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due in Tehran  
on Sunday

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# Iran Daily

Vol. 7839 • Saturday, May 24, 2025 • Khordad 03, 1404 • Dhu al-Qadah 26, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages



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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (c) is seen among members of his negotiating team after a fifth round of nuclear talks with the United States in Rome, Italy on May 23, 2025.

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# Araghchi: Oman’s proposed solutions could be ‘helpful’ in US talks

Negotiations ‘too complicated’ but on ‘reasonable path’

International Desk

Iran’s foreign minister said on Friday that Oman had suggested solutions that could be helpful in nuclear negotiations between Iran and the US as the two countries concluded their fifth round of talks in Rome. Speaking with Iran’s state TV shortly after the end of negotiations, Abbas Araghchi described the Friday’s talks as one of the “most professional rounds of negotiations” which are aimed at resolving a longstanding dispute on Iran’s nuclear program. Araghchi, who leads the Iranian negotiating team in the talks mediated by Oman, said that Iran’s delegation once again declared the positions and principles of Iran regarding the negotiations. “Our positions are completely clear and we firmly stand by them. We now think that there is a better understanding of these positions on the American side”, he added. The Iranian foreign minister said that Omani Foreign Minister Badr

Al-Busaidi presented some proposals aimed at removing obstacles and paving the way for progress in the negotiations, adding that it was agreed that further expert work would be carried out by both sides on the solutions and will be conveyed to the respective capitals. He noted that Tehran and Washington would present their views on the proposals and then the next round of negotiations will be arranged. Iran’s top diplomat expressed hope that in the next round of talks, Tehran and Washington will be able to go into some detail.

‘Complicated negotiations’

“The negotiations are too complicated to be resolved in two or three meetings,” said Araghchi. “But the fact that we’re now on a reasonable path, in my view, is a step forward in itself.” Oman’s foreign minister said on X that the fifth round of negotiations concluded “with some but not conclusive progress,” adding that he



Members of the Iranian delegation arrive at the Omani embassy in Rome for a fifth round of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States on May 23, 2025. ● AFP

hoped “the remaining issues” will be clarified in the coming days. The fourth round of talks, in the Omani capital Muscat, ended with a public spat over Iran’s uranium enrichment. US top negotiator Steve Witkoff said Washington “could not authorize even one percent” enrichment – a position Tehran called a red line, citing its rights under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Ahead of Friday’s talks, Araghchi said “fundamental differences” remained with the US, while adding that Tehran was open to its nuclear sites undergoing more inspections. “We will not have an agreement at all” if the US wants to prevent Iran from enriching uranium, he said. The Atomic Energy Organization of



Iran (AEOI) says the country’s nuclear industry employs 17,000 people, similar to other countries where uranium is enriched for civilian use. “The Netherlands, Belgium, South Korea, Brazil and Japan enrich (ura-

nium) without possessing nuclear weapons,” AEOI spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said. US President Donald Trump has threatened Iran with military attack if no agreement is reached.

## Iran’s Armed Forces vow firm response to any hostile act

National Desk

Iran’s General Staff of the Armed Forces in a statement on Friday warned that the country’s military would respond “with strength and authority” to any threat or hostile act against Iran. The statement came on the occasion of the anniversary of liberation of Iran’s southwestern city of Khorramshahr from the forces of Iraq’s Ba’ath regime in 1982. The statement said the arrogant powers incited Iraq’s former dic-

tator Saddam Hussein to impose an eight-year war on Iran. “The outcome of this aggression was nothing but defeat, disgrace, and humiliation for them, and honor and pride for our beloved country,” the statemen added. “Today, as well, the United States has once again fallen into a miscalculation.” Blaming the US for inciting tensions in the region, the statement accused the American President Donald Trump of attempting to provoke Iran’s neighboring countries and revive failed policies of

“Iranophobia” to gain financial and political advantage. “The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic will respond decisively and powerfully to any threat or hostile action targeting the values of the Islamic Revolution,” the statement read. It also warned that any further American “interference” in the region would have consequences similar to the US experiences in Vietnam and Afghanistan. The statement urged US leaders to reflect on Iran’s history of resilience and avoid further missteps.

## Pakistani PM Sharif due in Tehran on Sunday

International Desk

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to visit Iran as part of a four-nation tour which will also take him to Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan from May 25 to 30. According to Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the tour offers an opportunity for the prime minister to express gratitude for the support shown to

Pakistan by friendly nations during its recent diplomatic tensions with India. A deadly April 22 attack on Indian tourists in Kashmir triggered four days of exchange of fire between India and Pakistan, which claimed the lives of more than 70 people. During the visits, Pakistan’s prime minister is expected to hold high-level discussions with the leadership of each country on a broad range of issues, in-

cluding bilateral ties, regional developments, and international affairs. Prime Minister Sharif’s visit will include detailed discussions on regional security, the global political climate, and strategies for long-term cooperation. According to IRNA, Sherif will visit Iran on Sunday. Sharif is also slated to participate in the International Conference on Glaciers in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on May 29–30.

## Yemen says anti-Israel operation ‘successfully achieved its goal’

International Desk

Yemen’s Armed Forces said in a statement that its latest missile attack on the Israeli-occupied territories “successfully achieved its goal.” In a statement, the Armed Forces’ spokesman Yahya Saree said the “operation successfully achieved its goal, causing millions of occupying Zionists to rush to shelters and bringing the airport to a standstill.” The missiles triggered sirens in several areas, the Israeli military said, adding that it had intercepted a missile launched from Yemen towards Israel early on Thursday, prompting suspension of flights at Ben Gurion Airport. Hours later, a second missile was in-

tercepted, again forcing a temporary suspension of flights at the airport. Yemen also said it had launched drones at targets in Tel Aviv and Haifa. More than a million Israeli settlers went into bomb shelters when the first missile was targeted, Israeli media reported. Operations at Ben Gurion were temporarily halted, and several flights were delayed in the air. Israel’s Magen David Adom emergency service said there were no casualties from either launch, though one man was hurt while seeking shelter from the first. Yemen’s Armed Forces have repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

Earlier this month, a missile launched from Yemen landed near Ben Gurion Airport, injuring several people after failure of the occupying regime’s air defenses. Yemen paused their attacks during a two-month cease-fire that ended in March, but resumed them after Israel restarted its campaign in Gaza. Yemen’s Armed Forces warned Monday they would impose a “naval blockade” on the Israeli port of Haifa after the occupation army intensified its offensive in Gaza. Israel has carried out retaliatory strikes against Yemen, including one on May 6 that damaged Yemen’s main airport in Sana’a, and others last week that hit the Red Sea ports of Hodeida and Salif.

