

Minister: Iran bent on removing tourism barriers, boosting ties with Saudi Arabia



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Carter and Iran: Clash of politics and destiny

PERSPECTIVE During Jimmy Carter's administration, US relations with the Pahlavi regime experienced complex developments. Carter, who entered the White House with slogans of human rights, initially criticized dictatorial regimes and restricted arms sales to oil-rich countries. However, once he moved to practical policies, he established close ties with the Shah of Iran. [Page 8 >](#)



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Tehran, Baku reach deal to ease trade via customs



Iran and Azerbaijan reached an agreement to further facilitate trade through their customs processes.

During a bilateral meeting at the Astara customs office located in southern Azerbaijan, Iranian and Azerbaijani customs officials stressed the importance of enhancing cooperation to facilitate foreign trade and passenger transfer at their border points, IRNA reported.

The meeting, which took place on Sunday, was attended by Morteza Khodsiani, the head of the International Cooperation Office of Iran's Customs.

The two sides also agreed to improve customs processes and increase information exchanges between the countries. They also reached an agreement on 11 provisions aimed at expediting daily truck transits at the border.

To ensure ongoing collaboration, Iran and Azerbaijan plan to hold meetings every six months and conduct monthly meetings among border officials and authorities.

Aref affirms government's resolve to buttress cooperatives

Economy Desk

The Iranian vice president emphasized the essential role of cooperatives in the country's economic activities during the 11th session of the administration's Economic Council, stating, "The government's key economic strategy is to shift responsibilities back to non-governmental sectors. In our view, cooperatives represent a necessity that the country should have embraced decades ago."

According to fvpresident.ir, the 11th session of the Economic Council, held Monday in the vice president's office, addressed several topics, including:

- Setting tariffs for electronic invoice services by trusted tax companies.

- Amending Economic Council's approvals for urban passenger rail transport projects in Tehran and the eight metropolitan cities of Isfahan, Tabriz, Shiraz, Ahvaz, Kermanshah, Mashhad, Karaj, and Qom.

- Determining the minimum value threshold for domestic goods and services in renewable energy projects, in accordance with Article 5(b) of the Law on Maximum Utilization of Domestic Production and Support for Iranian Goods.



Cooperatives; a necessity

The session began with a report from Iran's Chamber of Cooperatives, which highlighted the critical role of cooperatives in the country's development and the completion of unfinished government projects. Following the presentations, the Vice President reiterated the need for cooperatives in Iran's industrial, agricultural, and economic sectors.

He criticized previous governments for their centralization efforts, which sidelined cooperatives, and noted that the current administration is committed to restoring public involvement in the economy through cooperatives.

Addressing cooperative heads, he urged, "Draft a plan to highlight the role of cooperatives in advancing the Seventh Development Plan. Such a plan is not

only a government need but also essential for national development."

Organizing cooperative sector

The vice president added, "If previous programs had effectively utilized cooperatives, our country's development indicators would be in a better state today. We firmly believe the government should not take on

tasks that the private sector can perform, and we will soon organize this issue. This approach is both our belief and a necessity for the government."

He continued, "Turning to cooperatives is not a matter of choice but a long-overdue necessity. This should have been our direction decades ago."

Aref affirmed the government's readiness to support cooperatives in any sector where they are legally permitted to operate. However, he emphasized that cooperatives should not view the government as a charity but must act as professional institutions, NGOs, or legitimate economic enterprises.

Supporting domestic production, tech transfer

Later in the session, Aref addressed the urgent need to resolve shortages in the electricity sector by building solar and wind power plants.

"Electricity deficits have inflicted significant damage on the production sector, and this cannot be ignored," he said.

The vice president stressed the importance of adopting advanced technologies and supporting domestic production to overcome these challenges and accelerate power plant construction.

Iran's TPO facilitates 2.5-fold rise in trade with Eurasian union

Economy Desk

Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) Mohammad Ali Dehqan-Dehnavi, stated that the preferential trade agreement signed between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) five years ago has paved the way for a 2.5-fold increase in trade with the union's member states.

Speaking on Monday during a meeting with members of the Entrepreneurs' Assembly, Dehqan-Dehnavi highlighted the importance of preferential and free trade agreements. He noted that since the signing of the agreement, tariffs on certain goods have been reduced, facilitating significant growth in trade with the region.

The official added that this success has led to plans for a free trade agreement with the EAEU. "The parliaments of the five EAEU member countries have approved this agreement, and in Iran, it is awaiting final approval by the Guardian Council. It is expected to be implemented at the beginning of the next [Iranian] year (March 21, 2025)," he said.

Dehqan-Dehnavi also emphasized that the TPO, responsible for trade negotiations, is pursuing similar preferential trade deals with other countries. Currently, negotiations with Pakistan are underway.

Goals, strategy

He outlined three primary goals for the TPO, which included reforming and simpli-



fyng regulations, promoting free trade through agreements and fostering export-driven production.

The TPO head stressed that exports should not be limited to surplus goods as such an approach cannot lead to an export boom. Instead, Iran should focus on industries that can drive trade growth.

Dehqan-Dehnavi underlined the importance of supportive laws for export development and emphasized the need for reforms to facilitate such growth.

Exchange rate policies, economic autonomy

Discussing exchange rate policies, Dehqan-Dehnavi said policymakers are mindful of inflation and the livelihoods of citizens.

He advocated for replacing preemptive oversight with post-transaction monitoring, explaining that this approach allows economic actors to operate freely within legal frameworks. Violations, however, would face severe penalties.

Challenges in trade authority

The official criticized the reduction of the TPO's authority, stating that it has become merely an executor of others' decisions rather than a policymaker.

He called for a focus on laws that support export and trade development.

The TPO head revealed that during his tenure, he stopped the implementation of several decisions that hindered exports as he emphasized that decision-making bodies should inform economic players at least one to three months before implementing any new trade regulations.

Dehqan-Dehnavi also referred to the publication of a guide on the rights of economic actors by the President's Legal Affairs Office.

He stressed that, under business law, economic actors have the right to be informed of regulations before they are implemented and to seek clarification on any ambiguities in the law.

Daily gas output at South Pars hits record high

The deputy for operations and support at Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) announced a record daily production of 714 million cubic meters (mcm) of gas at the South Pars field.

Speaking during a visit by senior officials from the Oil Ministry and the National Iranian Oil Company, Sepahdar Abbaszadeh shared the news, emphasizing his team's efforts to ensure a stable gas supply for the country, Shana reported.

