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### President inaugurates healthcare, industrial, water projects in Zanjan



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) inaugurates a factory rolling out glass bottles and jars during a visit to the western city of Zanjan on July 31, 2025.   
● EHSAN TAQIBIGLOU/ISNA

### Pezeshkian's visit to Pakistan Tehran, Islamabad aim to unlock dormant economic potential

By Nozar Shafiee  
Subcontinent affairs analyst

#### O P I N I O N

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is set to arrive in Pakistan today for an official visit. The sheer size of Pakistan's population, its extensive territory, and its shared border with Iran dramatically reinforce the strategic weight of this trip. Equally important is the identity bond between the peoples of Iran and Pakistan—a shared cultural and historical heritage that continues to distinguish their relationship from Iran's ties with other neighbors, especially to the west and south.

Foreign opportunities and threats often stem first from neighboring states. For instance, Israel and the United States could not have carried out military actions against Iran in June—or at the very least, doing so would have been significantly costlier—if they lacked bases or influence in Iran's neighboring countries. This underscores why neighborhood policy matters; when a country reopens its diplomatic window, the first view is often its immediate neighbors. Pezeshkian's Pakistan visit is significant for exactly this reason. Economics also lies at the heart of this mission. Iran and Pakistan have dormant economic synergies that remain unexplored—and this visit aims to bring those to life.

During the 12-day aggression waged by Israel and the US, Pakistan was one of the few nations to affirm its support for Iran unequivocally. It stood in solidarity before many other states spoke up. What that support translates into in tangible terms—especially while the ceasefire remains provisional—could emerge clearly during this visit.

It is important to emphasize that while Pakistan enjoys cordial relations with the US, it does not recognize Israel—unlike Washington, which stands firmly with Tel Aviv. This distinction matters. Pakistan consistently defends Palestine in international forums and remains one of Israel's staunchest critics.

Moreover, Israel consistently aligns with India—Pakistan's rival. India accounts for roughly 40% of Israeli arms exports. This makes Israel—India's ally and Pakistan's rival—an indirect adversary of Islamabad. Ideologically, the Hindutva (Hindu nationalism in India) and Israeli Zionism view themselves as embattled "chosen nations" under siege by the Muslim world. This closes ranks between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, placing them in the far-right political camp. In that light, Pakistan's foreign policy tilt toward Iran appears more courageous and straightforward, detached from US pressure.

Historically, Iran has supported Pakistan in all its conflict phases with India—directly during the Shah's era and indirectly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution—and even congratulated Pakistan on its nuclear tests. These precedents give Islamabad greater diplomatic latitude to back Iran credibly. Iran's support extends beyond executive endorsement; it permeates parliament, public opinion, and the armed forces. Multiple parliamentary resolutions in Pakistan have upheld Tehran, signaling deep bilateral closeness.

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# Araghchi: Compensation for war prerequisite to resuming Iran-US talks

## International Desk

Speaking in an interview with the Financial Times in Tehran published on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said the United States must compensate the Islamic Republic for losses incurred during the 12-day US-Israeli imposed war before the resumption of nuclear talks.

Araghchi said Iran would not agree to “business as usual” in the wake of Israel’s acts of aggression last month, which the US later joined despite having been in talks with Iran.

“They should explain why they attacked us in the middle of ... negotiations, and they have to ensure that they are not going to repeat that [during future talks],” he added.

“And they have to compensate [Iran for] the damage that they have done.”

On June 13, Israel launched an unprovoked war against Iran, assassinating many high-ranking military commanders, nuclear scientists, and ordinary civilians.

More than a week later, the United States also entered the war by bombing three Iranian nuclear sites in a grave violation of the United Nations Charter, international law, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occu-

pied territories as well as the al-Udeid air base in Qatar, the largest American military base in West Asia.

On June 24, Iran, through its successful retaliatory operations against both the Israeli regime and the US, managed to impose a halt to the illegal assault as Tel Aviv, overwhelmed by the counter-strikes, was compelled to seek a ceasefire.

## ‘Real confidence-building measures’

Araghchi further pointed to his exchange of messages with US envoy Steve Witkoff during and since the war, saying that he had stressed the need to find a “win-win solution” to resolve the years-long stand-off over the country’s nuclear program.

“The road to negotiation is narrow but it’s not impossible. I need to convince my hierarchy that if we go for negotiation, the other side is coming with real determination for a win-win deal,” the top Iranian diplomat added.

Araghchi explained that Witkoff has tried to convince him and has proposed resuming talks, but emphasized, “We need real confidence-building measures from their side.”

The veteran Iranian diplomat, without giving details, added that any resumption of talks should include financial compensation and assurances that no

more attacks would take place against Tehran during negotiations.

The top Iranian diplomat noted that the war had only deepened distrust of US President Donald Trump, who during his first term abandoned a 2015 deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“Anti-negotiation feelings are very high,” Araghchi said.

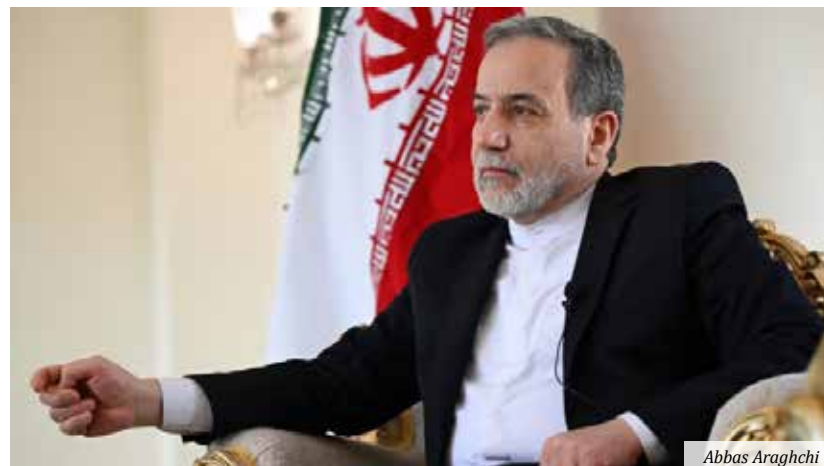
“People are telling me, ‘Don’t waste your time anymore, don’t be cheated by them ... if they come to negotiations, it’s only a cover-up for their other intentions.’”

Iran and the United States had held five rounds of indirect talks on Tehran’s peaceful nuclear program before the beginning of Israel’s acts of aggression. Mediated by Oman, the 6<sup>th</sup> round of talks was planned to be held in the Omani capital of Muscat on June 15, but was called off due to the anti-Iran attacks.

On June 22, the United States officially joined the war against Iran by launching attacks on three nuclear facilities in the country in violation of the United Nations Charter and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

## No deal with US over Trump’s zero enrichment

Araghchi once again reiterated Iran’s resolve to continue its enrichment activities, saying there could be no deal



Abbas Araghchi

as long as Trump demanded that Iran agree to zero enrichment.