## FM spox: New sanctions impugn US seriousness in nuclear talks

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said on Friday that new US sanctions announced ahead of the fifth round of indirect talks between the two sides cast doubt on Washington’s seriousness to follow the path of diplomacy. Baqaei made the remarks in an X post on Friday, two days after the US State Department said people or entities that provide Iran with certain construction-related materials will face sanctions. In a statement, the US Department of State claimed on Wednesday that it had found Iran’s construction sector was controlled by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and that it had identified another 10 strategic materials now subject to US sanctions. “With these determinations, the United States has broader sanctions authorities to prevent Iran from acquiring strategic materials for its construction sector under IRGC control and its proliferation programs,” it said in a statement. The 10 materials include austenitic nickel-chromium alloy, magnesium ingots, sodium perchlorate, tungsten copper and certain aluminum sheets and tubes, among others, it said. The Iranian Foreign Ministry’s spokesman condemned the coercive US measures as “outrageous” and “unlawful and inhuman,” saying the bans are “no less than crimes



against humanity” as they deprive Iranians of their basic human rights. “The US’s consecutive rounds of sanctions only reinforce our people’s deeply-held belief that the American decision makers are set to make every malign effort to hinder Iran’s development & progress,” he added. “These sanctions, announced on the eve of the fifth round of Iran-US indirect talks, further put to question the American willingness & seriousness for diplomacy.” Baqaei also expressed the Iranian nation’s resolve to “remain steadfast and strong” in the face of US animosity and hostile measures. The remarks came hours before the fifth round of Iran-US indirect negotiations, which was held in the Italian capital of Rome. Since taking office in January, US President Donald Trump has imposed several rounds of sanctions on Iran in order to pressure Tehran to sign a nuclear agreement with Washington.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist





# Petchem, oil-derived products dominate Iran’s exports

## Iran-South Africa trade set to gain traction this year: *Joint committee*

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

The chairman of the Iran-South Africa Joint Trade Committee at the Iran Chamber of Commerce announced that bilateral trade and exchanges between the two nations are poised for growth this year. In an interview with Iran Daily, Babak Hedayati described the deepening of bilateral interactions as a promising sign for brighter trade prospects between the two countries, emphasizing, “This year, we will witness more favorable developments in trade and an increase in bilateral exchanges.” Hedayati noted that strong collaboration has already been established among the Joint Trade Committee, the Iran Trade Center in Johannesburg, and the Commercial Attaché of the Islamic Republic of Iran in South Africa. “These three entities form a cohesive economic and trade triangle in South Africa, working in unison to expand commercial cooperation,” he stated.

On the volume of bilateral trade, Hedayati explained, “There is a notable discrepancy between official and unofficial trade figures, as much of the exchange occurs informally through third countries.” “Petrochemical and oil-derived products currently dominate Iran’s exports to South Africa, followed by agricultural goods. Carpets, tailored to local color and design preferences, are another key export item,” he added. “Iran also exports glassware, plastic products, bitumen, metal and iron equipment, rugs, and detergents to South Africa,” he continued. “In return, South Africa primarily exports meat products, sweet corn, soybeans, and minerals to Iran.” Regarding the Joint Trade Committee’s role, Hedayati underlined, “Our mandate is to facilitate economic activities for businesses in both nations and foster collaborative production opportunities. We aim to highlight each country’s economic, industrial, and trade strengths to catalyze joint ventures.” Highlighting recent efforts, he said, “The committee recently arranged for

80 South African business representatives to attend the Iran Expo in early May. Through B2B meetings and face-to-face negotiations, several fruitful agreements were signed between Iranian producers and South African delegates.” Hedayati added, “The committee has established five specialized working groups focused on food industries, agriculture and machinery, health tourism and medical services, industry and mining, knowledge-based enterprises, and petrochemicals. Their goal is to advance cooperation in these sectors.”

### Transportation a key challenge

Hedayati termed transportation as a major hurdle, noting, “The lack of direct maritime or air logistics infrastructure to South Africa has inflated shipping costs, thereby driving up prices for goods exported there.” “To address this,” he said, “We plan to soon form a logistics and transportation working group dedicated to re-



solving these issues.” He also addressed financial obstacles, stressing that, “Monetary sanctions against Iran, coupled with South Africa’s stringent banking policies, have severely hampered financial transactions

between the two countries.” “Additionally,” he concluded, “Iranian businesses’ limited understanding of South Africa’s market dynamics and consumer preferences remains a barrier to deeper trade ties.”

## Tehran, Beijing to boost agricultural knowledge sharing



Iran’s Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri (R) meets Chinese Ambassador to Tehran Cong Peiwu in Tehran on May 22, 2025. ● ILNA

### Economy Desk

Iran’s Agriculture Minister Gholamreza Nouri stated that Iran and China possess valuable expertise in various agricultural subsectors, which can be mutually shared. During a meeting with Cong Peiwu, the Chinese ambassador to Tehran, Nouri emphasized strengthening bilateral agricultural relations, particularly in “the transfer of knowledge, experience, and technology.” Highlighting Iran’s active participation in agricultural initiatives of the Shanghai Co-

Nouri expressed Iran’s readiness to ensure the successful hosting of the SCO Agricultural Ministers’ Meeting, scheduled for August of this year in Beijing, ILNA reported. He also invited China’s agriculture minister to visit Tehran for the third session of the Joint Agricultural Cooperation Committee. Cong, for his part, described the agricultural relations between Iran and China “at a satisfactory level,” adding that his country is currently a “primary destination for Iran’s agricultural exports.” The ambassador affirmed China’s readiness to expand

technical and economic collaboration with Iran across agricultural sectors. China is Iran’s largest trade partner, purchasing substantial volumes of Iranian oil despite US sanctions targeting both nations. Bilateral trade between Iran and China totaled \$2.214 billion in the first two months of 2025, reflecting a 23% decline compared to the same period in 2024 (\$2.884 billion). China’s exports to Iran fell 28% year-on-year to \$1.474 billion (from \$2.052 billion), while its imports from Iran dropped 11% to \$740 million (from \$832 million). The two countries have deepened bilateral ties in recent years, notably through the 25-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2021, which solidified cooperation across trade, energy, and infrastructure.

