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### Political message carried by a military visit to Tehran

By Reza Sadrolhosseini  
West Asia affairs analyst

**OPINION EXCLUSIVE**

The visit of the chief of the general staff of the Saudi armed forces to Tehran and his meeting with his Iranian counterpart marks another major step forward in the development of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, two key players in the West Asia region. The two nations' relationship has gone through ups and downs over the years, with two key takeaways: rivalry for regional influence and the understanding that this rivalry must come with healthy and diplomatic relations. The rapprochement and expansion of ties between Tehran and Riyadh, or their estrangement and lack of cooperation, has always had a ripple effect on the entire West Asia region and even ultra-regional countries. It is no surprise, therefore, that the two countries' relationship has not been immune to sabotage attempts by some regional and extra-regional players. Following the severing of diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, both countries came to the understanding that prolonging the diplomatic freeze would not only harm their own interests but also have negative repercussions on regional security. Consequently, in 2022, Tehran and Riyadh made a concerted effort to normalize relations, which has since led to numerous high-level visits and talks on bilateral and regional issues, including developments related to the Gaza conflict. **Page 7 >**



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## Aquaculture output up 32% in seven months: **IFO**



### Economy Desk

The Head of Iran's Fisheries Organization (IFO) said on Monday that in the first seven months of the current Iranian year, more than 500,000 tons of aquatics were produced, which is indicative of 32% growth compared to the previous year. Hossein Hosseini also stated that comparison of export statistics in the first six months of the current year with the same period last year shows a 44% increase in weight and a 28% increase in value, Tasnim News Agency reported. Approximately 142,500 tons of fisheries, worth \$219.5 million, were exported in the six months to September 21, while during the same period last year, 99,000 tons of aquatics valued at \$170 million were exported. In the last Iranian year which ended on March 19, the targeted production for aquaculture was set at 1.38 million tons as the country reported fisheries production of 1.418 million tons. Noting that 778,000 tons of the fishing in the country during last Iranian year was related to the sea, Hosseini said 640,000 tons of aquaculture production were carried out on the coasts and inland pools, so in total, 1.418 million tons of fish were produced last year. The IFO head went on to say that 144,000 people work as fishermen, and 117,000 people are involved in aquaculture, of which 18,000 people are directly engaged in breeding fish in the sea and coastal areas for fishing and shrimp farming. To achieve the goals set in the top-level documents, the Food Security Document, which was developed for 2032, foresees the production of 2.6 million tons of fisheries in the aquaculture sector, while under the Seventh Five-Year Development Plan (2024-28), the production of 1.8 million tons of fish has been targeted, Hosseini said. He also stated that according to the recommendations of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the population of the world is likely to reach 9.8 billion by 2050, of which seven billion people will need to source their protein from fisheries.

# Iran, Russia integrate payment systems to boost financial ties

### Economy Desk

The Russian banking network known as "Mir" was connected to the Iranian banking network (Shetab) in a ceremony attended by Governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Mohammadreza Farzin so that the bank cards of Iranians can be used in Russian banks from now on. Kazem Jalali, Iran's Ambassador to Russia, was also present at the event on Monday, IRNA reported. By connecting Russia's Mir network to Iran's Shetab, from now on, every Iranian can withdraw their funds from Iranian cards in the form of rubles, the Russian currency, from automated teller machines (ATMs) in Russia. Speaking at the ceremony, Farzin called the project to connect the Iranian Shabab and Russian Mir payment card networks a "significant step" toward creating a comprehensive economic cooperation in the region. "This project sets a successful example of using and expanding domestic infrastructure for inter-

national transactions, and demonstrates that by relying on domestic capabilities and utilizing advanced local infrastructure, international transactions can be developed in the form of de-dollarization and sanction-robustness," stated the CBI governor. The CBI further said that the second phase of the link-up process will allow Russian nationals to use Iranian ATMs and the third phase will make Iranian Shetab cards acceptable at point-of-sale (POS) terminals installed in Russian stores. According to the banking agreements of the two countries, in the third stage, Iran's Shetab cards can be used in Russian store acceptors so that Iranians traveling to Russia can buy from stores in Russia with Iranian bank cards. On July 4, Farzin held negotiations with Governor of the Bank of Russia Elvira Nabiullina in St. Petersburg. On July 6, he said that at the meeting the parties noted the completion of work on integrating the Russian payment



system Mir and the Iranian payment system Shetab and also signed an agreement on providing liquidity to national currencies for commercial transactions. Iran and Russia, both subject to illegal Western sanctions, have over the

past years deepened their relations in various fields, including economy and trade. They are also in talks to launch a payment messaging service that could rival SWIFT, a dollar-based international system that has banned the two coun-

tries because of US pressure. Iran has also proposed to connect the national payment systems of the BRICS countries, following the integration of Russia's Mir and Iran's Shetab systems. Russia's Mir payment card is now accepted in 12

countries. In addition to Russia, it works without restrictions in Abkhazia, Belarus, Cuba, and South Ossetia. Egypt, Mauritius, and Myanmar are planning to introduce Mir into operation. Six other countries are willing to engage in a dialog on its use.

## Rag Sefid field to supply 2.26 mcm of gas per day in two months: **CEO**

### Economy Desk

The Managing Director of Agajari Oil and Gas Production Company announced on Monday that with the aim of meeting the country's winter fuel needs, the initial phases of the dehydration project will be completed in the next two months, and 80 million cubic feet per day (MMcf/d) of gas will be added to the Persian Gulf Gas Refinery from the Rag Sefid facilities. Masoud Dehbanpour, visiting the Rag Sefid 1 flare gas collection project, referred to the significant progress made on the project, stating, "In accordance with the country's needs and based on the priority of the National Iranian Oil Company's new approaches to maximize production in the oil-rich regions, the productive role of collecting flare gases and pro-



viding part of the country's winter fuel needs will result in production of 80 MMcf/d of gas in the next two months," IRNA reported. He emphasized the environmental benefits of the project, such as preventing gas flaring and pollution, and preventing the waste of natural resources

and national interests. "This project will contribute to the solution of the gas shortage problem and will create significant added value for country," he added. The Rag Sefid 1 production unit has six gathering clusters with a production capacity of 80 MMcf/d.

## Iran to manufacture 200 freight wagons for CIS members



The head of the Railways of the Islamic Republic of Iran announced that the country and the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have reached an initial agreement on the construction of 200 rail freight cars. Talks on the initial agreement were held in Tashkent during the CIS railway meeting a few days ago, Jabbarali Zakeri said on Monday, IRNA reported. The talks focused on producing 200 freight wagons by Iran and allocating them

to one of the CIS members, Zakeri noted. The official further described the initial agreement signed by the CIS countries as an achievement gained from the Tashkent visit. Zakeri attended the 81st meeting of the CIS Council for Railway Transport in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, on November 5-6. At the meeting, Iran submitted its application to join the railway network of the CIS so that its railroad cars can operate in the CIS rail network.