He, however, added that Washington should address its concerns through negotiations.

“We can negotiate, they can present their argument and we will present our own argument,” the Iranian minister said. “But with zero enrichment, we don’t have a thing.”

## Iran to terminate E3 talks if snapback invoked

Araghchi also hit out at the European troika – Britain, France and Germany—who have warned they would trigger a so-called snapback mechanism to rein-

state UN sanctions at the end of August if Tehran does not resume negotiations with Washington and its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

He noted that the three European signatories to the JCPOA have failed to fulfill their obligations as per the nuclear deal, emphasizing that Tehran would end talks with the trio if they trigger the snapback mechanism.

“With the Europeans, there is no reason right now to negotiate because they cannot lift sanctions, they cannot do anything,” he said. “If they do snapback, that means that this is the end of the road for them.”

## ‘Baseless and ridiculous’: Tehran decries Western assassination accusations

### International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry dismissed on Friday “baseless and ridiculous” claims leveled by certain Western countries about Tehran collaborating with international criminal groups to perform assassination plots abroad.

Esmail Baqaei, the ministry spokesman, condemned the anti-Iran accusations by the United States, Canada and a dozen European states in their joint statement released the previous day.

Baqaei said the “blatant blame game” is an attempt to divert public attention from the most pressing issue of the day, which is the Israeli genocide in the occupied Palestine.

“The United States, France, and other signatories to the anti-Iran statement must themselves be held accountable for actions that violate international law, as they support and host terrorist and violent elements and groups,” he added.

Baqaei touched on the unprovoked US-Israeli aggression against Iran in June and Israel’s ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip against the backdrop of active support or approving silence of the 14 Western



Iran's Foreign Ministry building in downtown Tehran.

countries that signed the statement against the Islamic Republic. He further denounced the accusations as “blatant lies and an escape forward, designed as part of a malicious Iranophobia campaign aimed at exerting pressure on the great Iranian nation.”

The 14 states must be held accountable for their “disgraceful and irresponsible” behavior that violates the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter, the spokesman noted.

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK, and the US alleged in their statement that Iranian intelligence agencies are engaged in attempts to “kill, kidnap, and harass people in Europe and North America.”

## Dozens of Palestinians killed amid US envoy’s Gaza visit

### International Desk

Local medical sources reported on Friday that a total of 24 Palestinians had since dawn been killed by Israeli forces across the Gaza Strip, including five who were seeking humanitarian aid amid US special envoy Steve Witkoff’s visit to the besieged territory and Israel’s ongoing starvation campaign.

Palestine’s official news agency WAFA, citing medical sources, said at least 83 Palestinians were killed and 554 others were injured in the Gaza Strip over the last 24 hours as a result of the ongoing Israeli genocide in the region.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 2023 has risen to 60,332 fatalities, with an additional 147,643 people sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children.

According to the same sources, the death toll since Israel’s resumption of the genocide on March 18 after a two-month truce has also climbed to 9,163, in addition to 35,602 others injured. Last November, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his former military affairs minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza. Israel also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice for its war on the enclave.

### Witkoff’s visit to Gaza aid sites

The latest casualties occurred as Witkoff travelled to Gaza to inspect aid distribution amid mounting pressure on Israel over its starvation policy in the war-ravaged Palestinian enclave.

Witkoff and US ambassador to the occupied territories, Mike Huckabee, visited aid distribution sites run by the controversial US- and Israeli-backed GHF on Friday.

The two “spent over five hours inside Gaza,” Witkoff said in a post on X, accompanied by a photo of himself wearing a protective vest and meeting staff at a distribution site. He claimed that the purpose of the trip was to “help craft a plan to deliver food and medical aid to the people of Gaza.”

Friday’s visit was “to learn the truth” about the GHF’s distribution activities, Huckabee claimed on X. During the trip, they were briefed by the Israeli military and spoke to “folks on the ground,” he added. Earlier this week, Donald Trump contradicted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s insistence that reports of hunger in Gaza were untrue, with the US president saying the enclave was experiencing “real starvation.”

The United Nations and independent experts had warned for months that starvation was taking hold in Gaza due to the Israeli military blockade on humanitarian relief, and this week, they said “famine is now unfolding.”

## Hamas slams US envoy’s Gaza visit as ‘publicity stunt’

Moreover, a senior official of Palestinian resistance movement Hamas decried Witkoff’s visit to Gaza as a “publicity stunt” aimed at containing growing anger over US-Israeli involvement in the ongoing starvation of people in the blockaded territory.

“Witkoff only sees in Gaza what the Israeli occupation wants him to see. He views the ongoing tragedy through a distorted Israeli lens,” Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas’s political bureau, said in a statement.



WAFA

He stressed that the US envoy “will not witness the workings of the hunger guillotine known as the ‘Gaza Humanitarian Foundation,’ nor how it prepares the killing ground for the Zionist war machine.”

Al-Rishq added that the White House’s recent recognition of famine in Gaza — after months of denial — without holding Israel accountable, “amounts to absolving the perpetrator and offering political cover for what is the worst crime in modern history.”

The remarks come as suffering in the besieged enclave worsens, with warnings that hunger has reached extreme levels and reports of rising deaths due to starvation.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), founded in February 2025 amidst the prolonged Israeli assault on Gaza that started in October 2023, is a US-funded initiative working in collaboration with the Israeli military. Nearly 170 non-governmental organizations have called for the immediate discontinuation of the controversial GHF program, and called for a return to the UN-led aid mechanism that existed in the war-torn territory until March, when the Israeli regime imposed a full blockade on humanitarian assistance entering Gaza.

## Pezeshkian’s visit to Pakistan ...

Diplomatic ties unfold at bilateral, regional, and international levels. Security cooperation between Iran and Pakistan must be understood across these dimensions. While both countries raise concerns about each other’s support for militant groups, those frictions have not derailed bilateral relations—evidenced by Pakistani backing during Israeli aggression against Iran.

That said, it is a troubling contradiction. If both nations continue to point fingers at each other for aiding separatist or mil-

itant groups, they are doing something that harms both sides. A shared threat—Baloch separatism—exists in the trans-border region of Balochistan. If one part of this region breaks away, the other will inevitably face a crisis—because the issue revolves around the idea of a “Greater Balochistan.” Thus, both countries—particularly their military establishments—appear to have made a strategic miscalculation that could backfire if not corrected. It is surprising that in the highly sensitive case of Balochistan, both nations are backing forces whose victory would

necessarily come at the other’s expense. If Baloch separatists succeed in Iran, it would be disastrous for Pakistan—and vice versa. This is a dangerous misjudgment and a strategic blunder that could carry heavy costs.

