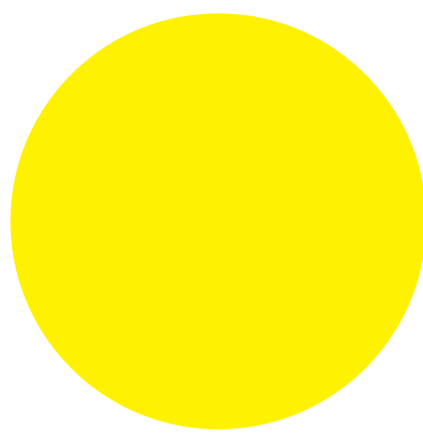


**Raisi:**  
Muslim  
cultural  
figures should  
counter  
distortion of  
Gaza realities



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# Iran Daily

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**Iran, India can  
complement  
one another  
economically**



By **Shuaib Bahman**  
International affairs  
expert

**OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE**

During a recent visit by the Indian minister of ports, shipping and waterways to Iran, an agreement was struck to run and equip Shahid Beheshti port terminal in Chabahar, further facilitating cooperation within the north and south corridors between the two nations. Sarbananda Sonowal referred to the agreement as a monumental and pivotal milestone for both bilateral relations and regional bonds. Iran's foreign minister emphasized that Tehran views its relationship with New Delhi as strategic.

Given the interruptions that have affected the Chabahar port development plan, the recent agreement should be regarded as a positive sign for both bilateral relations and regional collaboration. Iran and India are two nations that have always maintained solid historical and cultural ties. Concurrently, their economic relations have been well-established, yet they have not fully capitalized on the potential that exists between the two countries.

The Chabahar port development plan is a major project poised to significantly foster economic relations. To access markets in Russia, Europe, Central Asia, and Afghanistan, India requires efficient corridors and transit routes, most of which runs through Iran.

Over the years, the implementation of the Chabahar port development plan has been hindered by interference from third parties, leading to postponements. At the same time, China's investment in Pakistan's Gwadar port, which is perceived as a longstanding rival for India, unfolded. Now, it appears that Iran and India have come to the understanding that delaying the development of Chabahar port – a strategic hub intended to link India with other countries in the region and Europe – has not only resulted in losses for both nations but has also presented opportunities for their rivals to launch new routes that serve their own interests.

Furthermore, both Iran and India are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the BRICS Treaty. Their participation in these significant alliances has unlocked new opportunities for collaboration in multiple areas, with a primary focus on economic cooperation.

As a result, the two nations stand to benefit from greater cooperation, leveraging their respective strengths to address mutual needs. However, external pressure and efforts from regional rivals could slow down collaboration between Iran and India. Consequently, the determination of Tehran and New Delhi to exploit existing resources for heightened cooperation is crucial. Economically, Iran and India have the potential to complement one another. The recent deal to equip and operate Chabahar port, being a comparatively long-term contract, can be seen as a big step in this direction.

## India downplays US sanctions threat over Iran port deal

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## Resistance **Fighting** Hegemonic Goals in Mideast

Western 'barbaric thoughts' exposed by Axis of Resistance, Syrian publisher says

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### Iran strongly condemns Australian sanctions

Iran strongly condemned Australia's sanctions against several Iranian senior officials, entities and companies allegedly over the country's peaceful missile and drone programs. Australia's sanctions against Iran came on Tuesday a month after Tehran launched missile and drone attacks on the Israeli regime to punish it for an airstrike that killed Iranian generals in a diplomatic mission in Syria.

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Talks underway between Tehran, Kabul for ditching US dollar in bilateral trade



Negotiations are ongoing between Iran and Afghanistan for sidelining US dollar in bilateral transactions.

The deputy governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said that talks are ongoing between the two countries for the implementation of "offshore rial" in Afghanistan, reported Tasnim News Agency.

Mohsen Karimi pointed out that "offshore rial" is used with the aim of supporting the economic activists and exporters of the private sector of the country. The project of ditching the US dollar and using rial in foreign trade exchanges has always been followed up by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to neutralize sanctions, he underlined. Earlier, CBI Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin had announced that using the "offshore rial" in trade with Russia, Afghanistan and Iraq is on the agenda, adding that the idea of ditching the US dollar has produced positive results.

## Iran's point-to-point inflation down over 24%:

**Khandouzi**

Iranian Finance Minister Ehsan Khandouzi said the country's point-to-point inflation rate dropped by 24.6 percent in the first month of the current Iranian calendar year, March 20-April 19, compared to the same period last year.

He made the remarks at a weekly press conference in the Iranian capital Tehran, reported Mehr News Agency.

Citing figures by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), Khandouzi said the country's point-to-point inflation rate dropped to 30.9 percent in the first month of this year, compared with 55.5 percent during March 21-April 20 last year, the first month of Iranian calendar year 2023.

In addition, at the end of the previous year, Iran's liquidity growth rate decreased to 24.3 percent, the minister said, noting it used to stand at above 40 percent at the end of the former administration, early August 2021. The minister added from March 20 to April 19, 2024, Iran's producer price index declined by 6.1 percent compared to the same period last year to reach 31.2 percent.

## Handicrafts exports surge 35% post-pandemic

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writers

The head of the Women Commission of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives said that according to the figures by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, the export value of the country's handicrafts has reached \$3.5 billion.

Talking to Iran Daily, Khatereh Ostadrezaei also noted that the figure for exports of handicrafts includes official exports and unofficial figures.

"Since Iran's handicrafts are exported through various formal and informal channels, and the country's handicrafts are produced in legal frameworks, including cooperative and non-cooperative workshops and public or private companies, there are no detailed statistics about the exports," she said.

Every year, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts released statistics on the export of handicrafts, which can be considered as the statistics of the government sector of the handicrafts export of the country, Ostadrezaei said.

She went on to say that according to official statistics, the export of handicrafts in the country has increased by 35 percent compared to before the pandemic of Corona. "At the same time, the collection of data from the handicrafts cooperatives sector of the country shows the growth rate of handicrafts exports in the handicrafts cooperatives sector by three to five percent compared to before the pandemic."

According to Ostadrezaei, the figure of exports of handicrafts in the cooperative sector of the



country stands at about \$1.5 billion.

She put the number of cooperatives producing handicrafts across the country at about 8,000 and explained: "This number of cooperatives includes all branches of handicrafts and cooperatives producing handwoven carpets."

The production capacity of handicrafts in the cooperative sector of the country is a very considerable that can be used with proper planning for the growth of production and job creation in

the country, as well as increasing exports and earning foreign currency, Ostadrezaei stated.

"Handicraft cooperatives are now scattered throughout the country, both in urban and rural areas, and are able to benefit from the capabilities of this sector in far and near places."

She noted that about 40% of the country's handicrafts are produced in the form of handicrafts cooperatives, and explained the handicrafts cooperatives have a high capacity to use production

capabilities in the rural and remote parts of the country.

"About 1,800 craftspeople are active in the Handicrafts Cooperative Union of Tehran Province. The union operates in 48 fields of handicrafts, as the number of fields of handicrafts in the handicrafts cooperatives of the whole country is more than the figure."

Ostadrezaei noted that in the field of handicrafts, we are facing many problems, including the supply of raw materials, organizing production lines, introduction and marketing, as well as support and welfare issues for artisans

and producers.