## Iran exports register \$4b surge amid trade deficit: **IRICA**

### Economy Desk

According to recent figures by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration, the country's foreign trade (excluding crude oil and condensates) during the first seven months of the current Iranian year (March 20-October 21), reached \$72 billion. IRICA statistics indicate that during the seven months to October 21, the country's non-oil exports reached 88.701

million tons with a value of \$32.52 billion, which shows an increase of 11.48% in weight terms and 14.72% in value compared to the same period last year, ISNA reported. In addition, the imports in the seven-month period hit 21.719 million tons worth \$39.5 billion, showing an increase of 2.7% in weight terms and 8.8% in value. China was the top destination for Iranian exports, receiving \$8.6 bil-

lion worth of exports, or 26.4% of the total export value. This was followed by Iraq, with \$7.2 billion, or 22.4% of the total and the United Arab Emirates with \$4.2 billion, or 12.9%; Turkey with \$3.3 billion, or 10.2%; and Afghanistan with \$1.3 billion, or 4% of the total export value, according to IRICA figures. The UAE held the top position among the countries that exported to Iran during the first seven

months of the current Iranian year, with a value of \$12 billion in imports and a share of about 30.3% of the total import value. China with \$10.2 billion, or 25.8% of the total import value; Turkey with \$6.5 billion, or 16.6%; Germany with \$1.4 billion, or 3.6%; and Russia with \$958 million, or 2.4% of the total import value were other top exporters to Iran. Also, Iran's transit volumes during the seven months



amounted to 13.239 million tons, a 41.7% increase

compared to the same period last year.

# Grandeur and history of Bandar Anzali Palace Museum

Iranica Desk

The Bandar Anzali Palace Museum, nestled in the scenic Bandar Anzali of Gilan Province, exemplifies the grandeur of a historic palace while also serving as a treasure trove of nearly 2,500 historical artifacts. Among these remarkable items are military equipment, distinctive plasterworks, portraits of notable figures, and exquisite examples of metal craftsmanship. Mahmoud Tabasi Sabzevar, the museum's director, shared with ISNA that since the beginning of the current Iranian year, which commenced on March 21, the palace museum has welcomed approximately 15,000 visitors. This is a significant increase from the 11,000 visitors during the same timeframe last year, underscoring the growing interest in this cultural landmark.

Highlighted among the museum's attractions is a taxidermied mugger crocodile, a unique gift from India to Iran during the reign of Nasereddin Shah Qajar. Other prominent exhibits include an array of weapons, such as the sword and battle helmet of Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar, as well as images and descriptions of Iran's earliest naval vessels. Notably, the first warship of Iran, the Persepolis, is proudly displayed alongside its captain's chair and a detailed account of the ship's history.

Tabasi noted that the military artifacts showcased within the museum not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of the area surrounding the palace but also add a distinctive charm to its overall presentation. Among the notable military relics are tanks and armored personnel carriers captured during the Iran-Iraq War, various sea and river mines, a 10-ton anchor, road cannons of Swiss and British design, and other military equipment housed within the museum's walls.

In addition to military exhibits, the museum boasts a collection of exquisite engravings from the Safavid era, as well as an Achaemenid-style garment. Art enthusiasts will appreciate the dedicated section for paintings, featuring works by renowned artists such as Kamal-ol-Molk and Sohrab Sepehri, alongside a painting by Nasereddin Shah and a piece titled "Mother's Love," which was an intriguing gift from Hitler to Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Tabasi underscored the museum's architectural beauty, highlighting the intricate plasterwork that adorns the palace. He explained that the façade features elaborate designs of inverted tulips, pomegranate flowers reminiscent of Marlik culture, motifs of winged lions inspired by Achaemenid art, and columns reflecting



ancient Greek architectural influences — all harmoniously integrated into the palace's design. Among the notable gypsum decorations are lotus flowers whose inner petals symbolize the various ethnic groups residing in Iran. He pointed out the exquisite wood carvings, including a sun motif on the staircase window and a half-sun above the entrance door, emphasizing the craftsmanship of this delicate arrangement of sunlight, completed nearly a century ago.

Regarding the two-story building's fascinating staircase, Tabasi remarked, "The wooden entrance stairs and other wooden elements represent artistic masterpieces crafted by a master artist named Minoyi. These stairs extend in a graceful circular shape without columns from the lowest to the highest point of the structure. Additionally, all stair designs ensure that ascending them does not exert undue pressure on the legs and prevents fatigue."

Tabasi also mentioned the significant historical context surrounding the museum, particularly the transfer of the grave of martyr Yadollah Bayandor to the palace museum grounds. Bayandor, a distinguished army commander

who valiantly defended his homeland in 1941, employed a wartime strategy that resulted in sinking one of the old units at the entrance to the Bandar Anzali Channel. This tactical move effectively delayed the Russian attack by nearly 48 hours, compelling them to withdraw their forces and redirect their assault towards Bandar Turkman, thus enabling Iranian forces in Gilan Province and Anzali to prepare fully for the confrontation.

Furthermore, Tabasi noted that the architectural design of the museum was conceived by an architect from Yazd named Hamedani. The building originally incorporated wind catchers reminiscent of those found in Yazd to enhance ventilation. However, due to the unsuitable flat-roof design for Anzali's climate, the roof was modified to a sloped design around 1934-1935, which also led to the relocation of the wind catchers beneath the newly sloped roof.

The director of the Anzali Palace Museum revealed that the building encompasses a foundation area of 1,160 square meters and initially featured 11 rooms, which could accommodate four families simultaneously.



## Celebrating history, bicycles, kebabs in Bonab



Iranica Desk

In East Azarbaijan Province, the city of Bonab is renowned not only for its delectable kebabs and vibrant bicycle culture but also for its rich historical sites and significant steel industry. A leisurely stroll through the city's charming alleyways reveals a captivating blend of modern and traditional life, with newly constructed buildings showcasing Roman architectural styles standing proudly alongside older houses made of brown bricks, evoking a sense of nostalgia for many of its residents.

As one navigates the streets of Bonab, it becomes immediately apparent that the number of bicycles and cyclists rivals, if not surpasses, that of cars. Cycling in this city transcends age; from energetic 12-year-olds to spirited 80-year-olds, nearly everyone owns at least one bicycle and uses it as their primary means of transportation, IRNA wrote.

