



SPECIAL ISSUE

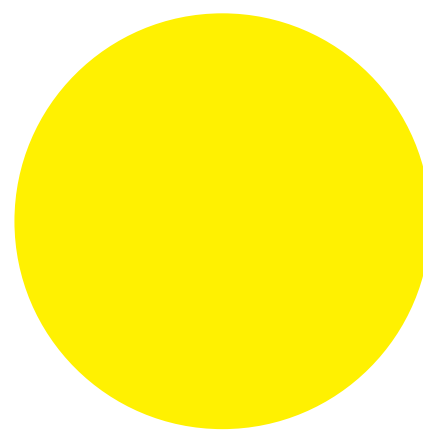
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World Health Assembly

# Iran minister urges int'l community to oppose healthcare sanctions

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## PERSPECTIVE

### International Desk

The American news channel CNN has revealed in a damning report that US-made munitions were used in Sunday's deadly Israeli strikes targeting displaced Palestinians in a tent camp in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah.

The strike, killed at least 45 people and injured over 200 others, most of whom were women and children, as reported by the Gaza Health Ministry. CNN cited four explosive weapons experts as saying that they had identified the tail of a US-made GBU-39 and its small diameter bomb (SDB) at the strike site. The bomb, manufactured by Boeing, is designed for high precision with minimal collateral damage.

Trevor Ball, a former US Army senior explosive ordnance disposal team member, identified the fragment as being from a GBU-39.

"The warhead portion [of the munition] is distinct, and the guidance and wing section is extremely unique compared to other munitions. Guidance and wing sections of munitions are often the remnants left over even after a munition detonates. I saw the tail actuation section and instantly knew it was one of the SDB/GBU-39 variants," Ball said.

He added that while there is a variant of the GBU-39 known as the Focused Lethality Munition (FLM) which has a larger explosive payload but is designed to cause even less collateral damage, this was not the variant used in this case.

Richard Weir, senior crisis and conflict researcher at Human Rights Watch, and Chris Lincoln-Jones, a former British Army artillery officer and weapons and targeting expert, also identified the fragment as being part of a US-manufactured GBU-39, when reviewing the video of the strike. Chris Cobb-Smith, a former British Army artillery officer, also noted that the GBU-39 is a high-precision bomb

"designed to attack strategically important point targets" and using it in a densely populated area will incur risks.

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# US Bombs Snuffing Gazan Lives

## Haley greenlights Rafah carnage



Nikki Haley, the failed US Republican presidential nominee, is seen writing a message on an Israeli shell in the north of the occupied territories on May 27, 2024. AP



Iranian artists join 'All Eyes On Rafah' as Israel ramps up deadly attacks

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Persian Gulf Pro League: Reds and Blues win as title race goes down to the wire

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Oil minister: 23 key projects worth \$4.6b set for inauguration

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# Iran's exports to Iraq reach \$12b



## Economic Desk

Iran's exports to Iraq have reached around 12 billion dollars, as stated by an official from the country's Planning and Budget Organization. Currently, out of 3,500 types of Iranian export goods worldwide, over 2,200 types of goods are being exported to Iraq, said the head of the land-use planning and regional development of the organization, IRNA reported. Seyyed Jafar Hosseini mentioned that more than half of active Iranian traders in global markets are present in the Iraqi market.

Iranian exports to Iraq are not limited to goods only, as technical, engineering, and electrical services are also significant export items. With the inclusion of these sectors, the value of Iran's exports to Iraq reaches around \$12 billion, he said. Referring to the necessity of strengthening the commercial infrastructure of the western Kermanshah Province as the most important export route from Iran to Iraq, he added "It is suggested to develop commercial infrastructures to facilitate trade between the two countries, provide information and encourage traders to invest in Iraq, ex-

pand trade through sending and receiving trade delegations and participating in trade fairs of both countries, establishing Iranian commercial centers in Iraqi cities, and achieving trade balance through import development from Iraq to enhance commercial and economic relations between Iran and Iraq. The official mentioned the high unemployment rate in Iraq, especially among youth, indicating the importance of industrial development to attract foreign investments for employment generation. Hosseini said that Iraq, being rich in resources with

significant oil revenues, gold reserves, and confirmed oil reserves, is considered one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East. From crude oil sales, Iraq earned \$76 billion in 2021 and is projected to earn \$120 billion in 2022, he added. He highlighted the substantial growth in Iran's exports to Iraq over the past 20 years due to relative stability in Iraq and the development of cooperation and commercial infrastructure between the two countries. This growth has increased significantly, with exports reaching over \$10 billion from around \$600 million in 2003, he said.

# Oil minister: 23 key projects worth \$4.6b set for inauguration



## Economic Desk

The Iranian oil minister said that 23 major projects valued at \$4.6 billion in upstream, downstream, and stalled sectors are prepared for operation. Javad Owji told reporters on Wednesday that among the projects are the collection of flare gases, increasing petrochemical capacities, building oil product transfer lines, and enforcing clean air laws, SHANA reported. With upcoming projects, the Oil Ministry, in addition to major projects

such as increasing oil and gas production and exports, preventing crude oil sales, and building refineries, has also achieved significant successes in downstream and ancillary industries. The minister stated that in the coming weeks, we are ready to utilize 23 major projects worth \$4.6 billion, including petrochemical plants that can increase our petrochemical production capacity by up to 3 million tons. Furthermore, the ministry will also start operating 460 kilometers

of oil product pipelines, he said, adding that currently, oil products are transported to consumption centers by road tankers, and the collection of these tankers through the operation of these pipelines will bring numerous benefits. The oil minister referred to other projects that will be inaugurated in the coming weeks, such as the construction of gas pipelines, booster stations, and the collection of flared gases totaling 4 million cubic meters as among the projects opening.

# Iran's export of agricultural products rises in 2024: IRICA

## Economic Desk

The president of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) revealed a 24 percent and a 28 percent growth in weight and value of the exports of agricultural products from the country in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2024). More than 1 million tons of agricultural products, valued at \$684 million, were exported from the country

in the first two months of the current Iranian calendar year, Mohammad Rezvanifar noted, Tasnim news agency reported. More than one million tons of agricultural products, valued at \$536 million, had been exported from the country in the first two months of the previous year (March 21 to May 20, 2023), the IRICA chief added. He added that apples (\$96.3 million), pistachios with shells (\$74.1 million), watermelon (\$83.7 million), to-

matoes (\$50.3 million) and greenhouse tomatoes (\$44.7 million) were the main products exported from the country this year, IRIB reported. A study of the export statistics in the first two months of the current year (March 21 to May 20, 2024) indicates that agricultural products have accounted for about 6.66 percent and 8.53 percent of the total exports of the country in weight and value respectively, Rezvanifar added.