Regarding Pakistan’s hesitation in completing the Iran–Pakistan gas pipeline stems largely from US pressure. Washington has warned Islamabad of sanctions if it proceeded with the project. Despite Pakistan’s warm ties with Washington, it could have followed the path of Turkey or Iraq and moved ahead. However, it has

refrained, likely due to lack of US approval. Even though Iran has legal grounds to file a claim against Pakistan for breaching the agreement, the specter of US sanctions continues to hold back progress. Yet economic ties often plateau not from fewer opportunities but from structural mismatch. Iran and Pakistan suffer from a lack of economic complementarity—their economies do not naturally mesh. This gap limits trade potential.

Another issue is the lack of technological depth in bilateral trade. Nations often pursue economic ties to gain access

to cutting-edge technologies. Neither Iran nor Pakistan possesses advanced industrial capabilities that would make such collaboration attractive. Thus, both states tend to focus trade relationships elsewhere—where technology transfer is feasible. Still, in sectors like agriculture, complementarities exist and are already being explored. However, given climate change, there is room for reevaluation and new initiatives to strengthen collaboration.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



# President inaugurates healthcare, industrial, water projects in Zanzan

## Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during a one-day visit to Zanzan Province on Thursday via video conference inaugurated several projects including two healthcare projects as well as a glassware production plant, a processing project, the impoundment of the Bolubin Dam, and residential housing units. Pezeshkian officially opened the development project of Zanzan's Shahid Beheshti Hospital, titled the Rajabali Moqadam Charity Project. The building serves as the 120-bed expansion phase of the Shahid Beheshti Hospital's Educational-Treatment Center, IRNA reported. The medical center has been constructed on a 6,445-square-meter plot and comprises five main floors plus one basement level. All floors have been meticulously planned with the necessary specialized treatment and educational sections, incorporating the latest standards. The ground floor houses a specialized psychiatric clinic and an Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) section with 12 active beds. Floors one to three each contain 38 beds designated for child and adolescent psychiatry wards, as well as wards for men's, women's, and geriatric psychiatry, respectively. With the commissioning of this project, the Shahid Beheshti medical center will become the premier psychiatric educational and treatment facility in the northwest of the country, fulfilling a central role in



enhancing the standard of educational and therapeutic services.

### Burn injury center

The president also inaugurated the Zanzan burn injury center. This center covers 6,788 square meters across four floors. It features 28 burn inpatient beds, seven Burn Intensive Care Unit (BICU) beds, and seven emergency inpatient beds. The ground floor of this section includes the emergency department, outpatient operating rooms, the BICU, and wash rooms. The basement houses operating rooms, recovery rooms, and medical equipment such as radiography and ventilators. The first and sec-

President Masoud Pezeshkian inaugurates a glassware production plant in Zanzan on July 31, 2025. ● IQNA

ond floors contain the inpatient wards. This specialized burn trauma section has been designed and built according to the latest international standards and is equipped with negative pressure isolation rooms (to prevent the spread of contamination). Furthermore, via video conference, Pezeshkian inaugurated several other projects: the Zanzan Khamseh Processing Project involving foreign investment and creating 140 jobs, and the impoundment of the Bolubin Dam.



The Bolubin Dam, considered one of the government's most important infrastructure projects in the water supply sector, aims to provide drinking water for the cities of Zarinabad, Halab, and 92 villages. With a reservoir capacity of 29.7 million cubic meters and a regulatory capacity of 17.5 million cubic meters, the dam can supply 3.5 million cubic meters of drinking water annually to Zarinabad, Halab, and 92 villages. Additionally, it will meet the water needs of regional industries up to 6 million cubic meters. A further 1.64 million cubic meters of downstream water rights will be supplied from this dam. On Thursday evening, 8,661 urban and

A glassware production plant in Zanzan becomes operational on July 31, 2025. ● EHSAN TAQIBIGLOU/ISNA

rural residential housing units in Zanzan were also inaugurated with Pezeshkian in attendance. Also, during this one-day trip to Zanzan, the president inaugurated a glassware production plant in the northwestern province. This production unit has created jobs for 200 people in the manufacture of various types of glassware. The factory has an annual production capacity of 40,000 tons of glass containers used in the food, beverage, and pharmaceutical industries.

## Minister denies 40m barrel 'stranded oil' claim



## Economy Desk

The Iranian oil minister denied claims of 40 million barrels of Iranian oil stranded at Sea, stating that the country does not have oil that it "cannot sell." Regarding foreign media reports alleging that over 40 million barrels of Iranian oil are stranded offshore, Mohsen Paknejad declared, "I deny this claim," ISNA reported. As reported by ILNA, recent publica-

tions from Platts (affiliated with S&P Global Commodity Insights) and Bloomberg News alleged concerning developments in Iran's crude oil sales to China. These reports claimed that a significant buildup of stored oil — both onshore and offshore — has caused worrisome market conditions, leading to price reductions and steep discounts on Iranian oil. The minister elaborated that in oil sales, cargoes may be held or redirected based on "market-driven conditions,"

adding, "These are measures taken according to the circumstances we face. Moreover, we fundamentally do not have oil that we cannot sell." Latest data from international tanker tracking firms show oil exports from Iran have increased from historic lows of below 0.3 million bpd reported in 2019, when Washington toughened its sanctions on the country, to records of more than 1.8 million bpd in recent months.

## IRICA reports \$34.175b in non-oil trade during first four months

## Economy Desk

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced the country's non-oil trade reached 61.02 million metric tons valued at \$34.175 billion during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (that began on March 20, 2025). This volume reflects a marginal 0.48% increase by weight but a significant 10% decrease in value compared to the same period last year, IRNA reported. Of the total trade volume, non-oil exports accounted for 48.811 million metric tons worth \$16.549 billion while imports totaled 12.209 million metric tons valued at \$17.627 billion. Non-oil exports registered a 1.46% increase in weight but a 5.51% decline in value year-on-year. Imports during the same period decreased by 3.23% in weight and 14.20% in value. Petrochemical exports



amounted to 17.402 million metric tons worth \$6.894 billion, reflecting an 8.30% decrease in volume and 10.22% decrease in value. The five principal export commodities were natural gas, liquefied propane, methanol, liquefied butane, and petroleum asphalt. Major import items comprised gold in raw forms, animal feed corn, rice, sunflower seed oil, and soybeans. China, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Oman served as primary export destinations, while United Arab Emirates, China, Turkey, India, Germany, Russian Federation, and Netherlands emerged as leading import partners during the four-month period ending July 21, 2024.

## Roadmap for Iran-EAEU free trade agreement set for approval in Sept.

## Economy Desk

The roadmap for the Iran-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) free trade agreement is scheduled for approval during the joint committee meeting in September, announced Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Bakytzhan Sagintayev. During his Thursday meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, Sagintayev said the economic union attaches critical importance to precisely formulating the implementation roadmap for this agreement during the 2025-2028 period, IRNA reported. The free trade agreement (FTA) between Iran and the EAEU came into force on May 15. A roadmap, drafted to operationalize the agreement between the bloc's five member states and Iran 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. Sagintayev stated that coordinated advancement across all planned areas of cooperation would be guaranteed once the document is ratified. The EEC chairman highlighted that the implementation of the FTA with Iran has elevated bilateral trade and economic relations to a new level. "We have observed a significant improvement in trade turnover between our countries," he declared, "which reached \$5.9 billion in 2024 – a 14.6% increase year-on-year." Ambassador Jalali characterized the agreement's implementation as demonstrating both parties'

resolve to develop comprehensive cooperation.