Bonab kebab, once considered a royal dish during the Qajar era, has evolved into a beloved traditional food across Iran, celebrated as one of the finest kebab brands in the country. This culinary heritage is honored

annually at a vibrant kebab festival held in the city, attracting visitors from near and far.

Throughout Bonab, various municipal projects are underway, with workers actively engaged in constructing new facilities, paving roads, and creating parks to enhance the urban landscape. Farid Panahi, the mayor of Bonab, spoke about the municipality's initiatives aimed at improving welfare and municipal facilities. He highlighted key projects including the restructuring and architectural redesign of ten city squares, the installation of new urban elements, and the landscaping of historical buildings as fundamental components of the municipality's efforts.

Panahi also noted that Bonab features three historical-cultural axes, mentioning ongoing projects such as a tourism complex, health paths, street murals, pedestrian walkways, and park developments. He emphasized that Bonab has transformed into a construction hub, currently witnessing civil activities in 24 different locations throughout the city. Among these initiatives is a tourism complex, which spans

an impressive 86 hectares and has been entrusted to the Bonab municipality by the city's Cultural Heritage Department. The first phase, covering six hectares, is set to include parks and afforestation, along with future plans for recreational activities such as rock climbing and ziplining.

One of the spiritual and unique attractions of Bonab is the old seminary known as Hazrat Vali Asr (AS), which serves as an educational center for Friday prayer Imams from surrounding cities. The Bonab Seminary operates independently from the Tabriz seminary and is recognized as the largest seminary in the country after that of Qom, playing a vital role in the region's religious education.

Additionally, the Kabud Mosque of Bonab stands as a significant architectural landmark dating back to the Safavid period, featuring 11 wooden columns adorned with ornate capitals. Notably, it houses an important inscription related to the footprint of Imam Ali (عليه السلام), elegantly placed on the marble facade of the mosque, further enhancing its historical and cultural significance.



# Democrats ignored Gaza, brought down own party



US Vice President Kamala Harris speaks during a reception marking the 75th anniversary of the illegitimate establishment of Israel, hosted by the Israeli Embassy at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., on June 6, 2023.

SAUL LOEB/AFP



By Peter Beinart  
Editor-at-large of Jewish Currents

## OPINION

*During the presidential campaign, journalists trying to assess the electoral impact of Israel's war in Gaza often focused on Arab and Muslim voters, particularly in Michigan. That's understandable. In the heavily Arab American city of Dearborn, Mich., which supported Joe Biden in 2020, results show that Donald Trump beat Kamala Harris by about six percentage points. But viewing Gaza's political repercussions merely through the lens of identity misses something fundamental. Over the past year, Israel's slaughter and starvation of Palestinians — funded by US taxpayers and live-streamed on social media — has triggered one of the greatest surges in progressive activism in a generation. Many Americans roused to action by their government's complicity in Gaza's destruction have no personal connection to Palestine or Israel. Like many Americans who protested South African apartheid or the Vietnam War, their motive is not ethnic or religious. It is moral.*



Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris (L) and former Republican representative Liz Cheney arrive for a campaign event at Ripon College in Ripon, Wisconsin, on October 3, 2024.

KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/AFP

The outrage has been particularly intense among Black Americans and the young. This spring, encampments expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people rose on more than 100 college campuses. In February, the Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of the nation's most prominent Black congregations, called the war in Gaza a "mass genocide" and demanded that the Biden-Harris administration stop funding it. In June, the NAACP urged an end to weapons shipments as well. A June CBS News poll found that while most voters over the age of 65 supported arms sales to Israel, voters under the age of 30 opposed them by a ratio of more than three to one. And while only 56 percent of white voters favored cutting off weapons, among Black voters the figure was 75 percent. Those pre-election polling numbers may explain some of what we saw last Tuesday. Kamala Harris is far more youthful than Joe Biden. Yet, early exit polls — from CNN, The Washington Post, Fox News, and The Associated Press — suggest she suffered a sharp decline among voters under the age of 29 compared with Mr. Biden's result in 2020. Ms.

Harris is Black, yet according to CNN and The Washington Post, she did slightly worse than Mr. Biden among Black voters. One exit poll, from Fox News and The Associated Press, suggests she did significantly worse. Surely, many young and Black voters were dissatisfied with the economy. Some may have been attracted to Mr. Trump's message on immigration. Others may have been reluctant to vote for a woman. But these broader dynamics do not fully explain Ms. Harris's underperformance because she appears to have lost far less ground among voters who are older and white. Her share of white voters equaled Mr. Biden's. Among voters over age 65, she actually gained ground. Which brings us back to Ms. Harris's support for Israel's war in Gaza. Despite overwhelming evidence that the Democratic Party's most devoted constituents wanted to end sales of weapons to Israel, the Biden administration kept sending them, even after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel expanded the war into Lebanon. And not only did Ms. Harris not break with Mr. Biden's policy, she went out of her way to make voters who care about Palestinian rights feel unwel-

come. When antiwar activists interrupted a speech of hers in August, Ms. Harris snapped, "If you want Donald Trump to win, then say that." At the Democratic National Convention, her campaign rebuffed a plea from activists to let a Palestinian American speak from the main stage. And just days before the election, the Harris surrogate Bill Clinton told a Michigan crowd that Hamas had "force[d]" Israel to kill Palestinian civilians by using them as human shields. All this provided Mr. Trump an opportunity. According to The Times, his campaign found that undecided voters in swing states were about six times as likely as other swing-state voters to be motivated by the war in Gaza. Mr. Trump wooed them. He pledged to help "the Middle East return to real peace" and lambasted former Representative Liz Cheney, a Republican with whom Ms. Harris had chosen to campaign, as a "radical war hawk". Like Richard Nixon, who in 1968 appealed to antiwar voters by promising "an honorable end to the war in Vietnam," Mr. Trump portrayed himself — however insincerely — as the candidate of peace. For months now, commentators close to the Palestinian rights movement have feared exactly



this scenario. In August, the Palestinian American analyst Yousef Munayyer warned that "unless Harris takes some steps to break from Biden's Israel policy, the same issue that helped tank an already vulnerable Joe Biden with his base could put major obstacles in her path to victory." But people who are passionate about Palestinian rights rarely occupy influential positions in Democratic campaigns. For decades, the party's politicians and operatives have treated the struggle for Palestinian freedom as a taboo. They've grown so ac-

customed to sequestering it from their stated commitment to human rights that, even amid what prominent scholars call a genocide, Ms. Harris thought it wiser to campaign with Ms. Cheney than, say, Representative Rashida Tlaib. Despite overwhelming evidence, her campaign could not see that among progressive voters, the Palestine exception no longer applies. There is only one path forward. Although it will require a fierce intraparty brawl, Democrats — who claim to respect human equality and international law

— must begin to align their policies on Israel and Palestine with these broader principles. In this new era, in which supporting Palestinian freedom has become central to what it means to be progressive, the Palestine exception is not just immoral. It's politically disastrous. For a long time, Palestinians in Gaza and beyond have been paying for that exception with their lives. Now, Americans are paying too. It may cost us our freedom.