## Food inflation reduction

Meanwhile, Iranian Agriculture Minister Mohammadali Nikbakht announced a reduction of inflation rate for food and beverages in the second month of the current Iranian year (April 20 to May 20, 2023) adding that the ministry will make extra efforts to decrease food prices. Nikbakht emphasized the monthly report by the Statistical Centre of Iran, which

provides the inflation rate on an annual basis and in detail for different economic sectors of the country, stating that "The annual inflation rate in the second month has decreased from 37.3% to about 33.7% in the food sector. He said that this percentage is much lower compared to non-food inflation, adding that we are striving to increase the production of various agricultural products.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# 13,000 MW of renewable power plants under construction in Iran

Renewable power plants with a total capacity of 13,000 megawatts are under construction in Iran, including a 780-megawatt plant being built in the southeastern Sistan and Balouchestan Province, an official said. Alireza Parandeh Motlaq, the deputy head of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization of Iran (SATBA) for technical and engineering affairs, stated that Sistan and Balouchestan is one of the richest provinces in the country in the field of

renewable energies and enjoys high capabilities in different sectors including wind energy and geothermal energy, Tasnim news agency reported. Currently, there is a 60-megawatt renewable power plant installed in Sistan and Balouchestan Province, including a 10-megawatt unit that had been installed in Zahedan region and a 50-megawatt unit constructed in the northern part of the province in recent years. Parandeh Motlaq pointed

to the high advantages of the generation of wind energy in Mil Nader region, the northern part of Sistan and Balouchestan, where a 50-megawatt wind power plant has been installed and is generating 210,000 megawatts/hour of electricity. He added that the wind energy generated in Sistan and Balouchestan not only can meet the electricity demand of the southeastern province, but also there is the possibility of exporting the electricity to neighboring Afghanistan.





# Charm and uniqueness of Esfidan village attract tourists

## Iranica Desk

Esfidan village, located in Bojnurd in North Khorasan Province, is a renowned tourist destination that was recognized as the most beautiful in the country in 2006. The village features stepped architecture resembling Masouleh in Gian Province, adding to its charm and uniqueness. Apart from its historical structures, Esfidan boasts a variety of attractions including valleys, waterfalls, a castle, gushing springs, caves, and more. The Sandalwood tree symbolizes the village, with only two remaining specimens.

Nestled amidst valleys and towering mountains, Esfidan captivates visitors with its natural beauty and intriguing landmarks. The village's landscape, characterized by beautiful waterfalls, gushing springs, captivating caves and towers, historic shrines, diverse fruit trees, a flowing river, and forested mountains, attracts tourists from near and far. In the past, initiatives such as constructing a cable car and a large restaurant aimed at developing

Esfidan into a prominent tourist destination were being considered but were eventually abandoned. Despite this, Esfidan remains a popular spot for travelers seeking a unique and memorable experience.

The villagers in Esfidan speak in the Khorasani Turkic language and are primarily engaged in agriculture, horticulture, and livestock farming. Esfidan village is known for producing key agricultural products such as walnuts, apples, grapes, cherries, potatoes, and more.

The walnuts from Esfidan are of export quality and considered the finest available in the province's market. In addition to agriculture, beekeeping and fish farming are also important economic activities in Esfidan. The Esfidan trout is highly regarded as one of the most delicious cold-water fish in North Khorasan Province. Hand-woven silk carpets with intricate patterns, along with walnuts and raisins, are popular souvenirs purchased by travelers. By supporting the local economy through buying these goods, visitors

not only contribute to the village's prosperity but also get to appreciate top-quality handicrafts.

This mountainous village has a moderate climate, and as the region enjoys pleasant and cool weather in the summer, many tourists travel to Esfidan during this time. The beauty of the village shines even more in the spring, with its clear and flowing springs and captivating nature. In the early summer, you can taste the delicious fruits and smell their aroma in the village atmosphere. These two seasons are considered the best time to visit Esfidan.

Autumn brings a myriad of colors, while winter arrives with heavy snowfall and extreme cold. As a result, fewer tourists visit Esfidan during these two seasons.

## Bahargah Valley

Located in the southwest of Esfidan village, Bahargah Valley boasts numerous springs, a picturesque waterfall, and lush greenery that captivates every tourist. At the valley's entrance on the left side, sits a moon-shaped hill known as Mousou, span-

ning about 40 hectares, which tragically collapsed a few years back due to severe landslides, burying all its orchards, houses, and ancient trees.

## Esfidan Castle

To the west of Esfidan village stands a rocky structure known as Tash Qaleh, or Stone Castle. This castle features stone walls, simple beige and red bricks, and mosaic tiles in various colors adorning its walls.

## Stone towers

Perched atop the surrounding mountains of Esfidan village are ancient stone tower structures constructed with stone and sarooj materials.

## Ancient cemetery

Another captivating historical site in the village is the ancient cemetery. The graves in this cemetery face east, with some of the deceased buried vertically.

## Sandalwood tree

The sandalwood tree stands as a

symbol of Esfidan village. According to the village elders, there used to be around 17 sandalwood trees in the village. However, due to their placement in the alleys and a lack of awareness regarding their significance, most were cut down, leaving only two trees. These remaining trees have a trunk diameter of 2.65 meters and an estimated age of around 1200 years.

## Mineral spring and waterfall

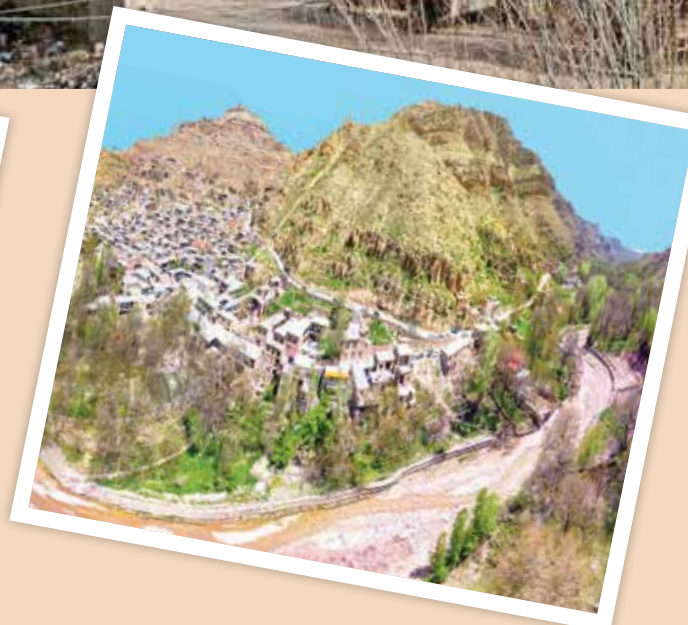
Located three kilometers from Esfidan village, a mineral spring and a waterfall are popular destinations for tourists to visit.

