a popular tourist destination, attracting many visitors due to its therapeutic properties. The juxtaposition of hot and cold springs in a valley creates a captivating sight that is truly unique. The Shah Abbas Arch, standing at 60 meters tall and with a narrow width of one meter, dates back to the reign of Shah Abbas Safavid. If you happen to pass by this spring, you will come across ancient tombs in the narrow walls, dating back to the Zoroastrian era.

## Grand Mosque of Zanjan, a symbol of Iranian/Islamic architecture



visitiran.ir

## Iranica Desk

The significance of religious buildings throughout history is undeniable. Mosques, churches, temples, and other places of worship have always had stunning architecture to symbolize the power of rulers and emphasize adherence to religions. Today, most of these buildings have become important tourist attractions in addition to their religious

significance. Therefore, tourists visit these sites to admire their amazing architecture, regardless of their personal beliefs.

The Jaame (Grand) Mosque of Zanjan is one of the most important religious buildings in the western part of the country and is a must-see attraction. Its extraordinary architecture draws many tourists.

The mosque, which is considered the largest in the city, is

a symbol of Iranian/Islamic architecture. This complex, which includes various sections such as a library and a religious school, is listed as a national monument.

Located in the heart of the old city and in a convenient location for access, the mosque is connected to the Qeysariyeh Bazaar to the west, the Seyyed Mosque alley to the east, Imam Khomeini Street and Sabzeh Maidan to the north.

## Architecture

The Jaame Mosque of Zanjan, which also houses the largest religious school in the city, is considered one of the valuable buildings constructed based on the design of four-ivan (portico) mosques. More than anything else, the porticos in the courtyard of the mosque showcase themselves, placed in a quadrilateral shape on the four sides of the mosque. The courtyard of this mosque is also

quadrilateral, measuring 48 meters in length and 36 meters in width.

Sixteen rooms are prominently visible in the eastern and western porticos. In the northern facade, six rooms are built for religious students. Behind the southern portico, a domed shabestan (prayer room) is located, occupying a space of 7.9 meters in width and 8.5 meters in length. Additionally, in the past, there used to be a large pool

in the center of the mosque's courtyard, surrounded by flower-filled gardens, except in front of the rooms and shabestans. This large pool later disappeared for unknown reasons.

The shabestan of the Grand Mosque is covered by a magnificent dome. This double-walled dome is adorned with turquoise tiles, and on it, the Al-Duha Chapter of the Holy Qur'an is written in Thuluth script, adding to its beauty.



# Geopolitical, strategic layers of conflict unfolding in Greater Mideast

By Armen Petrosyan  
Regional affairs expert

**PERSPECTIVE  
EXCLUSIVE**

The change in world order, which started in Eastern Europe with the Ukrainian war in February 2022, as predicted, created prerequisites for substantive changes in some other regions as well. The regions that were inevitably affected by the indirect confrontation between Russia and the West, as well as those where there are frozen deep conflicts and undisguised revisionist aspirations, became the scene of such developments. As it is usually recorded in similar historical periods, such processes usually lead to radical changes in geopolitical and security environments in different regions.

The change in world order, which started in Eastern Europe with the Ukrainian war in February 2022, as predicted, created prerequisites for substantive changes in some other regions as well. The regions that were inevitably affected by the indirect

confrontation between Russia and the West, as well as those where there are frozen deep conflicts and undisguised revisionist aspirations, became the scene of such developments. As it is usually recorded in similar historical periods, such processes usually lead to radical changes in geopolitical and security environments in different regions.

A man carries a giant banner comprising the flags of Iran, Syria, the Palestinian territories, and Hezbollah, during a ceremony marking the anniversary of Iran's Islamic Revolution, in Tehran.