*The article first appeared on The New York Times.*

## 'Learn a lesson'

# How Gaza genocide shaped 2024 US elections



By Romana Rubco  
Columnist

## OPINION

*The voting patterns of Arabs and Muslims and their allies suggest that Gaza played a major role in decisive votes in some American states.*

*George Helmy, a Democratic senator and a member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Al-Jazeera on Wednesday that the war in Gaza contributed to Kamala Harris's loss of the state of Michigan.*

*Earlier, official results from the state, home to hundreds of thousands of Arab-Americans, indicated that approximately 110,000 votes went to candidates other than Donald Trump and Kamala Harris.*

### Case of Michigan

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris lost Michigan, a crucial swing state, where votes from Arab and Muslim communities proved influential.

Republican candidate Donald Trump claimed Michigan's 15 electoral votes. Many American Muslims in the state expressed frustration with the Biden-Harris administration's unwavering

support for Israel amid the ongoing crisis in Gaza. According to The Associated Press, with 99% of precincts reporting, Trump gained 49.8 % of votes in the key state, while

Harris received 48.3%. Green Party candidate, Dr. Jill Stein, gained 0.8%, absorbing some of the dissatisfaction among Arab communities. For example, in the city of Dear-

born, which is considered the 'capital' of the Arab American community, Jill Stein garnered an impressive 18.37%. In addition to her support for Israel, Harris's campaign appeared

to suffer from other choices or mistakes. Last August, for instance, she refused to have a Muslim or Arab speaker at the Democratic National Convention.

Two weeks ago, former US president Bill Clinton was sent by the Democratic Party to rally support for Harris. However, Clinton faced wide criticism for remarks justifying Palestinian civilian casualties, claiming that Hamas “forced” Israel into such actions. “I understand why young Palestinians and Arab Americans in Michigan think too many people have died. I get that,” Clinton said addressing Arab-American voters. “But if you lived in one of those kibbutzim in Israel right next to Gaza, where the people there were the most pro-friendship with Palestine, most pro-two-state solution of any of the Israeli communities — were the ones right next to Gaza. And Hamas butchered them,” he continued. In an attempt to engage with “leaders of the Arab-American community,” Harris herself headed to Michigan, and vowed to do “everything in her power to end the war”.

Yet, voters appeared skeptical of her commitment. While acknowledging the “suffering in Gaza,” she reiterated, once again, that she must “ensure Israel is secure”.

**Demands rejected**

US voters opposing Israel’s genocide in Gaza openly declared that they would not support the Democratic party and the outgoing administration, which provided Israel a record \$17.9 billion in military aid during the first year of the war, according to a report from Brown University’s Costs of War Project.



Protesters wave Palestinian flags and anti-genocide banners while Kamala Harris speaks on the Ellipse in Washington, D.C., on October 29, 2024.  
● AMID FARAH/AFIP

Speaking to Al Jazeera on Wednesday, Arab American activist Adam Abusalah stated that Harris’s campaign disregarded warnings from the community. “We’ve been warning the Democrats for over a year now, and the Democrats continue to downplay what’s going on,” he was quoted as saying. Just a few days before election day, a report published in The Intercept noted: “After months of protests on the streets and organizing within the Democratic party, Kamala Harris’s campaign has not shown signs it will stray from the Biden administration’s steadfast support for Israel amid its genocidal

war in Gaza and invasion into Lebanon.” The Intercept interviewed “voters who are horrified by the ongoing US support for Israel’s war” and found out that “each voter(...) had demanded of Biden, and now Harris, an immediate, permanent cease-fire, and an end to the US policy of unconditional military aid to Israel.” “The rejection of such demands have left voters uneasy about their choices,” the report stated.

**Exception: Rashida Tlaib**

Democratic Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib won re-election in Michigan’s 12th congressional district, securing her fourth term

as the only Palestinian-American woman in the US House of Representatives. The Associated Press declared her victory early, with only 18 percent of precincts reporting. Tlaib garnered a remarkable 77 percent of the vote, while her Republican challenger, James Hooper, only received 19 percent. Notably, Tlaib was the only member of the so-called ‘Squad’ not to endorse the Democrat candidate. Tlaib has been outspoken in her criticism of the Democratic Party’s stance on the ongoing genocide, stating that it was “hard not to feel invisible” when the party

chose not to include a Palestinian-American speaker at its convention. “Our trauma and pain feel unseen and ignored by both parties,” she said in an interview with former MSNBC host Mehdi Hasan at the time. “One party uses our identity as a slur, and the other refuses to hear from us. Where is the shared humanity? Ignoring us won’t stop the genocide.”

**‘Learn a lesson’**

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, issued a statement on Wednesday calling

for Democratic leaders to “learn lessons from Vice President Harris’s loss of support among Muslims and other voters opposed to the Gaza genocide.” “It is important for Democratic and other elected officials to recognize that Vice President Harris’ steep drop in support in key states compared to President Biden’s 2020 victory resulted, in part, from the deep frustration and disillusionment that many young, Muslim, Arab, Black, and other voters feel with the Biden-Harris administration due to its steadfast financial and military support for Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza,” the statement said. “Rather than listening to the clear majority of American who support both a cease-fire and a suspension of weapons to Israel, Vice President Harris only struck a slightly more sympathetic tone toward Palestinians while sticking with the substance of President Biden’s disastrous stance.” “This led to an unprecedented shift of support from Muslim, Arab, and other communities who traditionally vote for Democratic presidents,” the statement concluded.

The article first appeared on The Palestine Chronicle.

# Don’t dare blame Arab, Muslim Americans for Trump’s victory

By Ahmad Ibsais  
Palestinian-American law student

**OPINION**

Indiana, and Ohio rolled in for Trump, social platforms became overrun with angry Democrats blaming the result on Arab and Muslim Americans who did not vote for Harris and wishing more death and destruction on our brethren in the Middle East as punishment for this perceived “betrayal”.