## Gardens

The gardens of Esfidan are remarkably beautiful, reminiscent of the forests in the northern regions of the country. Unlike the humid summers in the northern forests, the gardens in this area offer a cool and refreshing atmosphere that rejuvenates the soul. While enjoying their splendor, please remember to respect the gardens' privacy and keep them clean.



IRNA



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# Mirza Qasemi, a flavorful tale of Persian culinary mastery



## Iranica Desk

*Mirza Qasemi*, a delectable Iranian culinary delight, stands as a proud emblem of the gastronomic heritage of Gilan

Province in the north of Iran. Its name alone beckons intrigue, hinting at a culinary tradition likely rooted in the eras of, where dishes with specific monikers often emerged.

Despite its historical origins, Mirza Qasemi has transcended time, captivating the palates of Iranians across the nation. The tale of Mirza Qasemi traces back to the Qajar era of 1861,

when Mirza Qasem Khan, a distinguished figure who had just returned from a sojourn in Russia, ascended to the position of ruler in Gilan Province and Rasht under the patronage of

Naser al-Din Shah. Renowned for his political acumen and culinary prowess, Mirza Qasem Khan's penchant for culinary experimentation led to the creation of a remarkable dish. Combining roasted eggplant with tomatoes, garlic, and eggs, he birthed the flavorful masterpiece known as Mirza Qasemi. Charmed by the outcome, he zealously propagated the recipe throughout the province, eventually introducing it to the denizens of Fars Province during his tenure as governor. The preparation of Mirza Qasemi is a testament to culinary finesse, notably distinguished by the method of charring eggplants over an open flame, a departure from conventional frying or boiling techniques. The charred eggplant is then peeled, mashed with garlic, and simmered with tomatoes, spices, and the essential addition of eggs, culminating in a harmonious blend of flavors. Mirza Qasem Khan's legacy

endures, with his final resting place near the mausoleum of Hafez in Shiraz, immortalizing the culinary innovation he bestowed upon Iran. This savory dish is traditionally served with local breads, such as *sangak* and *barbari* bread, accompanied by side dishes like *sabzi khordan* and refreshing *doogh*. Beyond household kitchens, Mirza Qasemi graces the menus of traditional Iranian eateries, lauded not only for its tantalizing taste and vibrant presentation but also for its nutritional value. The fiber-rich eggplant aids in digestion, while garlic, revered for its medicinal properties, is believed by Iranians to possess healing virtues against a myriad of ailments. Eggs, a protein powerhouse, provide sustenance akin to meat, enriching the dish. Mirza Qasemi stands as a testament to the rich culinary tapestry of Iran, a dish that embodies history, tradition, and the artistry of Persian cuisine.



# Iran's regional standing better thanks to Raisi

## Operation True Promise disciplined foes, assured friends

By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

There are critical unanswered questions surrounding Iran's regional standing during the tenure of the late Iranian president Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi: Did his government's policies usher in greater stability in the region? What impact did the True Promise Operation against Israel have on Tehran's position? To discuss these issues, we turned to the expert insights of Amir Mousavi, a specialist in regional and strategic affairs.

**IRAN DAILY:** How did Iran's regional position change during the three-year period of president Raisi's government? Did it move towards strengthening or weakening?

**MOUSAVI:** The reaction of the world's government to the news of the unexpected martyrdom of the president and his foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian proved that the Islamic Republic had turned a corner and was no longer isolated on the global stage. A tidal wave of condolence messages and delegations poured in, paying their respects to the president and his companions on the crashed helicopter. The United Nations and the Security Council also responded with respect, further showing that the government of the late president was successful in improving the country's international standing. This outpouring of support really riled up the regime's opponents, leaving them fuming.

After the United States backed out of the JCPOA, the general consensus was that Tehran would see much tougher days and would have to back down from its stance. However, president Raisi's government rolled with the punches and used all the cards they had to stand up to the harsh sanctions and meet domestic



needs. They implemented a resistance economy, keeping the economic cycle going and factories running. Currency fluctuations caused a few hiccups but didn't deal a knockout blow to Iran. In fact, Iran's resilience in the face of these external pressures gave the Islamic Republic a real boost in credibility and reputation. President Raisi was able to iron out some disagreements with regional countries tactfully and rationally in their diplomatic interactions, helping to calm the waters and promote stability. He even managed to keep relations afloat with European countries while strengthening ties with the Axis of Resistance and maintaining support for the Palestinian people. By following the leader's recommendations and creating internal coordination, president Raisi's government steered through crises and solidified Iran's regional standing.

**From all these measures, the rapprochement agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia really stood out. Do you think this deal and the subsequent warming of ties had a calming effect on the region?**

Yes, it surely did. But it's worth pointing out that two factors prompted Saudi Arabia and other regional countries to dial down the tension and iron out their differences with Iran. The first factor was realizing that the president and foreign minister were in total agreement with the leader and the establishment in their remarks. As a result, their messages and stances carried weight, and it became clear that Iran's messages were not contradictory. This assurance prompted Saudi Arabia to take steps toward normalizing relations, and the level of cooperation ramped up nicely. A notable moment was when Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

stepped out of a high-level meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to personally greet president Raisi during his visit to Jeddah.

The second factor was that these countries saw the validity in Iran's positions. They realized that Iran was after regional stability and wasn't meddling in their business. They also woke up to the fact that America and Israel had pulled the wool over their eyes with Iranophobia. On top of that, America and Israel couldn't guarantee their safety. A prime example was when Aramco's major oil facilities in Saudi Arabia were hit, and the Americans didn't lift a finger to help.

As a result, we saw a shift in the attitude of Arab countries towards Iran. The tone of their comments changed from hostile to constructive and cooperative. A prime example of this shift is the recent message sent by Mohammed bin Salman to Iran's Interim



President Mohammad Mokhber. This message highlighted the importance they placed on maintaining and strengthening relations between the two countries. President Raisi successfully fostered cohesive coordination between various internal institutions, ensuring that Iran projected a united front in its comments. This single voice resonated with the countries in the region, leading to the mending of ties between Tehran and numerous regional states.