### Trade volumes poised to nearly double

Sagintayev described cooperation prospects between Iran and the EAEU as diverse, asserting that the free trade agreement "paints a clear outlook for trade growth between Iran and EAEU member states, and we expect trade volumes to nearly double in the near future." During the meeting, Mohammad Javad Izadi and Mohsen Rahimi were formally appointed as Iran's representatives to the Eurasian Economic Union. The Iranian Embassy in Russia projected that bilateral trade with the EAEU would rise to \$12 billion in the short term.

### Tariff reductions drive 22% export surge

Meanwhile, Mohammad Ali Dehqan Dehnavi, Head of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), emphasized the pivotal role of the FTA with EAEU members, revealing a 22% increase in Iran's exports to these markets during the past spring. He identified tariff reduction as the core advantage of the pact with the five EAEU members, facilitating Iranian goods' access to Eurasian markets. "Following the tariff reduction agreement's implementation," Dehqan Dehnavi added, "Iran's exports to these markets grew by 22% this spring compared to last year." The TPO head reported that over 15 provincial training conferences had educated producers and traders about the agreement's opportu-



Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission Bakytzhan Sagintayev (R) shakes hands with Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali after a meeting in Moscow on July 31, 2025. ● IRNA

nities, clarifying that these training tours were conducted in collaboration with chambers of commerce. He confirmed the establishment of customs coordination between Iran and the five EAEU members, resolving initial customs clearance challenges. Regarding export standards, he noted, "Eurasian countries maintain specific standards that some producers must obtain," adding that negotiations for standard harmonization are underway. He further stated that several medical equipment manufacturers had already obtained Eurasian standards and commenced exports. The TPO head concluded by stressing the agreement's importance for export development, affirming that "through collaboration between the private sector and government, its potential will be optimally utilized."



# Europe can turn snapback into positive leverage



By Sasan Karimi  
International affairs  
analyst

## OPINION

Lately, all eyes in Iran have zoomed in on the issues surrounding nuclear diplomacy, specifically the “snapback” or the Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) in the JCPOA. The first fact is that with the US bowing out of the deal and China and Russia taking a rather neutral stance, the only key players technically able to call the shots on this mechanism are the three European countries.

The second clear truth is that over recent years — especially after Donald Trump's return to power in Washington — Europe's position, particularly that of its three pivotal nations, has taken a nosedive. In today's post-polar world, Europe is neither a steadfast, unconditional ally of the US nor a major global power as it once was.

So, what exactly is the JCPOA's Dispute Resolution Mechanism? Why was it built into the text? Is it a betrayal, an oversight, negligence, or a failure on the part of negotiators? Does the “snapback” or “trigger mechanism” really exist in the JCPOA?

Answers to these hot-button questions have been given many times, yet they haven't caught on widely or been spelled out clearly enough. Typically, the impact of such answers never quite measures up to the scope of the questions or the doubts they spark.

First, at face value, neither “snapback” nor “trigger mechanism” appears in the JCPOA text. The correct term is the Dispute Resolution Mechanism, primarily set out in paragraphs 36 and 37 — and is not unrelated to paragraph 26. The two other names are media-constructed buzzwords.

Second, the foundation of this mechanism is rooted in global realities: No international agreement — whether political, treaty, etc. — has guarantees. Despite various frameworks like the International Court of Justice and arbitration bodies, when push comes to shove, it's raw power and mutual interests (economic, political, etc.) that ultimately tip the scales for states switching gears.

The JCPOA is no exception, and Iranian decision-makers and negotiators were fully aware of this. The mechanism's origin lies in Iran's negotiation team's guideline, which reflects deep distrust toward the West. Hence, the deal was drafted so that if the other side committed a fundamental breach or default, preventing Iran from benefiting, Iran could keep its cards close and act accordingly.

Naturally, these actions wouldn't entail depriving others of their economic benefits. Nor did Iran want to limit its right to respond to violations to just filing complaints with international bodies. Therefore, it was agreed that Iran could pull back to the pre-JCPOA position if it was being denied the deal's gains.

This request triggered a reciprocal clause from other parties. Hence, all sides agreed that, if any failed to benefit from the JCPOA, they could revert every-



*Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd-L) meets with his German, French, and British counterparts, as well as the European Union's top diplomat Kaja Kallas (top table-C), in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 20, 2025.*  
● GERMAN FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE



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*A European delegation leaves the Iranian Consulate following nuclear talks, in Istanbul, Turkey, on July 25, 2025, amid warnings that the three European powers could trigger “snapback” sanctions outlined under the 2015 deal.*  
● YASIN AKGUL/AFP

thing to the pre-agreement status without needing anyone's approval. This “rollback” clause means any dissatisfied party can hit the brakes, regardless of the outlined procedures and based on the voluntary nature of the JCPOA.

It's worth noting that following the US withdrawal and insufficient steps by other parties to guarantee Iran's benefits, Iran decided, under paragraphs 36 and 26, to scale back its JCPOA commitments. For years, Iran has refused to comply with technical, oversight, and other JCPOA constraints. So, Iran remains the only party to have taken advantage of the dispute resolution tool so far. Remember, the pre-JCPOA baseline entails no technical limits and the continuation of six UN Security Council sanctions resolutions passed between 2006

and 2010.

Two key distinctions emerge: First, Iran's rollback has been unilateral and informal, ongoing without following procedural formalities; Second, the rollback right is unlimited for Iran but only lasts a decade for others — that is, until October 2024. In other words, Iran's hand stays on the throttle indefinitely, while the other parties' ability expires.

Now, one of the European governments' main levers is this Dispute Resolution Mechanism: The UK, Germany, and France — the only remaining Western JCPOA members — though they've done little to meet their obligations or neutralize the effects of US sanctions post-US exit, still can technically play the card their position affords them in this political deal.

In the US's absence, these three

European states might attempt, under the guise of reciprocating Iran's nuclear rollback, to turn back the clock on the six UN Security Council sanctions against Iran, restoring conditions to pre-JCPOA negotiations.

While the Europeans' stance isn't “legitimate,” in the author's view, this mechanism can be triggered mechanically (though not legally justified), potentially racking up damage to Iran-Europe relations and undoing Tehran's already dwindling cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. According to one reading, these three European JCPOA members, first, are not active participants — they are only parties. As noted, they haven't taken effective measures to uphold the deal. Second, according to the International Court of Justice's 1971 advisory ruling in the Namibia

case, a party cannot selectively cherry-pick benefits and mechanisms from an agreement if it's not fulfilling its duties.