Their argument appears to be that by rejecting Harris, we gifted Trump the presidency and “sacrificed” the future of American democracy at the altar of foreign policy. They seem to believe not only that we are powerful enough to decide the fate of democracy in this country but also that, simply due to our minority status, we “owe” our vote to the Democratic Party. Sure, it is true that in contemporary US elections, minorities consistently showed support for Democratic candidates at much higher rates than white voters. But this historic support, which undoubtedly bolstered Democratic victories in the past and helped Clinton hold the popular vote in 2016, does not mean that we “owe” anything to the party, or that we can be held responsible for its “magnificent” defeat against Trump in this election. Politicians, no matter their party affiliation, are not entitled to the votes of any given demographic. It is their duty, indeed their prerogative, to earn our votes. In this election cycle, however, the Democratic establishment worked tirelessly to ensure we would not vote for them. So, this defeat is on them, and on them alone. Just look at how the Democrats campaigned in the state I live in, Michigan. A crucial swing state where elections can hinge on mere thousands of votes, Michigan is home to some 200,000 Muslim Americans. Over the past year, these voters made it clear, in every way they could, that their vote was conditioned on the party pledging to end its financial, political, and military support of massacres of Palestinians, Lebanese, and Yemenis. The

“uncommitted” campaign — looking to end the Democratic Party’s support for Israel’s genocide — secured more than 100,000 votes in the state’s Democratic primary.



The Democratic Party did not listen. Harris not only refused to abandon Biden’s staunchly pro-Israel policies on Palestine but also personally supported continued bloodshed in Gaza by publicly insulting anti-genocide campaigners in the state. When pro-Palestinian protesters interrupted a Harris rally in Detroit by simply stating that they “won’t vote for genocide,” she shut them up with her catchphrase, “I’m speaking.” She then sent former president Bill Clinton to the state to deliver a speech that tried to justify the mass killing of Palestinians. Liz Cheney, the Republican daughter of Iraq war architect and war criminal Dick Cheney, also made an appearance in the state to cam-

aign for Harris. Congressman Ritchie Torres, who spent the past year accusing anyone demanding an end to the bloodshed in Gaza of being an anti-Semitic terrorist, was another surrogate Harris sent to Michigan. As a result, understandably, Muslims in Michigan did not vote for Harris. They did not vote for Harris because they did not owe her their vote and she did nothing to earn it. What we are seeing in Michigan is indeed a picture of betrayal. But it was the Democratic Party that betrayed the voters who supported it election after election, not the other way around. In any case, numbers emerging from Michigan and other battleground

states are showing that the Democratic losses are simply too big to be blamed solely on Arab and Muslim voters. The Senate, for example, flipped as a result of Democratic losses in places like Ohio and West Virginia, where results cannot be tied to the supposed “betrayal” of Muslim and Arab voters. These races, and eventually the Senate and the White House, were lost because the DNC refused to listen to the primary demands and desires of not only Muslims and Arabs but the vast majority of potential Democratic voters. They did not offer answers and solutions to the American people on key issues like healthcare, climate change, and, yes, ending genocide. Indeed, unlike what Harris and her surrogates may suggest, most Americans want to see an end to US support for Israel’s brutal war on Gaza. A February survey of 1,232 likely voters by Data for Progress found that 67 percent — including 77 percent of Democrats and 69 percent of independents — would support the US calling for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza and conditioning military aid to Israel. This was some eight months ago, before Israel committed countless more massacres, invaded Lebanon, and began ethnically cleansing North Gaza using starvation as a weapon of war. Even a higher percentage of Americans likely want their country to stop supporting Israel now. The Democratic establishment can’t have it both ways. They can’t ignore, dismiss, and antagonise communities while simultaneously expecting their

unconditional support. Palestinians, Arab, and Muslim Americans, and others who have walked away from the Democratic Party over its support for Israel, aren’t asking for special treatment — they’re asking for basic human dignity and moral consistency in foreign policy. This isn’t just about foreign policy — it’s about the nature of democratic representation itself. Those who remained silent through months of humanitarian crisis but now emerge to discuss electoral politics reveal that their prior silence was indeed a choice. It was a choice that spoke volumes about priorities and values. They now profess, “Trump will be worse.” But for those who have watched their children maimed and land destroyed, there is nothing worse. We, of course, know that President Trump will not be any less supportive of the genocide of my people than Biden or Harris. His actions during his first term in office made that crystal clear. He is a rot that has grown out of a decades-long history of white supremacy, racism, and bigotry. But this does not mean we could have stepped over the shredded remains of tens of thousands of Palestinian men, women, and children killed by American bombs dropped by Israel to vote for the woman who personally defended and facilitated their murder. We couldn’t, and we didn’t. So, Vice President Kamala Harris, Gaza is speaking now. Was the slaughter of our children worth it?

The full article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

# Iran wins saber silver at fencing World Cup

## Sports Desk

Iran's saber team settled for the men's silver at the FIE Coupe du Monde following a final defeat against fencing powerhouse South Korea in Oran, Algeria.

The Iranian three-man team, comprising world No. 9 Ali Pakdaman, Mohammad Fotouhi, and Farzad Baher, came from behind to beat the United States 45-35 for a place in the final showpiece.

This was Iran's second victory over the Americans in less than four months after a last-eight win at the Paris Olympics.

Iran had begun its campaign with a 45-44 win against Ukraine and then came out on top against European heavyweight Hungary – victorious over Iran in the Olympic semifinals – 45-36

in the quarterfinals.

The final opponent, however, proved too powerful for Mohammad Rahbari's men, as the Olympic champion took an early lead and never looked back to walk away with a 45-35 triumph.

The silver medal will still go down as a decent coaching debut for Rahbari, who was only appointed to the job days before the team left for Algeria, while it saw the Iranian team move up by two spots to sit fourth with 256 points in the latest FIE Senior Men's Rankings – following South Korea, USA, and Hungary.

The team event came after the Iranians had a disappointing run in the men's individual contests, with Pakdaman the only fencer to represent the country in the round of 32 before suffering a 15-10 defeat against Olaf Stasiak of Poland.



● FIE

## Weightlifting World Championships: Female four to lift Iran's hopes for historic medal

### Sports Desk

The Iranian quadruple will be hoping to lead the country to a first-ever women's medal at the IWF World Championships when the event kicks off in Manama, Bahrain, on December 4.

Elham Hosseini will spearhead the Iranian women at the competitions, taking part in the 87kg contests.

The 36-year-old weightlifter has fond memories of the Bahraini capital – the host city of the Asian Championships in 2022, when Hosseini made a clean sweep of golds to become the first Iranian girl to win a senior medal in the flagship continental tournament.