**During president Raisi's term, we not only witnessed dip-**

Late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi arrives wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on November 11, 2023, to take part in an extraordinary summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.  
● AFP

**lomatic measures but also a military operation against the Israeli regime. Did this show of force bolster Iran's standing in the region?**

Yes, 'Operation True Promise' and the strike on Israel certainly bolstered Iran's position both regionally and internationally. With this decisive action, Iran sent a clear message to the world: we stand by our friends and deal firmly with our foes. Tehran demonstrated that any country daring to target Iran's interests would face a resolute response. It became evident that friendship with Iran bears fruit, while enmity comes at a cost.

This operation was made possible by the seamless coordination between various domestic institutions in Iran. Even the Americans toned down their usual belligerent rhetoric and opted for sending messages instead. A telling example was the visit by authorities from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Iran, where they pledged to uphold the security agreement to remove terrorists from Iran's borders.

Israel had misinterpreted Iran's strategic patience as a sign of weakness, only to realize that the patience morphed into a strategic blow. The execution of this operation during president Raisi's administration underscored the notion that military action complements diplomacy in Iran. Both diplomacy and defense capabilities are leveraged to safeguard Iran's security and advance its interests.

This operation taught Iran's foes a lesson and made resolute those friends who had been hesitant to become closer. The diplomacy of president Raisi's administration, coupled with the initiatives of Amir-Abdollahian, undoubtedly enhanced Iran's standing both regionally and internationally.

## Arab presence at Iranian president's funeral

### Diplomatic courtesy or sign of change?

By Ethar Shalaby  
Journalist

#### PERSPECTIVE

The prominent Arab presence at the funeral of the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi sparked a wave of questions within political circles about the trajectory of Arab-Iranian relations. Is this show of support indicative of a

pivotal diplomatic shift, or does it simply adhere to diplomatic norms?

During Raisi's era, Tehran's ties with Arab countries underwent a significant thaw, marked notably by the historic agreement with

Saudi Arabia in 2023 that ended a 7-year rift. Relations with other Arab nations, such as Egypt and Tunisia, also progressed, leading some to hail the improvement in Iranian-Arab relations as one of the most notable accomplish-

ments of Raisi's administration. According to IRNA, leaders and officials from 68 countries attended the funeral ceremony for Raisi and his accompanying team on May 22, 2024, in Tehran's International Conference

Hall. Notable attendees included the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Tunisian President Kais Saied, and foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan.



**Beginning of a new phase?**

Iranian analysts speculate that the presence of two Arab country leaders, alongside high-level diplomatic representations, could signal a potential shift in Iranian-Arab relations. Iranian political analyst Hakam Amhaz weighs in, attributing the Arab turnout to the diplomatic efforts of Raisi's administration. He interprets it as a sign of "the openness of Iran's relations with all neighboring Arab and Gulf countries". Hussein Royvaran, director of the Society for the Defence of Palestinian Nation, shares this outlook. He elaborated on the significance of the Arab presence in Tehran to BBC Arabic, highlighting two connotations. The first is a "humanitarian and solidarity" gesture following the tragic death of Raisi and his delegation in a helicopter crash on May 19. The second connotation, he explains, is a "rational" indication, suggesting the potential formation of new "strong" relations between Tehran and certain Arab countries, with Tunisia taking the lead. He adds, "Given the vast geographical distance between Tunisia and Iran, Kais Saied's presence in Tehran for the first time since assuming office in 2019 could signal a new chapter in relations between the two nations." Abdelaziz Fourati, former editor-in-chief of the Tunisian newspaper Al-Fajr, concurs. Speaking to the BBC, he characterizes Saied's visit — one of his "few" foreign trips — as a display of Tunisia's "political courage" in forging ties with Iran. He pre-

dicts "a notable development in Tunisian-Iranian relations at all levels in the coming period".

**Gulf participation**

Relations between Iran and the Persian Gulf countries have been fraught with tension over the past four decades, dating back to the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Divergent political stances, coupled with economic and intellectual competition, have kept the two sides at odds. Analysts highlight that the Iranian-Gulf rapprochement was markedly evident in the attendance of high-level Gulf delegations at Raisi's funeral, with some delegations standing out as particularly noteworthy. The presence of Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani in Tehran — his first visit in 13 years — sparked questions about a potential thaw in relations between Manama and Tehran, which are currently in a state of diplomatic rupture. These speculations were further fueled by statements by Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, who remarked that "there is no reason to postpone the return of diplomatic relations between Bahrain and Iran," signaling Manama's intent to enhance ties with Tehran. The relationship between the two countries has been fraught with tension, marked by Bahraini accusations of Tehran meddling in its internal affairs. Manama also pointed fingers at Tehran for fueling protests against the ruling regime in 2011, claims which Iran refuted. In 2015, Bahrain summoned the Iranian ambas-



Iranian top-ranking officials receive Saudi Ministers Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz (4th-R) and Prince Faisal bin Farhan (3rd-R) at the funeral ceremony for Iran's president and his accompanying team in Tehran on May 22, 2024. SAUDIGAZETTE

sador over allegations of interference in domestic affairs. Tensions escalated further in 2016 when Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Iran, following suit with Saudi Arabia after Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad were stormed. Amhaz holds the view that Bahraini-Iranian relations need time to mend and rebuild trust. He notes that relations between Manama and Tehran had already been on a gradual path to improvement following the Iranian-Saudi agreement last year. Amhaz shared with BBC News Arabic, "The visit of the Bahraini delegation to Tehran to offer condolences is a positive sign of Bah-

rain's desire to bolster relations." However, Bahraini political commentator Abdulla Aljunaid offered a different perspective to the BBC. He downplayed Manama's participation, stating that it fell within "diplomatic custom and nothing more". He drew a distinction between politics and humanitarian norms, asserting that "all countries attended the funeral not for the person of Ebrahim Raisi, but out of respect for the Iranian president who perished in a horrific accident." Aljunaid further elaborated, "Bahrain's participation was to offer solace to a people enduring a tragedy, a humanitarian gesture."