"With the efforts of the officials, the handicraft production issues as well as the welfare and support issues of the craftspeople of the sector have improved compared to the past.

We hope that more serious measures to be done in the field of exhibition and supply of handicraft products to the domestic and international markets, she said expressing her hope that the craftspeople are encouraged in the field of production and export, so we witness the prosperity of the country's handicrafts economy.

## Iran's heavy crude output tops 3 mbd in April: OPEC



The latest monthly report of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) shows that Iran's heavy crude oil production volume hit 3.212 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) in April 2024, showing a 14,000-barrel hike.

OPEC said that the price of Iran's heavy crude oil in April 2024 increased for the fourth consecutive month, reported Tasnim News Agency.

It said the price of each barrel of Iran's heavy crude oil in April 2024 reached \$88.79, showing a 6.4 percent hike compared to a month earlier. OPEC put the price of each bar-

rel of Iran's heavy crude oil in March 2024 at \$83.48.

The average price of Iran's heavy crude oil has reached \$83.21 since the beginning of the current year.

Oil production by OPEC member states, which is comprised of 12 countries, reached 26.58 million barrels of oil per day (bpd) in April 2024. In this period, the oil production volume both in Iran and Congo increased while the crude oil output decreased in Nigeria, Iraq and Venezuela. The oil production volume by non-OPEC members in the OPEC plus group reached 14.44 mbd in April 2024.

## India downplays US sanctions threat over Iran port deal

India's foreign minister said his country will work to communicate the benefits of a strategic port project in Iran, after the United States said Indian firms working on the project risked sanctions.

Iran and India this week signed a contract to develop and equip the long-stalled Chabahar port in an agreement that would give New Delhi 10 years of access to the facility, at a time when its government is seeking to grow trade in west and central Asia, AFP reported. "It's a question of communicating and convincing and getting people to understand that this is actually for everybody's benefit," Indian foreign minister S. Jaishankar said at a public event in the city of Kolkata on Tuesday evening.

"If you look at the US's own attitude to Chabahar in the past, the US has been appreciative of the fact that Chabahar has a larger relevance," he added.

The State Department on

Monday warned that Indian companies working on the project risked US sanctions.

"Any entity - anyone - concerned with business deals with Iran, they need to be aware of the potential risks that they're opening themselves up to," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told a press briefing then.

The deal signed this week will see India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) invest \$370 million into "providing

strategic equipment" and "developing the transport infrastructure of the port" over the coming decade.

India in 2016 agreed to finance the development of the Iranian port as a trading hub for central Asia.

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, both countries agreed to speed up the project after a visit by Jaishankar to Tehran.

Chabahar port is on the Indian Ocean about 100 kilometres (62 miles) west of the Pakistani border.



# Hormuz: The enchanting 'Rainbow Island'



● [hormuzisland.com](http://hormuzisland.com)



● [surfiran.com](http://surfiran.com)



● [surfiran.com](http://surfiran.com)



● [surfiran.com](http://surfiran.com)

## Iranica Desk

Did you know that the enchanting island of Hormuz, nestled near Bandar Abbas in the heart of Hormuzgan Province, is famously called 'Rainbow Island'? The island's vibrant hues are a result of its diverse range of minerals and rocks, creating a mesmerizing spectacle for visitors. Shaped like an exquisite oval, Hormuz boasts a significant portion made up of edible salt, adding a unique touch to its natural wonders. Spanning a remarkable 42 kilometers, this captivating island graces the stunning Persian Gulf.

Every corner of this island is blended with astonishing beauty. Colors have created the island like a painting and added to its charm. Hormuz is unlike any other island in the Persian Gulf. You can't find a similar example anywhere in the world. It is a salt dome rising from the sea.

The attractions of Hormuz Island are numerous, with the most notable being Rainbow Valley. It seems that this time the rainbow arch has taken shape not in the sky, but on the surface of a dome-shaped island.

Watching a rainbow in the sky is not something contrary to belief, but the existence of a beautiful rainbow on the surface of the earth, in the midst of mountains, is beyond belief and everyday experience.

Such a landscape, with the backdrop of the Persian Gulf and the azure sky of Hormuz, captivates every spectator. In the valley, more than 70 diverse color spectra can be found. From a distance one might think that we are experiencing a visual error. It is hardly believable that all those colors encompass the soil and heights, creating such a delightful 'Rainbow Island'. But the closer we get, the more we believe and accept that what lies before us is not an illusion, or a dream, but exactly how Hormuz appears from afar.

Each layer of soil and rock on the island is adorned with a vibrant palette of colors, from vivid yellows and pristine whites, to fiery reds, majestic purples, and unexpected hues that defy imagination. The intermingling of these hues creates an enchanting spectacle. Patience is required to fully revel in the euphoria of witnessing such a display of colors.

We stand in awe of the unmatched beauty in Hormuz's Rainbow Valley. Its diverse and magnificent rainbow, painted across layers of earth, is truly ethereal and unparalleled. Prepare to be enchanted by this extraordinary natural wonder.

Rainbow Valley has various metallic stones. Some of these stones can only be found on this island, such as Hema-

tite, which is called Shadneh in Persian. This stone can be seen in Europe and some countries in Latin America. In Asia, only Rainbow Valley has such a stone. It is interesting to know that this metallic stone is said to have created the red color of the planet Mars.

One of the important stones in Rainbow Valley is Magnetite, which is also a mineral and is black in color. The stone Olivine, which is the most abundant iron ore, is also found in Rainbow Valley. This stone is red and shiny. Iron oxide can be found in all of these stones. But what adds more value to Rainbow Valley is its colorful soil. The soil is used in painting and other artistic purposes; they are employed in the cosmetics and ceramics industries, and have medicinal value. There is even a colorful soil there that is edible.

In the past, colorful soil from Rainbow Valley was abundantly exported to countries around the world, especially to leading countries in the cosmetics industry. However, in recent years, for reasons unknown, the export of colorful soil from the valley has decreased. Perhaps one reason for this decline is reckless harvesting, which damaged the diverse range of colors found in the valley's soil.

We mentioned a fascinating fact about a species of soil from Rainbow Valley that is actually edible. The islanders, who call this soil Gilak, cleverly use it to create flavorful spices. They blend Gilak with oranges, then sprinkle it over freshly baked bread. The result is a mouthwatering delicacy known as Suragh.

In Rainbow Valley, there is a famous stone that is remembered everywhere. It resembles two hands reaching towards the sky. When it rains, water gathers between the two hands and slowly trickles onto the stone hollow. These little stone hands create a captivating sight, as if they want to prevent the rain from being wasted.

One of the enchanting wonders of Hormuz Island is Snow Mountain. Located just a stone's throw away from the vibrant Rainbow Valley, this majestic snow-capped peak is crafted from shimmering salt and crystals. It stands tall as a cherished gem among the island's top tourist destinations. From the breathtaking Rainbow Valley, visitors can observe the Snow Mountain's ethereal snowy silhouette, unveiling a scene straight out of a winter wonderland.

Hormuz Island and Rainbow Valley are best seen in autumn and winter. During these two seasons, the heat of the weather is reduced, and there is more time and tranquility to admire a valley with captivating and delightful colors.