Hosseini has registered a total entry record of 240kg for the event, with Australian Eileen Cikamatana entering the contest with the highest total of 260kg, while defending

champion Lo Ying-yuan of the Chinese Taipei will again be among the favorites to walk away with the ultimate prize.

Former world cadet bronze medalist Seyyedeh Ghazal Hosseini will represent Iran in the 64kg class with a total entry of 215kg.

North Korean duo Rim Un Sim and Ri Suk have recorded the highest entry with 245kg.

Reihaneh Karimi will head into the 71kg event with 230kg, while American Olivia Reeves – a gold medalist at the Paris Olympics – is on top of the entry list with 270kg.

Elaheh Razzaqi will be the Iranian girl in the 76kg contests, having registered 233kg for entry – 32 kilograms adrift of North Korea's Song Kuk Hyang and Chinese Liao Guifang, who won triple 71kg golds last year, on top of the list.



Elham Hosseini, a triple Asian gold medalist in 2022, will represent Iran in the women's 87kg class at the IWF World Championships in Manama.

● IWF

## Davis, LeBron James help Lakers beat Raptors



● NBA

**BBC** – Anthony Davis and LeBron James starred as the Los Angeles Lakers rallied to claim a 123-103 victory over the visiting Toronto Raptors.

Davis scored 22 points in 26 minutes before leaving the game with an eye injury in the third quarter as he tried to block a shot by the Raptors' Jakob

Poeltl.

The 31-year-old sustained a number of eye injuries last season, suffering a corneal abrasion in March against the Golden State Warriors before being hit again in the left eye in April against the Minnesota Timberwolves.

James added 19 points, 16 assists and

10 rebounds for his second consecutive triple-double, with the 39-year-old becoming the oldest player in NBA history to achieve the feat. It was his third triple-double of the season and the 115th of his career.

The visitors led 77-72 with three minutes and 59 seconds left in the third quarter before the Lakers went on a 16-5 run and from then on they controlled the game.

Elsewhere, Stephen Curry hit seven of his 13 three-point efforts, finishing with 36 points as the Golden State Warriors beat Oklahoma City 127-116. But Giannis Antetokounmpo's 43 points were in vain as the Milwaukee Bucks lost 113-107 to the Boston Celtics.

Jayson Tatum had 31 points and 12 rebounds for the reigning NBA champions, who have won nine of their opening 11 games but are still two games behind the unbeaten Cleveland Cavaliers in the Eastern Conference.

Payton Pritchard scored 18 points off the bench for Boston with Derrick White and former Buck Jrue Holiday adding 15 points each and Jaylen Brown hitting 14.

## New United boss Amorim 'ready for the challenge'

**REUTERS** – New Manchester United head coach Ruben Amorim said he is under no illusions about the difficulty of the task he faces when he moves to England from Portugal but he is looking forward to the challenge.

The Premier League club announced Amorim's appointment earlier this month, with the 39-year-old Portuguese set to arrive from Sporting today on a contract until June 2027.

Amorim, who replaces sacked Dutchman Erik ten Hag at United, marked his final game as coach of Sporting with a 4-2 comeback victory at Braga on Sunday.

"I feel ready for the new challenge," he told reporters after the match.



● REUTERS

"I'm not naive, I know it's going to be very different, very difficult. I'm at peace now, I can focus on my new job and

I'm looking forward to starting tomorrow." Considered one of Europe's brightest young managers,

Amorim's first match is slated for Nov. 24 at promoted Ipswich Town in the Premier League.

United are 13th in the league on 15 points from 11 matches, four points adrift of Chelsea in third. Interim manager Ruud van Nistelrooy has guided the side to three wins and a draw in all competitions since Ten Hag was fired on Oct. 28.

"I know it will be difficult to reproduce what I have here elsewhere, but there are other places with different exposure and pressure ... It's been a fantastic adventure," said Amorim, who has won the Primeira Liga twice with Sporting.

"I apologise for this mid-season decision, but I felt it was my time and my way."

# Iran: Israeli crimes in Palestine, Lebanon ‘shameful tragedy’

Israel should respect Iran’s sovereignty, refrain from aggression: **MBS**



Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref participates in a joint Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2024. [fvpresident.ir](#)

International Desk

Iran’s vice president called the crimes committed by the Israeli regime in the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon “a shameful tragedy” which is the result of the “feeling of im-

punity” of the criminals who are supported by some Western countries. Mohammad Reza Aref made the remarks in an address to the joint Arab League and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Saudi Arabia on

Monday, which focused on Israel’s ongoing genocidal wars in Gaza and Lebanon. Aref said the reluctance and inability of the United Nations and other so-called human rights institutions to stop the genocide of Palestinians is a

clear sign of indifference to the killing of more than 50,000 innocent people with the political, financial and military support of the United States. He said that all the Muslim and Arab countries have a moral duty and responsibility not to remain silent in the face of one of the worst evils left over from the last century, namely the bloody occupation of the Palestinian land and the ongoing displacement and genocide of a nation. The Iranian official described the US as the main supporter of Israel’s actions against the innocent people of Gaza and Lebanon. The vice president said that the compromise on the terrorist acts of Israel “invalidates all the rules and norms of peaceful co-habitation.” He considered the mechanisms of the UN and the Security Council to be unable to end the genocide of the Palestinians and the mass killing of the Lebanese

people due to the unconditional support of the US and several Western governments for occupying regime. Referring to the heavy responsibility of Islamic and Arab countries on the issue, Aref called for a decisive decision and collective action in order to end the Israeli crimes. Since October 2023, Israel has launched a devastating war on the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. The Israel’s wars have claimed more than 34,000 people in Gaza and over 3,000 people in Lebanon. **‘Respect for Iran’s sovereignty’** Addressing the summit, Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman demanded that Israel immediately stop its military aggression in Gaza and Lebanon. The crown prince, also known as MBS, condemned the “massacre committed against Palestinian and Lebanese people”.

He urged Israel “to refrain from any further act of aggression” and called on countries around the world to recognize Palestinian statehood. The Saudi crown prince also called on the Israeli regime to respect Iran’s sovereignty and refrain from attacking Iranian soil. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, secretary-general of the Arab League, also joined MBS in condemning Israel’s military operation in Gaza and Lebanon, saying that “words cannot express the plight of the Palestinian people.” “The actions taken by Israel against the Palestinian people are undermining efforts to achieve lasting peace. It is only with justice that we will be able to establish lasting peace,” Aboul Gheit said. Lebanon’s Prime Minister Najib Mikati, who also addressed the summit, warned that his country was suffering an “unprecedented” crisis that threatens its existence.

