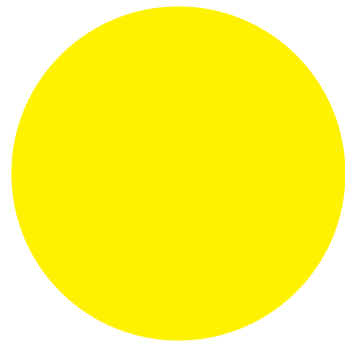


Iran's economy to grow 3.2% in 2024, inflation to fall 5.2%: **World Bank**



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Pezeshkian's foreign policy based on constructive engagement



By **Rahman Ghahremanpour**
Strategic affairs analyst

The article by President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian about his government's perspective on foreign policy is significant in many ways, as it sends a crystal-clear message to the world: Iran's new administration is all about striking a balance in its foreign affairs.

The 20-year vision document is a major guiding light for the Islamic Republic of Iran. When it was being drafted, two main schools of thought on foreign policy emerged. The first argued that confrontational approaches were needed to safeguard Iran's interests, pushing for resistance against the West.

The second believed engagement with the global community was the way forward to secure Iran's interests. Ultimately, the "constructive engagement" concept – the result of a consensus among experts, politicians, and decision-makers – was enshrined as the cornerstone of Iran's foreign policy in the document. Sadly, this approach was sidelined during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency and was limited to Europe with lackluster results under his successor Hassan Rouhani.

Pezeshkian's article calls to mind that internal consensus, backing a balanced, constructive engagement with the world. During the election campaign for president, both the confrontational and engagement-focused viewpoints were on full display.

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Armed Forces Ready to Work With New Gov't: **Top General**

Pezeshkian says favors balance in foreign relations

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Iran's President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian (c) meets with the country's top military commanders in Tehran on July 13, 2024. IRNA



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SPECIAL ISSUE

Iran's exports to Iraq up 28% in Q1 calendar year

Iran exported about \$3 billion worth of products to the neighboring Iraq in the first three months of this year in the Iranian calendar (started March 21, 2024), showing a 28% increase compared to same period last year. The West Asia Office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) submitted a comprehensive report on the trade between Iran and Iraq from March to June 22, 2024, first three months of the Iranian calendar, Mehr News Agency reported.

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Iran, Kyrgyzstan approve MoU for port development

Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) and the National Investments Agency of Kyrgyzstan have agreed on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the development of the southern ports of Iran.

The PMO and the National Investments Agency under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic approved the MoU for port development during an online meeting, Director General of Transit, Logistics and Agreements of the PMO Kazem Salehi said, Mehr News Agency reported.

In the virtual meeting, the two sides reviewed and approved the contents of the MoU regarding the participation of Kyrgyzstan's private sector in the southern ports of Iran.

The draft of the MoU will be signed by the parties during the visit of Kyrgyzstan's delegation to Tehran shortly, Salehi added.

By signing the said MoU, the two countries will participate in the establishment of joint logistics centers in Iran's southern ports. So, the trade relations between two countries will subsequently increase.

Salehi said that facilitation and promotion of regional transit through multi-modal transport is necessary and the PMO welcomes the presence of neighboring countries, especially Central Asian countries, in the infrastructure projects of Iran's ports.

The National Investments Agency is a governmental agency in Kyrgyzstan for promoting foreign investments and assisting international companies in finding business opportunities. Following three strategic missions of Iran's PMO in 2024 i.e., "sea-based economy", "transit", and "logistics management", the PMO opened 27 projects last month in six provinces across Iran that amounted to 59,531 billion IRR while starting 23 more projects with 569,909 billion IRR public and private investments in five provinces.

Iran's economy to grow 3.2% in 2024, inflation to fall 5.2%: *World Bank*

Economic Desk

The World Bank (WB), in its latest report, forecasted that Iran's economy is expected to grow by 3.2% in 2024, with the inflation rate projected to decrease to 35.3%.

According to World Bank estimates, Iran's economy grew by 5% and experienced a 40.7% inflation in 2023, Mehr news agency reported.

According to WB, the country's inflation rate, which was 40.7% last year, is also expected to decrease to 35.3% this year.

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) reported in late June that the country's gross domestic product (GDP), including oil, grew by 4.5% in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on

March 19).

The World Bank also forecasted that Iran's non-oil sector, which grew by 3.8% last year, will reach 3.0% this year.

Iran's oil sector, which saw a significant growth of 17.1% last year, is also expected to grow by 5.0% this year, Mehr news agency reported.

Additionally, the World Bank predicts that Iran's oil production will increase by 200,000 barrels compared to the previous year, reaching 3.2 million barrels per day.

The agricultural sector in the country is expected to grow by only 0.9% this year, while the industry sector is projected to reach 4.9% growth and the service sector is expected to grow by 2.6%.



Wheat cultivation via plasma-activated water to begin for first time in Iran

Economic Desk

Wheat cultivation using plasma-activated water (PAW) will be implemented for the first time in Iran as of October under the aegis of the Iranian Nanotechnology Innovation Council (INIC), as announced by an official from the council.

Secretary-General of the INIC Emad Ahmadvand said wheat cultivation via PAW, supported by the INIC,

will launch in Bu-Ali Sina University's farms, Tasnim news agency reported.

Ahmadvand stated on his X social media account that plasma-activated water positively impacts crop efficiency, although it has not been extensively assessed on a large scale in the country.

Water is a crucial factor in agriculture for enhancing production and productivity. Plasma water is a modern solution to increase

this productivity. Plasma is a state of matter composed of a quasi-neutral gas of charged and neutral particles.

PAW, through oxidation and other chemical changes, possesses disinfectant properties and acts as a plant growth stimulant. This clean technology can enhance agricultural productivity, reduce water consumption, improve product quality, and minimize waste.

Moreover, plasma-activated water has proven effective in disinfecting and preserving food products, leading to longer shelf life and reduced food waste.

Applications of PAW in agriculture include improvement of the germination rate of seeds. Plasma-activated water can enhance plant growth and performance, and can help manage soil acidity by reducing its adverse effects.

Iran's exports to Iraq up 28% in Q1 calendar year

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The West Asia Office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) submitted a comprehensive report on the trade between Iran and Iraq from March to June 22, 2024, first three



months of the Iranian calendar, Mehr News Agency reported.

Iraq is one of Iran's important trade partners as the

Islamic Republic exported about \$3 billion worth of non-oil goods to the neighboring country between March 21 to June 22, 2024.

The natural gas, ferrous or steel bars, tiles and ceramics, fresh apples, iron ingot, watermelon, evaporative coolers, tomatoes and gas turbines were of the main products exported from Iran to the neighboring Iraq in this period, the report added.