Also, the spirit of the JCPOA states that the DRM can only be called in when one side breaches the deal. Iran's actions, taken after a one-year pause, have been gradual, reversible, and corrective. They're responses to the US withdrawal and clear breaches by other parties, which deprived Iran of JCPOA benefits, thus Iran's actions don't constitute violations. So, the West's legal claim under paragraph 37 lacks merit, especially since it's wielded as a threat to other issues, including reaching a new deal.

What Europe should aim for on the Iran nuclear issue is a policy of rebuilding relations, instead of tearing down everything and killing Iran's motivation to work on the nuclear issue and to engage with Europe. Now that the domineering player — the US — is out of the picture, Europe can use the opportunity of lifting UNSC sanctions to regain its identity as an independent force that champions justice, restoring its credibility (which has been severely

tarnished, especially after the genocide in Gaza) and rekindling ties with Iran. This mutual rebuilding is sufficiently crucial and motivating for both sides. Remember that in the 1990s, Europe could have acted more autonomously and secured its position and interests.

However, it must be clearly stated: The JCPOA's dispute resolution mechanism is built on the aforementioned distrust and the principle of reversibility (to pre-JCPOA). Furthermore, though we disputed the legitimacy of the Europeans' stance here, in today's environment, the mechanism can still be leveraged. Legal debates on jurisdiction remain important grounds for Iran's Foreign Ministry and Legal Vice Presidency to keep pushing.

*The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.*





# How EU succumbed to Trump's tariff steamroller

By Andy Bounds, Henry Foy, and Ben Hall  
Journalists

## OPINION

The sweeping “liberation day” tariffs that the US president had inflicted on most of the world earlier that month had sent financial markets into a tailspin as investors dumped US assets over recession fears. With the sell-off intensifying, Trump blinked and on April 9, dropped the tariffs to 10 per cent, in what he said was a temporary measure.

But Brussels blinked too. On April 10, it suspended its retaliatory tariffs and accepted the US offer of talks with a knife at its throat: 10 per cent tariffs on most of its trade, along with higher levies on steel, aluminium, and vehicles.

Rather than join Canada and China with instant retaliation, the EU — hamstrung by divergent views among its member states — chose to seek a compromise in the hope of securing a better deal.

Under the framework deal struck by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen and Trump at his Turnberry golf resort on Sunday, the EU has swallowed a broad-based “baseline” US tariff of 15 per cent, including crucially for cars, but not for steel, which will be subject to a quota system.

Relief among policymakers about avoiding an immediate transatlantic trade war was tinged with regret: Could the EU, the world's largest trading bloc and supposedly an economic heavyweight, have extracted better terms had it not pulled its punches early on?

“He's the bully in the schoolyard, and we didn't join others in standing up to him,” said one diplomat. “Those who don't hang together get hanged separately.”

Georg Riekeles, a former commission official who helped negotiate the UK's exit from the bloc, said the EU's most recent threat to apply €93b of retaliatory tariffs against US goods came far too late.

“With the benefit of hindsight, the EU would have been better off answering the US vigorously in April in a one-two combo with China's retaliation against the US tariff hikes, which left markets and Trump reeling,” said Riekeles, now at the European Policy Centre think-tank. Trump views the EU as a parasite, feeding off the lucrative US market while closing its own through regulation and standards. The US president has said the union was “formed to screw the US” and “nastier than China”. The EU's response to his return to power in January was flat-footed. Months of planning beforehand by a dedicated team, which included senior trade officials led by another Brexit talks veteran Sabine Weyand and von der Leyen's trade adviser Tomas Baert, went up in smoke.

They had drawn up a three-point plan modelled on the approach taken in Trump's first term: offer to reduce the near €200b goods trade deficit by buying more liquefied natural



gas, weapons, and agricultural products. Second, offer mutual tariff reductions on each others' goods.

If that failed, they would prepare retaliation and rely on a market response to a possible trade war, or increasing inflation in the US, to force Trump to back down. But Trump moved faster than expected and by March had levied 25 per cent tariffs on steel, aluminium, and cars.

At a meeting in Luxembourg that month, many trade ministers were on the war path. Germany, France, and a few others pushed for the commission to consult on using its new “trade bazooka,” the anti-coercion instrument. Designed after Trump's first term to counter trade policy being used to pressure governments over other matters, it would allow Brussels to bar US companies from public tenders, revoke intellectual property protection, and restrict imports and exports.

However, it was not clear that a majority of member states agreed with the threatening move, diplomats said. Weyand told EU ambassadors, who met at least weekly to discuss progress, to show “strategic patience”.

When the UK struck a trade deal with Washington in May, accepting Trump's 10 per cent baseline

tariff, it encouraged those EU member states seeking a settlement, especially Berlin.

Meanwhile, a severe tit-for-tat escalation between the US and China ended in partial détente, easing investor fears of global trade turmoil. Stock markets reached record highs, despite the large tariff increases and continued uncertainty unleashed by Trump.

Italy's prime minister Giorgia Meloni and German chancellor Friedrich Merz for months held on to the EU's early offer to drop all industrial tariffs if the US did the same, even though Washington had long made clear it wanted unilateral concessions. Berlin was preoccupied with obtaining a complicated “offset” scheme to provide tariff relief for European — in practice, German — car companies that manufactured and exported from the US. While EU technocrats were boxing under Queensberry rules, Trump was in a New York street fight.

Maroš Šefčovič, the EU's avuncular trade commissioner, was dispatched to Washington seven times to propose areas of agreement, deliver homilies on the importance of the transatlantic relationship, and promote Germany's car offset scheme. In total, Šefčovič held more than 100 hours of frustrating talks with

his US counterparts.

A deal for a permanent 10 per cent “reciprocal” tariff, hatched in July with US trade representative Jamieson Greer and commerce secretary Howard Lutnick, was flatly rejected by Trump, who instead threatened to raise levies on the EU to 30 per cent, rather than 20 per cent, from August.

And his threats had worked before. The retaliatory package the EU paused in April had been reduced from €26b to €21b after lobbying by France, Ireland, and Italy to ensure bourbon was removed from the list, after Trump threatened to hit European distillers in return. If everything member states requested had been removed, only €9b of goods would have been left on the list, officials told the Financial Times.

Over the months of talks, Šefčovič's phone rang regularly with ministers urging caution. Simon Harris, the trade minister of Ireland, was a frequent caller. He wanted to save the country's pharmaceutical, spirits, and beef industry from any US counterpunch and let the world — not least the Americans — know with frequent social media posts. Business leaders also called loudly for restraint, preferring to accept a cut to profit margins than risk punitive tar-

iffs that would hit sales.

A second package of retaliatory tariffs on the US was also cut to €72b before finally being approved on July 24 to be used if talks collapsed, bringing the total to €93b.

The months-long uncertainty over the direction of negotiations has also exposed divisions inside the commission itself. Weyand, the steely expert whose hardball approach to Brexit often outfoxed her UK counterparts, has consistently argued for a stronger stance towards Trump and the use of the EU's retaliation tools, in opposition to the more dovish von der Leyen, multiple diplomats and officials told the FT.