● [jahannews.com](http://jahannews.com)



● [otaghak.com](http://otaghak.com)



● [hormuzisland.com](http://hormuzisland.com)

# Spain leads European push to recognise Palestine



By Giorgio Cafiero  
CEO and founder of Gulf State Analytics

## PERSPECTIVE

"The time has come for the international community to once and for all recognise the State of Palestine," he said in November. "It is something that many EU countries believe we have to do jointly, but if this is not the case, Spain will adopt its own decision." In all, 139 out of 193 United Nations member states consider Palestine as a state. Those that do include European nations such as Iceland, Poland, and Romania, as well as countries like Russia, China, and Nigeria. The European Union as a whole does not recognise Palestine, nor do states including the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. Sanchez, who has discussed the issue on his recent trips abroad, has declared that his country has agreed with Ireland, Malta, and Slovenia on the need for recognition. That four European governments are in favour of the move while others are against is a sign that the EU, as an institution, is deeply divided.

Earlier, Portuguese premier Luis Montenegro told Sanchez that his government would "not go as far" as Spain without a joint European approach.

Members of the bloc have for months adopted divergent positions on Israel's conduct in the besieged enclave and are also split, perhaps to a lesser degree, on the Russia-Ukraine war. But it is not surprising to see Ireland, Malta, Slovenia, and Spain taking the lead among EU members on this front, given their long-held positions in support of Palestinian self-determination. The four governments would have preferred to make the move within the EU framework, which would have given them far more leverage, but the pro-Israel positions of Austria, Germany, the Netherlands, and others would stand in the way.

To that end, policymakers in Dublin, Ljubljana, Madrid, and Valletta determined that their best possible course of action was to move ahead in this relatively small group of like-minded EU members.

It is possible that a few more European countries will join soon later and agree to recognise the State of Palestine, said experts. "This decision might trigger a few more recognitions, but I do not expect an avalanche," Marco Carnelos, former Italian ambassador to Iraq, told Al Jazeera. "Other EU member states will watch what the big members like Germany, France, and Italy will do." According to Carnelos, there are "no chances" of Germany or Italy under Prime Minister Giorgia

Spain is on a mission.

As Israel's war on Gaza rages on for THE seventh month, with over 35,000 Palestinians killed, Madrid wants to recognise Palestine as a state by July and is encouraging its neighbours to follow in its footsteps.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, a longtime supporter of Palestinian rights, sees recognition as a way of reaching a two-state solution and a possible key to ending the devastating conflict that began in October.



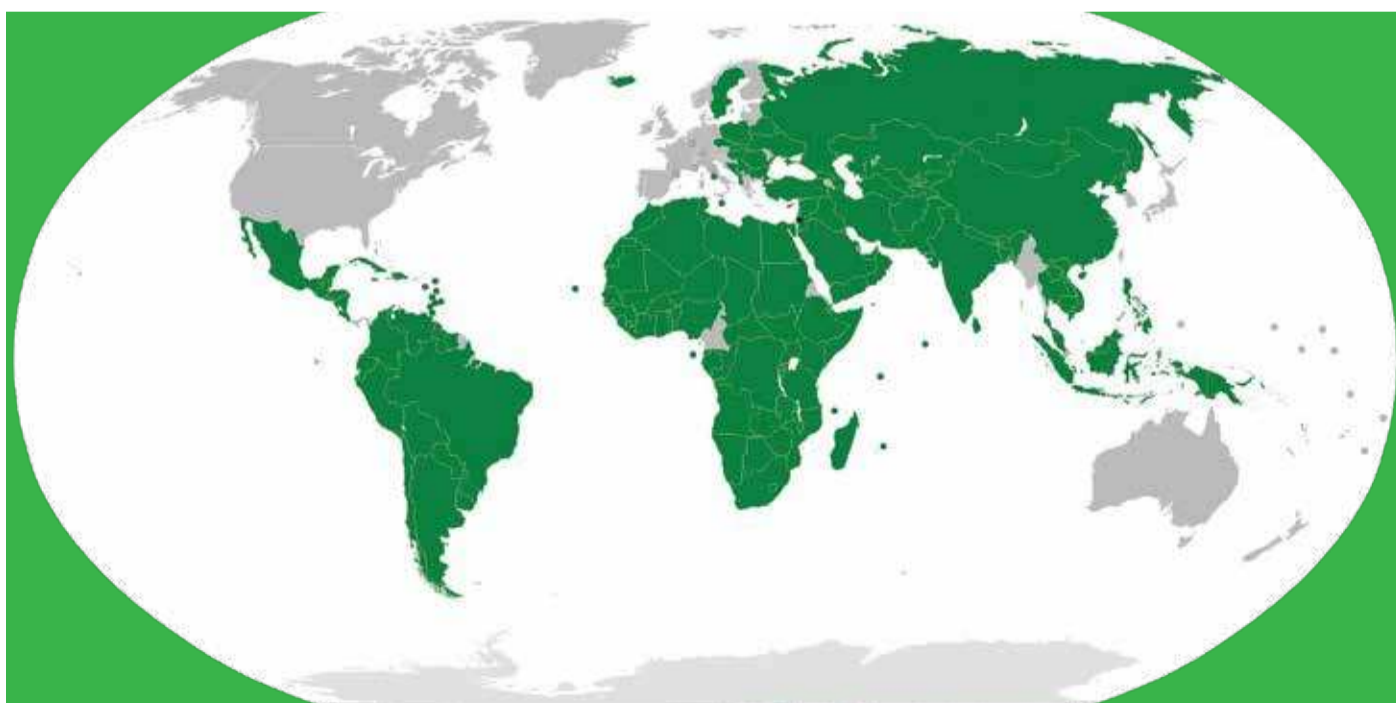
Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (R) and Ireland's new Taoiseach Simon Harris speak as they meet to discuss recognising the Palestinian state in Dublin, Ireland.   
● CLODAGH KILCOYNE/REUTERS

Meloni agreeing to such a move. As for France, "maybe", he said. Belgium, whose officials have been more critical of the war and called for economic sanctions on Israel, has said it will consider recognising Palestine. "Belgium holds the rotating

tine," Marc Martorell Junyent, a Munich-based journalist, told Al Jazeera. "Considering the critical position of the Belgian government about Israel's war against Gaza, it is likely Belgium will join the other countries in their efforts

sions on ties with the US, Israel's top ally, or Israel itself. Nonetheless, beyond "some verbal reaction" from the pair, Carnelos does not expect any concrete actions, such as the downgrading of diplomatic relations or economic sanctions.

as accusing them of giving "support to terrorism" at that time. "In the case of Spain, Israel withdrew her ambassador for some time. Something similar could happen if Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, and Malta push for Palestine's recognition," said Mar-



The 143 countries that are colored green on this map of the world recognize the State of Palestine, which is itself colored in black, as of May 8, 2024.   
● WIKIPEDIA

presidency of the EU this semester and this is most likely the reason why the Belgian government has not joined Spain, Ireland, Slovenia, and Malta in their push to recognise Pales-

after June, when it will no longer hold the rotating presidency," he added. Other EU members will likely watch closely to see whether the move has negative repercus-

In November, Israel summoned Belgium and Spain's ambassadors after the leaders of both nations denounced alleged war crimes in Gaza. Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen went as far

torell. In March, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz warned the four countries against recognising Palestine, likening the plan to a "prize for terrorism".