The most obvious examples of the above-mentioned are the substantive changes recorded in the framework of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue in the South Caucasus, as well as the multi-layered, hybrid confrontation reactivated in the Middle East by the latest round of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Of course, it is hard to see a direct connection in the activation processes of the two conflicts mentioned above. However, the time span of the developments, as well as the highly harmonious strategic cooperation between the main players Azerbaijan and Israel, inevitably generalize the logical chain of events. Hence, the one-day aggression of September 19, 2023, unleashed by Azerbaijani authorities against the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, who were exhausted from a 10-month siege, may have been a little surprise for the expansionist Ali-

ev regime, but the calculated maximum result of this political plan led to the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh and the forced displacement of more than 150,000 local Armenians who left Nagorno-Karabakh since 2020. Historical Nagorno-Karabakh inhabited by Armenians for millennia was completely depopulated. The Azerbaijani authorities could not have carried out this operation without shadow deals, especially with the key ally Turkey, as well as with Russia, which assumed the role of guarantor of security in Nagorno-Karabakh by the Trilateral Statement of November 9, 2020, and deployed its peacekeeping units in the region. One of the obvious components of the mentioned but yet-to-be-made-public agreement was Azerbaijan's refusal to negotiate on Western platforms that compete with

Russia in the historical stage of global confrontation and the renewal of the talk of the implementation of regional routes unblocking process with corridor logic. As for the geopolitical and regional political consequences of the process in Nagorno-Karabakh, they are actually within the logic of the development of the realities recorded by the results of the 44-Day War. That is to say, as a result of the Russia-Turkey-Azerbaijan deal, the positions of another regional player, Iran, are once again hit significantly, as well as the positions of the Western players, Washington and Brussels — who initiated active substantive steps aimed at reducing Moscow's role in the South Caucasus after the start of the Ukraine war. Azerbaijan's successful military-strategic operation could not but inspire Israel, one of its key partners in the large region.

The latter has long sought to find a radical solution to the most explosive and bloody Palestinian issue in the world today, especially concerning the Gaza Strip, which has a population of about 2.4 million Palestinians and is considered one of the most densely populated regions on earth. The surprise large-scale attack of the Islamic organization Hamas against Israel on October 7, 2023, that caused unprecedented human, material, and reputational damage (with more than 1,300 lives and 240 captives taken) became a very opportune occasion for the implementation of such a policy. Of course, the Al-Aqsa Flood military operation contained enormous miscalculations at the tactical level, despite pursuing the most serious strategic goals. In particular, the timing of the attack was also determined to disrupt the Saudi Ara-

bia-Israel normalization process, which is of strategic importance for solving the Palestinian problem. This is a cornerstone circumstance because, for example, the Abraham Accords signed between a number of important Arab countries (such as the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) and Israel in 2020–2021 with the mediation of the US were rightly assessed by Palestinians as a strategic omission since the logic of acting with a common pan-Arab front against the Jewish state was undermined. It implied a complete solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in one package, exclusively along the borders existing before the 1967 Six-Day War and the creation of a Palestinian state with East Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital. Especially since the middle of 2023, the Saudi Arabia-Israel normalization pro-



The photo shows the ghost city of Stepanakert in the Nagorno-Karabakh region after Azerbaijani forces evacuated ethnic Armenians in September 2023.

AL JAZEERA



Israel launches an airstrike on an apartment building in Rafah, the last refuge in southern Gaza on October 14, 2023.

AFP



cess reactivated by the efforts of the White House — one of the key preconditions of which was the demand for the creation of the Palestinian state — gradually lost its importance compared to other strategic opportunities promised to Al-Riyadh (such as the implementation of the Saudi nuclear program and new opportunities for cooperation in the military-technical sphere).

If successful, the process would definitely have a negative impact on the implementation of the ultimate goals of the Palestinian movement. Therefore, in the context of the above-mentioned, the relentless war between Israel and Hamas, which has been going on for five months, has solved the Palestinian side's problem at least in

In particular, one of the obvious layers of this confrontation is Israel's efforts at weakening Iran's regional influence and disintegrating the "axis of resistance". This fits into the logic of Israel's primary program, aimed at improving its security, in general, and finally neutralizing possible threats from pro-Iranian groups located in Syria and Lebanon, in particular. Alongside the Israel-Hamas confrontation, the military tension on the Israel-Lebanon border and the frequent Israeli military operations in Syria are aimed at this.