In turn, Iran imported \$108 million worth of products from Iraq in the first quarter of this year in the Iranian calendar, registering a 25-percent growth com-

pared to the same period last year.

Raw gold, aluminum alloys and tires for passenger cars were the main products imported into the country from Iraq.

According to the Department of Spatial Planning and Regional Planning of the Iranian Plan and Budget Organization (PBO), the Islamic Republic exports products valued at \$12 billion to neighboring Iraq annually.

 **Mohammad Ali Rajabi**
Cartoonist



Pezeshkian's foreign policy ...

Pezeshkian championed engagement, both internationally and within Iran, urging a united front on key national issues.

In other words, his approach was to engage with other spectra of politics, power, and society domestically. His emphasis on domestic cooperation and constructive engagement is on full display in his recent article. This perspective aligns neatly with the Islamic Republic's overarching stance on foreign rela-

tions. Pezeshkian doesn't want to swing too hard toward either the East or the West, nor does he aim to sour beneficial relations with China or Russia. He advocates closer ties with neighbors and regional players, while also signaling openness to working with Europe and the United States – all within the framework of Iran's interests. In international relations jargon, this balanced foreign policy conveys a simple message: Iran won't pick sides between the East and the

West; instead, its national interests take center stage.

It's safe to say that this approach will resonate with the global community. Europeans, particularly, have been frosty toward Iran lately, viewing Tehran as cozying up to China and Russia to disrupt global stability. Pezeshkian's balanced foreign policy, however, suggests that Iran seeks neither a showdown with the West nor a wholesale embrace of it; its priority lies in its own national

interests. Nevertheless, there is a tall wall of mistrust between Europe and Iran, and it remains to be seen how much progress can be made in tearing down this wall. But there's reason to believe Pezeshkian's article and the ideas within could go down well with European nations and the US. At its core, Iran's new president champions balance and puts the country's interests front and center in shaping its foreign policy.

Husseinieh Azam Mosque, a hub of religious significance and cultural heritage in Zanjan

Iranica Desk

Husseinieh Azam Mosque is a prominent landmark in Zanjan, the capital city of Zanjan Province, known for its significance as a religious tourist attraction during the month of Muharram. Situated on Ferdowsi Street in the southern part of Zanjan, it has a rich history dating back to the Safavid period.

In the year 1501, simultaneous with the ascendancy of the Safavids, the Shia faith was established as the official religion of Iran, leading to the widespread practice of mourning and recitation of elegies. During that era, due to the increase in pilgrimage journeys, particularly to Karbala hosting the holy shrine of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Imam of Shia Muslims, venues for mourning pilgrims were constructed along the routes and in various cities.

In the hallway and entrance of the Husseinieh Azam Mosque, there is a stone inscription on the wall with poems underneath, bearing the date of 1261 AH (1845 CE). It is said that this date relates to the



● basjnews.ir

religious congregations in the country.

In the Zanjan Province's event calendar, the eighth day of Muharram is recognized as Abulfazl Day, when thousands of devotees offer sacrifices or donations to the mosque. This ritual has been designated on Iran's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

The Husseinieh is one of the most influential cultural and religious centers of Zanjan Province, extending over an area of 12,000 square meters, this complex has various cultural, religious, and medical facilities. Many people make pilgrimages to religious sites every year.

According to the board of trustees of the Azam Husseinieh of Zanjan, substantial financial and non-financial donations are made to the Husseinieh throughout the year. These funds are used for the construction of numerous cultural, religious, healthcare, and service spaces such as libraries, different halls, clinics, benevolent funds, and more.

Husseinieh Azam Mosque is prepared to host religious tourists traveling to the province during



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restoration and reconstruction of the mosque and public spaces of the building. In other words, this structure existed and was

constructed prior to this date. One of the most notable events at Husseinieh Azam is the mourning ceremony held on the eighth

of Muharram in honor of Hazrat Abolfazl Al-Abbas (PBUH), the greatest companion and brother of Imam Hussein (PBUH). This

gathering is renowned as the largest assembly of mourners in Muharram in Iran, earning the Husseinieh Azam the title of

the capital of Hussein mourning. The annual event draws an estimated 500,000 participants, making it one of the largest reli-

Muharram to participate in the mourning ceremonies held for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH).

Mourning traditions for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in Meyami

Iranica Desk

The traditional rituals of the lunar months of Muharram and Safar in the city of Meyami, located in Semnan Province, are annually celebrated with grandeur, drawing a large number of mourners of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Imam of Shia Muslims. These ceremonies include traditional processions, the carrying of religious banners, the preparation and distribution of *aash* (a type of Persian soup), and more, chn.ir wrote.

According to the elders of Meyami, these inherited ceremonies, observed for over 200 years during the months of Muharram and Safar, are a testament to the ancient and authentic mourning commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH).

The Azam Husseinieh of Meyami was established by Mohammad Taqi Khan Sarhang around two centuries ago, and the mourning ceremonies for Imam Hussein (PBUH) have been a longstanding tradition since its establishment.

Service at the Azam Husseinieh in Meyami is hereditary, passed down from father to son. Each individual is assigned a specific role, such as shoekeeping, water supply, teahouse management, and kitchen duties. Due to the large gatherings and high workload during the mourning processions at the Azam Husseinieh, some servants are unable to participate in mourning activities throughout the day. At the conclusion of the ceremony, everyone gathers inside the building to conduct a

ceremony named Hassan and Hussein. Presently, in addition to the designated servants, the general public also partake in these ceremonies.

Religious groups and chest beaters, particularly youth and adolescents, proceed towards the Azam Husseinieh after attending mourning ceremonies in mosques to engage in the rituals of Hassan and Hussein. Upon reaching the location, they form circles with great fervor.

During this traditional ceremony, each individual holds

the waist of the person next to them with their left hand and beats their chest with their right hand. A person positioned in the center of the circle, in harmony with the chest beaters, alternates saying "Hassan" with the first step, to which the chest beaters respond with "Hussein" on the second step.

The number of circles in the mourning ceremony of Hassan and Hussein varies based on the number of participants, occasionally forming more than 10 circles, showcasing

their reverence for Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his companions.

Within these ceremonies, certain mourners, adorned in special attire often in green, participate, adding beauty and a sense of special splendor to this religious tradition. The mourning ceremony of Hassan and Hussein in Meyami is nationally recognized, drawing numerous enthusiasts from different regions of the country to witness the execution of this beautiful ceremony during these months.