In a similar vein, Israeli Ambassador to Ireland Dana Erlich, asked: "Why reward terrorism?" Israel's latest military campaign in Gaza is by far its deadliest.

This stage of the Israel-Palestine conflict began after Hamas, the group that governs the enclave, attacked southern Israel on October 7, killing 1,139 people and taking more than 200 captive. Some of the captives have been released, others have died, and dozens remain held.

Israel has been bombarding Gaza with the stated aim of crushing Hamas, but with mostly women and children among the dead and much of the Strip reduced to rubble, that goal remains elusive.

In recent months, several global powers have called for Israeli restraint, including Washington. Analysts said that even if Palestine is increasingly formally recognised, the reality of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land will limit the effect of the move.

If European nations were to apply serious pressure on Israel, it could happen in one of two ways, said Matorell. The first would be by suspending the EU-Israel Association Agreement, which is the legal basis of the bloc's trade ties with Israel. The second would be through halting arms sales to Israel.

Spain, never one of Israel's key arms dealers, is the only EU member to have imposed an arms embargo.

The only two members of the bloc to have recently sold Israel significant levels of weaponry are Germany and Italy — Israel's second and third top sources of weapons behind the US.

Martorell believes that Berlin and Rome will continue with their arms sales to Israel for the foreseeable future.

"The only way European states will change the Israeli calculus and behaviour on the Palestinian issues is through heavy sanctions, but probably no European state, except Ireland I believe, will be ready to pursue such a path. Germany will prevent any move in such direction, and in this case, the US reaction could be very strong," Carnelos told Al Jazeera.

"Ultimately, EU member states do not shine for their political courage and their determination in defending the values they are so proud about and claim so obsessively. Or, to put it more precisely, they do on certain topics but not on others. It is called a double standard," added the former Italian diplomat.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

# Turkey's joining in Israel genocide case could inspire others: *Lawyer*



By Melike Pala  
Reporter

## PERSPECTIVE

Daniele added that Turkey is an important NATO member which enables its joining in the case to have significant consequences. Saying that the ICJ's injunctions in the genocide case led to significant changes in the approaches of third states, he added that this stems from the states facing the risk of being brought before the ICJ due to complicity.

Arguing that Western countries attach importance to protecting their allies rather than international law, he said: "International crimes are not something that can be forgiven when the allies commit them and condemned when rivals commit them."

"Civilian populations will pay the consequences, as it happened already for the Palestinian civilian population, partly also for the Israelis' young population," he added.

He said the political leaderships of the EU and US have been the "most complicit" in serious human rights violations of Israel. "As a European citizen, I was shocked to hear the unilateralism of the declarations of leaders like (European Commission President) Ursula von der Leyen on their land. It seemed for months and months, while children and women were being exterminated, that nothing was happening, or that this was somehow an unfortunate but forgivable necessity of war," he added.

This is in "striking contrast" to all the solemn declarations of values including accountability for crimes against civilians in the Ukraine war, he said, adding that the EU, alongside the US, is really at "the top of its double standards".

### US stance 'beyond hypocritical'

He said the US attitude towards Russia's acts is completely different. He described the US reaction to the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of Israel as "beyond hypercritical, a

Turkey's recent announcement that it will become a party to South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) will encourage other countries to do the same, according to an Italian lawyer.

"More third states should intervene in the South Africa versus Israel proceedings, even just to ask for clarifications about what they should do when a danger of genocide is detected. So, I think that from this point of view, the intervention by Turkey catalyzes more third state interventions in support of South Africa," Luigi Daniele, a senior lecturer at Nottingham Law School in the UK, told Anadolu.



A delegation headed by Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Yildiz (R) told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on February 26, 2024, that the UN Security Council is failing.  
● NIKOS OIKONOMOU/ANADOLU AGENCY

preposterous position that undermines the international legal system."

"Actually (it) seems like a sort of tribalism of the Western states, perceiving themselves as a tribe, above the law, and perceiving the law itself as something that is only for their enemies," he added.

Underlining that this attitude threatens international security and increases the risk of world war, he said: "If you keep asserting that the law is only for your enemies, you are basically pushing, escalation by escalation, the worldwide political arena to the thresholds of a world war in which the new rules will be written by war."

Mentioning next month's European Parliament elections, he said the European people have seen what was done against the Palestinian civilian population and demand justice.

"So, if our leaders don't take steps in this direction now, they will pay the prices in the ballots," he said.

Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip in retaliation for an October 7 Hamas attack that killed some 1,200 people. More than 35,000 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza, the vast majority of them women and children, and over 78,000 others injured, according to Palestinian health authorities.

Nearly seven months into the Israeli war, vast tracts of Gaza lay in ruins, pushing 85% of the enclave's population into internal displacement amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine, according to the UN.

Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January said it is "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, and ordered Tel Aviv to stop such acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

The article first appeared on Anadolu Agency.

## On Ireland recognising Palestine

# A welcome development, a message to Israel

## PERSPECTIVE

Although Ireland in 1980 was the first EU state to endorse the idea of Palestinian statehood, turning this aspiration into actual recognition of that state has taken nearly a quarter of a century.

Micheál Martin's announcement in the Dáil on Tuesday that Ireland, and several EU allies, will now do so shortly is a welcome and important diplomatic acknowledgment of the well-established reality of Palestinian self-government in the West Bank, and a timely political admonishment of both Israel's war against Gaza and its refusal to advance negotiations on a two-state solution.

In 2014, the Oireachtas passed resolutions calling on the Government to "officially recognise the state of Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital, as established in UN resolutions, as a further positive contribution to securing a negotiated two-state settlement to the Israeli-Palestine conflict." To no avail.

The Government's reluctance stemmed from its wish to preserve the common EU foreign policy while attempting over a long period to move the consensus within the Council of Ministers to a position more critical of Israel.

Ireland was not alone but has been seen as an outlier in its support for Palestine. Spain, Slovenia, and Malta have also declared they will recognise Palestine.

Israel has argued, and until now most EU member states have accepted, that recognition would be premature, pre-empting the shape of the agreement reached between it and Palestine in final settlement talks in the framework of the now largely moribund Oslo peace accords and their promise of a two-state solution. Israel has for some years refused to talk.

"We have agreed," Martin told the Dáil, "that the undermining of the Oslo accords and therefore the agreement to



Tánaiste Micheál Martin (standing) speaks in the Dáil Chamber on April 9, 2024, where he said that Ireland intends to recognise the Palestinian state.  
● MAXWELLS/PA WIRE

create two states has reached a point where the accords' approach of recognition after a final agreement is not credible or tenable any longer."

The decision is also an important implied challenge to an unwilling Israel to

accept a Palestinian Authority role in the administering of Gaza post-Israeli withdrawal.

The article first appeared on The Irish Times.

## Shared historical links between Ireland, Palestine



By Jade Poleon  
Author

## PERSPECTIVE

Ireland has always been a country that has helped and supported other nations worldwide, especially in turbulent times.

Palestine is a perfect example of this since Ireland has

openly been supportive as Palestine strives to overcome war and seek political freedom.