## ‘More than double’: Iran moves to accelerate gas infrastructure development

### Economy Desk

The acting head of Iran’s Gas Engineering and Development Company announced progress in strategic gas storage, transmission, measurement, and optimization projects, stating, “With the commissioning of gas storage development projects in Sarajeh and Shourijeh, the country’s gas storage capacity will more than double.” In an interview with SHANA, Behnam Mirzaei emphasized that the company, as the executor of major projects for the National Iranian Gas Company, is laying the groundwork for gas industry development, saying, “The company’s mandate includes the design, implementation, and commissioning of high-pressure transmission pipelines, pressure boosting stations, storage projects, measurement systems, and refinery expansion initiatives.” Mirzaei highlighted the Sarajeh Gas Storage Project in Qom (central Iran) — with a current annual capacity of 1 billion cubic meters — as one of the key ongoing storage projects set to become operational this year. “Storage projects involve injecting gas into reservoirs during eight months of warm seasons and utilizing the stored gas in the network during four months of cold seasons, preventing gas supply shortages,” he added.

### Doubling Shourijeh gas storage capacity

Mirzaei noted that another critical project is the Shourijeh Gas Storage Development in Sarakhs region, designed to address supply imbalances in northern and northeastern Iran with an annual capacity of 2.025 billion cubic meters. Iran opened Shourijeh as the largest gas storage



facility in the Middle East in the northeastern province of Khorasan Razavi in 2014. “The Shourijeh D development project, currently 55% physically completed, encompasses upstream, downstream, and general sectors,” he stated. The project involves drilling 28 storage wells and installing three high-capacity compressors, marking the first domestically produced compressors in Iran capable of increasing pressure from 50 bar to 345 bar. “Upon completion, Shourijeh’s gas storage capacity will rise to 4.5 billion cubic meters per year,” Mirzaei added. The official also cited the underground natural gas storage project in the Nasrabad salt domes in Kashan as another key initiative of the company, stating, “Given the region’s geographical position in central Iran and its proximity to transmission pipelines, this project will play a significant role in mitigating gas supply-demand imbalances.” He discussed the company’s measures to accelerate the implementation of priority projects, stating, “Transformations are underway in both software and hardware domains.”

## Eurasian Union says roadmap for free trade with Iran finalized

### Economy Desk

The trade minister of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) said a roadmap had been drafted to operationalize the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the bloc’s five member states and Iran, referencing the implementation of the FTA effective May 15, 2025. During a meeting in Moscow with Samad Hassanzadeh, the head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA), and his accompanying delegation, Andrei Slepnev added, “This roadmap encompasses measures to enhance direct

cooperation between businesses of the EAEU and Iran, as well as thematic seminars to clarify the specifics of trade regulations between the two parties,” as reported by IRNA. The EAEU Trade Minister emphasized that the FTA “establishes unique conditions for commercial actors to access each other’s markets, creates effective mechanisms and platforms for fostering collaboration, swiftly resolving trade and economic cooperation challenges, and strengthens mutual understanding of regulatory frameworks and implementation procedures in our respective countries.”

During the meeting, held at the headquarters of the Eurasian Economic Commission in Moscow, Slepnev viewed the new phase of cooperation with Iran as a partnership, adding, “It is crucial for our entrepreneurs to perceive one another not as competitors but as partners, enabling them to synergize their capabilities and technologies within a unified 250-million-person market.” In another part of his remarks, the EAEU trade minister invited Iranian traders and business leaders to participate in the Eurasian Economic Forum, scheduled for June 26–27 in Minsk, Be-

larus. According to the report, the two sides discussed strengthening trade engagement between EAEU and Iranian business communities under the framework of the FTA. Hassanzadeh addressed existing challenges in trade with the EAEU, highlighting “weak transportation and logistics infrastructure,” stating, “Outdated and insufficient rail and road networks in Iran and parts of Eurasia hinder the acceleration of exports and imports.”

On the trade imbalance, the head of the ICCIMA noted, “Despite Iran’s \$1.5 bil-



lion in exports, imports from Eurasia amounted to \$1.7 billion, reflecting a negative trade balance.”



# Blueprint for 'better deal'

## Trump's approach to negotiations with Iran

### INTERVIEW

After four rounds of indirect talks between the diplomatic delegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States — led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump's special envoy for West Asia — differences over uranium enrichment have stirred up a fresh wave of analysis and speculation about the fate of the negotiations. The Islamic Republic of Iran has maintained a firm, unchanging stance, repeatedly emphasized in recent weeks by its president, foreign minister, and foreign ministry spokesman: "Enrichment in Iran will continue, whether there is an agreement or not." Javad Haghgoo, an international relations expert and associate professor at the University of Tehran, shed light on this issue and, more broadly, the dynamics of Tehran-Washington negotiations in the interview below:

Given the deep-seated disputes between the Islamic Republic and the US — especially Iran's unending hostility toward the Israeli regime, which is a major factor shaping US foreign policy — how do you assess the future of Tehran-Washington relations?

**HAGHGOO:** All the signs point to the fact that, since October 7, 2023, Iran's tensions with Israel and the United States have reached a boiling point, entering a high-risk, pre-conflict phase. In this period, the simultaneous advance of three elements — namely, military threats, asymmetric operations, and diplomatic negotiations — is turning the future into the present. Despite all the posturing and speculation about Iran-US talks, public positions reflect a fragile environment. Given this, it seems the period ahead — at least until mid-2025 — will be marked by a delicate balance between diplomatic initiatives and talk of military threats. While negotiations have kept hopes for de-escalation alive, simultaneous cyber operations or arms transfers could raise the risk of conflict breaking out.

In such an environment, and based on current trends, what scenarios do you see for the future of Iran-US-Israel relations?

Indeed, in today's tangled world — where wars have essentially entered the fifth generation and hybrid confrontation is the name of the game — it's entirely possible for several scenarios to play out in parallel. These scenarios are actually fivefold, each with a different chance of taking place. What is more, if signs gravitate toward one scenario, it doesn't mean that the others would not take place in the end. These five scenarios can be categorized into three more comprehensive scenarios.