Observers noted the attendance of a high-level Saudi delegation at the funeral, which included notable figures such as Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Saudi Ambassador to Iran Abdullah bin Saud al-Anazi, and Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz, advisor to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. Dr. Hesham Alghannam, director of the Security Research Center at Naif Arab University, remarked that the visit reflects the objectives of Saudi-Iranian reconciliation, aiming for a more sustainable and stable relationship. He pointed out that the interactions during the offer-

ing of condolences by the Saudi foreign minister indicated the presence of "features of a close and important personal relationship" with Iranian officials, which contribute to fortifying diplomatic ties. However, he opined that confidence-building measures might still require some time. Saudi-Iranian relations resumed in March of last year, following the announcement of a "historic" agreement brokered by China. This deal put an end to a seven-year rift between the two nations. Saudi journalist Mubarak al-Ati weighed in, stating that the presence of the Saudi delegation, and, by extension, the countries of the Gulf region, at Raisi's funeral underscores the Gulf states' commitment to "cooling differences and constructing more bridges of communication with Iran". It's also seen as a signal from Saudi Arabia of their intention to "build on what was achieved in building confidence over the past year," potentially translating into tangible progress in implementing agreements, particularly security-related ones, that emerged from the Saudi-Iranian reconciliation.

The article first appeared on BBC Arabic.

## Bahrain's three reasons for restoring relations with Iran



By Seyyed Razi Emadi  
Middle East  
affairs expert

### OPINION

**During his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa underlined, "Bahrain confirms the normalization of relations with Iran." He went on to say, "We had problems with this country in the past, but now there are practically no problems and we see no reason to drag our feet on the normalization of relations with Iran." We try to spell out why the king of Bahrain has officially called for a rapprochement with the Islamic Republic of Iran.**

Bahrain is a tiny country in the Persian Gulf region; it's a mere 786 square kilometers and plays host to fewer than 1.5 million folks, half of whom are foreigners. The majority of Bahrain's locals (about 60%) are Shiites. Bahrain's geopolitical significance stems from its strategic location — it's rubbing shoulders with two regional heavyweights, Iran and Saudi Arabia — and the fact that it plays host to the US Fifth Naval Fleet, the biggest American naval base outside its own shores. So, to sum it up, the significance of Bahrain lies in three things: its majority Shia population, its proximity to Iran and Saudi Arabia, and its role as a base for the US Navy.

### Bahrain's Geopolitical Dance

Bahrain is the smallest member

state of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and when it comes to foreign policy, it tends to go along with whatever Saudi Arabia and the United States are doing. Relations between Bahrain and the Islamic Republic of Iran were severed back in 2016, just a day after Saudi Arabia did the same with Iran.

In the following years, the increase in tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as between Iran and the United States, has had a negative effect on Tehran-Manama relations and widened the gap between the two countries. One of the reasons why Iran-Bahrain relations are influenced by the policies of other countries regarding Iran is that the volume of business relations between Manama and Tehran is at a small level. According to the report of the Research Center of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Iran's annual exports to Bahrain between the Iranian calendar years 1396 and 1400 (March 21, 2017–March 21, 2021) were 11.7, 12.1, 9.9, 8.4, and 9.7 million dollars, respectively. Only 0.02 percent of Iran's total exports in 1400 went to Bahrain, ranking the country 68th among Iran's trading partners. In turn, Bahrain took only 0.002% of Iran's imports that year. Here are three key factors that shed light on why Bahrain is keen on mending fences with the Islamic Republic of Iran:

### Iran-Saudi détente

In the wake of the resumption of ties between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran on March 10, 2023, discussions turned to the potential resto-



Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani (2nd-R) shakes hands with his Iranian interim counterpart, Ali Bagheri Kani, during the former's trip to Tehran to pay respects to Iran's late president and his accompanying team on May 23, 2024. FOREIGN MINISTRY OF BAHRAIN

### Diplomatic efforts of Raisi, FM

The flagship foreign policy strategy of Iran's government, helmed by Raisi, was to build bridges with neighboring, Islamic, and like-minded countries. Over time, this policy gained traction and wasn't just all talk and no action. 28 trips to 23 countries during the 34-month presidency of Raisi are a testament to that administration's commitment to mending fences and building bridges. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain came to recognize the genuine intentions and honest approach of the Iranian administration in restoring relations, even steering clear of taking hasty positions. As a result, tensions between Iran and its neighboring countries, including Bahrain, have cooled down. Now, the King of Bahrain is emphasizing that there's no point in dragging their feet when it comes to normalizing relations with Iran.

### Waning US influence in Mideast

The third relevant factor is the declining American influence in the Middle East. With Joe Biden taking the reins in the US in 2021, ties with Saudi Arabia hit a rough patch, and Washington started to shift its focus to East Asia.

ration of relations between Bahrain and Iran. Just days after Riyadh and Tehran patched things up, Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, Speaker of Bahrain's Council of Representatives, held talks with a parliamentary delegation from the Islamic Republic on the sidelines of the 146th session of the international Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Manama. He disclosed that Tehran and Manama had commenced negotiations aimed at reinstating passenger flights between the two nations. Adding to the momentum, Barbara Leaf, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near-Eastern Affairs, briefed members of the US Congress on June 13 regarding the potential resumption of diplomatic relations between Bahrain and Iran.

As Iran and Saudi Arabia bury the hatchet and get closer, Bahrain has been shown to be keen to jump on the bandwagon. Despite not having official diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Bahrain sent its foreign minister to Tehran to pay its respects to the late Iranian president and foreign minister. Abdullatif al-Zayani, Bahrain's foreign minister, jetted off to Tehran on Thursday to attend a ceremony honoring president Ebrahim Raisi and the late Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the foreign minister of Iran. In the same vein, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain, emphasized the importance of rekindling ties between Manama and Tehran during his meeting with Vladimir Putin.

Nevertheless, the US doesn't seem keen on adding fuel to the fire in the Middle East, and it's not against efforts to improve relations between countries in the region, including Iran. One reason for this shift is that the US doesn't hold all the cards anymore, and its ability to throw its weight around and strong-arm countries in the Middle East has taken a hit. Saudi Arabia's refusal to follow US policy on the Ukraine war, as well as its refusal to ramp up oil production, are tell-tale signs of the US losing its grip on the Middle East. With the US influence on the back foot, Bahrain now has more freedom to reconcile with the Islamic Republic. The King of Bahrain stress on restoring relations with Iran is a surefire sign that the policy of trying to make the Islamic Republic isolated and driving a wedge between Iran and Arab countries, which the US was hell-bent on, has fallen flat. The decline in American influence in the Middle East has also given Arab countries more wiggle room to call the shots in their foreign policy. Even with the untimely death of the Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi and his foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, the Islamic Republic is still keen on mending fences with its neighbors. This was echoed by Iran's leader of the Revolution in a meeting with foreign dignitaries who flew to Tehran to pay their last respects. Iran welcomes the idea of restoring relations with Bahrain and even calls for expanding economic ties alongside political ones.

The article first appeared on Mehr News Agency.