● IRNA



● chn.ir



● IRNA

'I'm bored, so I shoot'

Israeli army's approval of free-for-all violence in Gaza



By Oren Ziv
Photojournalist,
reporter

INVESTIGATION

In early June, Al Jazeera aired a series of disturbing videos revealing what it described as "summary executions": Israeli soldiers shooting dead several Palestinians walking near the coastal road in the Gaza Strip on three separate occasions. In each case, the Palestinians appeared unarmed and did not pose any imminent threat to the soldiers.

Such footage is rare, due to the severe constraints faced by journalists in the besieged enclave and the constant danger to their lives. But these executions, which did not appear to have any security rationale, are consistent with the testimonies of six Israeli soldiers who spoke to +972 Magazine and Local Call following their release from active duty in Gaza in recent months. Corroborating the testimonies of Palestinian eyewitnesses and doctors throughout the war, the soldiers described being authorized to open fire on Palestinians virtually at will, including civilians.

The six sources — all except one of whom spoke on the condition of anonymity — recounted how Israeli soldiers routinely executed Palestinian civilians simply because they entered an area that the military defined as a "no-go zone". The testimonies paint a picture of a landscape littered with civilian corpses, which are left to rot or be eaten by stray animals; the army only hides them from view ahead of the arrival of international aid convoys, so that "images of people in advanced stages of decay don't come out." Two of the soldiers also testified to a systematic policy of setting Palestinian homes on fire after occupying them.

Several sources described how the ability to shoot without restrictions gave soldiers a way to blow off steam or relieve the dullness of their daily routine. "People want to experience the event [fully]," S., a reservist who served in northern Gaza, recalled. "I personally fired a few bullets for no reason, into the sea or at the sidewalk or an abandoned building. They report it as 'normal fire,' which is a code-name for 'I'm bored, so I shoot.'"

Since the 1980s, the Israeli military has refused to disclose its open-fire regulations, despite various petitions to the High Court of Justice. According to political sociologist Yagil Levy, since the Second Intifada, "the army has not given soldiers written rules of engagement," leaving much open to the interpretation of soldiers in the field and their commanders. As well as contributing to the killing of over 38,000 Palestinians, sources testified that these lax directives were also partly responsible for the high number of soldiers killed by friendly fire in recent months.

"There was total freedom of action," said B., another soldier who served in the regular forces in Gaza for months, including in his battalion's command center. "If there is [even] a feeling of threat, there is no need to explain — you just shoot." When soldiers see someone approaching, "it is permissible to shoot at their center of mass [their body], not into the air," B. continued. "It's permissible to shoot everyone, a young girl, an old woman."

B. went on to describe an incident in November when soldiers killed several civilians during the evacuation of a school close to the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, which had served as a shelter for displaced Palestinians. The army ordered the evacuees to exit to the left, toward the sea, rather than to the right, where the soldiers were stationed. When a gunfight erupted inside the school, those who veered the wrong way in the ensuing chaos were immediately fired at.

"There was intelligence that Hamas wanted to create panic," B. said. "A battle started inside; people ran away. Some fled left toward the sea, [but] some ran to the right, including children. Everyone who went to the right was killed — 15 to 20 people. There was a pile of bodies."

'People shot as they pleased, with all their might'

B. said that it was difficult to distinguish civilians from combatants in Gaza, claiming that members of Hamas often "walk around without their weapons". But as a result, "every man between the ages of 16 and 50 is suspected of being a terrorist." "It is forbidden to walk around, and everyone who is outside is suspicious," B. continued. "If we see someone in a window looking at us, he is a suspect. You shoot. The [army's] perception is that any contact [with the population] endangers the forces, and a situation must be created in which it is forbidden to approach [the soldiers] under any circumstances. [The Palestinians] learned that when we enter, they run away."

Even in seemingly unpopulated or abandoned areas of Gaza, soldiers engaged in extensive shooting in a procedure known as "demonstrating presence". S. testified that his fellow soldiers would "shoot a lot, even for no reason — anyone who wants to shoot, no matter what the reason, shoots". In some cases, he noted, this was "intended to ... remove people [from their hiding places] or to demonstrate presence."

M., another reservist who served in the Gaza Strip, explained that such orders would come directly from the commanders of the company or battalion in the field. "When there are no [other] IDF forces [in the area] ... the shooting is very unrestricted, like crazy. And not just small arms: machine guns, tanks, and mortars."

Even in the absence of orders from above, M. testified that soldiers in the field regularly take the law into their own hands. "Regular soldiers, junior officers, battalion commanders — the junior ranks who want to shoot, they get permission." S. remembered hearing over the radio about a soldier stationed in a protective compound who shot a Palestinian family walking around nearby. "At first, they say 'four people.' It turns into

two children plus two adults, and by the end, it's a man, a woman, and two children. You can assemble the picture yourself."

Only one of the soldiers interviewed for this investigation was willing to be identified by name: Yuval Green, a 26-year-old reservist from Jerusalem who served in the 55th Paratroopers Brigade in November and December last year (Green recently signed a letter by 41 reservists declaring their refusal to continue serving in Gaza, following the army's invasion of Rafah). "There were no restrictions on ammunition," Green told +972 and Local Call. "People were shooting just to relieve the boredom."

Green described an incident that occurred one night during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah in December, when "the whole battalion opened fire together like fireworks, including tracer ammunition [which generates a bright light]. It made a crazy color, illuminating the sky, and because [Hanukkah] is the 'festival of lights,' it became symbolic."

C., another soldier who served in Gaza, explained that when soldiers heard gunshots, they radioed in to clarify whether there was another Israeli military unit in the area, and if not, they opened fire. "People shot as they pleased, with all their might." But as C. noted, unrestricted shooting meant that soldiers are often exposed to the huge risk of friendly fire — which he described as "more dangerous than Hamas". "On multiple occasions, IDF forces fired in our direction. We didn't respond, we checked on the radio, and no one was hurt."

At the time of writing, 324 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the ground invasion began, at least 28 of them by friendly fire according to the army. In Green's experience, such incidents were the "main issue" endangering soldiers' lives. "There was quite a bit [of friendly fire]; it drove me crazy," he said.

For Green, the rules of engagement also demonstrated a deep indifference to the fate of

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Israeli soldiers describe the near-total absence of firing regulations in the Gaza war, with troops shooting as they please, setting homes ablaze, and leaving corpses on the streets — all with their commanders' permission.



An Israeli soldier from the 8717 Battalion of the Givati Brigade looks over the ruined Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip, on December 28, 2023.
● YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90

the captives. “They told me about a practice of blowing up tunnels, and I thought to myself that if there were hostages [in them], it would kill them.” After Israeli soldiers in Shuja’iyya killed three captives waving white flags in December, thinking they were Palestinians, Green said he was angry but was told “there’s nothing we can do.” “[The commanders] sharpened procedures, saying ‘You have to pay attention and be sensitive, but we are in a combat zone, and we have to be alert.’”