The French government, notwithstanding its attempts to shield French business from retaliation, has also repeatedly called for a more muscular commission approach to Trump's tariffs.

But the commission president and her close aides argued that the potential damage from additional Trump measures — including threats to impose specific tariffs on critical sectors such as EU pharmaceuticals — meant the risk of a spiralling trade war was too great.

There was also concern that a more confrontational stance towards Washington could spill over into other areas.

Europe's dependency on America's security guarantee was a further argument against trade confrontation, especially for the bloc's eastern and northern members. Fears that Trump would cut off weapons supplies to Ukraine, pull troops out of Europe, or even quit NATO overshadowed the talks, diplomats said.

A further priority for the commission president was to preserve the EU's right to regulate. The US tech industry has pushed hard for Trump to pressure the EU to weaken laws regulating online speech and data management. They also opposed national digital taxes. So far, von der Leyen has refused to compromise on those issues.

“Some in the commission's trade directorate viewed this as a classical trade dispute and were pushing for retaliation, but von der Leyen had to consider the bigger picture, which drove her caution and risk aversion,” said Mujtaba Rahman, Europe managing director at Eurasia Group, the risk consultancy.

After Trump rebuffed the deal hatched by his own officials, the commission's negotiating team concluded they had no option but to accept a US tariff of 15 per cent. They pitched the number to member state ambassadors last week.

Officials will try to present it as a status quo deal, since the 15 per cent theoretically includes the pre-existing average US tariff of 4.8 per cent. In fact, on a trade-weighted basis, the pre-existing US tariff on imports from the EU was only 1.6 per cent.

There is no hiding the fact the EU was rolled over by the Trump juggernaut, said one ambassador. “Trump worked out exactly where our pain threshold is.”

The article first appeared on the Financial Times.

US President Donald Trump (L) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen  
● FT



Trump views the EU as a parasite, feeding off the lucrative US market while closing its own through regulation and standards. The US president has said the union was “formed to screw the US” and “nastier than China”.



US President Donald Trump (C-R) meets with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (C-L) on July 27, 2025, at his golf resort in Turnberry, Scotland, after the two leaders agreed to a trade deal.  
● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP



## U17 World Wrestling Championships:

## Iran unimpressive but pips Uzbekistan to Greco-Roman title

## Sports Desk

Iran had only two finalists across 10 weight classes but still managed to lift the Greco-Roman team trophy at the U17 World Wrestling Championships in Athens, Greece.

A medal haul of one gold, one silver, and four bronzes saw Iran – represented by nine wrestlers in the Greco-Roman event – stand atop the team table with 125 points.

Uzbekistan impressed with four gold medals but had to settle for a runner-up finish with 118 points, after four of its wrestlers did not contribute points to the team title race.

Kazakhstan finished third with 113 points, with Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan – tied on 100 points – in fourth and fifth, respectively.

A 60kg bronze-medal contest on the final day, featuring Iran's Abolfazl Zare' and Humoyun Erkinov of Uzbekistan, proved crucial in the title race.

A victory for Erkinov would have seen Uzbekistan win the title, but Zare' came out victorious 7-5 to keep Iran in contention with a fourth successive Greco-Roman trophy at the U17 Worlds.

Later on Wednesday, Amir-sam Mohammadi made a quick work of Belarusian Kanstantsin Kasyan, who competed as a neutral athlete, to walk away with the ultimate prize in the 92kg class and help Iran jump from fourth to the top spot in the team table.

Mohammadi started the show-



● IAWF

down right on the front foot and scored with three stepouts. Kasyan was then called passive and put in par terre as Mohammadi turned him twice and won the final 8-0 in one minute and 12 seconds.

Mohammadhossein Kazemi, meanwhile, bounced back from a 2-1 loss to Uzbekistan's Behruzbeq Valiev in the quarter-finals to rout Finland's Matias

Onnenlehto 9-0 in repechage before defeating Azerbaijan's Yusif Ahmadli 4-3 for a joint-bronze in the 71kg event.

Elsewhere, Benjamin Khezli missed out on the podium in the 45kg contests after an 8-3 defeat against Vadim Tarelunga of Moldova in a third-place playoff.

Wednesday's results came after Iran had collected one silver medal, through Yazdan Delrouz

in the 110kg division, and two bronzes on the preceding night in the Greek capital.

Delrouz enjoyed an emphatic run to the final showpiece, not conceding a single point in three bouts, but was unfortunate to give away a three-point lead at the break and lose on criteria (3-3) to Indian Yardeep Yardeep.

Amirmohammad Hajivand re-

covered from a first-round 4-3 defeat against Uzbekistan's Bunyod Hasanov, to finish his campaign with a consolation bronze in the 48kg contests, courtesy of superiority win (12-3) against Turkish wrestler Baris Soyulu.

Amirreza Tahmasbpour also bounced back from a setback in his first outing – a 5-3 loss to Kyrgyzstan's Alkham Abdirasulov – to finish his 55kg

campaign with something to cheer about, hammering Indian Aditya Gupta 10-1 in a bronze-medal bout.

Meanwhile, Taha Nouri (80kg) and Amirmahdi Hajivand (51kg) finished their campaigns empty-handed, while Abolfazl Shiri was ruled out of the 65kg event after the host country refused to issue an entry visa for the young Iranian.

Despite a somewhat underwhelming campaign, Iran head coach Mohsen Sourian was thrilled to see his squad "display true Iranian fighting spirit" to defend the Greco-Roman title in Athens.

"Our nation was caught up in the imposed war with Israel, forcing us to cancel our training camp. We also missed out on the U17 Asian Championships [in June], which was a major setback to our preparations for the world event," Sourian said.

"Abolfazl Shiri was unlucky to miss the competitions. I'm sure he would have been a favorite for the gold medal, given his experience and track record in the previous events as well as a favorable draw in Athens," added the Iranian.

"I'm fully satisfied with all my members of the squad – even Amirmahdi Hajivand who was eliminated. They all gave their absolute best and displayed true Iranian fighting spirit on the mat. We could have won multiple gold medals, but inexperience in the final seconds and our wrestlers' physical exhaustion eventually cost us dearly."

Ex-Iran international Ansarifard on Esteghlal radar: *Report*

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal is weighing up a move for former Iran international striker Karim Ansarifard, Varzesh3 reported on Friday.

Ansarifard, 35, has been without a team since parting ways with Aris Thessaloniki in July 2024 – after registering one goal and assist apiece in 14 appearances for the Greek top-flight side.

A former player of Iranian clubs Saipa, Persepolis, and Tractor, Ansarifard was first introduced to European club football with

LaLiga Osasuna side in 2014.

The Iranian spent the best part of his club career in Europe at the Greek Super League 1, where he scored 58 goals and provided 16 assists in 195 outings across all competitions for AEK Athens, Panionios Athens, Aris, and Olympiacos, helping the latter lift league trophy in the 2016/17 season.