This article will explore the many shared historical ties between both nations, uncovering the deep, long-standing relationship between two very similar nations with a shared past.

### British colonialism — a shared historical tie

One of the main historical links between Ireland and Palestine goes back to their colonial past. Both have been under British rule throughout the years, with Ireland being the first colonial 'experiment', while Palestine was its last.

Palestine was under British rule for around thirty years, from 1917 until 1948, and Ireland remained under British rule for 700 years. Part of Ireland successfully gained independence in 1921.

Because of this pivotal time in history, both nations recognise the struggles and hardships that come with being a suppressed colony, which is what has led Ireland to be a strong supporter of Palestine.

To this day, Ireland, among many other nations, supports Palestine as it continues to strive for its complete independence from Israel.

One of the primary historic ties between Ireland and Palestine dates back to 1980 when Ireland was the first country in the European Union to endorse the idea of a free Palestinian State.

Since Ireland has had its fair share of history regarding the fight for independence, many Irish republicans and government officials have empathised with Palestine and their struggle for freedom.

In 2011, the Foreign Affairs Minister stated that Ireland would indeed "lead the change" regarding Palestine's statehood. In 2024, this step is still in process, with Irish people consistently supporting this issue.



A mural expresses solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza in a Nationalist area on the Falls Road in Belfast, Northern Ireland.  
● CLODAGH KILCOYNE/REUTERS

### Partitions, violence — nations with similar experiences

It was during the early 20th century that both nations were resisting occupation by British rule.

In 1921, Ireland was divided into Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, while the partition of Palestine occurred in 1948, significantly impacting the population.

Both nations have experienced violence, oppression, and persecution, which has brought the two closer, with many murals of support for Palestine seen through Ireland and Northern Ireland to this very day.

Furthermore, they both share a profound historical bond characterized by unmatched strength and resistance.

Additionally, while conflicts in Ireland were often framed as religious clashes between Catholics and Protestants, a similar dynamic can be observed in Palestine, where it manifests as tensions between Muslims and Jews.

As we all know, this is almost always an anti-colonial struggle rather than a fight between religious groups.

### Language, identity — striving for recognition

In addition to other historical ties between Ireland and Palestine, we observe similarities in the realm of official languages.

Irish served as Ireland's official language until colonization, after which it was banned, and communication was mandated in English exclusively.

Only in 2021 did the Irish language attain full official status in the EU, with Northern Ireland granting it official language status in 2022.

Similarly, in Palestine, parallels emerge as Israel altered street signs, excluding Arabic in favour of Hebrew, thereby posing a threat to the Palestinian language and identity.

From their turbulent colonial pasts under British Rule to the recognition of their language and identity, both Ireland and Palestine have plenty in common.

It goes without saying that Ireland is one of the most pro-Palestinian nations in Europe, with Irish and Northern Irish citizens seeing a mirror image of themselves and their historical situations in Palestine.

The article first appeared on Ireland Before You Die.

# Iranians grab 10 medals, finish runner-up in Asian Poomsae Championships

Iran collected 10 medals to stand second in the team table at the Asian Taekwondo Poomsae Championships in Da Nang, Vietnam. Taekwondo powerhouse South Korea lifted the team trophy at the eighth edition of the competition, with the Chinese Taipei finishing third. The second day of the event saw the Iranians claim three medals – including one gold – across different age groups. Hossein Beheshti, Mahdi Jamali, and Ali Salmani teamed up to beat the host's trio to the ultimate prize in the men's team over-30 event. This was a second medal for Beheshti on Monday following a silver in the mixed pair over-30 contest alongside Atousa Farahmand, with Marjan Tajji and Yassin Zandi settling for a bronze in the under-30 class. Represented by nine athletes in Da Nang, Iran had picked up seven medals on the opening day. Mahdiyeh Oqbaei won a first gold

medal for Iran, thanks to a victory over South Korean Hana Lee in the women's under-40 final, while Yasaman Limouchi also finished her campaign on a high with a gold in the women's freestyle over-17 event. Elsewhere in the

women's contests, Farahmand took the individual under-50 silver. In the men's draw, Zandi was unlucky to finish as the individual under-30 runner-up after a controversial defeat against South Korea's Kang

Wan-jin in the final showpiece. Jamali also finished Day 1 with a silver, coming short against Park Yong-hwa of South Korea in the under-40 final. Salmani and Mohammad-Taqi Hatami added a couple of bronze medals to Iranian men's medal count, standing on the

Abolfazl Zandi (-54kg) and Matin Rezaei (-63kg) will be in men's action as the six-time champion Iran will begin its quest for a first team crown since 2018. Iranian Olympian Mahdi Haji Mousaei (-58kg) will be joined by Amir-Sina Bakhtiari (-74kg), and Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani (-87kg) in the men's bouts on Friday, with teenage prodigy Mobina Ne'matzadeh (-49kg), Elham Haqiqi (-62kg), and Melika Mirhosseini (-73kg) getting their campaigns underway in the women's competitions. Ali Khoshravesh, replacing injured captain Mirhashem Hosseini, will fight for the men's -80kg glory on Saturday, along with Aryan Salimi, who will take part in the +87kg weight class ahead of Olympic participation in the summer. Yalda Valinejad (-67kg) will be the sole Iranian girl in action on the final day of the kyorugi competitions, which will be followed by the Asian Para Taekwondo Championships on Sunday.



## Persian Gulf Pro League

# Stakes high at bottom end as five teams seek survival

### Sports Desk

All eyes might be on Tehran archrivals Esteghlal and Persepolis in the two-horse race for the Persian Gulf Pro League crown, but the stakes are equally high at the bottom end of the table. Separated by five points with three games to spare, five teams will give their all to secure a place in the Iranian top flight when the new season gets underway in late summer. San'at Naft Abadan – rock bottom with 20 points – looks destined to start next campaign in the second tier for the first time in nine years. Under new head coach Faraz Kamalvand, San'at defeated third-place Sepahan and Mes Rafsanjan in recent weeks but the massive results have done little to inspire the southern Iranian club, which has left the pitch empty-handed on 15 occasions while managing only four wins in 27 matches this season. San'at will play Shams Azar

at home next before visiting Zob Ahan and then welcoming fourth-place Tractor for the final round of fixtures on May 31. Sitting two points clear of their fellow-southern Iranian club in the table are Ahvaz city rivals Foolad and Esteghlal Khuzestan, which have three league titles between them since the Iranian Pro League was launched two decades ago, with the latter just outside the bottom two on goal difference. The addition of Brazilian Sávio Roberto and Iraqi striker Aso Rostam, among other signings, in the winter break saw Esteghlal Khuzestan – the last team other than the Tehran giants to win the league – enjoy a decent run in the second half of the season but the 4-1 humiliation against fellow-struggler Nassaji Mazandaran last time out was a major blow in the Ahvaz Blues' quest for an extended spell in the top-tier league. Next for Sirous Pourmousavi's men is a daunting en-

counter with defending champion Persepolis at Tehran's Azadi Stadium on Tuesday, followed by a visit to Mes Rafsanjan and the home game against Havadar. Foolad, meanwhile, is on a 10-game winless run – suffering six losses in the process – and will need significant improvement in the remaining fixtures, starting with the home game against Zob Ahan. Abdullah Veisi's side will square off against Paykan in the Foolad Arena on May 26 and finish its campaign with a trip to Qaemshahr to take on Nassaji in what could be a decisive battle for both sides. Nassaji has been the most in-form team of the bottom five in the closing stages of the campaign under Saket Elhami, who parted ways with Mes in the mid-season to return to northern Iran, two years after steering the club to Hazfi Cup glory – Nassaji's maiden silverware in the Iranian club football. The emphatic victory over