Highlighting POGC's contribution of over 70% to the nation's gas supply, Abbaszadeh stated that increasing production remains a top priority for oil industry workers. Meanwhile, the managing director of POGC announced on Monday that the first gas well of the South Pars Infill Drilling Project will be operational within the next month.

Touraj Dehqani highlighted the acceleration of the project's execution and the increase in the number of active drilling rigs to four. He stated that four drilling rigs are currently engaged in the infill drilling project, while three additional rigs are operating in other gas blocks.

"Thanks to measures implemented in recent months, the drilling process for this project has been expedited," the POGC head said.

He added that the Sahar 1 and Pasargad 200 rigs have been deployed at platforms 19A and 19B of South Pars, bringing the total number of



active rigs in the infill project to four.

This marks significant progress in executing the third and fourth packages of the South Pars Infill Drilling Project.

Focus on sustained gas production

Dehqani emphasized the importance of maintaining steady gas production to prevent energy supply disruptions.

He explained that preliminary activities have been completed, and new well drilling has commenced.

"With careful planning, the Sahar 1 and Pasargad 200 rigs were deployed simultaneously to the gas platforms with minimal downtime," the official noted.

Currently, four operational packages of the infill drilling project are fully underway. Dehqani noted that the first well under this initiative will be drilled and ready for gas production within a month. Expressing gratitude for the support of the National

Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), Dehqani revealed that the project involves drilling 35 infill wells at various locations across South Pars. Once operational, these wells will significantly boost production from the field.

Strategic importance of Infill Drilling Project

Dehqani underlined the strategic role of the South Pars Infill Drilling Project in maintaining gas output and addressing the country's energy imbalance.

"The project is closely monitored and evaluated daily as a critical initiative of the National Iranian Oil Company to sustain the reservoir's production capacity," he said. Over the next three years, the project is expected to play a crucial role in managing the gap between gas production and consumption.

Implemented across 17 gas platforms, the completion of the infill drilling initiative will increase South Pars' gas production capacity by 36 million cubic meters per day.

Churches of Jolfa and their stories



Saint Stephanus Church
IMNA

Iranica Desk

Speaking about historical monuments is a broad topic that, when intertwined with religious beliefs, reveals its most beautiful manifestations. One of these manifestations is the role of art in the construction of churches. As you navigate the twists and turns of the Aras River, the enormous yellow and reddish stones come into view, majestically and gracefully sitting side by side. Saint Stephanus Church is a relic from the ancient past that, thanks to its inclusion in UNESCO's World Heritage List, has gained renown beyond its borders. There isn't a day that it doesn't welcome groups of visitors into its intertwined courtyards. This complex includes Saint Stephanus Church, the Church of the Virgin Mary, and the Shepherd's Church in the beautiful and border town of Jolfa, alongside the twists and turns of the Aras River in East Azarbaijan, as well as Saint Thaddeus Church in West Azarbaijan, chn.ir wrote.

Saint Stephanus Church is located 16 kilometers west of Jolfa, about three kilometers from the southern bank of the Aras Riv-

er, near an abandoned village called Darreh Sham. The church is named after "Stephanus," the first martyr of Christianity. There are numerous statements regarding the history of this building's construction. Some regard it as a monument from the early Christian period, while others, like Tavernier, attribute its construction to the Safavid era. However, the architectural style and materials indicate that this church was built between the 10th and 12th centuries CE. Saint Stephanus is situated in a lush valley surrounded by trees, enclosed by a stone wall that resembles a fortress, featuring a tall rampart with seven watchtowers and five cylindrical stone buttresses, reminiscent of the robust fortifications from the Sassanid era and the early Islamic period. Above the large wooden door of the church's courtyard, a relief sculpture of the Virgin Mary and the childhood of Jesus, displaying a serene and smiling expression, welcomes visitors and guides them toward the church building, which consists of three parts: the bell tower, the prayer hall, and Daniel's oven. The bell tower of the church is situated on a two-story porch



Chapel of Chupan
wikipedia.com

attached to the southern wall of the church. The tower is adorned with reliefs of angels, crosses, floral patterns, and eight-pointed stars. This tower is a fine example from the Qajar period and was restored during the time of Abbas Mirza, the Crown Prince. At the entrance of the prayer hall, there is a beautiful marquetry decoration integrated into the middle of the western side, which is said to comprise over a thousand pieces of wood. In this part of the church, the stone

carvings of the bases, half-columns, side chains, and muqarnas are considered masterpieces of stone carving art. A red sandstone inscription in Nasta'liq script can be seen above the entrance door and below the archway of the church. Reliefs of angels are carved into the archways of the sixteen large sides of the central dome, which actually serve as the base of the tall and beautiful prayer hall dome. The dome is constructed in a pyramidal shape with 32

sides, set upon a star-shaped plan. In the wide archways, windows with a double-arch design are installed, featuring reliefs of one of the angels within a rectangular frame that adorns the exterior. Among the interesting decorations inside the temple are three stone prayer platforms with beautiful and intricate carvings.

The beauty and many details of this complex have made it, along with several other churches, one of the first globally recognized sites in the province, attracting a large number of tourists each year. Another church in this collection is the Chapel of Chupan, sometimes called the Shepherd's Chapel. Its prayer hall is located in Jolfa, alongside the Aras River, on the border between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, on the way to Saint Stephanus Church.

This church features a cross-shaped plan enclosed within a rectangle and has a central dome. The dome is supported by a cylindrical base and has a unique shape. As mentioned in its history, this prayer hall was primarily used by poor shepherds, and thus, its construction reflects the simple, beautiful, and unembel-

lished lives of these shepherds. The last church in this complex, located in East Azarbaijan Province, is the Church of the Virgin Mary. It is situated at the confluence of the "Aqchay" and Aras rivers, in a naturally flat and expansive area, bordering the southern side of the Aras, and hosts the rocky village of Darreh Sham. On the eastern edge of this village, the Church of the Virgin Mary has been established. This church does not have an inscription or stone tablet that can be referenced for dating the construction, but according to historical evidence and texts, its origins can be traced back to the Safavid period and even earlier.

The Church of the Virgin Mary and the village of Darreh Sham were active and thriving until the Safavid era. This simple and beautiful church is constructed using stone materials, while inside, there are plastered walls, and some areas display paintings. Entry to this church is only possible by passing beneath the sole carved stone inscription, adorned with floral, vine, and cross decorations that will leave a lasting impression on every visitor's mind.

Nature and fun at Chitgar Park of Tehran

If you enjoy cycling, Chitgar Park is the first place that comes to mind. This park is one of the best spots near Tehran for spending time outdoors, thanks to its beautiful nature and well-designed facilities for aerobic exercises. Established in 1963, it is a popular destination for both residents of the capital and travelers from the west.