## Persian Gulf Pro League: Reds and Blues win as title race goes down to the wire



Persepolis midfielder Masoud Rigi celebrates after scoring in a 3-1 win at Shams Azar in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Qazvin, Iran, on May 28, 2024.  
● HOSSEIN GHOLIKHANI/IRNA



Esteghlal defender Rouzbeh Cheshmi celebrates his goal in a 1-0 victory over Golgozar Sirjan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on May 28, 2024.  
● PAYAM SANI/IRNA

### Sports Desk

The tightest title race in the Persian Gulf Pro League in years will be decided on the final day of the season after both Persepolis and Esteghlal came out victorious in the penultimate round of fixtures on Tuesday. Leading its city rival by a single point, Persepolis walked away with a massive 3-1 triumph over Shams Azar in its last outing on the road, with Esteghlal edging out Golgozar 1-0 at home in the simultaneous match to keep up with the Reds heading into Saturday's decisive games. A home win against Mes

Rafsanjan at Tehran's Azadi Stadium will secure a remarkable seventh top-flight crown in eight seasons for Persepolis, while the Capital Blues, who were on top for the best part of the campaign before last Friday's frustrating stalemate at Nassaji, will long for one last twist in the two-horse race when playing away to relegation-threatened Paykan. Esteghlal hoped Saeid Daqiqi's Shams Azar – the surprise package of the season which had taken four points from Esteghlal and Sepahan at home – would come up with yet another brave performance on Tuesday but in-form winter sign-

ing Oston Urunov bagged his sixth goal in 12 games with 19 minutes into the contest to ease the pressure on the visiting Reds. Iranian international center-back Rouzbeh Cheshmi broke the deadlock for Esteghlal with a low drive from the edge of the box right before the interval, and when Mohammad Papi headed home the equalizer for Shams Azar six minutes after the break, the Blues crowd at the Azadi venue went into raptures. However, Esteghlal supporters could only celebrate for 10 minutes as former Blues midfielder Masoud Rigi found his first goal in

the Reds shirt to restore the one-goal lead for Osmar Vieira's men on the hour mark. A late blunder by Shams Azar keeper Alireza Ja'farpour was like a bucket of cold water for the Blues faithful after he made a mess of what looked to be a routine save against Mahdi Torabi's cross before the ball went in through his legs. While Esteghlal coach Javad Nekounam will be eager to see his former international teammate Moharram Navidkia and his Mes side pull off a major upset on the final day, Paykan manager Reza Enayati can still provide a stern test for the Blues – with whom he lifted the

league trophy as a prolific striker.

### San'at goes down

Enayati had Ali Qorbani to thank for his 98th-minute equalizer which saw Paykan salvage a 2-2 draw at Foolad Khuzestan and remain above its southern Iranian host in the survival battle. The excitement will be equally high at the bottom end of the table with Paykan, Foolad, and Esteghlal Khuzestan looking to avoid joining San'at Naft Abadan in the second division next season. A 2-1 away defeat against Zob Ahan meant San'at will begin next campaign in the second tier for the first time

in nine years. Esteghlal Khuzestan, which surrendered a three-goal halftime lead against Persepolis to leave Azadi empty-handed last Friday, will head into Saturday's fixtures in the bottom two but will be hoping to build on Tuesday's massive 3-2 victory at Mes Rafsanjan. Reza Dehqani put Mes in front 14 minutes into the game before Javad Aqaiepour's double and Ousmane Ndong's close-range finish in the space of 17 minutes gave the southern Blues a commanding lead at the break, with Farshid Baqeri's late consolation too little too late for the home side.

In Tehran, Mohammadreza Azadi netted twice with Hossein Zamehran, Mohammad Abbaszadeh, and Mehrdad Abdi also on the scoresheet, to help Saket Elhami's Nassaji go four points clear of the bottom two with an emphatic 5-0 away win against Havadar. Nassaji will still play a part in the survival battle when hosting in the season finale. Elsewhere, Kaveh Rezaei scored in the first half as Sepahan defeated Iralco 1-0 in Arak to all but secure a third-place finish, with fourth-place Tractor coming from behind to beat Malavan 3-1 in its final home game.

Serbia's Novak Djokovic reacts during the second set tie break in his first round match against France's Pierre-Hugues Herbert in the French Open in Paris, France, on May 28, 2024.  
● STEPHANIE LECOQ/REUTERS

## Djokovic 'moving in positive direction' with French Open win

BBC – Novak Djokovic began his French Open title defence with a solid if not spectacular victory over home hope Pierre-Hugues Herbert. Serbia's Djokovic, 37, upped his level when it mattered to win 6-4 7-6 (7-3) 6-4 in Tuesday's night session at Roland Garros. The 24-time Grand Slam champion will take sole ownership of the record of most major titles with a fourth victory on the Paris clay. But he has come into the event in uncertain form. Djokovic has endured a turbulent season, having been far from his lofty heights and not yet reaching a final. Playing in Geneva last week was a sign

he wanted to build rhythm and confidence before heading to the French Open, saying when he arrived that he had "low expectations but high hopes". Therefore, it was intriguing to see how Djokovic would perform against 142nd-ranked wildcard Herbert. Djokovic's movement at the baseline did not always look comfortable and lacked some sharpness in his returning. However, he generally served well and was still able to pick his moments to strike – most notably in a commanding tie-break. This year, Djokovic has appeared to lack some of the fire which has often

fuelled his success but his demonstrative celebrations as he clinched the two-set lead indicated his pleasure. Chances were rare in the third set before he piled on the pressure again in what proved to be the final game. A stunning winner at deuce teed up a first match point and Herbert blinked to hand it over with a double fault. "I'm glad I started the way I started, the way I felt on the court," said Djokovic, who plays Spain's world number 63 Roberto Carballes Baena in round two. "Comparing to the previous weeks of tournaments I played [recently], I felt good, better. I'm moving in a positive direction."

## Usyk v Fury rematch set for December, Saudi official says

BBC – Undisputed heavyweight champion Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury are set to meet in a rematch on 21 December, according to the chairman of Saudi Arabia's general entertainment authority. Usyk beat Fury by split decision to become the first undisputed champion

of the four-belt era on 18 May. A rematch was said to be in the works for October but Turki Alalshikh says the date has been pushed back to December. "The world will watch another historical fight again," Alalshikh added on X. "Our commitment to boxing fans continues. We hope you enjoy it."