Despite the apparent difficulties, however, the realities of today's world let us assess the implementation of the above-mentioned programs of Israel as very realistic in theoretical terms. Of course, the Israelis cannot succeed without the all-around support provided to them by their allies, especially the United States, at the military, diplomatic-political, financial, and psychological levels. It is precisely thanks to the diplomatic and strategic support of Washington that Israel is able, in the face of various external pressures, to continue solving its problems in Gaza at the expense of deepening the humanitarian disaster there. One of the strategic agendas followed by the US is to neutralize the effective united anti-Israeli action in the region by involving formal players, such as various Arab-Muslim governments. However, it should be stated that the existing deep competitive environment in the region between a number of players (including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Qatar, Iran, etc.) does not already allow the formation of a united anti-Israel front. As an example, the weakening of Iran's regional influence and escalating tensions between Egypt and Israel or Egypt and the US are in the interests of many of the above-mentioned players.

This is the reason why a number of players with significant potential to influence Israel, in particular, and the war, in general, do not initiate more substantive actions than some diplomatic steps and strong anti-Israel rhetoric. For example, the lion's share of Israel's oil supplies is provided by Turkey. Thus, it would have been much more influential if the Turkish ruling elite, instead of issuing anti-Israeli statements that regularly accuse Tel Aviv of committing genocide, cut the oil supply from Turkey to Israel even for a week. Such a measure could have made a significant impact on Tel Aviv's ability to continue the war. Iran, in particular, has repeatedly brought up this tactic in conversations, but it has not yet been implemented due to the aforementioned competitive realities.

Even if we put the war in Gaza aside, there would still be obvious tendencies to increase tensions in the region. Although such regional tensions are often evaluated within the framework of the US-Iran confrontation, they seem to be mostly engrained in the nature of the Middle East. In particular, there are many non-state players involved in regional processes, who are associated with some Middle Eastern and extra-regional players yet not fully influenced by them. Among them are the Islamic Jihad movement in Palestine, Ansarullah (the Houthis) in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq, and several resistance groups in Syria, along with a number of terrorist groups such as the Daesh (Islamic State) and Al-Qaeda, which have always taken advantage of any tension arising in the region to advance their goals and interests. Vivid examples of the role played by non-state players are the destabilization of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden by the Yemeni Ansarullah in support of Hamas, the regular targeting of Israeli territory by Hezbollah, the attacks against American military bases by Iraqi and Syrian groups, and the terrorist activities of the Daesh in Iran.

To summarize, it can be confirmed that deep geopolitical changes are manifesting in the Middle East as well. They have had a substantive impact on the geopolitical and security image of this region. Various military tensions in the region, with unique characteristics, warn of the possibility of a larger confrontation, despite global efforts to avoid it.

## General developments of labor market in Armenia

By Eliza Matevosyan  
Economist

**PERSPECTIVE  
EXCLUSIVE**

The basis of this claim is the latest available data, mainly for 2022 since the summary indicators of the labor market for 2023 have not been published yet.

In light of the double-digit economic growth of 12.6% registered in 2022 in Armenia, positive developments were also observed in the labor market: the unemployment rate decreased, while employment and wages rose.

Thus, the average monthly number of officially registered unemployed people decreased by 12.4% in 2022, compared to the same period last year, totaling 53,420 people. In 2022, the unemployment rate decreased by 2% to reach 13.5%, compared to 2021, and the number of unemployed decreased by 11.3%, counting up to 176,600 people. On the other hand, during the observed period, the number of hired workers increased by 5.4%, to which contributed both the formation of new organizations (the number of organizations increased by 11.2% for the given period, employing 61,386 people), as well as an increase in the number of tourists and labor migrants, especially in the IT sector, arriving in the Republic of Armenia (RA).

To characterize the labor market, it is important to refer to study salaries and their trends in a given country, which is a key characteristic that illuminates the social security of that country. According to 2022 figures, the average monthly nominal salary in RA was 235,576 Armenian dram (AMD) (equaling \$541). This showed a 15.5% increase compared to the previous year, mainly due to a 19% increase in the wages paid by Armenia's private sector and a 4.3% increase in the wages paid by its public sector. The growth of wages is mainly owing to the growth of salaries in the fields of

- Information technologies,
- Wholesale and retail trade,
- And financial and insurance activities.