● **Scenario one: The negotiations move forward step by step toward success.** This scenario has the most supporters at the domestic, regional, and global levels. It unfolds in phases and isn't expected to reach a conclusion overnight. Given the current US administration's priorities, Trump's personal style, and Iran's domestic situation, it won't take long to find out whether this scenario pans out. According to some calculations using modern tools and technologies, the likelihood exceeds 50%. Here, both back-channel and open diplomacy need to be kept on the radar.

● **Scenario two: Regional developments spill over into the talks, or vice versa.** This includes two sub-scenarios: a drop in the chances of a successful deal and the onset of tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, or increased uncertainty about the talks' outcome and a flare-up in the Red Sea. There's no doubt that regional events — Yemen, for instance — can't be analyzed in isolation from Iran. One likely scenario is conflict in the region flaring up, which could both influence and be influenced by the fate of the negotiations.

Tension in the Strait of Hormuz is also a possibility, though less likely due to opposition from key players like China and Gulf states. Events under this scenario would largely stem from strategic miscalculations on both sides.

● **Scenario three: The talks hit a brick wall.** This pessimistic scenario includes the negotiations running into deadlock, a surge in digital and cyber warfare, or even a complete breakdown, leading to missile exchanges or air battles. While

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History shows that there are, in fact, significant differences between US presidents. It's true that, like other countries — and perhaps even more so — the US has a well-defined legal and political structure, rooted in its Constitution and ordinary laws, and that a set of clear frameworks holds sway over all presidents. But to imagine that every decision is cooked up behind closed doors by a single group, and that, for example, bringing Trump, Obama, or Biden to power is all the work of that same group, is a childish notion. The real skill is capitalizing on the differences between these officials to serve our national interests.



● AIDA AMER/AXIOS

these confrontations have precedent, there's a real chance they could crop up again. Given Netanyahu's dissatisfaction with a US-Iran deal, expect a spike in digital and cyber skirmishes in the coming months. New hacker groups could spring up. Players like Netanyahu and other opponents of a deal will make the most of these opportunities.

It's crucial to note that the outcome of these talks could send shockwaves through the global economy — which is why this scenario has significant opposition. Assuming tensions flare up and continue on one front, and the trade war between the US and China heats up — which isn't far-fetched — the international system is likely to head down the path toward a kind of pre-war radicalization. Escalation between Iran and the US/Israel is hardly in the interest of China or Gulf states, though Russia could stand to gain from rising tensions.

**Given that some analysts say the odds of a deal with the US have dropped since Trump's return, while others see the chances rising, does it really matter who's in the White House?**

There's no doubt that there are real differences among US presidents and their administrations. The idea that all US presidents are "cut from the same cloth" is just empty rhetoric.

History shows that there are, in fact, significant differences between US presidents. It's true that, like other countries — and perhaps even more so — the US has a well-defined legal and political structure, rooted in its Constitution and ordinary laws, and that a set of clear frameworks holds sway over all presidents. But to imagine that every decision is cooked up behind closed doors by a single group, and that, for example, bringing Trump, Obama, or Biden to power is all the work of that same group, is a childish notion. There's no question that who ends up in the roles of president, secretary of state, or national security advisor makes a real difference. In fact, this is even more apparent when it comes to foreign policy.

For example, in Iran, the executive and legislative branches each have their roles, but the impact of the person implementing the law is far greater than that of the lawmaker. The same logic applies to the US presidency. There are clear distinctions between, say, Obama and Trump. The real skill is capitalizing on these differences to serve national interests. While both may share a "hegemonic streak," their worldviews and approaches to international relations can be worlds apart.

For instance, Trump might cut a deal with Russia to rein in China, whereas



⬆ Javad Haghgoo

Biden, though aware of the China threat, would never team up with Moscow to contain Beijing. International relations is all about spotting these cracks — sometimes no bigger than a chink in the armor — and slipping through to pursue your country's interests.

Given the volatile and ever-changing nature of international relations, there's no room for procrastination. If you look back at Iran's position before and after the Russia-Ukraine war, you'll see how many opportunities slipped through our fingers because we failed to grasp the instability of the international scene. We ended up settling for far less than before, and even those reduced gains didn't last as the other side had already cottoned on to the new reality. In international relations, it's best to grab what you can now rather than hold out for a promise down the line.

**Is there a historical example from Iran-US relations, before or after Iran's Islamic Revolution, that illustrates this point?**



A satellite image shows six B-2s at the airfield on Diego Garcia island in the Indian Ocean on April 2, 2025. ● PLANET LABS



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For Americans, a “better deal” than the JCPOA doesn’t necessarily mean the other side gave up more; it could simply mean that, unlike last time, they’re able to get their foot in the door and invest in Iran. Instead of handing out concessions to a dozen countries, you give one — America — an economic advantage, which may be less than what was given to all those intermediaries before. Of course, Trump’s love of showmanship and media spectacle shouldn’t be underestimated; he and his team are seasoned pros at playing to the gallery. The key is to ensure that any concession has real propaganda value.

Absolutely. Perhaps the best example is the early years after the Revolution, when the US embassy was seized and the 444-day hostage crisis unfolded. During that period, Iran dealt with two US presidents: Carter and Reagan. Iran could have struck a bargain with Carter, who was desperate for the hostages’ release to boost his re-election chances, or it could have dragged things out to undermine Carter and cut a deal with his rival, Reagan. In the end, it seems Iran chose the latter as the crisis ended on January 20, 1981, just as Reagan entered the White House. Evidence suggests Iran released the hostages without securing any concessions from Reagan — a move that, if true, holds valuable lessons for today.

Later, some, like then-Texas governor John Connally, claimed they urged Tehran not to release the 52 hostages before the election, promising that after Reagan’s victory, the US would hammer out a better deal with Iran. This never happened, and some believe Iran, under Reagan’s threats, was forced to bring the standoff to an end. All these claims need to be verified at a later date. Regardless, the main takeaway is that there are real differences among US presidents, and at times, you have more room to maximize your national interests.

**So, what are the key features of Trump’s presidency in this context?**

Because of these personal and team differences, it seems it’s actually easier to strike a deal with Trump than with Biden or Obama. Americans like Trump, when they talk about negotiation and agreement, don’t really care about the broader structures of international relations or the views of Washington’s allies or the stated values of liberal democracy; they only care about US interests as they define them. If they feel there’s something in it for them, they’ll go after it.