To reach the park, take the Tehran-Karaj freeway and follow the exit for Chitgar Park, where rows of pine trees greet you, visitiran.ir wrote.

Your picnic begins upon arrival at the park's green spaces. It's advisable to bring a mat or tent; otherwise, you can find a bench or pergola. For grilling

kebabs, you can use the fixed cement grills, or you may opt to dine at one of the park's restaurants.

Chitgar Park is renowned for its extensive bicycle tracks, catering to both professionals and casual riders seeking a few hours of fun. There's a mountain track for those with higher physical stamina, a special cycling track for women, and bicycle rentals available. Skating is also popular here.

Horse riding is another enjoyable activity, available at the park's horse riding club, which has many regular members. One reason for the park's popularity is the variety of activities available; if cycling, skating, or horse riding isn't your

preference, you can try paintball or take your children to the woodlands to observe local birds and animals.

Don't miss the opportunity to stroll through the cool shade of the trees. In addition to pine and cypress, you can find species like maple, oak, locust, and umbraculifera. The park's winding paths are safe and peaceful, free from traffic noise.

To visit Tehran's only artificial lake, head north of Chitgar Park. Given that Tehran lacks natural rivers, this lake is a unique attraction. The area also offers various amusements, including Jump in the Sky, the Freefall Slide, skydiving, surfing, the Sky Flyer, kayak riding, and a 6D cinema. Children can enjoy a playground, a roller coaster, and sandy beach areas.

Finally, the Baam Land shopping center is located to the east of the lake, featuring numerous coffee shops and restaurants for a delightful dining experience.



West Bank's men of CIA

Why is PA killing Palestinians in Jenin?

By Ramzy Baroud
Author,
journalist

OPINION

Following a 10-day siege, the Palestinian Authority (PA) began, on December 14, a violent raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank.

The PA security forces used similar tactics as used by the Israeli occupation forces in their routine attacks on the area.

The camp, which is a mere half a square kilometer in size, hosts an ever-growing population of 24 thousand refugees, mostly the descendants of Palestinians ethnically cleansed by Zionist militias during the great catastrophe, or Nakba, of 1948.



Mourners march on December 17, 2024, with the bodies of two people who were killed in clashes with Palestinian security forces at the Jenin camp.
● GETTY IMAGES

The raid began with a tight siege, followed by an attack from multiple directions that resulted in the killing of an unarmed youth, Rebhi al-Shalabi, 19, then a 13-year-old child, Muhammad al-Amer.

The PA forces also killed Yazid Ja'ayseh, the commander of the Jenin Brigades, who had evaded Israeli assassination attempts for his leadership role in unifying all Palestinian Resistance fighters under the umbrella of a single group. Expectedly, Israel is largely pleased with the PA's action against the Palestinian Resistance, though it expects more. "The Palestinian Authority has been acting resolutely against the Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters over the past several weeks, army and Shin Bet sources said, but the Israeli officials expressed the hope that their effectiveness could be enhanced," Haaretz reported.

Indeed, Israel had attempted to subdue Jenin 80 times in the last year alone, killing more than 220 people, Al Jazeera reported, citing Palestinian Ministry of Health sources. By attacking Jenin, the PA is helping the Israeli army in more than one way: it is killing and detaining anti-Israeli occupation Resistance fighters, consuming the energy and resources of the Resistance, allowing Israel to spare thousands of soldiers so that they may carry on with the genocide in Gaza, and more.

For many, especial-

ly supporters of Palestine around the world, the PA's action is confusing, to say the least. Those surprised by the anti-Resistance policies of Mahmoud Abbas and his Authority, however, are driven by the erroneous assumption that the PA is a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and that it behaves in ways consistent with the collective aspirations of all Palestinians.

Nothing could be further from the truth. For many years, the PA has ceased playing any role that deviates from the interests of a small clique of pro-US and pro-Israeli wealthy elite who have enriched themselves, while millions of Palestinians continue to suffer an Israeli genocide in Gaza, and a violent system of apartheid and military occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The most telling and recent example is that, a short distance away from Jenin, illegal and violent Israeli Jewish settlers have burned the Bir Al-Walidin Mosque in the town of Murda, near Salfit — less than 70 kilometers from Jenin. Neither in this case, nor in any of the hundreds of settlers' pogroms carried out against Palestinians in the West Bank in the last year — or before — did the PA security carry out any action to confront the armed Jewish militias, nor, of course, the occupation army.

But how did the PA turn from a supposed national project — at least in theory — to another branch of the Israeli occupation?

It could be argued that the PA was structured since its establishment in 1994 as a body whose existence catered to benefit the Israeli occupation. There is much evidence that substantiates this claim, including the arrests, torture,

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For many, especially supporters of Palestine around the world, the PA's action is confusing, to say the least. Those surprised by the anti-Resistance policies of Mahmoud Abbas and his Authority, however, are driven by the erroneous assumption that the PA is a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and that it behaves in ways consistent with the collective aspirations of all Palestinians. Nothing could be further from the truth.

and killing of dissenting Palestinians soon after the creation of the PA.

The CIA became directly involved in supporting the PA from the very start, expanding its role as early as 1996 following a series of Palestinian retaliatory attacks on Israeli targets in major cities. It was then that CIA director George Tenet became an important player in shaping the policies of the PA security forces, preparing it for massive crackdowns on Palestinian Resistance groups.

This involvement was a direct condition for US financial support under the Bill Clinton Administration — the kind of support that sowed the seeds of the Fatah-Hamas conflict, which reached its zenith in the summer of 2007.

The involvement of the US — and other armed forces of US client regimes in the region — became even more apparent under the leadership of US Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton, who helped train, prepare, and equip the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (NSF), producing several battalions of young recruits (between 20 and 22 years old) to fight fellow Palestinians in the name of restoring law and order.

That supposed restoration of the law began in earnest as early as 2005 and continues until this day. Interestingly, this is the same language that the PA is currently using to justify its war on the Jenin refugee camp.