He also had stints at then-Championship outfit Nottingham Forest, Qatari club Al Sailiya, as well as Omonia Nicosia in the Cypriot First Division.

Ansarifard has 30 goals in 104 international caps, with his last

appearance for the national team coming as a substitute in a last-eight win against Japan at the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar in February 2024.

Should the Iranian striker join Esteghlal, he will be the sixth summer signing for the Tehran Blues, who finished ninth in the 16-team table of the Iranian league last season but managed to win the Hazfi Cup trophy in May and secure a place in the AFC Champions League Two for the upcoming season, before bringing back Portuguese Ricardo Sa Pinto as the head coach last month.



● ARIS FC



● taekwondo.ir

Asian Para Taekwondo Championships:  
Iranians complete  
clean sweep of 12 medals

## Sports Desk

Iranians enjoyed a prolific day at the Asian Para Taekwondo Championships, completing a clean sweep of 12 medals, including triple golds, in Kuching, Malaysia on Friday.

Alireza Bakht (-80kg) and Hamed Haqshenas (+80kg) – two Paralympic bronze medalists last year in Paris – bagged a

couple of golds in men's competitions, while Marzieh Nasrollahi walked away with the ultimate prize in the women's +65kg class.

Amirmohammad Haqiqatshenas (-70kg) and Saeid Sadeqianpour (-63kg) were the Iranian silver medalists in the men's draw, with Maryam Abdollahpour settling for a runner-up spot in the women's -57kg event.

Zahra Rahimi, who won a Paralympic silver in Paris, took the bronze in the -57kg class after a loss to Abdollahpour in an all-Iranian semifinal.

Elsewhere, Mahdi Pour-Rahnama (men's -80kg), Taha Hassanpour (men's -58kg), Leila Mirzaei (women's -65kg), Aylar Jami (women's -47kg), and Roza Ebrahimi (women's -52kg) added five bronzes to Iran's medal haul.



# Wander through Oudlajan Bazaar’s historic alleys

Iranica Desk

Oudlajan Bazaar is considered one of the oldest in Tehran, encapsulating the authentic history and culture of the capital within itself. The traditional market is located in the Oudlajan neighborhood, adjacent to Tehran’s Grand Bazaar; thus, when visiting it, you can stroll through its old alleyways and explore the many tourist attractions of the area.

Composition and offerings

This bazaar, comprised of small shops within a traditional setting, is known among tourists as a center for selling traditional handicrafts. There are also cafés and restaurants operating there, where you can rest and dine after shopping.

Location

Regarding the location of Oudlajan Bazaar, it can be said that it is in the central part of Tehran, nestled within one of the city’s oldest neighborhoods — Oudlajan. This neighborhood is bounded to the north by Amir Kabir Street, to the south by 15 Khordad Street, to the east by Rey Street, and to the west by Pamenar Street. The proximity of this old structure to 15 Khordad Street, Mostafa Khomeini Street, Imamzadeh Yahya area, and the Grand Bazaar of Tehran has made it easily accessible for shoppers and visitors.

Historical background

The Oudlajan neighborhood is about 400 years old and is considered one of Tehran’s attractions, with its most interesting part being the bazaar, which has flourished since the Qajar era. Over time, the site expanded, affecting the neighborhood as old houses



karnaval.ir



gradually turned into workshops or warehouses for the market.

Revival and restoration efforts

The Oudlajan Bazaar, a leading market in Tehran during the Qajar era, revived its prosperity in the 2000s, focusing more on handicrafts. Later, in 2016, merchants and the Cultural Heritage Organization restored the market, turning it into a historic and beautiful market.

Walking through bazaar

Walking through Oudlajan Bazaar, with its cobblestone alleys and brick walls, revives the sense of this region’s history for visitors. In summer afternoons, the market’s corridors are sprinkled with water to cool the air and relieve the summer heat. Besides the main part of the old market, you can also visit its side alleys. A section of the market contains a wall of clay souvenirs, which is worth seeing.

Handicrafts and arts

Oudlajan Bazaar can be considered dedicated to handicrafts. Within it, various trades related to Iranian handicrafts and traditional arts operate, breathing new life into this historic passage. Many of the vendors are artists who offer their works directly to customers. Especially on Thursdays, with the “Thursday Bazaar” and the presence of artists from across the country, Oudlajan becomes a vibrant platform for pro-

moting handicrafts. Additionally, some shops have been converted into cafés and restaurants. Many shopkeepers in Oudlajan are artists whose works are the result of hours of careful and creative labor. Among the offered handicrafts are Mina Kari (enameling), Qalam Zani (engraving), traditional pottery and ceramics, which are both decorative and functional. Copperware, Malileh Kari (delicate filigree), and silver jewelry are also very popular,

especially among tourists.

Diversity

Wooden works such as inlay and marquetry showcase Iranian art as both decorative and utilitarian objects. Kilims, small rugs, and colorful felt items from various provinces add remarkable diversity to the ancient market. It is not only a place to shop but also a venue for keeping traditional crafts alive and passing them on to future generations.

## Yazdi sweets celebrate tradition with Baklava and Qottab

Yazdi sweets are the most famous Iranian sweets. Yazd, the ancient desert city of Iran, is famous not only for its stunning mud-brick architecture and Zoroastrian heritage but also for its delectable sweets. Among the many traditional Persian confections, Baklava (Baghlava Yazdi) and Qottab are two of the most beloved treats, each offering a unique blend of flavors and textures that captivate both locals and travelers alike.

Baklava Yazdi

Baklava is a widely recognized dessert across the Middle East, the Balkans, and Central Asia, but Baklava Yazdi has a distinct Iranian twist. Unlike the Turkish or Greek versions, which use honey-based syrup, Baklava Yazdi is made with rosewater, cardamom, and pistachios, giving it a delicate floral aroma and an elegant sweetness, adventureiran.com wrote.

The preparation involves layering thin

sheets of dough with finely ground almonds or pistachios, then baking them to a golden crisp. Once out of the oven, the baklava is drizzled with a lightly scented sugar syrup infused with rosewater and saffron, adding a rich depth of flavor. The final touch is a generous sprinkle of crushed pistachios, making it as visually appealing as it is delicious.

Qottab

Qottab is another iconic Yazdi sweet that dates back centuries. These deep-fried pastries are shaped like small crescents, with a crisp, flaky exterior and a soft, nutty filling inside. The dough, made from flour, yogurt, butter, and egg yolk, is rolled out thinly, filled with a mixture of finely ground almonds,



Qottab  
fararu.com

cardamom, and powdered sugar, then carefully folded and fried to golden perfection. Once fried, Qottab is dusted generously with powdered sugar, giving it a melt-in-the-mouth texture with a satisfying crunch. The combination of nutty, sweet, and aromatic flavors makes Qottab an irresistible companion to a cup of Persian tea.