B. confirmed that even after the mishap in Shuja’iyya, which was said to be “contrary to the orders” of the military, the open-fire regulations did not change. “As for the hostages, we didn’t have a specific directive,” he recalled. “[The army’s top brass] said that after the shooting of the hostages, they briefed [soldiers in the field]. [But] they didn’t talk to us.” He and the soldiers who were with him heard about the shooting of the captives only two and a half weeks after the incident, after they left Gaza.

“I’ve heard statements [from other soldiers] that the hostages are dead, they don’t stand a chance, they have to be abandoned,” Green noted. “[This] bothered me the most ... that they kept saying, ‘We’re here for the hostages,’ but it is clear that the war harms the hostages. That was my thought then; today it turned out to be true.”

‘Wow, what fun’ to see buildings come down

A., an officer who served in the army’s Operations Directorate, testified that his brigade’s operations room — which coordinates the fighting from outside Gaza, approving targets and preventing friendly fire — did not receive clear open-fire orders to transmit to soldiers on the ground. “From the moment you enter, at no point is there a briefing,” he said. “We didn’t receive instructions from higher up to pass on to the soldiers and battalion commanders.” He noted that there were instructions not to shoot along humanitarian routes, but elsewhere, “you fill in the blanks, in the absence of any other directive. This is the approach: ‘If it is forbidden there, then it is permitted here.’”

A. explained that shooting at “hospitals, clinics, schools, religious institutions, [and] buildings of international organizations” required higher authorization. But in practice, “I can count on one hand the cases where we were told not to shoot. Even with sensitive things like schools, [approval] feels like only a formality.” In general, A. continued, “The spirit in the operations room was ‘Shoot first, ask questions later.’ That was the consensus ... No one will shed a tear if we flatten a house when there was no need, or if we shoot someone who we didn’t have to.”

A. said he was aware of cases in which Israeli soldiers shot Palestinian civilians who entered their area of operation, consistent with a Haaretz investigation into “kill zones” in areas of Gaza under the army’s occupation. “This is the default. No civilians are supposed to be in the area, that’s the perspective. We spotted someone in a window, so they fired and killed him.” A. added that it often was not clear from the reports whether soldiers had shot militants or unarmed civilians — and “many times, it sounded like someone was caught up in a situation, and we opened fire.”

But this ambiguity about the identity of victims meant that, for A., military reports about the numbers of Hamas members killed could not be trusted. “The feeling in the war room, and this is a softened version,

was that every person we killed, we counted him as a terrorist,” he testified.

“The aim was to count how many [terrorists] we killed today,” A. continued. “Every [soldier] wants to show that he’s the big guy. The perception was that all the men were terrorists. Sometimes a commander would suddenly ask for numbers, and then the officer of the division would run from brigade to brigade going through the list in the military’s computer system and count.”

A.’s testimony is consistent with a recent report from the Israeli outlet Mako, about a drone strike by one brigade that killed Palestinians in another brigade’s area of operation. Officers from both brigades consulted on which one should register the assassinations. “What difference does it make? Register it to both of us,” one of them told the other, according to the publication.

During the first weeks after the Hamas-led October 7 attack, A. recalled, “people were feeling very guilty that this happened on our watch,” a feeling that was shared among the Israeli public writ large — and quickly transformed into a desire for retribution. “There was no direct order to take revenge,” A. said, “but when you reach decision junctures, the instructions, orders, and protocols [regarding ‘sensitive’ cases] only have so much influence.”

When drones would livestream footage of attacks in Gaza, “there were cheers of joy in the war room,” A. said. “Every once in a while, a building comes down ... and the feeling is, ‘Wow, how crazy, what fun.’”

A. noted the irony that part of what motivated Israelis’ calls for revenge was the belief that Palestinians in Gaza rejoiced in the death and destruction of October 7. To justify abandoning the distinction between civilians and combatants, people would resort to such statements as “‘They handed out sweets,’ ‘They danced after October 7,’ or ‘They elected Hamas’ ... Not everyone, but also quite a few, thought that today’s child [is] tomorrow’s terrorist.”

“I, too, a rather left-wing soldier, forget very quickly that these are real homes [in Gaza],” A. said of his experience in the operations room. “It felt like a computer game. Only after two weeks did I realize that these are [actual] buildings that are falling: if there are inhabitants [inside], then [the buildings are collapsing] on their heads, and even if not, then with everything inside them.”

‘A horrific smell of death’

Multiple soldiers testified that the permissive shooting policy has enabled Israeli units to kill Palestinian civilians even when they are identified as such beforehand. D., a reservist, said that his brigade was stationed next to two so-called “humanitarian” travel corridors, one for aid organizations and one for civilians fleeing from the north to the south of the Strip. Within his brigade’s area of operation, they instituted a “red line, green line” policy, delineating zones where it was forbidden for civilians to enter.

According to D., aid organizations were permitted to travel into these zones with prior coordination (our interview was conducted before a series of Israeli precision strikes killed seven World Central Kitchen employees), but for Palestinians it was different. “Anyone who crossed into the green area would become a potential target,” D. said, claiming that these areas were signposted to civilians. “If they cross the red line, you report it on the radio and you don’t need to wait for permission, you can shoot.”

Yet D. said that civilians often came into areas where aid convoys passed



Israeli female soldiers pose for a photo on a position on the Gaza Strip border, in southern Israel, on February 19, 2024. [TSAFRIR ABAYOV/AP](#)

through in order to look for scraps that might fall from the trucks; nonetheless, the policy was to shoot anyone who tried to enter. “The civilians are clearly refugees, they are desperate, they have nothing,” he said. Yet in the early months of the war, “every day there were two or three incidents with innocent people or [people] who were suspected of being sent by Hamas as spotters,” whom soldiers in his battalion shot. The soldiers testified that throughout Gaza, corpses of Palestinians in civilian clothes remained scattered along roads and open ground. “The whole area was full of bodies,” said S., a reservist. “There are also dogs, cows, and horses that survived the bombings and have nowhere to go. We can’t feed them, and we don’t want them to get too close either. So, you occasionally see dogs walking around with rotting body parts. There is a horrific smell of death.” But before the humanitarian convoys arrive, S. noted, the bodies are removed. “A D-9 [Caterpillar bulldozer] goes down, with a tank, and clears the area of corpses, buries them under the rubble, and flips [them] aside so that the convoys don’t see it — [so that] images of people in advanced stages of decay don’t come out,” he described.