The problem arises when they sense others have walked away with gains while they’ve gotten nothing. That’s when, as with the JCPOA, they’ll tear up the agreement. This highlights the importance of understanding your counterpart’s precise characteristics and tailoring your approach accordingly. Whether talks are direct or indirect doesn’t matter much; what counts is that, in Trump’s case, he needs to be able to sell the deal at home and claim, “Look, I got a better agreement than Obama, and I deserve the Nobel Peace Prize, too.”

For Americans, a “better deal” than the JCPOA doesn’t necessarily mean the other side gave up more; it could simply mean that, unlike last time, they’re able to get their foot in the door and invest in Iran. Instead of handing out concessions to a dozen countries, you give one — America — an economic advantage, which may be less than what was given to all those intermediaries before. Of course, Trump’s love of showmanship and media spectacle shouldn’t be underestimated; he and his team are seasoned pros at playing to the gallery. The key is to ensure that any concession has real propaganda value.

**Given this history, can Trump be compared to Reagan, and Biden/Obama to Carter?**

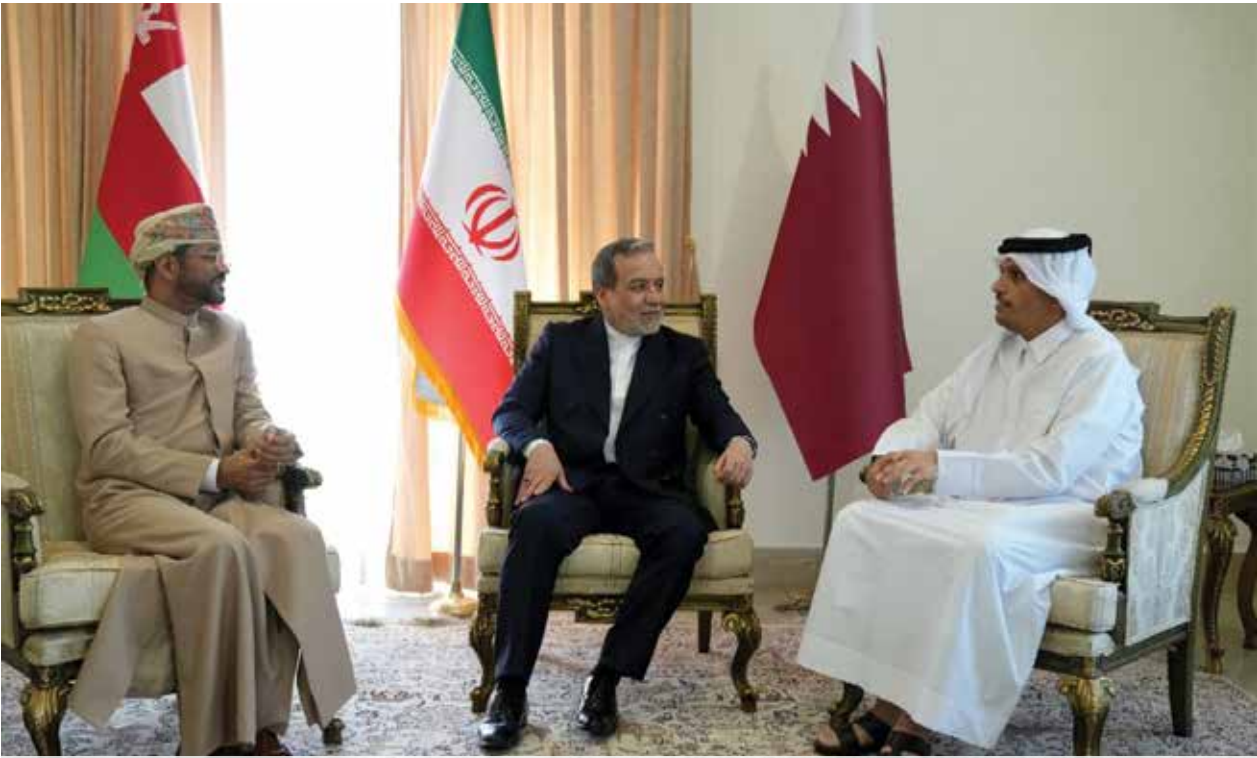
Certainly, such comparisons can be made, though one must be mindful of differences in individuals, eras, circumstances, and issues. Some argue that Trump and Reagan are quite different, but I personally believe their similarities outweigh their differences.

In my view, Trump’s foreign policy is more “neo-Reaganite” than “neo-Jacksonian.” This resemblance is precisely why there’s reason to be wary of future negotiations with Trump’s America; if talks don’t move forward in a timely manner, they may yield no benefit for our national interests — just as, in recent years, many opportunities were squandered on flimsy pretexts, to the detriment of the majority and the benefit of a select few. Like Reagan, Trump believes that the road to peace runs through strength — and, more importantly, the display of



Israeli security forces inspect the site where the military said a projectile fired by Yemen’s Ansarullah (Houthi) group landed near Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on May 4, 2025

● OHAD ZWIGENBERG/AP



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) meets with his counterparts from Oman and Qatar, Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi (L) and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, respectively, in Tehran, Iran, on March 18, 2025, on the sidelines of the Tehran Dialogue Forum, hosted by the top Iranian diplomat.

● IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY



President-elect Donald Trump (sitting-L) watches outgoing president Barack Obama (sitting-R) speak to the reporters during their first meeting in the Oval Office on November 10, 2016.

● WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

strength. The deployment of additional B-2 bombers to Diego Garcia fits this mindset, and these moves aren’t just about Iran but a wide range of states. In this view, war is not the end of diplomacy; rather, conflict is part and parcel of diplomacy, meant to bring you to the point where you have no bargaining

chips left and are forced to throw in the towel. That’s the crossroads you must avoid at all costs. Obviously, if you play by the rules set by the likes of Netanyahu, you’ll pay a heavy price, and future generations will surely hold you accountable. As Imam Ali (PBUH) said, justice means putting

everything in its proper place — so, in governance, timing is everything. If you act too late or too soon, you’re bound to do more harm than good. In statecraft, this is even more critical.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



# 2025 World Women's Handball Championship: Iran pitted against Hungary, Switzerland, Senegal in preliminary round

## Sports Desk

Iranian handball girls will square off against the Switzerland in their opening game at the IHF Women's World Championship – cohosted by Germany and the Netherlands – on November 27.

The draw for the 27th edition of the flagship international event of the sport took place on Thursday at the Noordbrabants Museum in the Dutch city of 's-Hertogenbosch, where 32 teams were split into eight groups of the preliminary round.