Against the inflation of 8.6%, the real salary increased by 6.3% in Armenia. It is noteworthy that in 2022, compared to the previous year, the levels of average monthly nominal wages increased in all provinces of Armenia, except Lori Province. However, the growth rate was particularly significant in Tavush Province by 41.1% and in Yerevan by 23.1%.

The creation of mechanisms aimed at the development of the labor market, the implementation of effective policies, and reforms are important prerequisites for achieving economic success in Armenia. They also promote the development, stability, expansion, and effective use of its labor potential.



ARMENPRESS

However, attention should be paid to the fact that the salary level in Tavush Province was inferior to four other provinces in absolute terms during the mentioned period. On the other hand, the highest salary level was in Syunik Province, which exceeded the rate registered in the capital by more than 58%, amounting to 427,040 AMD.

It is extremely important for the well-being of society to constantly focus on the study of labor market issues, raising them, as well as taking and implementing measures aimed at their regulation. In this context, it is particularly important to note that one of the urgent and outstanding problems of Armenia's labor market continues to be the uneven development of the labor market by territorial units (by RA provinces and Yerevan), particularly, the concentration of jobs and labor in the capital.

In 2022, about 36% of the labor force was concentrated in Yerevan, instead of the 29.6% registered in the previous year. It should also be noted that in 2022, more than 61% of the labor force was allocated to Yerevan and other cities. Furthermore, about 35% of the total employed people belong to Yerevan. Attention should be paid to the fact that despite such a concentration of labor resources, Yerevan is also the leader in terms of the share of unemployed people, which was about 44% in 2022. It is noteworthy that provinces with a large share of labor resources are also distinguished by a large share of unemployment.

On the other hand, from the point of view of studying the distribution of labor resources, it is extremely important to take into account the population density indicator. Here,

it should be noted that the level of urbanization in Armenia continues to be quite high, as a result of which the population density has increased to 1 per square mile. Thus, the capital is the most densely populated area as of 2022: about 64% of the total population was concentrated in Yerevan, while the indicator stood at 9% in the most populated province.

An integral part of the labor market study is the observation of labor migration, as well as the ethnic composition of the labor market in the country, since they have a direct impact on the composition and structure of labor resources, as well as the professional quality of the workforce. Therefore, it should be noted that people from Armenia mainly go to Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and other CIS countries as well as some European countries for work. And people come to work in Armenia mainly from India, Iran, and Ukraine. Recently, there has been a sharp increase in the inflow of citizens from India, Iran, and Russia to Armenia.

To sum up, we can state that the features and problems of the Armenian labor market are mainly as follows: Firstly, the geographical location of the territorial units and socio-economic features reveal disparities in development and, secondly, both the labor market and economic development are mainly concentrated in Yerevan. Along with all the above-mentioned, the study and analysis of the main indicators characterizing the labor market show that currently, there are positive trends in the Armenian labor market. These positive trends are also reflected in a decrease in the unemployment rate and an increase in employment in the country.

the medium term, temporarily disrupting the Riyadh-Tel Aviv settlement.

As for Israel, the current situation uses the realities of the global order no less successfully, based on the logic of the "war is an opportunity" formula. In particular, the explicit goal is to maximally change the current status quo of the Palestinian issue as a cancerous unresolved legacy left over from the previous world order. That is, to establish full control over the Gaza Strip, at least in the short term, and later, if possible, to do away with the plan for the formation of a Palestinian state.

The Israeli Army is carrying out a "punitive operation" in Gaza known as "Iron Swords", the declared goal of which is to remove the hold of Hamas over Gaza and to form a more controllable government in the region. Meanwhile, it can be concluded from the current three-phase operation of the Israeli army that Tel Aviv's plans in Gaza are more profound, aimed at the desolation of the territory as much as possible. Despite the constant calls and demands of the international community, as well as Israel's key allies, the most right-wing, pro-religious cabinet formed throughout the history of Israel continues its military operations with obvious elements of crimes against humanity (as a result of Israeli Armed Forces' actions that claimed 28,000 victims, left 67,000 wounded, and displaced 70% of the region's population). However, the professed goals of the Israeli side have not yielded significant results, especially because of the principled stand of Egypt and Jordan, which are also supported by Iran, Turkey, other Arab and Muslim countries, the United Nations, and the European Union.