“I saw a lot of [Palestinian] civilians — families, women, children,” S. continued. “There are more fatalities than are reported. We were in a small area. Every day, at least one

or two [civilians] are killed [because] they walked in a no-go area. I don’t know who is a terrorist and who is not, but most of them did not carry weapons.”

Green said that when he arrived in Khan Younis at the end of December, “We saw some indistinct mass outside a house. We realized it was a body; we saw a leg. At night, cats ate it. Then, someone came and moved it.” A non-military source who spoke to +972 and Local Call after visiting northern Gaza also reported seeing bodies strewn around the area. “Near the army compound between the northern and southern Gaza Strip, we saw about 10 bodies shot in the head, apparently by a sniper, [seemingly while] trying to return to the north,” he said. “The bodies were decomposing; there were dogs and cats around them.”

“They don’t deal with the bodies,” B. said of the Israeli soldiers in Gaza. “If they’re in the way, they get moved to the side. There’s no burial of the dead. Soldiers stepped on bodies by mistake.”

Last month, Guy Zaken, a soldier who operated D-9 bulldozers in Gaza, testified before a Knesset committee that he and his crew “ran over hundreds of terrorists, dead and alive.” Another soldier he served with subsequently committed suicide.

The full article first appeared on +972 Magazine.

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At the time of writing, 324 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since the ground invasion began, at least 28 of them by friendly fire according to the army. In Yuval Green’s experience, such incidents were the “main issue” endangering soldiers’ lives. “There was quite a bit [of friendly fire]; it drove me crazy,” he said.



This screengrab shows an Israeli soldier indiscriminately firing on Palestinian residential buildings in Gaza without aiming carefully while smoking a cigarette. [X](#)

Iranians learn Paris path as UWW announces Olympic seeding

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestlers learned their fate at the upcoming Paris Olympics after the United World Wrestling released the top eight seeds for each weight class across the freestyle, Greco-Roman, and women's event in the upcoming sporting extravaganza. The top side of the draw will feature the No. 1, No. 4, No. 5, and No. 8 wrestlers with the other four placed in the bottom half.

Apart from the eight seeded wrestlers, the remaining eight, who round out the 16-person bracket, will be randomly drawn into the bracket the day before each style begins in the Grand Palais Éphémère. Headlining the country's six-man Greco-Roman squad in the Games, world superheavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh is the top seed in the 130kg contests and will begin his campaign against an unseeded wrestler in the round of 16 and a victory will see him take on the winner of the bout between American number eight Adam Coon and his unidentified for a last-four spot.

Legendary Cuban Mijaín López, who will be chasing a fifth successive Olympic gold in Paris, is not among the 130kg top eight and could confront the Iranian two-time world medalist at any stage.

Mahdi Mohsennejad – No. 5 in the 60kg class – will also meet an unknown wrestler in the first round, though he faces a demanding task to reach the final as he will likely lock horns with four-time world medalist and Olympic silver winner Kenichiro Fumita of Japan in the quarterfinals, with two-time defending world champion of Zholaman Sharshenbekov of Kyrgyzstan in the same half of the draw. Saeid Esmaeili (No. 7), who beat Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei to the Iranian 67kg berth, could face world and Olympic gold winner Luis Orta in the quarterfinals, looking to make up for the bizarre loss to the Cuban in last month's Ranking Series event in Budapest.

Amin Kaviani and Alireza Mohmadi will step into the event as unseeded wrestlers in the 77kg and 87kg classes respec-



L-R: Amin Mirzazadeh (Greco-Roman 130kg), Hassan Yazdani (freestyle 86kg), Amirhossein Zare' (freestyle 125kg), and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (Greco-Roman 97kg) will be among the 11 Iranian wrestlers at the Paris Olympics. UWW

tively, and will only know about their path in Paris.

Mohammad-Hadi Saravi will fancy his chances of reaching the 97kg final after being handed a rather favorable draw. An Olympic bronze winner three years ago, number three seed Saravi is yet to know his last-16 opponent but a win will send him into a likely clash against Finnish Arvi Savolainen – a former world U23 champion and European silver winner – in the quarterfinals, while high-profile Armenian Artur Aleksanyan, a three-time Olympic medalist and a winner of four world golds, will not come the Iranian's way before the final showpiece.

In the freestyle competitions, Iran will be represented by five wrestlers with Amirhossein Zare' and Hassan Yazdani

among the favorites to leave the Games with the ultimate prize of their respective classes.

A winner of two world golds and a silver since the Olympic bronze in Tokyo, Zare' is the top seed in the 125kg category and if he wins his last-16 bout he will square off against either No. 8 Chinese Zhiwei Deng or an unknown wrestler in the next round. Zare's familiar Turkish foe Taha Akgül, chasing a third Olympic medal, could land the Iranian in the semifinals in what will be a repeat of the world last-four meetings over the past three years, with Zare' enjoying a 2-1 head-to-head lead.

Second-seed Yazdani, who could become the most-decorated Iranian in the history of the Games with another gold, will begin his quest for the 86kg glory against an un-

seeded wrestler and if he goes through, he will have to battle Greece's Russian-born Dauren Kurugliev – European champion over the past two editions – in the quarterfinals.

San Marino's Myles Amine and Mongolian Bat Byambasuren are in the same part of the bracket with Yazdani, while Aaron Brooks, who came out on top against David Taylor in the US Olympic trials, will head to Paris as an unseeded wrestler. A last-16 win could see Iranian Rahman Amouzad, the 2022 world champion and No. 2 seed in the 65kg class, square off against European champion Islam Dudaev from Albania.

With Azerbaijan's Haji Aliyev – a winner of three world golds and the Olympic silver – and world champion Ismail Musukaev of

Hungary in the same half of the draw with the Iranian, the 'Ruthless' Rahman will have a tough path toward the final.

Representing Iran in the 74kg event, number-eight seed Younes Emami will also have to come up against a daunting challenge toward the final as top-seeded American Kyle Dake – a four-time world gold medalist – will await him in the last-eight round.

Iranian prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira is not among the 97kg top eight, though he could be a threat for any of the two big names of the class in Akhmed Tazhudinov and Kyle Snyder.

The four-day Greco-Roman competitions will kick off on August 5, with the freestyle contests getting underway four days later.

'Best moment of my life', Taremi says after sealing Inter deal

Sports Desk

Iranian international striker Mahdi Taremi described his move to Serie A champion Internazionale as "the best moment in my life."

Having spent the last four seasons at Portuguese giant Porto, the 31-year-old Iranian signed for Nerazzurri as a free agent on Saturday on a contract that could keep him at the club until June 2027.

"I am very happy to be here today. It is like a dream come true for me. I have to say that this is

the best moment of my life," Taremi said in his first interview with Inter TV.