Esteghlal Khuzestan helped Nassaji move three points clear of the relegation zone but Elhami's side will still have to keep up the momentum in the remaining fixtures, the first of which will be at home against leader Esteghlal. An away game at Havadar will come Nassaji's way in its penultimate fixture, followed by the final-day game against Foolad. Paykan seemed to be secured a Pro League place for next season before a run of three successive defeats against Shams Azar, Iraco, and Zob Ahan sounded the alarm bells for Reza Enayati's side. Tied with Nassaji on 25 points – with a better goal difference – Paykan will host Tractor and visit Foolad in its next two games, hoping to secure safety before the final day, which will see the Tehran club welcome Esteghlal in what may well be a must-win encounter for Javad Nekounam's Blues in their title quest.



Nassaji Mazandaran's Mohammadreza Azadi (c) celebrates a goal during a 4-1 victory over Esteghlal Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Ahvaz, Iran, on May 13, 2024. ● FFIRI



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola reacts during a 2-0 win against Tottenham Hotspur in the Premier League in London, Britain, on May 14, 2024. ● DYLAN MARTINEZ/REUTERS



## Guardiola feels Man City are 'serving for Wimbledon'

**REUTERS** – Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola has likened his side's final Premier League game of the season to "serving for Wimbledon" as they moved to the top of the table after beating Tottenham Hotspur 2-0 on Tuesday. Guardiola's side have 88 points, two clear of Arsenal, and will secure a record fourth successive league title if they beat West Ham at home on Sunday, the final day of the season.

"The tennis players say 'the serve to win Wimbledon', the last match, is the most difficult," Guardiola told the BBC. "We know what we're playing for. The tension is there. We have a day off, two days to prepare and then we will do our best," he added. City, who have kept up the pace in the title chase, are now unbeaten in 22 league games, while Arsenal, who need to beat Everton, will be

hoping for the best on Sunday. Guardiola also spoke about goalkeeper Ederson, who was treated on the pitch after being tripped by Cristian Romero and midfielder Kevin de Bruyne, and was forced to come off through injury. "Ederson had a problem with his eye, he couldn't see well, so the doctor said he had to come off. De Bruyne had injured his ankle," he added.

# Raisi: Muslim cultural figures should counter distortion of Gaza realities



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (l) meets a group of prominent authors and cultural figures from the Islamic world in Tehran, Iran, on May 15, 2024.

## International Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi underlined the importance of the Muslim world's cultural figures in countering the enemies' plot to distort realities in the Gaza Strip.

He made the remarks in a meeting with a group of prominent writers and cultural figures from the Islamic world, who have participated in the 35th Tehran's International Book Fair.

Raisi said that enemy, using its media empire, is seeking to mislead the world's public opinion in the issue of Gaza by distorting real-

ities in the Palestinian territory.

He said that today the issue of Palestine has become the first and common issue of all Muslim and freedom-seeking nations of the world, calling the unprecedented unity a basis for the final victory of the Palestinian nation.

Despite the enemy's efforts to induce despair among the Islamic Ummah, the resistance of the freedom-seeking nations in the face of the historical oppression against the people of Gaza promises the victory of the Palestinian nation and the destruction of the criminal Israeli regime.

## Iranian MPs back switch to Friday-Saturday weekend

Iran's parliament approved changes to the working week for all government employees on Wednesday that would establish a 40-hour working week with a Friday-Saturday weekend. The legislation, which still requires a green light from constitutional watchdog the Guardian Council, would replace the existing 44-hour working week with a half-day Thursday and Friday – the Muslim day of prayer and rest – the only full day off.

The change had been hotly debated, and 136 lawmakers voted in favor with 66 against and three abstentions, the official IRNA news agency said.

Economists had warned that the alternative of a Thursday-Friday weekend risked deepening Iran's isolation by limiting most international transactions to three days per week.

But some opponents accused supporters of a Friday-Saturday weekend of taking their lead from the Judeo-Christian traditions of the Western world.

However, lawmaker Mohsen Pirhadi told Parliament Wednesday that leading cleric Ayatollah Javadi Amoli had raised no objection to Saturday as a weekend day.

## Biden's administration turning a blind eye to Israel's crimes



By Syed Ali Hassan  
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

Despite Washington's pro-Israel policies, countries in South America have protested against Israel's brutal attacks on Gaza. Bolivia and Belize had severed diplomatic relations with Israel due to its aggressive actions, and now Colombian President Gustavo Petro has announced that his country is also cutting diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv in response to attacks on Rafah. He has also called on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue arrest warrants for the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Petro stated that Netanyahu will not stop the genocide, so the need to issue their warrants for arrest has become even more urgent.

Colombia, an important country in South America, has announced its inclusion in the case of genocide filed against Israel by South Africa in the ICJ. The court ruled in January that genocide and Israeli attacks in Gaza pose a serious threat, but it did not order Israel to cease hostilities, which gave Israel further oppor-

tunity for more genocide of Palestinians.

The actions taken by South Africa and South American states against Israel will be remembered as a golden chapter in world history. However, when we analyze the reactions of Muslim countries over the genocide in Gaza, the heart sheds tears of blood. If Muslim countries only stop selling oil to Israel, it can increase pressure on the Israeli rulers. The United Arab Emirates and Azerbaijan are the Muslim countries that meet 40 to 60 percent of Israel's oil needs, while Saudi Arabia and Turkey are also involved in providing crude to Israel. Imagine if these Muslim countries stop supplying Israel with oil, then the bullets fired from its tanks and aircraft would not take the lives of Palestinian mothers, sisters, and children. Eighty percent of Gaza's 2.3 million population has become homeless due to Israeli aggression. Many neighborhoods and areas have been reduced to rubble while more than 35,000 Palestinians have been killed. Despite this, Israel has started attacks on Rafah and ordered the evacuation of temporary settlements for more than one million Palestinians.

Israeli ground forces are forcibly evacuating Palestinians.

After approving the attacks on Rafah by Israel's war cabinet, the US has temporarily stopped the supply of bombs that destroy concrete bunkers. It includes bombs weighing between 1,800 and 2,000 pounds and between 1,700 and 500 pounds. Washington's punitive action against Israel is extremely inadequate because billions of dollars' worth of American weapons are in the firm pipeline for Israel, including tanks, bullets and F-35 components. Moreover, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has halted the process of reaching a conclusion in Congress on a critical report on Israel's use of US weapons against civilians in Gaza.

The report stated that Israel has violated the terms of the use of weapons. If Blinken does not stop this action, not only will Israel have to face US legal actions, but the Biden administration will also have to take tougher punitive measures against Israel. Here again, the Biden administration has tried to turn a blind eye to Israel's crimes in the eyes of the world.