A spokesman for the PA security forces, Anwar Rajab recently told Al Jazeera that the objective of the raid on Jenin is to "pursue criminals" and lawbreakers and to "prevent the camp from becoming a battleground like Gaza." Equating Resistance fighters with criminals and linking that supposed criminality to the Gaza Resistance is the typ-



ical PA discourse on resistance, a discourse that took the US and Israel years to craft and perfect — making the PA arguably the greatest achievement of Israel and the US in recent decades. This behavior and language can be traced to a famous statement by General Dayton himself, who in a 2009 speech celebrated the US's greatest creation in Palestine:

“And what we have created — and I say this in humility — what we have created are new men ... upon the return of these new men of Palestine, they have shown motivation, discipline, and professionalism, and they have made such a difference.” Indeed, the ‘new men of Palestine’ are making all the difference required by the US and

Israel: they are fighting the very Palestinian Resistance that is defending Jenin against the Israeli onslaught, Nablus against the pogroms of armed settlers, and Gaza against genocide. None of these ‘new men’ — whose numbers are counted in the tens of thousands — have lifted a finger to help their brethren as they continue to

starve to death in the Gaza Strip, tortured and raped en masse, burned alive in Jabaliya and Khan Yunis, and yet continue to fight and die in their thousands — alone. To say that the PA has betrayed Palestinians, however, is an inaccurate statement. The PA was never set up, financed, and armed by the US and Israel as

a force of liberation, but as an obstacle to Palestinian freedom. We are witnessing the final proof of this claim. It is taking place in Jenin now; in fact, throughout the West Bank. Of course, the PA will not be able to crush the Palestinian Resistance, which the supposedly mighty Israeli army has failed to subdue over the course of years.

But the question remains: how long will the PA be allowed to serve the role of the enforcers of the Israeli occupation and the protector of settlers, while still promoting itself as the guardian of Palestinian rights, freedom, and statehood?

The article first appeared on Ramzi Baroud's website.

Amid ashes, blood

Palestinian Authority carves its claim on Gaza

By Bana Abu Zuluf & Ameer Faleh
Scholars

OPINION

Antonio Gramsci's famous words — “The old world is dying, the new world is struggling to be born; now is the time of monsters” — capture the grim state of Palestinian politics today. Among Palestinians, one of the most glaring “monsters” is the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA's legitimacy has steadily eroded, particularly under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas, who has clung to power since his presidential mandate expired in 2009. Once touted as an interim administrative body, the PA now functions primarily as an arm of Israeli occupation, prioritizing its survival over the liberation of the Palestinian people.

Its role in the West Bank has become one of containment and counter-insurgency, a betrayal that fuels widespread anger among Palestinians. Now, with the unprecedented destruction in Gaza, the PA sees an opportunity to position itself as central to the strip's future governance — but this is less a strategy for unity and more a desperate bid for relevance.

PA's decay

The erosion of the PA's legitimacy has been a slow but steady process. In a 2023 poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 62% of Palestinians called the PA a burden, while 68% said the Oslo process harmed Palestinian national interests. Corruption is rampant, with PA officials enriching themselves while ordinary Palestinians suffer. Much of its budget, funded by international donors, props up a bloated bureaucracy and security forces instead of addressing the needs of the people.

It is this international recognition of Palestine by countries such as Ireland, Norway, and Spain that lends the PA some semblance of legitimacy within the framework of the two-state solution. But this recognition rings hollow for many Palestinians, who see the PA's reliance on donor funding as proof of its prioritization of foreign interests.

The PA's so-called “security coordination” with Israel exemplifies this dependency. Presented as a measure to ensure stability, it has functioned as a mechanism to suppress Palestinian resistance. It targets dissidents and dismantles grassroots networks, leaving many to view the PA not as a representative of Palestinian aspirations but as a collaborator in maintaining the occupation.

The West Bank offers a stark picture of the PA's complicity. Its security forces regularly suppress protests, detain activists, and silence dissent, often violently. During Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza, the PA's repression escalated further. According to the Committee for Political Prisoners, the PA had killed five Palestinians and arrested dozens more by the end of 2023. Just three weeks ago, the PA launched a security campaign to uproot the resistance forces in Jenin. Dubbed “The Protection of the Homeland,” the campaign aims to “[restore] the camp from the grip of outlaws who disrupted the citizen's daily life and deprived them of their right to access public services freely and securely”. Similarly, in 2008, the PA enacted a count-



Palestinian Authority security officers launch smoke grenades during clashes with Palestinians in the West Bank city of Jenin on December 16, 2024.
NASSER ISHTAYEH/FLASH90

er-insurgency campaign in Jenin titled “Smile and Hope” in order to neutralize the resistance under the guise of law and order.

These actions are justified by the PA as measures to maintain “law and order,” but in reality, they have emboldened Israel's control over the West Bank. Rather than supporting the broader Palestinian struggle, the PA has entrenched the status quo.

Gaza gambit

The PA's conduct in Gaza follows a long history of political opportunism. Since 2007, when Hamas took control of the strip, the PA has treated Gaza with disdain, cutting salaries, withholding essential services, and imposing punitive measures causing misery and immiseration. Now, in the aftermath of an Israeli onslaught, the PA is seizing the moment to reinsert itself into Gaza's governance.

The strategy is not new. After the Second Intifada, the PA capitalized on international support for reconstruction by introducing donor-driven governance reforms and positioning itself as a stabilizing force. Figures like Salam Fayyad, hailed as technocrats, were promoted to satisfy international demands for “good governance”. Yet these efforts did

little to address the underlying causes of Palestinian suffering: apartheid, settler colonization, and the lack of sovereignty. A similar script is unfolding today, with Mohammad Mustafa's appointment as prime minister. While the PA touts Mustafa's technocratic credentials as a step toward revitalization, such moves primarily aim to reassure international stakeholders that the PA remains a viable partner for reconstruction and counter-insurgency.

The PA's ambitions in Gaza are complicated by rival actors. Hamas remains a significant force, despite the devastation in the strip. It views the PA's overtures as a veiled attempt to reassert control under the guise of reconstruction. Adding to the complexity is Mohammad Dahlan, a former Fatah strongman backed by the UAE, who has positioned himself as a contender for influence in Gaza. Dahlan's 2017 rapprochement with Hamas allowed him to channel Emirati aid into Gaza, boosting his popularity. Recently, he has positioned himself as an alternative to both Abbas and Hamas, branding Gaza's future under the mantra of “No Abbas, No Hamas.” Dahlan's UAE backing and ability to mobilize resources pose a threat to the PA's plans for Gaza, while Hamas continues to resist both forces.

Committee of Community Support

In the face of these challenges, the PA has turned to a new mechanism: the creation of a Committee of Community Support. This committee, formed in agreement with Hamas in order to establish the “political capital” necessary for a cease-fire in Gaza, is tasked with administering Gaza's daily affairs — health, education, infrastructure, reconstruction, aid distribution, and border crossings — until elections or a governance framework is agreed upon.