Usyk, the first undisputed heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis in 1999, added Fury's WBC belt to his WBA, WBO and IBF collection when they fought in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia earlier this month. The 37-year-old Ukrainian has won all 22 of his professional fights. Alalshikh did not name a venue or desti-

nation for the rematch but stated it would take place "during Riyadh Season". Riyadh Season is an entertainment festival held every winter since its launch in 2019 which has hosted a number of high profile boxing events. The contest would give Briton Fury, 35, the opportunity to gain revenge after

tasting defeat for the first time in his 16-year professional career against Usyk. It is unlikely that all four belts will be on the line in the rematch with the IBF planning to strip Usyk as he will not be facing its mandatory challenger next.





# Borrell: UN's system paralyzed by vetoes

**International Desk**  
European Union's top diplomat said the United Nations' system is paralyzed by vetoes and these vetoes maintain conflicts across the world. "Look at what is happening at the [United Nations]

Security Council; there are no agreements, there are only vetoes. And by the way, I can say that the EU member states have not used the veto right in these last times. But the United Nations' system is paralyzed by vetoes, and these vetoes maintain

conflicts. And these conflicts can kill people and spread insecurity and put ethical questions to all of us," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a speech at the Schumann Security and Defense Forum 2024 in Brussels. He said that humanity

had returned to a classical high-intensity war with tanks, trenches, planes, explosions, and not only in Ukraine and Gaza. "There are many wars in Africa, a lot of - not wars - but instability in Latin America. We see not a war but war games in the

Indo-Pacific," he said. The United States, Israel's key political and military backer, has repeatedly vetoed the UN Security Council multiple resolutions on ending the nearly eight-month Israel's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, which has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians - mostly women and children. Since the beginning of the Israel's onslaught on Gaza in October, the US has used its veto five times, four of which to block a cease-fire in Gaza. Turkish President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan also hit out at the United Nations on Wednesday. "The UN cannot even protect its own staff. What are you waiting for to act? The spirit of the United Nations is dead in Gaza," Erdogan told lawmakers from his AKP party. Erdogan's comments came as the UN Security Council met to discuss a deadly Israeli attack on a displacement camp west of Rafah on Tuesday that killed 21 people, according to a civil defense official in Gaza. The Turkish leader also hit out at fellow Muslim-majority countries for failing to take common action over the Israeli strike. "I have some words to say to the Islamic world: what are you waiting for to take a common decision?" Erdogan, who leads a Muslim-majority country of 85 million people, told lawmakers from his AKP party. "Israel is not just a threat to Gaza but to all of humanity," he said. "No state is safe as long as Israel does not follow international law and does not feel bound by international law," Erdogan added, repeating an accusation that Israel is committing "genocide" in Gaza.

## Iran's ballistic missile technology at disposal of Yemen

**National Desk**  
Iran has reportedly provided Yemen's Ansarallah resistance movement with a technology to manufacture Qadr medium-range ballistic missile. According to the Tasnim News Agency, technical know-how to produce Iran's first homegrown naval ballistic missile is now at the disposal of the Yemeni military forces. The missiles have presented serious challenges to the US and Israel's interests in the region. Yemen's Ansarallah movement has been targeting Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea since November in response to Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip.

## Saudi Arabia expels 6 Iranian journalists



The Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Peyman Jebeli said Saudi Arabia detained and expelled six state media journalists. "They were carrying out their normal and routine task when this happened and they were arrested," Jebeli told reporters. "We are not aware of the reason they were arrested and sent back to the country." The journalists, who had been sent to Saudi Arabia to cover the Hajj pilgrimage, has been detained for six days in the kingdom.

# Sanctions removal talks underway: Iran's acting FM

Iran's acting Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani said the Islamic Republic is proceeding with its peaceful nuclear activities under the supervision of the country's top security body, adding that talks on the removal of anti-Iran sanctions are also underway. Baqeri Kani made the remarks on the sidelines of the Iranian administration's weekly cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran on Wednesday as he pointed to late president Ebrahim Raisi's emphasis on keeping active diplomacy, Press TV reported.

"The martyred president's emphasis was on being active in the field of foreign policy with a focus on the policy of neighborliness and interaction with neighbors," the top diplomat said. Stressing that Iran's nuclear activities continue under the supervision of the country's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Baqeri Kani touched on negotiations to remove anti-Tehran sanctions and said, "The exchange of messages has not stopped and is still underway." Over the past years, Iran

has made great strides in its peaceful nuclear energy program in defiance of illegal sanctions and other hurdles created by the Western governments. The country, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), has also been closely cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The country showed to the world the peaceful nature



of its nuclear program by signing the 2015 nuclear agreement, formally known as the Joint Com-

prehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with six world powers. But, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in May 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo. Asked about a possible trip by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Tehran, the acting foreign minister said there has been a mutual invitation from both sides and the issue has previously been brought up, but the exact timing of the trip has yet to be specified.

## US city adopts resolution calling for boycott, divestment of Israel

The Hamtramck City Council, in the US state of Michigan, unanimously passed a resolution Tuesday to support a pro-Palestinian movement calling for boycotts and divestment in an effort to end support for Israel in its war on Gaza. City Council members described the resolution as a push to "stop the genocide" in Gaza and follows demonstrations by pro-Palestinian supporters in calls for a cease-fire and the move to set up encampments on college campuses. "We are making history with this decision," said Mayor Pro Tem Abu Musa. "... The American government, we are taking our tax money and sending to Israel and (that) money (is being used), killing in-

nocent people, especially kids and women." The all-Muslim Hamtramck City Council passed the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions resolution 4-0. Councilman Mohammed Hassan said his support for the resolution was motivated by his humanity rather his ethnic and religious affiliations. "As a human, I'm supporting this resolution, not as a Muslim, no - as a human," Hassan said. "... As an American administration, we are supporting (Israel) to kill the kids and the innocent people and (not letting) the medicine, food, water to go to a specific area." Passage of the resolution came as pro-Palestinian demonstrations have occurred and encampments

have set up on college campuses across the United States. Encampments have been dismantled and cleared from several campuses. Discord from last month's violent attack on pro-Palestinian students and activists encamped at the University of California, Los Angeles, flared again on Tuesday as academic workers staged a protest strike on campus protesting UCLA's response to the incident. Unionized academic researchers, graduate teaching assistants and post-doctoral scholars at UCLA walked off the job over what they regard as unfair labor practices in the university's handling of pro-Palestinian demonstrations in recent weeks, organizers said.