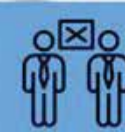
The war in Gaza has a deep geopolitical layer. This is also the reason that it carries predictable risks of continuous expansion and turning into a regional-scale war, despite the noticeable efforts of its main actors to contain it.

### Labour market in Armenia, 2022



684 783

Number of employees,  
person



176 600

Unemployed persons



541

Mean monthly nominal  
wages, USD



61 386

Number of establishments



# Brazilian Motta Paes named Iran volleyball head coach

## Sports Desk

Brazilian Mauricio Motta Paes was appointed as the head coach of Iran's men's national volleyball team, the governing body of the sport in the country announced on Wednesday. A former number two to fellow-Brazilian Bernardo Rezende on France bench in 2021 and 2022, The 60-year-old coach replaces Behrouz Ataei, who stepped down from his role in the aftermath of a 3-1 defeat against the Czech Republic midway through last October's FIVB Olympic Qualifying Tournament in Rio de Janeiro, where Iran finished second from bottom in the eight-team table of Pool A and failed to secure direct qualification for the Paris Olympics. The announcement ends months of speculations and rumors surrounding the national team, during which several names – including former Iranian captain and world-class setter Saeid Ma'rouf, high-profile Belgian Vital Heynen, as well as Italian Gianlorenzo Blengini – had been lined up by the

federation for the job ahead of the Volleyball Nations League – starting May 21 – which will serve as the final phase of the Olympic qualifiers. The Brazilian's contract will be valid until the end of the volleyball competitions of the Olympic Games in August, the federation's caretaker Vahid Moradi said on Wednesday, adding it could be extended until the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028. Currently in charge of the Ukrainian club Epicentr-Podolyany, Motta Paes worked as an assistant to ex-France head coach Philippe Blain at the 2009 FIVB World League before he was part of the Brazil coaching staff at the annual competition between 2011 and 2017. As a head coach, Motta Paes steered his country to a silver medal at the 2015 Pan American Games, while lifting numerous domestic trophies during a four-year spell with Japanese club Panasonic Panthers. His toughest job to date, however, will probably come in the upcoming VNL event, where he will be facing a mammoth task to lead the Asian powerhouse to

the Games in the French capital. With Germany, Brazil, Poland, Canada, USA, and Japan having already joined host France, and Egypt likely to take the African slot for the Olympics, only four quotas remain up for grabs, which will be decided through the FIVB Ranking by the end of the VNL preliminary round on June 23. As it stands in the ranking, third-placed Italy, Argentina (sixth), Slovenia (seventh), and Serbia (ninth) are the favorites to punch the Paris ticket, with Iran lagging behind in the 15th place. Iran will be back in Rio de Janeiro for the start of its VNL campaign, squaring off against Serbia, Italy, Cuba, and Argentina. The final week of the preliminary round will see Iran play USA, the Netherlands, France, and Germany in Manila, Philippines. The top seven of the 16-team table of the preliminary phase will join host Poland in the VNL Finals in Lodz from June 27-30.



volleyball.ir

## Persian Gulf Pro League:

# Cheshmi's screamer piles misery on Morais



Esteghlal midfielder Rouzbeh Cheshmi (4) celebrates with teammates after scoring the winner in a 1-0 victory over Sepahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on February 27, 2024.

ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

## Sports Desk

A Rouzbeh Cheshmi's stunning strike was the difference between Esteghlal and Sepahan in the Persian Gulf Pro League's highly-anticipated fixture on Tuesday. There was little to separate the two sides, with the only goal coming late in the first half when the Iranian international midfielder's sizzling effort from 30 yards out went in off the bar – reminiscent of his stoppage-time strike in the World Cup victory over Wales two years ago. The 1-0 victory maintained the Tehran Blues' perfect home record at the Azadi Stadium, while adding to the misery for the visiting-side and Portuguese head coach Jose Morais,

who fell to a sixth consecutive defeat across all competitions. Sepahan's frontline – the most prolific in the league this season – was thoroughly kept at bay and hardly made an impact over the course of the 90 minutes, for which the Blues boss Javad Nekounam deserves credit, but still had a couple of chances to find an equalizer. The top flight's leading marksman Shahriar Moghanlou's tame effort came off the bar before the break, while winter signing Ali-Asghar A'rabi missed a glorious opportunity to bag his first goal for the club when he was denied by Esteghlal keeper Seyyed Hossein Hosseini in a one-on-one situation after the break. The statement triumph saw