Joining Iran and Switzerland – making its debut – in Group B are 2024 European bronze medalist Hungary and Senegal, which finished runner-up in last year's African Championship. Iran will face Hungary at the Maaspoort in 's-Hertogenbosch on Nov. 29, before taking on Senegal in the same arena two days later.

The top three teams in each group will progress to the main-round group phase with the bottom sides heading into the Presidents Cup, where the 25th-32nd spots will be on the line.

This will be a third participation at the World Championship for the Iranian girls, who booked a spot at the event thanks to a last-four finish in last December's Asian Championship in New Delhi – alongside champion Japan, South Korea, and Kazakhstan.

Iran was beaten 33-20 by record 16-time champion South Korea in the semifinals and then settled for the fourth place following a 28-22 loss to Kazakhstan.

Iranian girls finished second from bottom in the overall standings in the previous two world showpieces in 2021 and 2023, with their sole victory in 13 outings coming against Greenland (28-23) two years ago in Denmark.

Elsewhere in Thursday's draw, defending champion France was pitted against Poland, Tunisia and wild card China in Group F.

Norway, the reigning Olympic champion, will feature in Group H, alongside African champion Angola, plus two Asian sides in South Korea and Kazakhstan.

Denmark – bronze medalist at the last two editions – will face Romania, Japan and Croatia in Group A. Denmark conceded a loss on its home court in the main round against Japan in 2023.

The Netherlands is in Group E, where the cohost is going to face Austria, Argentina and debutantes Egypt.

Germany will meet Serbia, Iceland and Uruguay in Group C, while a well-balanced Group G features Sweden – a perennial contender for world medal – and former champion Brazil, as well as Czechia – the eighth-placed side at the previous edition – and Cuba.



● IHF



● JAVIER BARBANCHO/LIBRE USO

## Esteghlal in talks with ex-Sevilla boss Flores: *Report*

### Sports Desk

Esteghlal is in talks with former Sevilla and Atletico Madrid manager Quique Sanchez Flores for the permanent role on the Persian Gulf Pro League club's bench, Iranian website Football 360 reported on Thursday.

Esteghlal great Mojtaba Jabbari has been serving as the interim coach since the club parted ways with Montenegrin Miodrag Bozovic in April, with the Tehran Blues eager to hire a high-profile foreign manager for the start of the next season. Jabbari became the sixth Esteghlal coach in a dreadful campaign, which has seen the club finish ninth in the Iranian top-flight's 16-team table, though

the Blues could still put a lid on their misery with the Hazfi Cup silverware.

Esteghlal will host second-tier side San'at Naft Abadan in the last-four round of the domestic cup at the Azadi Stadium today. A winner of four Pro League titles since its introduction in 2001, Esteghlal has also approached former Sepahan boss José Morais, Portuguese Ricardo Sá Pinto, who was the Blues manager in the 2022/23 season, as well as Dutch coach Frank de Boer, and Italian Walter Mazzarri in recent weeks, according to the report, but the negotiations fell through for different reasons. Should Flores join Esteghlal, he will be among the most promi-

nent managers to work in the Iranian club football in recent years.

A Valencia and Benfica boss in the 2000s, the 60-year-old Spaniard was in charge of Atletico Madrid when Los Rojiblancos lifted the UEFA Europa League and Super Cup in 2010.

Flores, who was the head coach of Premier League club Watford over two spells, is familiar with working in the Middle East, having enjoyed decent spells at Emirati clubs Al Ahli and Al Ain from 2011 to 2014.

His last job was at Sevilla FC in the second half of the 2023/24 season, when he led the Andalusian side to eight wins in 22 outings and a 14th-place finish in the LaLiga table.

## Thunder roll again at home, grab 2-0 lead on Wolves

**REUTERS** – Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was presented with the NBA Most Valuable Player Award before Game 2 of the Western Conference finals on Thursday. Then the Oklahoma City Thunder superstar went out and showed why he earned the award. Gilgeous-Alexander tied his career playoff high with 38 points to help the Thunder beat the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves 118-103 Thursday to take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven series.

"I thought about coming out and just forcing the first couple shots," Gilgeous-Alexander said.

Instead, Gilgeous-Alexander leaned heavily on his supporting cast early, attempting just three shots through the midpoint of the second quarter.

It was far from a one-man show, as Jalen Williams finished with 26 points and 10 rebounds and Chet Holmgren added 22 points.

Gilgeous-Alexander has scored 30 or more points in five consecutive games, tying the longest such streak in franchise playoff history. He already shared the marks with Gus Williams.

Minnesota star Anthony Edwards finished with 32 points, shooting 12 of 26 from the floor but just 1 of 9 on 3-point attempts. He also contributed nine rebounds and six assists.

Now, heading into Game 3 today in Minneapolis, the Thunder are two wins away from the NBA Finals and six away from the franchise's first title since 1979 when it was based in Seattle.

## Asian Karate Championship: Iran's Bahmanyar settles for kumite bronze on Day 1

### Sports Desk

The first day of the 21st Asian Senior Karate Championship saw Iranian girl Sara Bahmanyar win a bronze medal in the women's kumite competitions in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, on Friday.

Former world bronze medalist Bahmanyar began her -50kg campaign with a victory over Palestinian Ibaa Salama but suffered a 2-1 defeat against the host's Gulshan Alimardanova.

However, the Iranian was given a second chance for a podium finish in repechage, after the Uzbek fighter progressed to the final showpiece.

Bahmanyar defeated Indonesian Arnella Putri Wandari 7-0 and then beat Chan Hsin-Yu 4-3 to win a joint-bronze alongside Kazakhstan's Moldir Zhangbyrbay – third Asian bronze in four editions for the Iranian girl, who also settled for a third-spot finish at the Hangzhou Asian Games two years ago.

In the men's kumite event, Behnam Dehqanzadeh – an Asian bronze winner last year – defeated Resul Garatayev 6-4, but was knocked out of the -55kg contest following a 4-3 setback against Jordanian Rahman Haimour.