This move reflects the PA's attempt to establish itself as an indispensable actor in Gaza's reconstruction. Yet, key issues remain unresolved, particularly concerning the role of Gaza's security forces and the resistance factions. These omissions suggest the PA is testing the waters, with three potential scenarios in play:

- 1. Regional security oversight:** The PA may aim to establish a regional security force led by the UAE, as proposed by Israel, while sidelining Hamas through hidden agreements. Such a move could hint at a rapprochement between Abbas and Dahlan.
- 2. Monopoly on aid and reconstruction regime:** By monopolizing aid and reconstruction, the PA might seek to weaken

both Dahlan and Hamas, presenting itself as an indispensable partner for international donors. However, Gaza's resistance factions and public opinion are unlikely to tolerate a PA-controlled security presence.

- 3. Bid for political clout:** The committee could provide the PA with a much-needed boost in political relevance. By cooperating with Hamas on this limited basis, the PA may hope to quell internal dissent and present itself as a stabilizing force in Gaza's reconstruction. While these scenarios reflect the PA's desperate bid for survival, its quest for legitimacy among Palestinians remains questionable.

What comes next?

Gramsci's “time of monsters” is an apt metaphor for the PA's current role. It is a creature of the Oslo era, sustained by the very forces that perpetuate Palestinian suffering. Its reliance on external actors, from donor nations to international recognition, ensures its survival even as it alienates the Palestinian people by acting as a proxy for Israeli security interests. The stakes for the PA were best articulated by a Palestinian Authority official at the start of the aggression against Gaza, who stated that “this time, Israel must destroy Hamas, otherwise

[the PA] is done.” It is through this logic of eliminating Hamas, while keeping the flimsy status quo afloat in the West Bank through coercion and coordination with Israel, that the Palestinian Authority is negotiating the terms of the “Gaza cake”. Attempting to sideline both Hamas and Dahlan while trying to win a faltering international legitimacy, has been the *raison d'être* of the PA in the wake of October 7. Israel's genocide, as such, strengthens the PA's bargaining position in its negotiations with Hamas through the flattening of neighborhoods, assassinations of Gaza's security forces, and the killing of the political and military leadership of the resistance.

Hamas, for its part, is aiming to have a say in the day after while recognizing that any post-cease-fire arrangement will differ from previous aggressions in Gaza. For Hamas, harm-reduction to both the people of Gaza and the autonomy of resistance remains a central issue, which it cannot give up.

Recent developments underscore this dynamic. Abbas's appointment of Rouhi Fattouh as interim president in the event of his departure signals the PA's focus on maintaining its structure rather than addressing its legitimacy crisis. This continuity may reassure international donors, but it does little to inspire confidence among Palestinians.

As Gaza's future hangs in the balance, so does the broader trajectory of Palestinian politics. The PA's attempts to assert itself in Gaza are unlikely to rebuild trust or address the root causes of the Palestinian struggle. Instead, they risk deepening divisions and perpetuating a system that prioritizes power over liberation. The time of monsters cannot last forever. But whether the PA's eventual collapse will pave the way for a unified resistance or new challenges remains uncertain. What is clear is that the Palestinian people are yearning for leadership that genuinely reflects their aspirations for freedom and justice — a leadership that is unlikely to emerge from the PA's halls in Ramallah.

The article first appeared on Mondoweiss.

From Doha defeat to Paris podiums:

How did Iranian sport fare in 2024?



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

From a semifinal setback at the AFC Asian Cup in Doha to astonishing Olympic medals in Paris, 2024 was filled with

highs and lows for Iranian sport.

As the calendar year comes to a close, the following provides a brief overview of how Iranian athletes performed in various international events over the past 12 months.



Iranian wrestler Mohammad-Hadi Saravi celebrates the Greco-Roman 97kg final victory at the Paris Olympics on Aug. 7, 2024.
● ALIREZA SOTAKBAR/ISNA

Last-four heartbreak

The year began with the flagship international showpiece of Asian football in Qatar, where three-time champion Iran was desperate to end a 48-year wait for the elusive crown.

With strike force duo Mahdi Taremi and Sardar Azmoun spearheading one of the finest generations of Iranian football, Team Melli won the group with maximum points before laboring to a shootout win against Syria in the round of 16.

The pinnacle of Iran's campaign came in the quarterfinals as Mohammad Mobein and Alireza Jahanbakhsh found the net in the second half, the latter scoring from the spot in the 96th minute, to help Amir Qalenoee's side pull off a 2-1 comeback victory over Asian powerhouse Japan.

The triumph, however, was followed by a 3-2 loss to the host as Iran fell to a second consecutive semifinal defeat in the competition.

Qalenoee's men still managed to finish the year on a high note, claiming five wins – including a 4-1 rout of Qatar – in a six-game unbeaten run to sit firmly atop the World Cup qualification group, and are on the verge of securing a place in the 2026 finals in North America when the qualifiers are back in late March.

Wrestling, taekwondo to the rescue

It was more or less business as usual for Iran at the Paris Olympics in July and August as the country again had wrestling and taekwondo representatives to thank for the taste of glory in the sporting extravaganza. Eight of the 11 wrestlers left the French capital with a medal, while all four members of the taekwondo squad finished on the podium to steer Iran's 40-athlete delegation to the 21st spot in the medal table – six places better off than the Tokyo Olympics three years ago, where Iran had to settle for seven medals despite sending 65 athletes to the Games.

Iran's taekwondo campaign was one for the ages after the team made a clean sweep of four medals. Young gun Arian Salimi walked away with the ultimate prize in the men's +80kg contests to round off a thrilling, action-packed four days for the Iranians in the Grand Palais, notching up a first Olympic taekwondo gold for the country since Hadi Saei's triumph in Beijing 2008.

Nahid Kiani and teenage sensation Moina Ne'matzadeh made history in the

women's competitions as the former became the first Iranian girl to reach the final showpiece in any Olympic event before taking the -57kg silver, while the latter's -49kg bronze meant this year's Games were the most productive for the Iranian female athletes. Mehran Barkhordari also produced magnificent performances to end Iran's 12-year wait for a men's final spot, though he was ultimately beaten in the -80kg showdown.