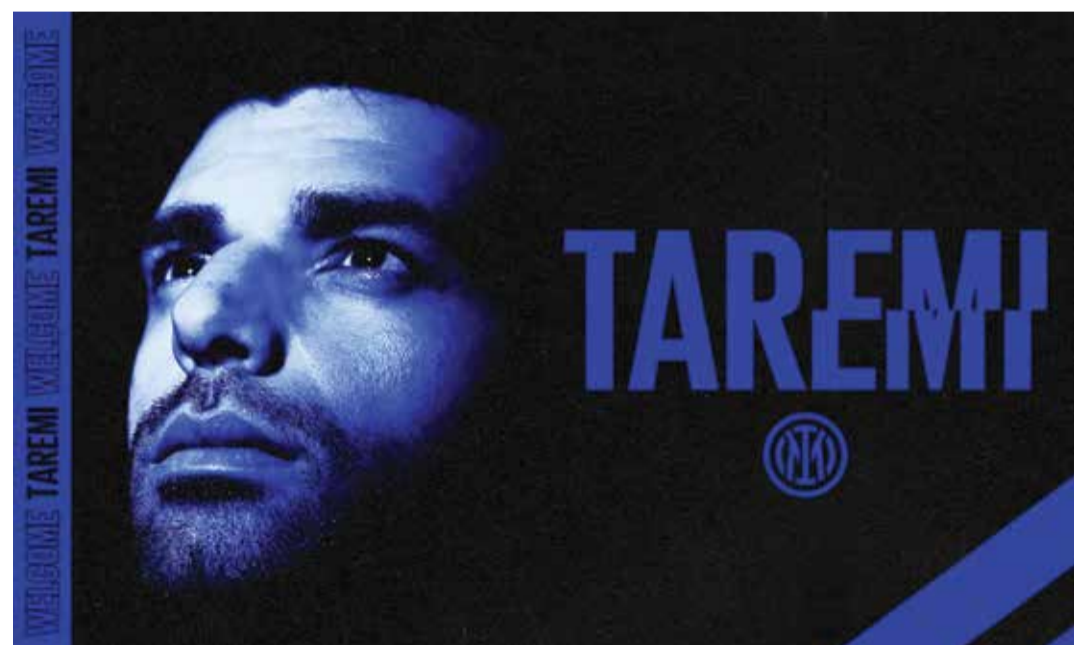
Taremi will be the fourth Iranian to play in the Italian top flight, following Rahman Rezaei and Ali Samereh in the 2000s, as well as international teammate Sardar Azmoun, who played for AS Roma on loan from Bayer Leverkusen last season.

"Serie A is one of the most prestigious leagues in the world. I will try to do my best as I have always done until now. I want to give my best here at Inter," said the former Persepolis and Rio

Ave player.

"I am at Inter, a great club. It's about winning as many matches as possible. We need to focus on this goal and give our best to achieve it. Winning is something that is achieved with the help of everyone: The staff, the players, and the whole club, step by step until the final goal."

Taremi helped Porto lift seven domestic trophies – including a Portuguese league and couple double in the 2021/22 campaign – bagging 91 strikes in 182 appearances to become the Dragons' third all-time top scorer.



inter.it



Iran beats Kyrgyzstan to lift CAFA under-20 trophy

Sports Desk

Iran came out victorious by three goals against host Kyrgyzstan to win the CAFA U20 Championship. Reza Ghandipour was the star of the show for Hossein Abdi's side in Friday's final in Jalal-Abad's Kurmanbek Stadium, bagging a hat-trick – including a spot-kick in the 48th minute – as Iran lifted

the trophy in the second edition of the competition, which features the Central Asian countries.

Iran began its campaign with a 3-0 victory over Turkmenistan in Group B and then played to a 1-1 draw against inaugural champion Uzbekistan to progress to the final showpiece.

Uzbekistan defeated Tajikistan 3-0 earlier on Friday to finish third in

the six-team tournament.

The event was part of Iran's preparation for the AFC U20 Asian Cup qualifiers in September, with Abdi's boys taking on Mongolia, India, and host Laos in Group G.

The 10 group winners and five best second-placed teams will advance to the finals – to be hosted by China next February.

Iranian players celebrate lifting the CAFA U20 Championship trophy in Jalal-Abad, Kyrgyzstan, on July 12, 2024. FFIRI

Pezeshkian says favors balance in foreign relations

Iran's newly elected president said his government will create "balance in relations with all countries" in line with national interests and the prerequisites for peace but alerted the United States that his country "will not respond to pressure."

Masoud Pezeshkian penned "My Message To The New World" in the country's state-owned Tehran Times late Friday, praising the latest presidential election that "demonstrated remarkable stability," and vowing to uphold "promises I made during my campaign."

Pezeshkian, a 69-year-old heart surgeon and veteran lawmaker, bested former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili to clinch July 5's runoff election to replace president Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash in May.

"The Iranian people have entrusted me with a strong mandate to vigorously pursue constructive engagement on the international stage while insisting on our rights, our dignity and our deserved role in the region and the world," he said in his message.

Ties with neighbors

He said his administration would "prioritize strength-

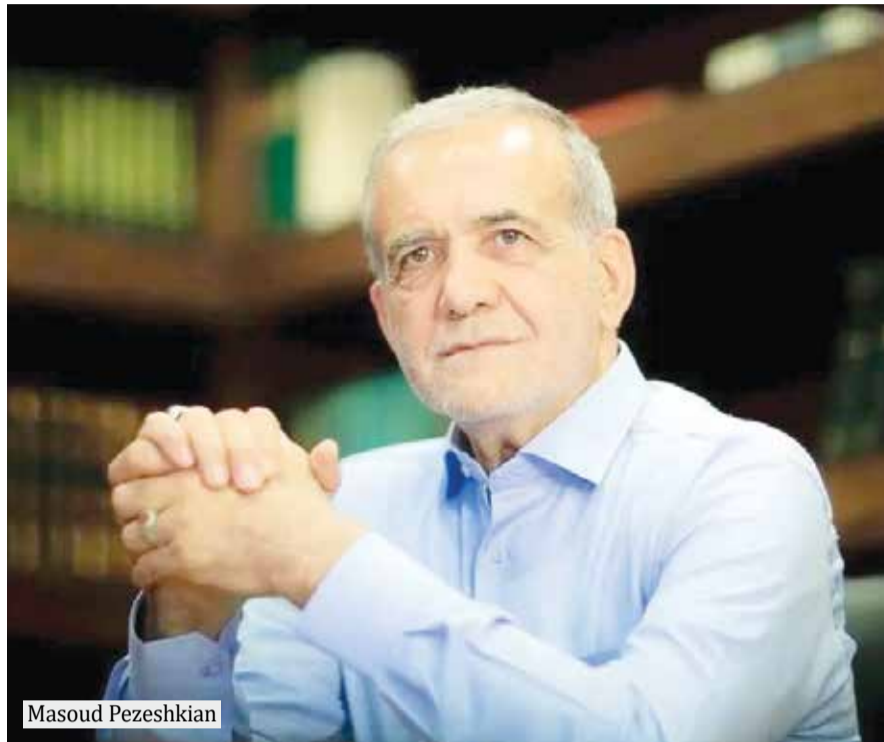
ening relations with our neighbors."