## EU urges Israel to end Rafah military operation 'immediately'

The European Union on Wednesday urged Israel to end its military operation in Gaza's Rafah "immediately", warning that failure to do so would undermine ties with the bloc.

"Should Israel continue its military operation in Rafah, it would inevitably put a heavy strain on the EU's relationship with Israel," said the statement issued in the EU's name by its foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

"The European Union urges Israel to end its military operation in Rafah immediately," the statement said, warning it was "further disrupting the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza and is leading to more internal displacement, exposure to famine



AFP

and human suffering."

The bloc – the main aid donor for the Palestinian territories and Israel's biggest trading partner – said more than a million people in and around Rafah had been ordered by Israel to flee the area to other zones the UN says cannot be considered safe. Israel has launched a brutal war on Gaza since Oc-

tober 7. Israel's relentless bombardment from the air and a ground offensive inside Gaza has killed more than 35,000 – mostly women and children. Israel's main allies, the United States and the EU, as well as the United Nations, have all warned Israel against a major operation in Rafah given that it would add to the civilian toll.

## Slovakia's PM wounded in assassination attempt

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico suffered life-threatening injuries when he was shot and wounded in an attempted assassination on Wednesday, the government office said.

Fico, 59, was rushed to hospital in the central city of Handlova after holding a government meeting there, and was being transported by helicopter to the city of Banska Bystrica for urgent treatment, it said.

A Reuters witness heard several shots fired after the meeting in Handlova northeast of the capital Bratislava. Police detained a man and security officials pushed someone into a car and drove off, the witness said.

"An assassination (attempt) on Prime Minister Robert Fico was carried out today at the government's off-site meeting in Handlova," the government office said in a statement.

"At the moment he is being transported by helicopter to Banska Bystrica, because it would take too long to Bratislava in view

of the necessity of an acute intervention."

Emergency Services said they had received information about a man being shot in Handlova shortly after 2:30 p.m. (1230 GMT) and sent an emergency helicopter to a 59-year-old patient. Broadcaster TA3 reported four shots were fired, and that the leftist prime minister had been hit in the abdomen.

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, led condemnation of the attack, which

also shocked the European Union and NATO member state's allies in central Europe.

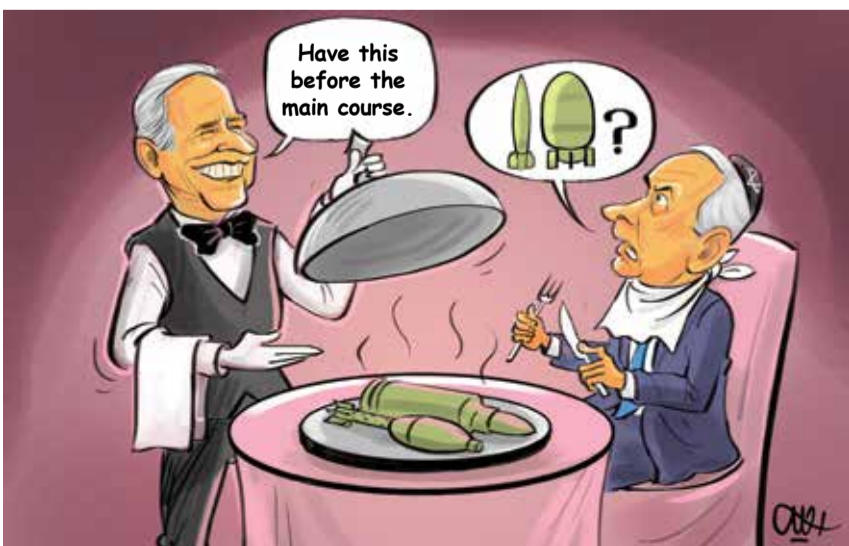
"Such acts of violence have no place in our society and undermine democracy, our most precious common good. My thoughts are with PM Fico, his family", von der Leyen said.

The Slovak government was meeting in Handlova, 190 km (118 miles) northeast of Bratislava, as part of a tour of the country's regions after coming to power late last year.



The image taken from video footage obtained shows security personnel carrying Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico (c) towards a vehicle after he was shot in Handlova on May 15, 2024.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Iran strongly condemns Australian sanctions

Iran strongly condemned Australia's sanctions against several Iranian senior officials, entities and companies allegedly over the country's peaceful missile and drone programs.

Australia's sanctions against Iran came on Tuesday a month after Tehran launched missile and drone attacks on the Israeli regime to punish it for an airstrike that killed Iranian generals in a diplomatic mission in Syria, Press TV reported.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani slammed the silence of Australia and its allies in the face of Israel's violations of international law and its recent attack on the Iranian embassy premises in Syria.

Kanaani said this silence proves the double-standard approach adopted by Australia and its allies to developments in Middle East.

He said that Australia and its partners remained silent "regarding the aggressive action and violation of international law and human rights by the Zionist regime in attacking the diplomatic headquarters of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

The spokesman said such an approach only encourages Israelis to further violate the rules of international law and commit more war crimes.

# Resistance fighting hegemonic goals in Mideast

Western 'barbaric thoughts' exposed by Axis of Resistance, Syrian publisher says



By **Zohreh Qanadi**  
Staff writer

The 35th Tehran International Book Fair is set to conclude Saturday, marking the end of a celebration of reading and a platform for global dialogue and cultural exchange. This year, amidst a diverse range of offerings, the spotlight is on a topic of significant global importance: the Gaza War.

The Palestinian death toll in the seven-month conflict has now exceeded 35,000. The civilian casualties in Israel's assault on the besieged enclave have sparked international condemnation and concern, drawing attention from authors and publishers, too. Through their words and imagery, the authors amplify the voice of Gaza.

In this edition, the Tehran International Book Fair has also offered this opportunity for foreign publishers from countries like Syria, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and Turkey, giving them a chance to participate in this narrative.

Saba Publications from Syria, with a main focus on Syria's national resistance, was represented at Tehran's book fair. In an interview with Iran Daily, Aya Ali Dasha, in charge of the institute, said

the company's participation in the Tehran exhibition was "a great opportunity to introduce his country's culture to the world".

The works focused on supporting the Axis of Resistance were showcased in the 10-day book fair.

Dasha said Saba Publications "encourages Syrian youth to pick up the pen and retell narratives centered around Resistance".

The Axis of Resistance in the Middle East opposes the Western influence, led by the US and Israel. It includes the Islamic Republic of Iran, Palestinian groups like Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, Lebanon's Hezbollah, the Houthi movement in Yemen, and several Shia groups in Iraq and Syria.

The manager of Saba Publications believes that "the Axis of Resistance is pushing back hegemonic goals in our region, which aims to dominate us in terms of energy, culture, beliefs, or strategies".

"Part of this geography is located in Syria, and in line with this resistance, the publication has documented the defense of its people, beliefs, homeland, and ideology," she says, explaining that, "The Resistance has laid bare a set of barbaric thoughts claiming to be civilized but perpetrating heinous acts".

"The violence against the people of Gaza

is a prominent example of this brutality." The bloodiest-ever Gaza war erupted after Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. The United Nations has recently said that nearly 450,000 people have been displaced from Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip. At the same time, another 100,000 people have fled their homes amid renewed fighting in northern Gaza, the UN has said, meaning that around a quarter of Gaza's population of around 2.4 million people has been displaced again in just over a week.