# Rich, beckoning heritage of Malayer’s marquetry art



**By Leila Imeni**  
Staff writer

**EXCLUSIVE**

Monabat-Kari (marquetry) has been flourishing in Iran for centuries. It is one of the valuable arts and traditional crafts produced and showcased in several cities across the country. Skilled artisans carefully and passionately apply pieces of inlays to surfaces, creating intricate decorative patterns and designs. Most marquetry work is done on wood, and the patterns crafted are highly beautiful and captivating to the eye. Malayer is the second-largest city of Hamadan Province after Hamadan. A significant portion of this historic Iranian city’s population is engaged in woodworking crafts, especially the traditional art of furniture-making and Monabat-Kari. In 2019, Malayer’s

woodwork and marquetry products were recognized during an inspection by the World Crafts Organization, meeting all UNESCO criteria, including quality, authenticity, excellence, historical significance, creativity, and innovation. Later, in December it was officially registered Malayer as World Craft City for Carved Wooden Furniture. In this city, experienced artists, with years of expertise, produce a large share of Iran’s marquetry and woodworks. Malayer, with numerous workshops and thousands of craftsmen, supplies a significant part of Iran’s high-quality marquetry products to domestic and international markets. Choosing the appropriate wood depends on the color and type of design intended by the artisan. Among various woods walnut, pear, cherry, elm, ash, Ta-

brizi and cedar are most frequently used in crafting artistic marquetry pieces. Each type of wood has a unique color and grain, which greatly enhances the final aesthetic and beauty of the artwork. Like any fine art, Monabat-Kari involves diverse styles and techniques, all of which are highly intricate and delicate. Besides marquetry, other related arts such as carving and inlay art are also prominent, each requiring specific tools and equipment, reflecting the rich cultural and artistic heritage of this craft. Mohammad Rahmati, a native of Malayer, is one of the artisans working in the field of marquetry in Malayer. He represented the talented craftspeople of the city at the recent Khorasan Razavi Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition held in Mashhad.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Rahmati explained, “Malayer is known in the world for two main things: grape production and marquetry furniture. What we do is a branch of Monabat-Kari named Peykar-Tarashi (sculpture-carving).” He added, “We reuse and revive dried tree trunks from our city — rather than cutting them down, and transform them into sculptures and woodworks. All of our works is entirely hand-crafted; we design and produce without digital tools or machines, relying solely on skill and precision.” The woods used for these artistic creations are mostly walnut, cherry, and cedar, because the stronger and more durable the material, the better suited it is for detailed marquetry work. Rahmati further highlighted, “Regarding the recognition of our craft both inside

Iran and internationally, Malayer is quite famous in this field. We have customers from abroad, especially Arab countries that purchase our work. We have sent pieces like eagle sculptures and inlaid furniture to Qatar.” “Inside Iran, most of our clients are from Tehran. While Malayer is well-known for its furniture industry, I personally focus only on sculpture work, not furniture manufacturing.” Finally, Rahmati explained, “Malayer does not have direct export channels, but foreign buyers contact local producers and merchants directly. For example, through exhibitions like this one and the Tourism and Handicrafts Exhibition, held annually in Tehran, most of our international clients from Arab countries acquire our products.”

## Exploring Haftad Molla Cemetery’s legends, architecture

One of the prominent attractions of a city can be its cemetery, especially when the burial rituals and the shapes of the graves reflect different historical periods. Such diversity adds a unique visual charm to the setting. In the Mirjaveh of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, there is a notable cemetery known as Haftad Molla, which means Seventy Mollahs. This ancient cemetery dates back approximately 800 years and is located atop the sandstone cliffs of the volcanic Mount Taftan, near the popular tourist village of Tamin, which is known for its cool climate.

From Tamin, visitors can enjoy one of the most spectacular views of the peak of Mount Taftan, visitiran.ir wrote. Like many other historical monuments in Tamin, Haftad Molla Cemetery has been carved directly into the rocks. Historically, the design of the tombs was inspired by the architecture of the tomb of Cyrus; the ancient people carved large openings into solid rocks to serve as graves. Covering an area of about 500 square meters, the burial site has an arch shape extending over the eastern part of Rups village. The graves are always shaded

by natural overhangs, which helps protect them from erosion caused by wind and rain. A century ago, two large stone pillars stood in front of the main opening of the cemetery, but these have been destroyed over time. The graves are rectangular in shape. Bricks were arranged along their sides, and the bodies were buried within these structures. These graves were constructed flat, with eight small holes embedded on each side to provide ventilation. The walls of the cemetery were painted in red, a pigment made from local soil. Additionally, families deco-

rated the graves using the same soil, adding a personal and cultural touch to each site. The exact date and historical records regarding the foundation of the cemetery remain unknown, which has led to a variety of legends and stories about its origins. There are some popular tales associated with Haftad Molla Cemetery; one story claims that local inhabitants buried their dead on the mountain to keep them safe from flooding, a theory supported by the proximity of the cemetery to a nearby river. Recognized as a national heritage site in Iran, Haftad Molla

Cemetery is accessible via a route that starts from Zahedan, goes through Mirjaveh, and then proceeds to Tamin village. The road leading to Tamin village is paved and easy to traverse. However, the road from the village to the cemetery is more rugged and can only be navigated using local vehicles suited for off-road travel. Sistan and Baluchestan Province is one of Iran’s most ancient regions, with a rich history that dates back thousands of years. Historically, it was part of the larger region of Greater Baluchistan and has served as a crossroads of civili-

zations, trade routes, and cultural exchanges. The province is known for its diverse ethnic groups, including Baluch, Persians, and others, each contributing to its unique cultural landscape. Its historical sites, like Haftad Molla and others, reflect the deep-rooted traditions and the importance of this region through centuries of history, from ancient Persia to the modern era. Despite facing some socio-economic challenges today, Sistan and Baluchistan remains a vital cultural and historical hub, preserving its heritage amid its natural beauty and rugged landscapes.