## US bombs snuffing ...

The CNN report underlined that serial numbers on the remnants of the munitions matched those for a manufacturer of GBU-39 parts based in California, pointing to more evidence the bombs were made in the US. Since the start of Israel's genocidal war on Gaza in early October 2023, the United States and its Western allies have been providing untrammelled financial and logistical support to the occupying entity in its ceaseless bombardment campaign against Palestinians in the besieged territory. In yet another brazen act of support for Israel's months-long onslaught, the administration of US President Joe Biden hinted on Tuesday that the regime's deadly strikes

on Rafah did not cross a "red line" and would not lead to a change in Washington's policy towards Tel Aviv. Pentagon deputy press secretary Sabrina Singh said in a presser that Sunday's airstrike, which was the deadliest incident in Rafah since Israel launched an offensive there, did not amount to what the White House has warned against. "It is still our assessment that what is happening in Rafah and what the [Israeli military] are doing, it is limited in scope," Singh told reporters. The White House claims to have warned Israel against a large-scale ground offensive in Rafah without a clear plan to evacuate civilians safely. Haley writes 'finish them' on Israeli shells

Nikki Haley, the failed US Republican presidential nominee, signed Israeli artillery shells with the inscription "Finish Them!" on a visit to the Israeli-occupied territories this week. The former South Carolina governor's graphic display of support came on a trip to the north of the occupied territories, where she was accompanied by Danny Danon, a former Israeli ambassador to the United Nations and a noted hawkish member of Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party in the Israeli parliament, Knesset. "America needs to do whatever Israel needs and stop telling them how to fight this war," said Haley, whose missile message also carried the words "America loves Israel".

As a staunch supporter of Israel during her time in Donald Trump's administration, Haley is one of the main recipients of financial aid from pro-Zionist lobbies in America, with some social media activists having considered her inscription on Israeli missiles as an example of "incitement to genocide" and called for her trial in international courts. Israel's barbaric attack on the tent camp in Rafah prompted global condemnations and calls for the implementation of a World Court order to halt Israel's assault on Gaza. The attack came two days after the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to stop its US-backed aggression on Gaza that has killed more than 36,000 people and injured over 81,000 others since it started in October last year.



## World Health Assembly

# Iran minister urges int'l community to oppose healthcare sanctions

### Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Health and Medical Education Bahram Einollahi called on the international community to oppose unilateral and illegal sanctions imposed on the healthcare sector worldwide.

He made the remarks during the 77th World Health Assembly, which is currently being held in Geneva, Switzerland, from May 27 to June 1, IRNA wrote.

The theme of this year's assembly is "All for Health, Health for All."

Einollahi emphasized that despite Iran's commitment to prioritizing healthcare for its citizens, the country is facing severe economic

constraints due to unlawful unilateral coercive measures.

Einollahi also highlighted the ongoing suffering in Palestine, describing acts of genocide against the Palestinian people while global health officials convene in Geneva.

The World Health Assembly is an annual event held at the World Health Organization's headquarters, bringing together health ministers from 192 member countries to discuss global health issues.

This year's assembly continues through June 1, focusing on strategies to achieve universal health coverage and improve health outcomes globally.



## Moscow hosts Russian artist's exhibition inspired by 'Shahnameh'



An exhibition showcasing the paintings and sculptures of Russian artist Sergey Feofanov, inspired by the characters of Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh' (The Book of Kings), opened Tuesday at the School of Dramatic Arts in Moscow.

The exhibition, titled 'Eastern Wind,' features 30 paintings and 40 sculptures that draw on the rich myths and legends from Ferdowsi's epic work. The event, being held in the theater hall, marked the commemoration of the renowned Persian poet Ferdowsi.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Iran's Cultural Attaché in Moscow, Masoud Ahmadvand, praised the Russian side for their

collaboration in organizing this cultural event.

"Feofanov has been a pioneer in introducing Iranian art and culture to others," Ahmadvand said, highlighting the artist's ability to blend the lofty concepts of the 'Shahnameh' with modern imagination.

Ahmadvand recalled Feofanov's earlier visit to Iran, where he held an exhibition in Mashhad. For his contributions to global awareness of Ferdowsi, Feofanov was awarded the Ferdowsi Medal. "Today, we witness his beautiful works, both sculptures and paintings," Ahmadvand added.

Feofanov expressed his deep admiration for Iranian culture, particularly

its poets, miniatures, and Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh'. "Sometimes, I tell myself there is enough work in this field, but I cannot separate myself from Iran's culture and the 'Shahnameh,'" he said, underscoring his enduring passion.

The ceremony also featured remarks from other Russian artists who praised Feofanov's work for its originality and innovative use of various elements and materials. A recitation of the Shahnameh in both Persian and Russian was also part of the program.

The 'Eastern Wind' exhibition will remain open to visitors at the School of Dramatic Arts until June 27.



## Iranian artists join 'All Eyes On Rafah' as Israel ramps up deadly attacks

A large number of Iranian filmmakers and artists including Kamal Tabrizi, Parviz Parastui, Payman Maadi, Tannaz Tabatabaei and Amir Jafari along with more than 39 million online activists have joined the 'All Eyes On Rafah' campaign to condemn the Zionist regime's aggression on Rafah in the south of Gaza Strip.

An image depicting tents in a camp arranged to spell out "All Eyes on Rafah," an area in the south of Gaza filled with refugee tent camps – where at least 45 civilians died after an Israeli strike on Sunday – has gone viral on social media.

The phrase holds significance as Israel's war on Gaza continues despite the major global outcry. "All eyes on Rafah" is a phrase that refers to the ongoing genocide in Rafah, Gaza, with over 1.4 million Palestinians seeking shelter," Iran's Embassy in India had earlier shared.

The image, which appears to be AI-generated, was shared more than 37 million times in less than 24 hours.

Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told the country's parliament in Hebrew that the casualties were a "tragic mishap"; his office presented

clarifying comments in English that translated the phrase as "tragic incident."

The image has been shared primarily through Instagram's stories feature, with influencers, athletes and celebrities – including "Bridgerton" star Nicola Coughlan, singer-songwriter Kehlani and one of India's top actors, Varun Dhawan – posting the image.

American singer Kehlani Ashley Parrish, Egyptian singer Bushra Rozza, American actress Marcia Cross, an, Syrian singer Faia Younan, and British singer and actress Leona Lewis are among the international celebrities who have shared the image on their Instagram pages.

The "All Eyes on Rafah" image does not portray

the violence actually occurring on the ground, while it does echo the other content that has repeatedly gone viral and been endorsed by highly followed people on social media over the past eight months.

"The trend of posting 'All Eyes on Rafah' has been something that has been building for a little while," said Matt Navarra, a social media consultant and industry analyst. "We've seen quite a lot of influencers and celebrities and widely followed people on multiple platforms, not just Instagram, that are sharing the sentiment of this message or an almost identical version of it, which will amp up the reach and visibility across many platforms."