## Pezeshkian hopes for further expansion of Tehran-Riyadh ties

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed hope that Tehran and Riyadh would further improve relations in all fields given the determination of both sides. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a phone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Sunday. The Iranian president had been invited to a summit of Arab and Muslim leaders in Saudi Arabia on Monday, which focused on Israel’s wars in Gaza and Lebanon. Pezeshkian told Saudi crown

prince that he could not accept the invitation of the Saudi King to take part in the summit due to his heavy executive work. Instead, Iran’s First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref participated in the event. The Saudi crown prince hailed a historical turning point in Tehran-Riyadh relations and expressed hope that mutual ties will reach the highest levels in all fields. Bin Salman added that he would take the opportunity of the Iranian vice president’s presence in Riyadh to discuss ways to expand



relations. He once again invited the Iranian president to travel to Saudi Arabia and hoped grounds would be prepared in this regard as soon as possible.

## Israel fell short of occupying ‘a single Lebanese village’: **Hezbollah**

International Desk

Hezbollah said the Israeli military has been unable to occupy even a single village in Lebanon since launching its ground operation in Lebanon in September. “After 45 days of bloody fighting, the enemy is still unable to occupy a single Lebanese village,” Hezbollah spokesman Mohammad Afif said in a press briefing in the southern suburbs of the capital Beirut. “We tell the enemies that you will not win your war with air strikes.” Afif added that Israel’s claims

about a significant decline in Hezbollah’s missile stockpile are “just lies.” “Hezbollah continues to increase its missile stockpiles, both in quantity and quality,” he said, and affirmed that the movement’s fighters on the frontlines “have enough weapons and supplies for a prolonged war on all fronts.” Elsewhere in his remarks, the official insisted that the resistance group “does not accept defeat.” “Our concept of victory comprises prevention of realization of the enemy’s political and military goals,”

he said, adding that it was rather refusal to resist that would translate into defeat for the group. He also said the group’s relationship with the Lebanese Army “will remain strong,” and that demonstrations against Israel around the world indicate that the regime is “isolated.” He also said Hezbollah has not received any proposals on a truce for Lebanon as Israel’s foreign minister said diplomatic efforts had made “progress” amid Israeli media reports that the cabinet had approved a ceasefire proposal.

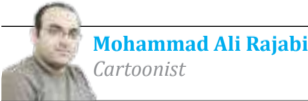
## Iran says Europe’s anti-Iran measures taken on ‘baseless grounds’

International Desk

Iran said on Monday the Ukrainian president who rejected claims of Iran’s delivery of ballistic missile to Russia showed how European countries take “harmful measures” against the Islamic Republic on “baseless grounds.” Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told a weekly press briefing that by President Volodymyr Zelensky’s remarks were “quite clear” when he stated that Iran had not delivered any missile to Russia. On September 10, the US claimed that Iran provided Russia with Fath-360 close-range ballistic missiles as a boost to Moscow’s war against Ukraine. Iranian officials denied the claim. “We’ve warned Tehran publicly, we’ve warned Tehran privately, that taking this step would be a dangerous escalation,” US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. “Russia has now received shipments of these missiles.” Then, the US, the European Union and the UK imposed sanctions against Iran. The EU announced sanctions against more than a dozen Iranian individuals and firms, including the country’s deputy defense minister and national airline. Washington also sanctioned Iranian national carrier Iran Air “for operating or



having operated in the transportation sector of the Russian Federation economy,” the Treasury Department said in a statement. Meanwhile, the UK said it is terminating “all direct air services between the UK and Iran.” However, the Ukrainian president said on September 11 that there was no evidence yet that Russia had used Iranian ballistic missiles against Ukraine. Zelensky said he had received information from Western intelligence about the Iranian ballistic missile deliveries to Moscow. “But I cannot confirm the use of the missiles for now. I can only confirm when we have evidence. As it was with North Korea,” the president said. Iran has repeatedly said that it has played no role in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and has called for dialogue to bring an end to the conflict.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

## Political message carried...

Now, following the Iranian foreign minister’s visit to Saudi Arabia, the visit of General Fayyad bin Hamed al-Ruwaili, the chief of the general staff of the Saudi armed forces, in Iran heralds a new chapter in the two countries’ relations and signals their determination to boost cooperation in various fields, including military and security. This visit also carried an important political message that did not go unnoticed by analysts and leading media outlets in the region and beyond: a shift in the dynamics between Arab countries and Iran, on the one hand, and Israel, on the

other. Over the past year, while these countries’ relations with the Israeli regime have been marked by challenges, their ties with Iran have grown closer, effectively limiting the Israeli regime’s room for maneuver against Iran. A day after this high-level military meeting, Iranian First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref traveled to Saudi Arabia to attend the second emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League, which was convened at the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and focuses on the cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Meanwhile, Iranian President Ma-

soud Pezeshkian and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman talked on the phone, during which Pezeshkian extended an invitation to the Saudi leader to visit Iran. Speculation is rife in political circles that a formal written invitation from Iran to the Saudi crown prince will be handed over to senior Saudi officials by the Iranian first vice president. It is likely that a visit by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Tehran would represent a new turning point in relations between the two countries, cementing existing ties and paving the way for greater cooperation that would ultimately benefit all countries in the region.





# Iran-China exhibition opens 'new horizon' for cultural relations: Minister

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, has hailed the Iran-China exhibition 'Endless Clouds of Silk Road' as a "new horizon" for cultural relations between the two countries. Salehi made the remarks during his visit to the exhibition on Sunday, November 10, IRNA reported.

"This exhibition has provided a new horizon for the realization of cultural memoranda between

Iran and China, which can definitely draw new perspectives in the vast relations between the two countries," Salehi said. The exhibition, which showcases a collection of artworks from the Shanghai Museum of Collectible Arts and the Malek National Library and Museum, has been extended until December 5. Salehi described the exhibition as "valuable" and praised the organizers for bringing together the cultural heritage of the two countries.

The minister noted that the exhibition has created an opportunity for the cultural heritage of the two countries to connect, highlighting the rich history of civilization in both Iran and China. "This exhibition has brought together the cultural heritage of two countries with ancient civilizations, creating a platform for the realization of cultural memoranda between Iran and China," he said. Salehi also praised the artworks on display, particularly those



by Chinese artist Xiao Guo Hui, which depict life on the Silk Road. "These valuable paintings are not only interesting in terms of subject matter and content, but also in terms of form," he said. The exhibition also features artifacts from the Malek National Library and Museum's collection related to China's cultural heritage.

Salehi noted that this highlights the importance of the library and museum in promoting cultural diplomacy. The one-month exhibition which was supposed to end on November 10, has been extended until December 5, providing a unique opportunity for art lovers and cultural enthusiasts to explore the rich heritage of Iran and China.