The wrestling event, meanwhile, was packed with mixed emotions for the Iranian fans. While the country enjoyed the introduction of some up-and-coming stars, as well as sensational victories over high-profile opponents, there was a disappointing conclusion to Iran's quest for a first freestyle gold since Rio 2016. Looking to dethrone Saei as Iran's most decorated Olympian, Hassan Yazdani was hit with a recurring shoulder injury in the untimely fashion – the early seconds of the 86kg final showdown against Bulgaria's Magomed Ramazanov, which cost the Iranian a 7-1 defeat. Amirhossein Zare' was the ultimate favorite for the superheavyweight gold in Paris prior to the event but a crazy three minutes of action in the final saw the Iranian trail Geno Petriashvili by nine points at the break and the second-period surge proved too little too late as it finished 10-9 in the Georgian's favor. The story was the same for Rahman Amouzad, who ran riot against two world champions in American Zain Retherford and Bulgaria's Ismail Musukaev before being stunned 10-3 by low-profile Japanese Kotaro Kiyooka in the 65kg final.

Iranian prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira fell to a first-round defeat against eventual gold medalist Akhmed Tazhudinov but still capped his decent run with a consolation bronze in the 97kg class thanks to a massive win against American great Kyle Snyder. There was more joy for the Iranian wrestlers in the Greco-Roman competitions, as Saeid Esmaeili (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) emerged as surprise gold medalists of their respective weight classes. Alireza Mohmadi, 21, also had every reason to be proud of his Olympic debut despite an 87kg final setback, while 130kg bronze medalist Amin Mirzazadeh would have definitely finished with a more prestigious medal, had it not been for a second-round loss to legendary Cuban Mijaín López, who went on to grab an Olympic-record fifth successive gold. At the end of the Games, the 12-medal

haul was the second best for Iran in 19 Olympic participations, with London 2012 remaining the most prolific with 13, including seven golds.

There were more taekwondo and wrestling glories for the Iranians throughout the year.

The World Junior Championships in October was yet another indication of Iranian taekwondo being on the right track, as seven golds medals, as well as double silvers and bronzes apiece saw Iran beat South Korea to the men's and women's team titles in its own backyard.

In wrestling, Iranians continued their success in age-group competitions, with October's double under-23 crowns in Tirana taking the country's tally to 14 team trophies in five years across different youth-level world championships.

Record haul

Iran celebrated an all-time most productive Paralympic campaign since the first participation in Seoul 1988, collecting a remarkable 25 medals across 11 days of action in Paris in August and September.

The Iranian men's sitting volleyball team won a magnificent eighth title, while shooting sensation Sareh Javanmardi grabbed a third successive women's 10m air pistol gold, with further achievements in powerlifting, athletics, archery, taekwondo, and judo events helping the Iranian delegation finish with eight golds, 10 silver, and seven bronzes.

the outcome would have been even better, had Sadeq Beit Sayyah not been stripped of the javelin throw gold for celebrating with a religious flag, which was deemed a violation of the Games' code of conduct.

Bronze on the beach

The Iranian men's futsal team lifted a record-extending 13th Asian title in April – at the expense of host Thailand in the final – but Vahid Shamsaei's men failed to progress beyond the last-16 round in September's World Cup, suffering a 4-3 loss to African champion Morocco in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

The year was also one to forget for Iranian volleyball, after the men's national team finished second from bottom in the 16-team table of the preliminary round and missed out on a berth for the Paris Olympics.

Iranian beach soccer team, however, reveled in a glorious World Cup run in February as the Asian champion hammered Belarus 6-1 in the third-place contest, emulating an all-time best finish in the event



Iranian skipper Alireza Jahanbakhsh is dejected by the semifinal defeat against Qatar in the AFC Asian Cup in Doha, Qatar, on Feb. 7, 2024.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



Iran's Nahid Kiani poses with her taekwondo silver medal at the Paris Olympics on Aug. 8, 2024.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO



Members of the Iranian sitting volleyball team celebrate after winning the gold medal at the Paris Paralympics on Sept. 7, 2024.
● IRNA

Pezeshkian: Iran pursues peace, security in West Asia

International Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that Iran's practical approach is to secure peace and security in the region, calling for more "serious interaction" between Iran and Oman in this regard.

Pezeshkian said in a meeting with Oman's visiting Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi that his government's foreign policy is based on "expanding relations and strengthening cooperation with all Islamic countries, neighbors and friends," stressing that Oman has a privileged position among them.

The president said it is not acceptable that regional countries and Muslim nations suffer differences of which a "criminal" regime like Israel can take advantage to harm the regional states.

Referring to "long-standing and friendly" relations between Tehran and Muscat, Pezeshkian said the "continuation and further expansion of these constructive relations is of great importance

to the Islamic Republic of Iran." He also pointed to an agreement reached between the two countries to hold the next meeting of the Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation in the near future, saying that good measures are underway to accelerate the implementation of previous agreements.

Oman's foreign minister said that expansion of relations with Iran based on mutual respect, and trust has been an "unchangeable principle" for Oman. Badr al-Busaidi who arrived in Tehran on Monday, before his talks with Pezeshkian, held a separate meeting with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. During a joint press conference, Araghchi said Iran and Oman as well as the majority of countries in the region have commonalities on the regional issues and all call for the promotion of independence and stability in Syria.

Syria situation

"We have consensus on maintenance of territorial integrity

and unity, respect for all ethnics and religions and the formation of an inclusive government in Syria," the Iranian minister said. Iran's positions have much in common with Oman and most of the countries in the region, and we all want independence and stability in Syria.

Syria has been witnessing chaotic scenes after militants, led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), took control of Damascus on December 8 and declared an end to former president Bashar al-Assad's rule in a surprise offensive that was launched from their stronghold in northwestern parts of the country, reaching the capital in less than two weeks.

Araghchi further pointed to close stance and constant consultations between Iran and Oman on regional matters and said the two countries stress the need to establish an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and send aid to the war-ravaged Strip.

At least 45,514 Palestinians, mostly children and women,

have been killed and 108,189 people wounded in the war that Israel began on October 7, 2023 following a retaliatory operation by the Palestinian territory's resistance movements.

Pointing to mutual talks about the developments in Yemen, the Iranian foreign minister said Tehran and Muscat condemn the joint attacks by the United States and the Israeli regime on the Yemeni territory.

Bilateral ties

Araghchi also hailed "growing" relations between Tehran and Muscat in various fields and said a meeting of the two countries' joint economic committee would convene in Oman next month.

He added that the volume of trade between the two countries has been tripled in the last Iranian calendar year (ended on March 19) in comparison with three years ago.

The value of the two countries' trade in the last Iranian year reached 2.5 billion dollars, Araghchi noted.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) meets with Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi in Tehran on December 30, 2024.
president.ir

Iran confirms apprehension of Italian journo for 'violating law'



Cecilia Sala
AFP

Iran confirmed on Monday that it had arrested Italian journalist Cecilia Sala for "violating the law," state media reported, a move that has been decryed by Italy as "unacceptable."