Pezeshkian said he firmly believes that "neighboring and brotherly nations should not waste their valuable resources on erosive competitions, arms races, or the unwarranted containment of each other."

"Instead, we will aim to create an environment where our resources can be devoted to the progress and development of the region for the benefit of all," he stated.

"We look forward to cooperating with Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and regional organizations to deepen our economic ties, bolster trade relations, promote joint-venture investment, tackle common challenges, and move towards establishing a regional framework for dialogue, confidence building and development," Pezeshkian added.

The president-elect wrote that as a first measure, his administration "will urge our neighboring Arab countries to collaborate and utilize all political and diplomatic leverages to prioritize achieving a permanent ceasefire in Gaza with the aim of stopping the massacre and preventing the



Masoud Pezeshkian

broadening of the conflict."

Relations with Russia, China

Pezeshkian, in the letter on Friday, hailed his country's relations with Russia and China which "consistently stood by us during challenging times." He said Moscow was "a valued strategic ally" and his government would expand bilateral cooper-

ation. He also expressed willingness to "support initiatives aimed at" achieving peace between Russia and Ukraine in the ongoing war that entered its third year.

The new chief executive also said he looked forward to furthering cooperation with Beijing and applauded it for brokering a deal to normalize relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia after seven

years of diplomatic tensions.

Constructive dialogue

Pezeshkian said he looks forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with European countries "based on principles of mutual respect" despite a relationship that has known "its ups and downs."

In May 2018, the US unilaterally withdrew from the

Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a nuclear agreement that also included Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany and re-imposed sanctions on Iran. Pezeshkian accused the European countries of reneging on their JCPOA-related commitments following the US withdrawal to ensure "effective banking transactions, effective protection of companies from US sanctions, and the promotion of investments in Iran." However, he added there were still many opportunities for collaboration between Iran and Europe.

"Despite these missteps, I look forward to engaging in constructive dialogue with European countries to set our relations on the right path, based on principles of mutual respect and equal footing."

European Union spokeswoman Nabila Massrali had earlier congratulated Pezeshkian on his election, saying the 27-member bloc was "ready to engage with the new government in line with EU policy of critical engagement."

US must face 'reality'

Pezeshkian then addressed the US, underscoring the Islamic Republic's strong

resolve and its refusal to "respond to pressure."

"The United States also needs to recognize the reality and understand, once and for all, that Iran does not - and will not - respond to pressure," said Pezeshkian, who is to be sworn in on July 30.

He added that Iran "entered the JCPOA in 2015 in good faith and fully met our obligations." Pezeshkian said the US backing out has inflicted "hundreds of billions of dollars in damages to our economy," and caused "untold suffering, death and destruction on the Iranian people - particularly during the Covid pandemic" due to sanctions. Pezeshkian said Western countries "not only missed a historic opportunity to reduce and manage tensions in the region and the world, but also seriously undermined the Non-Proliferation Treaty." He emphasized that "Iran's defense doctrine does not include nuclear weapons."

Pezeshkian also accused the US administration in his open letter of escalating "hostilities" by assassinating Iran's Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was killed in a US drone strike in neighboring Iraq in 2020.

Intelligence Ministry reports 79 confrontations with terrorists in 45 days



MIZAN

Iran's Intelligence Ministry said in a statement that its forces identified various terrorist ring-leaders and engaged in 79 direct confrontations with them in a period from May 1 to July 5.

Dozens of terrorists, their supporters and suppliers of weapons and ammunition were arrested during 45 days of operations, it added.

The ministry noted that 560 types of weapons, 41,895 war cartridges, 9 bombs and significant amounts of explosives were also confiscated. It said Daesh terrorists hatched plots to infiltrate into the country and carry out terror acts during the funeral processions held for late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and their associates who were killed in a trag-

ic helicopter crash in May.

The terrorists also sought to carry out acts of sabotage during two rounds of Iran's presidential election, it added.

However, the ministry detained the terrorists who had entered the country to conduct terror attacks mainly in the provinces of Tehran, Alborz, Qazvin, Khorasan Razavi, Fars, Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormuzgan and Bushehr. According to the statement, a number of terrorists were killed in Iran's eastern border areas before entering the country. It also pointed to miscalculation of the anti-Iran Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group, which sought to sow insecurity in Iran, and said six operational cells linked to the MKO

were identified and all the terrorists were arrested. Workshops for the production of handmade launchers were also seized. The statement added that the security forces have detained one of the main culprits behind two terrorist blasts in the southeastern city of Kerman earlier this year, identifying him as Abdullah Quetta.

At least 103 people were killed and 211 more injured in twin terrorist explosions near the burial site of Iran's anti-terror figure Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Kerman on January 3.

It added that the intelligence obtained from Quetta has played a leading role in uncovering many Takfiri conspiracies, identifying other major elements involved in the plot and discovering their hideouts in regional countries.

Meanwhile, Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, said on Saturday that Iran has listed the names of 120 terrorists and has asked the neighboring Iraq to extradite them to the country.

Gaza's health ministry said dozens were killed Saturday in an Israeli strike on a displacement camp in an area where Israel claimed it targeted Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif. It is the latest mass-casualty incident in the Al-Mawasi area, where many Palestinians had fled, and came as international mediators pushed on with efforts to halt the nine-month war between Israel and Hamas, according to AFP.

Armed forces ready to work with new gov't: Top general

National Desk

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said on Saturday that the country's military forces are ready to fully cooperate with the new government in all fields. Mohammad Baqeri made

the remarks after a meeting with Iran's president-elect Masoud Pezeshkian who won the July 5 runoff election to replace the late president Ebrahim Raisi who died in a helicopter crash on May 19.

Iran's top general said that the military forces along-



side their main obligations, which are defending and establishing security in the country, will also stand by the new government with all their might, just like the previous governments.

Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Gharaei Ashtiani, Army Chief

Commander Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Hossein Salami and Police chief Brigadier General Ahmadreza Radan also attended the Saturday meeting with Pezeshkian.