Esteghlal move eight points clear of third-place Sepahan on top of the table, though Morais' men have two games in hand. Elsewhere on Tuesday, Foolad Khuzestan and Malavan shared the spoils in a 1-1 stalemate in Ahvaz's Foolad Arena. Mohammadreza Soleimani gave Mahdi Tartar's Malavan the lead eight minutes after the interval, but his goal was canceled out by Mohammad Asgari in the 84th minute. In Sirjan, Roberto Torres, Ahmadreza Zenderouh, and Saeed Saharkhizan were on target as Golgozar walked away with a 3-0 win against Nassaji Mazandaran – a result to forget for head coach Saket Elhami on his return to the northern Iranian club's bench.

# Iranian swimmers win four Asian age group medals

## Sports Desk

The second day of the Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships saw the Iranian swimmers collect four medals, including one gold, in Capas, Philippines. Representing the country in the men's 50m freestyle final of the over-18 age group, Samyar Abdoli clocked 22.83 seconds to finish ahead of Uzbekistan's Eldorbek Usmonov (22.87s) and Qatari swimmer Mohamed Mohamed (22.90s), becoming only the second Iranian to walk away with the ultimate prize in the history of the competition after Mohammad Ali-rezaei had won a couple of

golds in 2005 and 2007. This was a second medal for Abdoli in Capas, following a 4X100m freestyle relay bronze-winning performance along with Mehrshad Afghari, Homer Abbasi, and Matin Sohran on Day 1. Having won the boy's 200m individual medley silver and the 50m backstroke bronze on the preceding night, Mohammad-Mahdi Gholami won a second medal for Iran on Tuesday, when he settled for the silver in the 200m butterfly event of the 13-14 age class, thanks to a second-best time of 2:05.99 minutes. Vietnam's Hoang quy Duong grabbed the gold with

2:03.54 minutes, with Yung-cheng Kan of the Chinese Taipei taking the bronze. Gholami was also part of the Iranian four-boy team – alongside Yashar Soleimani, Rayan Zare', and Shantia Nazari – that won the bronze in the 4X100m freestyle relay final. Meanwhile, Afghari finished his men's 100m butterfly campaign with a bronze, while Kiumars Aslani and Sam Vajer teamed up for a diving bronze, finishing third in the boy's synchro board level with 232.2 points. Vajer took his personal tally to two medals on Wednesday, courtesy of a boys' platform silver with 357.3 points.



Iranian swimmer Samyar Abdoli poses with the men's 50m freestyle gold at the Asian Age Group Aquatics Championships in Capas, Philippines, on February 27, 2024.

IRSF



National Desk

EXCLUSIVE

With just one day left until the highly anticipated elections in Iran, the country is making the final touches for the big day. Scheduled for March 1, Iran is bracing itself for two significant elections —the 12th parliamentary and the 6th Assembly of Experts elections. As the candidate list is now finalized, the country is gearing up for these pivotal elections. The election campaigns for both the

Emphasizing political ethics and people's rights by the candidates and their supporters, the assembly urges all to cast their votes for individuals who, in "commitment to Islamic principles," and "adherence to the Constitution," possess greater competence in insight and management. This way, with a high vote, the representatives of these two important councils (Parliament and Assembly of Experts) will have a stronger support and, in line with the responsibilities assigned to them in the



# Iran bracing for big elections

**Raisi: Massive voter turnout key to enhancing social capital**

Parliament and the Assembly of Experts wrapped up on Wednesday. Senior officials, institutions, and organizations have repeatedly called on all Iranians to take part in the countrywide elections, with recent invitations coming from President Ebrahim Raisi. The president once again urged widespread participation in the elections, emphasizing the importance of seeking public opinion on critical issues and increasing voter turnout as a strategic approach for the country, ultimately leading to a boost in social capital. He said that all essential infrastructure and arrangements for conducting the 38th round of elections in the country are set up. The Assembly of Experts and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) also issued their statements on Tuesday. The Assembly of Experts, expressing appreciation to the Iranian nation, which has prepared itself for a "conscious presence," invites everyone to vote with maximum participation, wisdom, and insight, a part of the statement said.