"Cecilia Sala, an Italian citizen, travelled to Iran on December 13, 2024 with a journalist's visa and was

arrested on December 19, 2024 for violating the law of the Islamic Republic of Iran," the official IRNA news agency said, citing a statement by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. "Her case is currently under investigation," added the ministry, which oversees and accredits foreign journalists in Iran.

Chora Media, an Italian podcast publisher for which Sala worked, said she had travelled from Rome to Iran on a journalist visa, and was due to return on December 20.

On Friday, Italy denounced Sala's arrest as "unacceptable" and said she has been held in Tehran's Evin prison. Italy's ambassador to Tehran, Paola Amadei, has visited her. Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on Saturday that efforts to free Sala were "complicated." The Iranian ministry confirmed Monday that Sala had been allowed consular assistance and "has been in contact with her family by phone."

Afghanistan's dam construction on Harirud to affect millions: Iran



International Desk

Iran said Afghanistan's construction of a dam on the Hari River (Harirud) will affect the supply of drinking water for several million people and will lead to widespread damage to the downstream environment. The spokesman for Iran's water industry Isa Bozorgzadeh said Iran

considers Afghanistan's unilateral exploitation of the river as a violation of conventional rights.

Bozorgzadeh said the construction of Pashdan Dam on the Harirud would lead to decrease in the volume of water entering Iran - a move that will cause problems in supplying drinking water for Iran's northeastern city of Mashhad.

The Iranian official said Tehran has repeatedly expressed its official protest against the consequences of the construction of a dam by the Afghan side on the Hari River and has called for joint cooperation to minimize the effects of such measures and choosing "sustainable development instead of destructive development."

Iran and Afghanistan have been locked in a protracted water dispute which has been escalated after Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021. At the heart of the dispute is the Hilmand River, which originates in the Hindu Kush Mountains near Kabul and flows 700 miles (1,126 kilometers) south before flowing into Hamoun wetlands, located in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

The two countries signed a water-sharing accord on the Hilmand River in 1973, under which Afghanistan pledged to deliver an average of 820 million cubic meters of water per annum to Iran.

Iran has repeatedly criticized Afghanistan for failing to honor the agreement in letter and spirit.

WHO demands Israel release Gaza hospital director

The WHO chief called Monday for the immediate release of Hossam Abu Safiyeh, director of Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, who is being held by Israel's military following a major raid on the facility.

The Friday-Saturday assault on Kamal Adwan in Beit Lahia left northern Gaza's last major health facility out of service and emptied of patients, the World Health Organization said, AFP reported.

"Hospitals in Gaza have once again become battlegrounds and the health system is under severe threat," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X.

"Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza is out of service following the raid, forced patient and staff evacuation and the detention of its director. His whereabouts are unknown. We call for his immediate release."

Israel's military claimed Sunday that its forces had killed approximately 20 Palestinian fighters and apprehended 240 others in the raid, calling it one of its "largest operations" conducted in the territory.

The military also said had detained Abu Safiyeh, suspecting him of being a Hamas fighter. When asked if he had been transferred to the occupied territory for further questioning, the military did not offer an immediate comment.

Tedros said the patients in critical condition at Kamal Adwan had been moved to the Indonesian Hospital, "which is itself out of function".

"Amid ongoing chaos in northern Gaza, WHO and partners today delivered basic medical and hygiene supplies, food and water to Indonesian Hospital and transferred 10 critical patients to Al-Shifa Hospital," he said.



Hossam Abu Safiyeh

"Al-Ahli Hospital and Al-Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital in Gaza City also faced attacks today and both are damaged," Tedros added.

"We repeat: stop attacks on hospitals. People in Gaza need access to health care. Humanitarians need access to provide health aid."

Since October 6 this year, Israeli operations in Gaza have focused on the north, with officials claiming their land and air offensive aims to prevent Hamas from regrouping.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi

Cartoonist



Minister: Iran bent on removing tourism barriers, boosting ties with Saudi Arabia

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, announced significant plans to enhance tourism connections with Saudi Arabia and other neighboring countries, including Bahrain and Kuwait. Speaking at a conference held in Tehran on December 29, Salehi Amiri emphasized the government's commitment to eliminating barriers for tourism operators and fostering international tourism. "The will of the government and the president, along with other state institutions such as the Parliament and the Judiciary, is to

remove obstacles facing tourism operators," he said. He stressed the need to move beyond the daily challenges in the tourism sector and to identify and eliminate the factors hindering growth. Salehi Amiri noted that flight services from Saudi Arabia to Mashhad have commenced, with Riyadh seeking to increase the number of flights. He also mentioned that preparations are underway to facilitate the entry of tourists from Bahrain and Kuwait in the future. In addressing the current state of tourism, he stated, "We must avoid despair and seriously focus on attracting tourists."

The minister outlined one of the government's key initiatives: To identify various sectors for attracting tourists from different countries, prioritizing those in the Nowruz cultural sphere initially, followed by assessing additional potential markets. Salehi Amiri also revealed that Iran has around 2,700 ongoing projects, including 550 hotel projects. "We plan to open 100 hotels annually and provide facilities to investors," he added. He emphasized that the tourism sector's recovery post-COVID-19 relies heavily on travel agencies and related entities, describing them as the "motor of Iran's tourism industry."

Additionally, Salehi Amiri pointed out Iran's rich cultural heritage, stating, "Iran holds a valuable place in cultural heritage and historical identity." He cited the historical region of Jiroft as an example of Iran's significant historical treasures. He urged for innovative means to present these values to the world and combat the phenomenon of Iranophobia. In conclusion, Amiri reaffirmed the importance of all sectors within the tourism industry, stating, "All parts of the tourism sector are significant to us, and we will support them. We believe that tourism agencies connect all elements of the industry".



Deputy minister: Handicrafts sector panacea for cultural, economic growth

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, unveiled the National Handicrafts Development Document. During a ceremony held at the ministry's office, Jalali emphasized that the document epitomizes the dedication and commitment of all relevant officials and stakeholders, IRNA reported. "This national document was developed spontaneously over two years by artists, experts, and activists in the handicrafts sector," Jalali stated, highlighting the collaborative effort behind its creation. She noted, "We are all striving for the development and prosperity of handicrafts because we believe this sector is a key to our cultural and economic growth." The event saw the participation of various dignitaries, including the Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, and members of the Parliament's handicrafts commission, along with numerous government and private sector managers and seasoned artisans. Jalali reiterated that the goal is to make the document a "people-centered" initiative, aligning it with the objectives of the country's Seventh Development Plan. "We are witnessing a consensus in society, and the National Handicrafts Development Document aims to foster this unity,"



she added. Describing the document as a reflection of the values inherent in handicrafts, Jalali pointed out its significance as a vital tool for job creation and cultural transmission. "Handicrafts are family-oriented, with women being the primary producers in this field," she noted, underscoring the essential role of women in the handicraft industry. Furthermore, Jalali remarked that the formulation of the national document represents a collective effort, stating, "This is not just an event, but the fruit of collaboration among various organizations." She announced the establishment of four working groups to enhance the implementation of the document and achieve better outcomes. Jalali expressed optimism about the support from various sectors, including the government and parliament, declaring, "Handicrafts lead to dignified livelihoods, and we are fortunate to see considerable backing for this field."