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi (2nd R) tours the Iran-China exhibition 'Endless Clouds of Silk Road' at Malek National Library and Museum in Tehran on November 10, 2024.  
● IRNA

## Iran, China ink 5-year tourism cooperation agreement



Hormatollah Rafiei (R), head of the Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran, and Alaaeddin Boroujerdi, Chairman of the Iran-China Friendship Association, exchange documents after signing a five-year cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening tourism ties between the two countries.  
● TASNM

## Social Desk

The Association of Air Transport and Tourist Agencies of Iran (AATTAI) and the Iran-China Friendship Association signed a five-year cooperation agreement on Tuesday, aiming to boost tourism ties between the two countries. The agreement was signed by Alaaeddin Boroujerdi, Chairman of the Iran-China Friendship Association, and Hormatollah Rafiei, President of AATTAI, ILNA reported. According to the agreement, the two organizations will work together to strengthen and expand relations between Iran and China, with a focus on developing tourism and cultural exchange between the two nations. The agreement also emphasizes the importance of cooperation in the fields of sports tourism, creative tourism, cultural tourism, and intangible heritage.

Rafiei stated that the agreement includes the establishment of specialized working groups consisting of experts and scholars from both countries to study cultural and tourism development, as well as cooperation in organizing national and international conferences and exhibitions in the tourism industry. He also noted that the agreement highlights the potential for cooperation between Iranian and Chinese cities, including Tehran-Beijing, Tehran-Guangzhou, Isfahan-Xi'an, and Shiraz-Chongqing, among others. Rafiei emphasized that these sister cities can be used to develop tourism between the two countries. The agreement also includes provisions for planning and organizing independent and joint tours based on the "One Belt, One Road" initiative, a 25-year cooperation agreement between Iran

and China in the field of tourism. The head of AATTAI added that the agreement also includes the launch of cultural campaigns to promote a positive image of Iran, as well as cooperation in designing and implementing programs related to cultural heritage and handicrafts. Boroujerdi noted that in his meetings with the President of AATTAI, they reached the conclusion that if even 1% of China's 160 million outbound tourists visit Iran, it would have a significant impact on the country's tourism industry. He criticized the lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate a large number of tourists, citing a previous experience where the Chinese Embassy in Iran announced plans to send 1,000 tourists to Iran, but there were not enough hotels to accommodate them. Boroujerdi emphasized that Iran

and China can take big steps in attracting foreign tourists, especially from the Chinese market, through cooperation with travel agencies. Rafiei also stated that Iran has the necessary infrastructure to host Chinese tourists, and that the association is ready to cooperate with Chinese travel agencies to attract more visitors. However, he noted that the official statistics on tourist arrivals in Iran are inaccurate, and that the actual number of tourists is much lower than the reported 6 million. Rafiei said that if AATTAI and the Iran-China Friendship Association cooperate strongly, they can attract 1% of Chinese tourists, which would be a significant number. Both sides agreed to follow up on the implementation of the agreement, which is expected to boost tourism ties between Iran and China in the coming years.

## VPN providers struggling to block efforts to lift Internet ban: Top official

## Social Desk

Providers of virtual private network (VPN) are "blocking the lifting of Internet ban with all their might" due to the huge profits they make, said Majid Ansari, the vice president for legal affairs. Internet ban, also known as Internet filtering or censorship, in Iran refers to the government's efforts to control and restrict access to some online content, websites, and services. According to local media, some users have reported accessing filtered platforms such as Instagram without a VPN in recent days, sparking speculation about operators testing the network to lift the ban. However, government officials have announced that the lifting of Internet ban is still "on the legal path and under review by the Supreme Council of Cyberspace," and that any information

about lifting restrictions will only be announced by the council or the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. Recently, Ali Rabiei, an aide to President Pezeshkian on social affairs, also criticized the Internet ban policy on the social media platform X, pointing to the annual \$1 billion loss caused by Internet ban to the people and calling it useless. "I have no idea what's the benefit of Internet ban?" Rabiei wrote on X. "Show a harmful movie or piece of news you have blocked through filtering. People lose \$1 billion annually due to this ban." Two lawmakers have also said that some supporters of Internet restrictions "are involved in selling VPN themselves." Javad Nikbin and Gholamreza Nouri pointed to the high financial turnover and economic benefits in the VPN market, saying that those who have pursued the ban are also

connected to VPN distributors. Nikbin added that the majority of VPN sales are done inside the country, not outside. Iran's minister of Communications and Information Technology, Sattar Hashemi has called for the judiciary to investigate these claims. President Masoud Pezeshkian has repeatedly reacted to this issue. During his election campaign, he promised to solve the problem. Before the elections, Pezeshkian wrote on his X account in response to a user's request: "I guarantee that the entire administration will stand against Internet filtering with all its might." Despite the Pezeshkian's promise to lift Internet ban, which has given hope to social media users, Hashemi announced on October 13 that Internet ban will be lifted in the near future. He also announced on November 7 that a plan to lift the ban is being re-

viewed by the "Supreme Council of Coordination of Heads of the Three Branches," but did not specify a time frame for lifting the ban. The Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) announced in 2023 that the number of internet users in Iran is 116 million. Data from the "Data Reportal" institute also shows that as of the beginning of 2024, the internet penetration rate in Iran has reached 81.7%, with 73.14 million internet users in the country. The large number of internet users and their effective demand for buying VPN has turned the sale of these tools into one of the most thriving businesses in Iran. According to a report by the Governance and Policy Think Tank (GPTT) and the Iranian Students Polling Agency (ISPA), 80% of internet users in different age groups use VPNs.

## Arash Kamangir's symphony to hit global platforms

Renowned Iranian composer and researcher, Amir Pourkhalaji, is set to release his latest musical endeavors, including the global broadcast of his symphony, 'Arash Kamangir', and the publication of a book on viola performance. Pourkhalaji revealed that his album, which was performed and recorded by the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine in 2009 under the baton of Vladimir Sirenko at the Kiev House of Music, will soon be available on all global digital platforms. The suite symphony, written in four movements for orchestral symphony, has already garnered significant recognition, including the Best Composer Award at the 25th International Fajr Music Festival and the Special

Award at the Ferdowsi Millennial Celebration in 2009. Pourkhalaji also announced the publication of his book, "40 Etudes for Viola", which includes a foreword by Starreh Beheshti, a university professor, and cover design by Nazanin Khazaei. The book focuses on various aspects of viola performance, such as finger placement, bowing techniques, and tone production.