Constitution, contribute to the progress and prosperity of the Islamic Republic of Iran, resolving the country's challenges, and obtaining more divine success, it concluded. The IRGC also invited Iranians from all social strata to vote in the polls, contributing to the enhancement of national power and security. The elections would guarantee a boost to national security and power, raise social capital, strengthen the capacities and opportunities for the settlement of problems, pave the way for development, and stymie the plots of enemies, the statement said. The IRGC described a maximum and enlightened turnout in the elections as a main element of religious democracy in Iran, saying the votes have always brought about power, might and credit for Iran in delicate junctures and have disappointed the enemies. Additionally, supporters have openly expressed their backing for the candidates. Concurrently with the parliamentary elections, the 6th Assembly of Experts



elections will also take place on Friday. Members of the assembly are directly elected to office by the people for an eight-year term. Assembly of Experts is composed of 88 qualified Islamic jurists and clerics who, based on the Constitution, are responsible for appointing, supervising, and dismissing the Leader of the Islamic Revolution. For the parliamentary elections, eligible

voters from 31 provinces will choose their provincial representatives for the 290-seat Parliament on Friday. To secure victory and serve as a lawmaker for the four-year term in Parliament, a candidate needs to attain a minimum of 20 percent of the votes cast in his or her constituency. Some 15,200 candidates have been approved by the Constitutional Council to compete for the seats. Any candidate for elections in Iran must be approved by the council. According to the council's spokesman Hadi Tahan Nazif, all the candidates should benefit from campaigning facilities with equal and proportionate distribution according to the resources of each election. On Wednesday, the Constitutional Council sent the names of the 15,200 qualified parliamentary candidates to the Interior Ministry, which holds the elections. It's a record number and more than twice the candidates who ran in the 2020 elections, when voter turnout was just over 42%. The candidates include 1,713 women, which is more than double the 819 who ran in 2020. The new Parliament will convene in late May. The current Parliament has been dominated by conservatives. Tehran, the capital and the most politically significant city with 30 seats, emerges as the focal point for the main electoral lists. Traditionally, electoral competitions have unfolded between the two primary factions of Reformists and Principlists. But in the upcoming elections, certain factions within the Reformists have stated that they have not introduced a candidate or list due to the performance of the supervisory institution, namely the Constitutional Council. However, a list called "The Voice of the Nation," led by the former MP Ali Motahari, has introduced prominent figures from past terms, embodying a mix of moderate and Reformist voices critical of the current Parliament and government policies. During a Tuesday campaign meeting, Motahari emphasized the Voice of the Nation's pursuit of enhancing the credibility of Parliament through constitutional avenues. On the other side, Principlists have entered the arena with multiple lists, most notably the Revolution Front, a coalition of the Coalition Council of Islamic Revolution Forces, and another political group known as the Stability Front. Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, the current

The Assembly of Experts urges all to cast their votes for individuals who, in "commitment to Islamic principles," and "adherence to the Constitution," possess greater competence in insight and management.

The IRGC described a maximum and enlightened turnout in the elections as a main element of religious democracy in Iran.

Parliament speaker, and Morteza Aqatehrani, the head of the Central Council of the Stability Front, top the list of this coalition. In contrast to Motahari, head of the Coalition Council of Islamic Revolution Forces, Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, stressed that not opposing the government was a red line in selecting individuals for the Revolution Front list. Regarding the inclusion of Qalibaf on the final list, Haddad-Adel said, "Our red line for selecting candidates is not being against the government because we recognize Mr. Raisi's government as our own, and supporting the government as our duty." Another coalition, named the Unity Council, has presented a 30-member list for Tehran, with former foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki as its head. Additionally, another Principlist list, known as the People's Coalition of Islamic Revolution Forces has been introduced for the Tehran elections. Alongside these coalitions, independent candidates have also entered the campaign, though their chances of success seem limited. These coalitions have also introduced candidates for elections in provinces, with their influence expected to be less pronounced in smaller cities compared to Tehran and major urban centers.