# Tehran Auction rakes in over \$2.1mn, sets new sales record

## Arts & Culture Desk

The 23rd Tehran Auction closed Thursday night with total sales topping \$2.1 million, marking a record-breaking moment for Iran's premier art market, organizers announced after the event at the Parsian Azadi Hotel. Collectors packed the ballroom as 100 works of Iranian modern and contemporary art went under the hammer. The final tally came to just over \$2.1 million — the highest gross in the event's history. Ninety-seven lots were sold by the end of the night, IRNA reported. The top-selling piece was 'Organs' by Hossein Zenderoudi, which sold for about \$172,900. The intricate canvas, blending calligraphy and geometry, led a strong showing for modern masters. Zenderoudi, known internationally for his bold graphic style, was also named the most valuable artist of the auction. Sculptor Sahand Hesamiyan, part of a younger wave of contemporary artists, made a strong statement with 'Hidden Side', which sold for nearly \$122,300. That placed third overall, behind an untitled bronze work by Masoud Arabshahi, which brought in roughly \$141,000. The sale opened with a tribute from

auctioneer Shahriar Rabani, who honored four Iranian visual artists who passed away this year, including Parvaneh Etemadi and Kamran Katouzian. Rabani described the evening as both "a celebration and a farewell," acknowledging the role of past generations while showcasing new voices. "This year's lineup leaned younger," said one curator at the event. While past editions often centered around giants like Sohrab Sepehri and Bahman Mohasses, this edition shifted focus to emerging names and underrepresented figures. Still, classic artists such as Manoucher Yektai, Parviz Tanavoli, Monir Farmanfarmaian, and Aydin Aghdashloo drew significant bids. Farmanfarmaian's 'Mirror Ball', a luminous geometric sculpture, sold for \$95,800. An untitled piece by Kourosh Shishegaran followed closely at \$90,400. In total, 40 works crossed roughly \$12,000 at current exchange rates. Three pieces failed to sell. The auction's final sales figure includes a 10% buyer's premium on all successful bids. Founded in 2012, Tehran Auction has grown into the most visible and influential art marketplace in Iran.



## Kerman serving as hub in revival of ancient spice route



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts says the ancient city of Kerman is poised to play a "key role" in a major tourism revival project centered on the Spice Route — a trade network that stretches back more than 7,000 years. Speaking at a high-level provincial meeting on Wednesday, Mostafa Fatemi, Director General of Domestic Tourism Development, said the ministry is focusing on two national tourism corridors,

with the Spice Route being "the oldest trade path in the world." The route, Fatemi explained, begins in the Spice Islands of Southeast Asia and makes its way through Iran's Kerman province. From there, it branches off toward Shush in the southwest and on to North Africa, while another path heads northwest toward Isfahan, then Turkey and Europe, IRNA reported. "Kerman sits at a crossroads," Fatemi told attendees at the 110th session of the Public-Private Dialogue Council held in Kerman Chamber of Commerce. "It deserves a dedicated corridor of its own." Fatemi cited archaeological findings — including ancient spices discovered in Iran's Burnt City — as evidence supporting Kerman's historic place on the route. Similar finds in Egypt and Morocco further validate the theory, he said. Officials are eyeing the Hindu Caravanserai, a historic travelers' inn in Kerman, for redevelopment under a joint agreement between the Ministry and Iran's Endowments Organization. The site could soon welcome investment and restoration efforts led by a tourism development company. Beyond

the Spice Route project, the ministry is urging a multi-pronged push to boost Kerman's tourism sector, which has long lagged behind other regions. Fatemi called for international events to be hosted in the province and suggested leveraging the region's railway network to remove transport bottlenecks. "We can't talk tourism without talking trains," he said, urging cross-ministerial cooperation to fix railway issues. Fatemi also laid out a vision to engage Kerman's industries in protecting its cultural heritage. He proposed that each major company adopt a historic site, taking responsibility for its preservation, restoration, and promotion. The plan would be formalized through the provincial council and overseen by the Chamber of Commerce. A similar initiative in the city of Yazd — involving the purchase and restoration of old homes as second residences — could be replicated in Kerman's historic core. Fatemi said the model worked there and "could bring real value" to the aging urban fabric of Kerman. The director also floated creative penalties for

heritage violations. "Instead of jail time," he said, "let them make adobe bricks, help restore sites, or print brochures for tourists." Such community service models had shown success in the past, he noted. Looking ahead, Kerman is preparing for a major new tourism campaign: Smile of the World to Kerman 1405, referencing the year in the Iranian calendar that begins in March 2026. Fatemi urged provincial leaders to rally every agency to develop events and unveil promotional materials before the year kicks off. The province may also become Iran's pilot region for geotourism, with the ministry ready to relocate the National Geotourism Secretariat to Kerman. The council meeting coincided with Iran's first National Ecotourism Festival, which opened in Kerman on May 21 and runs through May 23. Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts attended the launch. Fatemi called for stronger private-sector support and a dedicated task force to clear investment hurdles. "You can't draw investors if past ones walk away unhappy," he warned. "Support is not optional — it's foundational."

## Nearly 1,000 film figures malign Israeli genocide in Gaza

In a growing wave of global outrage against Israel's war on Gaza, nearly 1,000 film industry figures, from Hollywood icons to European auteurs, signed an open letter denouncing what they call a "genocide" and lambasting the international film industry's silence on the matter. The letter, part of an initiative dubbed Artists for Fatem, surfaced just ahead of the prestigious Cannes Film Festival, casting a long shadow over the glamour and celebration associated with the event. Among the prominent signatories is Ralph Fiennes, famed for his role in Schindler's List, a film that many critics now see in stark contrast to his stand today. He is joined by Oscar-winning actress Juliette Binoche, who currently chairs the Cannes jury, and a diverse coalition of actors and filmmakers including Rooney Mara, Jonathan Glaz-

er, Jim Jarmusch, Susan Sarandon, Pedro Almodóvar, Mark Ruffalo, Richard Gere, and French actor Omar Sy, Middle East Eye reported. The campaign was sparked by the death of 25-year-old Palestinian photojournalist Fatima Hassouna, affectionately known as "Fatem," who was killed in an Israeli airstrike alongside ten members of her family in northern Gaza. The attack came just one day after a documentary featuring her life and work was announced as part of Cannes' ACID selection. The letter, published by Middle East Eye, reads in part: "As artists and cultural players, we cannot remain silent while genocide is taking place in Gaza and this unspeakable news is hitting our communities hard." It continues: "Fatem was not just a journalist. She was a storyteller. She gave voice to a people relent-

lessly silenced by occupation and war. Her loss is not only personal — it is political." The signatories are calling not only for an end to the violence but for accountability in the institutions that have, in their words, "turned away" in the face of mass civilian suffering. The petition critiques the complicity of silence, especially from industries that so often pride themselves on championing human rights and justice through art. The ongoing Israeli onslaught on Gaza, which has killed tens of thousands and displaced over a million Palestinians since October, has been widely condemned by human rights organizations, but receives continued political and military backing from the United States and its allies. The Artists for Fatem initiative is being hailed by activists as a rare and brave break from the often



cautious tones of the entertainment industry, particularly in the U.S., where criticism of Israel can come at a professional cost.