In this regard, Saba Publications has compiled a book titled "Storm of Words," inspired by Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, the manager said.

The operation, launched by the Hamas resistance group was a reaction to years of Israeli devastation, oppression, and savagery amid the indifference and silence of the international community.

Speaking about the book, she said "The authors of the book have depicted the pain and suffering of the people in the region, especially Gaza, based on heartbreaking images of atrocities committed by Israel or the Daesh terrorist group.

One of the most moving written descriptions by Nour Haj Ibrahim illustrating a photo of a child watching over the lifeless body of his mother is presented here:



### Mother, get up...

It's not your habit to sleep for such a long time...!!

Get up...

I'm not waking you up because I need an oil and thyme sandwich... Nor will I ask you for money to buy a balloon.

I wake you up because I miss you... Come on Mom...

I promise I won't fight with the neighbor boys again...

I will write my homework as soon as I get back from school.

And I will ask you when you call me at the same moment ...

Get up, Mom ...

Life is still young...

I still need to live next to you

And I love you...

Puly Press from Azerbaijan was also among the foreign publishers who attended the Tehran International Book Fair.

Mahi Sharifzadeh, responsible for publishing at Puly Press, says the institute "aims to introduce and familiarize Azerbaijani language books to their fellow countrymen worldwide. The main focus of this publishing house is religious books centered around Shia beliefs. Additionally, this publishing house introduces Iranian martyrs, heroes, and Islamic religious figures to the world.

Sharifzadeh states that their goal is to show the truth by translating these types of books from Persian to Azerbaijani. Alongside this institution, the website Kitaboxu.com is also active in three languages: Russian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish.

One of the recent international activities of this publishing house is a book 'Palestine', compiling the longstanding remarks of the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei regarding the Palestinian issue. This book is dedicated to the fight against Zionism.

## Persian Literature: Common foundation of two nations



By **Sadeq Dehqan**  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

The head of publishing and press of the Tajikistan Ministry of Culture hailed Ferdowsi's Shahnameh as a mirror of Tajik culture, asserting that this epic poem encapsulates the worldview of the Tajik people, instilling values of bravery, love, and patriotism. Coinciding with the 35th Tehran International Book Fair, held from May 8 to May 19, the Tajikistan pavilion has been established in the exhibition's international section. The pavilion showcased books by Tajik publishers and offered opportunities for their introduction and supply.

Attending the fair as a special guest from Tajikistan, Rahmonali Miralizoda, the head of publishing and press at the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan, conducted an exclusive interview with Iran Daily. Read on for an in-depth account of the conversation:

### Iran Daily: Could you provide insights into Tajikistan's participation in this year's exhibition?

**Miralizoda:** Ever since the early 90s, following Tajikistan's independence and the establishment of official relations between Tajikistan and Iran, Tajik publishers have consistently taken part in the Tehran book fair annually. This year, Tajikistan is participating with over 150 book titles encompassing various subjects. The majority of these books delve into topics such as history, literature, prose and poetry, fiction, and encyclopedias.

Some noteworthy titles among these works include the 6th-century collection of poetry by Ohadeddin Muhammad bin Muhammad Anuri, the timeless epic Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Nizami Ganjavi's captivating war tales, and the renowned medical treatise penned by Avicenna. These literary gems continue to garner significant interest and appreciation from Iranian readers.

It's important to note that in Tajikistan, we write Persian in the Cyrillic script, which is our nation's official writing system. This distinctive feature often leads some to mistakenly assume that these books are penned in Russian. In reality, they are all written in Persian, mirroring how individuals sometimes employ Latin letters to write Persian in the form of Finglish. Similarly, we use the Russian alphabet to transcribe books.

It seems that the difference in handwriting between two Persian-speaking countries has created a slight separation, making it challenging for our people to communicate effectively through text and writing. What measures could be considered to address this issue?

If you are referring to the change in script, it would be a costly undertaking for Tajikistan and is not an easy task. However, to tackle the issue you've raised, we've selected the finest books available in both countries and underlined them, as they no longer require translation. For instance, I personally translated 'Cyrus the Great or Dhu al-Qarnayn,' an enlightening work authored by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a distinguished Indian intellectual. Dr. Bastani Parisi translated this piece from Urdu into Persian. In this book, Azad provides an in-depth exploration of Cyrus the Great by examining the historical context of Dhu al-Qarnayn mentioned in the Qur'an and Torah. Notably, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad boasts an intriguing multicultural background: he was born in Mecca, raised in Egypt, and grew up in India. His mother is of Arab descent, while his father is Hindu. Through his work, Azad illuminates the character of Cyrus the Great by delving into the religious and historical narratives that surround Dhu al-Qarnayn.

### An aspect worth noting about the people of Tajikistan is their exceptional focus on and admiration for Persian literature and ancient Iranian culture, notably Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. What is the source of this captivation?

Persian history, culture, and literature constitute our shared roots; we are intrinsically bound to them. The origins of modern Farsi language can be traced to eastern Iran, whereas Pahlavi language was spoken in the western region. Pahlavi eventually faded away, yet Dari Farsi has endured and thrived across Iran and beyond. From the distant past to the present day, our land has birthed renowned

poets and writers who have bestowed upon us an incredibly rich literary heritage spanning over a thousand years. This expansive literature encompasses diverse poetic forms such as sonnets, stories, quatrains, and couplets, among others. Within the realms of history, literature, and culture, we possess a priceless global treasure, which acts as a shield protecting us against Western cultural encroachment. Our strong cultural foundation helps prevent self-destruction in the face of external influences.

Today, we inhabit an age of globalization where various cultures inevitably collide, and digital advancements have transformed the world into a small, interconnected village. This digital realm allows people to communicate with one another at an unprecedented pace. Against this backdrop, we are urged to delve into our historical roots and cultivate a deeper appreciation for our own culture. We must not only preserve our rich literary assets but also promote them on the global stage to enhance their visibility and recognition.

### It appears that Ferdowsi's Shahnameh holds a high status in Tajikistan. Could you elaborate on this?

The Shahnameh embodies the culture, history, language, literature, worldview, and wisdom of our people, all skillfully woven together within its pages. The epic imparts two key messages: the establishment of justice and the triumph of knowledge over ignorance. These themes exemplify our collective worldview and are complemented by lessons on courage, patriotism, and love, among others.

Tajikistan's fascination with Shahnameh is not a recent phenomenon; its roots trace back to a time

before the nation's independence. During the Soviet era, the epic was held in high regard and enjoyed immense popularity. This reverence was manifested through various film adaptations of Shahnameh's individual stories, such as Kaveh Ahangar, Rostam and Sohrab, and The Story of Siavash. These films were meticulously produced with the finest Russian actors and were considered costly endeavors due to the challenges of depicting ancient armies without the aid of modern visual effects.

Shahnameh stands as a testament to our rich literary heritage, joining the ranks of universally acclaimed poets like Saadi, Hafez, Rudaki, and Rumi. Within these works, we discover the pinnacle of human society's ideals. Recognizing the historical, cultural, moral, and epistemological significance of Shahnameh, the decision was made this year to publish and disseminate this timeless epic, making it accessible to all Tajiks.