Date: 1402/12/10 - No.: 55/02/31570 First Announcement

**INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER**

**AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY**

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, affiliated to Ministry of Agriculture-Jahad of I.R of Iran, is considering the purchase of the below item of technical, through renewal of one step international tender.

	Name	PACKING	Quantity/ KG
1	Deltamethrin Tech Min 98.5 pct.	50 kg drums	1800

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Wednesday** dated 28/2/2024 until **Monday** dated 4/3/2024 (4 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran). The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of IRI. Rials 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR25010004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30-character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000006. The bidders are requested to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Wednesday** dated 3/4/2024 until **10:00 AM** to our security office located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be held on **Wednesday** dated 3/4/2024 at 14:00 with the presence of bidder's representatives at our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, Fourth Alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran). We would like to emphasize that the value of the bid bond amount must be only submitted by the bidders in bank guarantee as follows:

1- € 4806 for Deltamethrin Tech Min 98.5 pct. equivalent to Iranian Rials 1476076392.

- The bid bond value should be in Euro or in equal value of any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on the exchange rate of Telegraphic Transfer of the basic and essential commodities on CBI's ETS website, www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir, on 18/2/2024.
- The bidders are also permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial.
- After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website [www.assc.ir](http://www.assc.ir), and <http://liets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

Public relations and international affairs of agricultural support services company



# 'I will no longer be complicit in genocide'

"I will no longer be complicit in genocide."

These are the last words of a member of the US Air Force before setting himself on fire outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington to protest the regime's US-backed slaughter of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Aaron Bushnell, 25, also said his suffering was minimal compared to that of Palestinians as the humanitarian crisis persists in Gaza.

Aaron was taken to a hospital in a critical condition but died from his wounds hours later.

The image of a man pointing a gun at Aaron's body as it burned on the ground also drew criticisms. The image quickly became a symbol of the brutality Bushnell was protesting and then experienced in his final seconds.

Vigils were held to honor his life in various US cities

which have been the scene of pro-Palestine rallies since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on the Palestinian territory on October 7.

Mourners left flowers and candles, many expressing their admiration for Bushnell's final act of protest while condemning the US government for its support for Israel's war, which has claimed the lives of about 30,000 Palestinians – most of them women and children.

Aaron's self-immolation brought to light the military aid and support that Israel has been receiving from its biggest ally.

Since October 7, Israel has received immense support from the US, ranging from arms and ammunition to consultancy from top-level commanders.

The Hamas resistance group, whose forces are fighting Israeli forces in Gaza, reacted to the incident in Washington and said the US should be held responsible for his death.

Hamas said in a statement, "He immortalized his name as a defender of human values and the oppression of the suffering Palestinian people because of the American administration and its unjust policies".

It is not the first time someone has set themselves on fire in front of an Israeli diplomatic mission in the US since the intensification of Israel's strikes on Gaza.

In December, a protester self-immolated in front of the Israeli consulate in Atlanta, Georgia.



People attend a vigil for US Airman Aaron Bushnell at the US Army Recruiting Office in Times Square in New York City on February 27, 2024.  
 ● MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/  
 GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP



People place flowers in front of photos at a vigil for US Airman Aaron Bushnell at the US Army Recruiting Office in Times Square in New York City on February 27, 2024.  
 ● MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/  
 GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

A person holds a sign during a vigil for US Airman Aaron Bushnell at the US Army Recruiting Office in Times Square in New York City on February 27, 2024.



A person holds a sign during a vigil for US Airman Aaron Bushnell at the US Army Recruiting Office in Times Square in New York City on February 27, 2024.  
 ● MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO  
 GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
 Cartoonist



People leave notes and flowers during a vigil for US Air Force active-duty airman Aaron Bushnell outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC on February 26, 2024.  
 ● ANNA MONEYMAKER/GETTY IMAGES/AFP



Protesters set Israeli flags ablaze outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC on February 27, 2024.  
 ● GETTY IMAGES