Carter and Iran: Clash ...

The 39th president of the United States died on December 29, 2024, at the age of 100, on the anniversary of his trip to Iran. During his historic trip to Iran in late December 1977, which took place on New Year Eve, Carter introduced Iran as "an island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world." This visit became a symbol of the clash between global policies and the political and civil transformations occurring in Iran at the time, marking one of the turning points in the contemporary history of the country. In the early years following the fall of the Shah and the victory of the Islamic Revolution, many critics viewed Carter's failure to be re-elected as president of the United States as a result of his mishandling of the hostage crisis at the US Embassy in Tehran, which was seized by "the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line." This is a narrative about Jimmy Carter's life after his presidency, written by an Iranian journalist: "Although Jimmy Carter lived for 44 years after the end of his presidency, he likely thought about those 444 days during all those years when his mind was occupied with how to secure the release of 52 American hostages in Iran. These hostages were held ... as a form of punishment for the US' 25 years of interference in Iranian affairs, and they were released under an agreement in Algeria; precisely when Ronald Reagan was taking the presidential oath." An interesting point to note is that Carter passed away on the anniversary of his trip to Iran. The then-President of the US arrived in Iran on December 31, 1977, along with his wife, Rosalynn Smith, and attended a banquet at Niavaran Palace. Carter's presence in Iran is a narrative of the clash between politics and fate, leaving an unforgettable image in the history of the country's contemporary foreign policy; an image that suggests even the "Island of Stability," from the perspective of the global hegemon's leader, can with-

in just one year become host to a revolution that would challenge this self-proclaimed hegemony in the heart of the Middle East for over four decades. **From birth to politics** Born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia, Carter became one of the most influential political figures of the 20th century. His father was a conservative and a segregationist, while his mother was a free-thinking woman who devoted a significant part of her life to caring for underprivileged families in Georgia. His political career began in 1962 when he won the Georgia state senate election. At that time, Carter was a supporter of "John F. Kennedy" and was known for his integrity and independent views, although politics did not always favor him. He lost in the Democratic primary for the governorship of Georgia in 1966, but this setback set the stage for his powerful comeback in 1970. Carter not only secured the Democratic nomination this time but also became the governor of Georgia by defeating his Republican opponent. He then focused on the 1976 presidential election. The political climate in the US at that time, especially following the Watergate scandal that led to Richard Nixon's resignation, presented a golden opportunity for him. By analyzing the Democrats' defeat in the 1972 election, Carter concluded that winning the 1976 election required a moderate candidate from outside the power circles in Washington—someone who could restore the public's trust. This strategy propelled him from state governor to president of the US. **Elections and victory of Democrats** Carter was one of the ten candidates in the Democratic Party's primaries for the presidential nomination in 1976. Though unknown to many voters, his firm positions on preventing waste of government resources, advocating for a balanced budget, and addressing the needs of the poor increased his popularity.

In the fall of 1976, his victory in the US presidential election had profound effects on the political landscape of Iran. Historical evidence shows that Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi was not pleased with Carter's victory over Republican candidate Gerald Ford in the US elections. The Shah, who had close ties with the Republicans, especially Richard Nixon, preferred US policies to be pursued under the management of this party. **Carter's policy and Pahlavi regime** Nixon, the Republican president, had adopted policies in support of the Pahlavi regime; extensive sales of military weapons were conducted, the role of regional gendarme was assigned to this regime, and the Pahlavi regime was considered the closest political-military ally of the US in the region. Although Carter's stances on "defending human rights" and "criticizing arms sales to dictatorial regimes" could have raised concerns for the Shah, after Carter entered the White House, he adopted a dual policy. On one hand, he emphasized human rights, political openness, and limiting arms sales, while on the other hand, he gradually leaned towards greater cooperation with the Shah's regime. The bilateral military relations underwent significant changes during the years 1976 to the fall of the regime under Carter's presidency. Initially, restrictions were imposed on the export of military equipment. These restrictions were later lifted, although many military contracts did not reach the implementation stage after the revolution due to specific US laws regarding the export of military equipment and the need for a lengthy process. During Carter's presidency, three main approaches towards third-world countries were observed: Pressuring authoritarian regimes to respect human rights and democracy, reducing military and intelligence presence, and striving for international peace. The Shah of Iran leveraged the support of his friends in the Carter admin-

istration and the US Congress to alleviate external pressures and successfully regained Washington's backing. The Pahlavi regime, influenced by political pressures from human rights organizations and in an effort to win Carter's favor, took measures to reduce these pressures; among them, the dismissal of "Amir Abbas Hoveyda," its prime minister who had held executive responsibilities in accordance with the Shah's wishes for nearly 13 years, followed by his arrest. Additionally, individuals involved in suppressing political groups and opposition parties were arrested and tried. After Hoveyda, "Jamshid Amouzegar" came to power. From then on, as the scope of crises expanded, prime ministers changed one after another because they lacked the capacity to overcome the crises, and cabinet changes did little to sustain the regime or resolve internal issues. In the year 1977, the Shah traveled to the US once, and Carter visited Iran again, when he introduced Iran as "an island of stability." These reciprocal visits and official meetings indicated political support for maintaining the status quo. Until the convening of the Guadeloupe Summit in January 1979, when the internal situation in Iran had reached a critical stage, the US still hoped for the Shah's survival and supported Bakhtiar's government and the establishment of the Regency Council to protect its interests after the Guadeloupe Summit. Therefore, it must be said that Carter retreated from his human rights rhetoric and, like his predecessors, continued to provide unconditional support for the Shah. Carter's historic visit to Iran and his laudatory remarks at the dinner at Niavaran Palace seemed to underscore this policy shift. He stated, "Our views on security issues are closer with no country than with Iran. I have no leader for whom I feel more gratitude and friendship than the Shah," but just a year after these remarks, the Shah fell, and the Islamic Revolution triumphed.