Dozens killed in Israel attack on displacement camp in Gaza

Sanders: US complicit in Israeli crimes

The Israeli military claimed it had targeted Deif and Rafa Salama, a brigade commander, calling them two of the masterminds of the October 7 operation which sparked the Gaza war. A Hamas statement called the claim that Deif had been targeted "false allegations" intended "to cover up the magnitude of the horrific massacre".

The US Senator Bernie Sanders said the US is complicit in the Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip.

"Yet, in the midst of this horror and violations of international law, the United States continues to send billions of dollars and thousands of bombs and other weapons to support this

war. We, as Americans, are complicit."



HATEM KHALED/REUTERS

"We must end our support for Netanyahu's war. Not another nickel to make this horrific situation even worse. I intend to do everything I can to block further arms transfers

to Israel, including through joint resolutions of disapproval of any arms sales. The United States must not help a right-wing extremist and war criminal continue this atrocity," Sanders said in a statement.

Iranian artists shine at French Millon auction

Arts & Culture Desk

The Millon and Associés Auction in Paris, titled 'Middle Eastern Auction, 20th Century Art/Istanbul - Montparnasse', featured works by Iranian artists. At the event, an untitled work by Sadeq Tabrizi was sold for 42,000 euros, IRNA wrote. The renowned Bataille-Bataille Street in Paris witnessed the brilliance of Iranian artists at one of its famous auctions. The Millon and Associés Paris auction house held a modern and contemporary art auction on July 11, featuring works from Iran, Turkey, and the Arab world. The acrylic painting on canvas, part of the artist's collection, dating back to

2010, had an initial estimate of 12,000 to 18,000 euros and emerged as the highest bid among Iranian works at the auction. Reza Derakhshani's 'Purple Night Hunt,' estimated at 18,000 to 22,000 euros, was sold for 26,000 euros. An image from the collection 'A Window Through The Life' by late Iranian artist Abbas Kiarostami was also sold for 19,000 euros. A work by Sirak Melkonian sold for 15,000 euros, and Iran Darroudi's painting fetched 11,000 euros. Behnam Mahjoubi's collection of three lifeless nature paintings was sold for 10,000 euros, while a painting by Ardeshir Mohassess was sold for 6,000 euros.

Moreover, two works by Nasser Ovissi were sold for 8,000 and 9,000 euros. Works by Jafar Rouhbakhsh (8 and 15 thousand euros), Khosrow Hassanzadeh (9,500 euros), Samira Alikhanzadeh (4,500 euros), Ali Asghar Petghar (2,500 euros), Manoucher Yektai (2,500 euros), Farshid Maleki (2,800 euros), Rokni Haerizadeh (1,200 euros), Sadeq Tirafkan (1,400 euros), Shadi Ghadirian (1,400 euros), and Mahmoud Bakhshi (900 euros) were also sold. The auction, named "Middle Eastern Auction, 20th Century Art/Istanbul - Montparnasse," included approximately half of its works (59 pieces) from the late Turkish artist Orhon Mubin's collection. Mehrdad Fallah, a painter and representative of

the late Sadeq Tabrizi's family, commented on the auction and Tabrizi's record-breaking work: "The auction house is one of Europe's most important auction institutions and one of France's most important auctions. They presented a unique work by Sadeq Tabrizi in their auction. This work is part of this artist's collection and is important in terms of composition and color. At the same time, the dimensions of this work are large, which sets it apart." Regarding Iranian artists' performance in foreign auctions and the demand from buyers, Fallah added: "We must consider that this auction was held in a European country and had

good sales of works by Iranian artists. The high sales of works by artists such as Sadeq Tabrizi, Nasser Ovissi, and Jafar Rouhbakhsh show that

Iranian modernists still have demand. In this unfavorable economic situation worldwide,

the high sales of works by Iranian artists can be a promising sign for the future of art in our country."



Iranian animation 'Phoenix' takes flight at Italian festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian director Mona Shams' animated short film 'Phoenix' is set to compete in the 27th Religion Today Film Festival in Italy, from September 19 to 26. The film, produced by the Documentary & Experimental Film Center, explores the themes of migration, homeland, and longing through the voices of Iranian immigrants worldwide. Founded in 1997 as Italy's first spiritual cinema and interreligious dialogue festival, Religion Today is celebrating its 27th anniversary this year. The festival, which runs from September 19 to 26, includes workshops pro-

moting cultural exchange alongside its Competition Section. Last year, the festival's director, Andrea Morgan, served as a juror for the international section of Iran's Fajr Film Festival. 'Phoenix' is being distributed internationally by the center. 'Phoenix' adds a unique perspective to the festival's lineup, showcasing the power of animation to convey profound emotions and experiences. The film's inclusion in the festival highlights the universal themes of migration and the enduring connection to one's homeland, transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Tehran conference results to facilitate dust storms combat

The UN representative in Tehran stated that sand and dust storms are a global challenge that affects the environment, health, and economy worldwide. In a message on the X social network, Stephan

Prizner emphasized the significance of sand and dust storms as a global challenge and commended Iran's initiative in hosting a crucial conference on combating dust storms in 2023, ISNA wrote.

He said, "Last year, Iran hosted an important conference to address this issue where experts proposed solutions that underscored the necessity of global cooperation to combat dust storms."

He added that the results of this conference will facilitate support for actions related to combating sand and dust storms. It is worth mentioning that, at the suggestion of the Islamic Repub-

lic of Iran, the World Calendar designated July 12 of each year as International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms, which was approved at the United Nations General Assembly.

Blood donation rates increase by 6% in Q1

Social Desk

The Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization spokesperson announced that the number of blood donations in the spring

of Iranian year (March 20 to June 20) reached 628,418 units, showing an increase of nearly 6% compared to the same period last year. According to the organization, the blood donation

rate is now over 55% in the country, with Semnan and Yazd provinces showing the highest continuous donation rates at nearly 66% and Qom at over 64%, ILNA wrote.



Bashir Haji-Beigi emphasized the importance of rejuvenating the blood donor population due to the aging population and subsequent retirement of past donors. The organization aims to attract more young donors through ongoing programs and agreements. Currently, over 29% of donors in the country have a history of donating blood. In spring of this year, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province showed the highest growth in donation rates at over 43%, followed by Sistan and Baluch-

estan with over 19% and Kermanshah with nearly 19% growth. The spokesperson highlighted the importance of increasing female participation in blood donation and stated that with the organization's planning, there has been a slight increase in female donations compared to the same period last year. Currently, over 4% of donors are women. The leading provinces in female blood donation are North Khorasan with over 9%, Lorestan, South Khorasan, and Sistan and Baluchestan with over 7%, the health official added.