Sweet legacy of Yazd

Both Baklava and Qottab are deeply rooted in Yazdi culture, often served during Nowruz (Persian New Year), wed-

dings, and special celebrations. Their delicate flavors, traditional recipes, and meticulous craftsmanship make them symbols of Yazdi hospitality and heritage. For travelers visiting Yazd, no trip is complete without indulging in these famous confections. Many traditional sweet shops in the city offer freshly made Yazdi sweets include Baklava and Qottab, allowing visitors to experience the authentic taste of Persian desserts. If you have a sweet tooth and an appreciation for Persian culinary artistry, these Yazdi delights are a must-try.

Baklava Yazdi  
wikigardinet







# ‘Confusion’ awarded at Georgia theater festival

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian director Mohammad Amin Sadi’s ‘Confusion’ was awarded an honorary diploma on July 31 at the Regional International Theater Festival in the Georgian port city of Poti. The Tehran-based production, staged by Amitis Theater Group, was among 11 entries from France, Romania, Lithuania, Georgia and Iran, according to ISNA.

Festival officials praised the piece for its “coherent” structure and “high-quality” execution. The play is a free adaptation of ‘L’Étourdissement,’ a novel by French writer Joël Egloff, translated into Persian by Asghar Nouri. It has been reimagined through a postmodern lens and delivered in what the director described as a “cross-genre language.”

Set in an unnamed industrial town, ‘Confusion’ follows a 23-year-old man battling internal pressures on his daily commute between home and the

slaughterhouse where he works. The story is told from the character’s point of view as he lives with his grandmother. According to Sadi, the work explores “loneliness, despair and psychological pressure” that weigh on the modern individual.

The production combines physical performance and shadow theater. Lead actor Fardin Rahmanpour was cast for his ability to handle both intense physicality and psychologically layered roles. Sahar Ghassemi plays in both form and shadow sequences. Sadi said the role took nearly five months of rehearsals to refine, while additional performers trained for more than two months. The entire staging process took about seven months to complete.

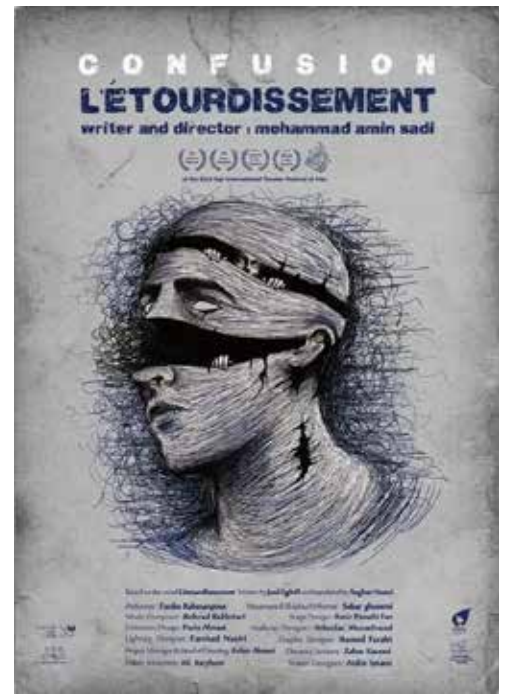
After logging more than 70 performances in Tehran, ‘Confusion’ was nominated at the Fajr International Theater Festival for best directing, acting, costume, and makeup design. The production team credited its



success in Georgia to logistical support from Albert Beigiani and Saman Khalilian, along with backing from Iran’s General Directorate of Performing Arts.

The performance is currently running at Tehran’s Hamoon Theater, which Sadi selected for its “professional audience and quality programming.” The director said the team has received offers to tour the show in cities includ-

ing Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Qeshm. Sadi is now working on a new project based on ‘Frankenstein,’ aiming to blend classical narrative with modern themes. The script is in early development, with no performance dates confirmed. As for ‘Confusion,’ he said the play is “well-suited” for both domestic and international festivals, and the group plans to submit it to this year’s Fajr festival if conditions allow.



## Iranian passion play moves Brussels audience with tale of Karbala



## Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian troupe performed the traditional Shia passion play of Ta’zieh in Brussels, drawing a mixed crowd of European spectators and Shia residents. The Brussels performance marked the third European stop this summer for the “Imam-e-Raouf” ensemble, following shows in Sweden and Norway, according to Iranian state-backed Mehr News Agency.

The group, led by producer Mo-

hammad Javaheri and featuring artists including Hassan Gol-Khatami and Mojtaba Hassanbeigi, aims to bring the centuries-old ritual drama of Ashura to a wider global audience.

Rooted in the story of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in 680 AD, Ta’zieh blends poetry, music, and costume to recount themes of justice, sacrifice, and resistance. The performance’s “universal message” and visual resemblance to both Greek tragedy and medieval European religious plays have

helped it resonate with Western audiences, organizers said.

UNESCO recognized Ta’zieh as intangible cultural heritage in 2010, boosting international exposure. Since then, the Imam-e-Raouf troupe has staged performances in countries across Europe, including Spain, Denmark, and Hungary, especially during the Shia mourning months of Muharram and Safar.

“This is not just a religious ceremony,” said one of the perform-

ers. “It’s a human story of oppression and courage.” Audience members—many with no prior exposure to Shia rituals—reportedly reacted with tears and silence, as the dramatic reenactment unfolded.

The group plans upcoming performances in Paris and Frankfurt, continuing its European tour. The strong turnout in Brussels, including non-Iranian viewers, suggests the cross-cultural pull of a tradition once confined to village squares and shrines in Iran.

## Iran eyes deeper film ties with Africa

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is seeking to expand its film industry’s reach across Africa through joint productions, festival collaborations and cultural exchange, officials and academics said at a Tehran panel hosted by the Cinema Organization of Iran.

The event, held by the Center for Cinematic Studies, drew cinema officials, experts and artists to explore how Tehran could tap into what one speaker called the “vast, underutilized potential” of African film markets.

Amir Bahram Arab Ahmadi, associate professor at the University of Tehran, said Africa, home to a quarter of the world’s countries, is fast becoming a strategic cultural and economic frontier.

Arab Ahmadi highlighted Africa’s cinematic diversity, pointing to Egypt’s century-old film industry and South Africa’s post-apartheid cinema revival. He noted Nigeria’s Nollywood as the world’s most prolific producer, with some 2,500 films annually. Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ethiopia also show signs of steady growth despite limited resources.

“In most African countries, cinema is managed by the state with support for both public and private players,” he said, noting that many governments have “borrowed models from countries like China.” Professional guilds and unions have also emerged over the past decades, signaling structural maturity.

Iranian filmmakers, he added, have mostly worked in East Africa due to historical ties dating back to the Shiraazi diaspora. Documentaries and features have been shot in Kenya, Somalia, and South Africa, including ‘The Fourth Child’ by Vahid Mousaian and Majid Majidi’s ‘Muhammad: The Messenger of God,’ partially filmed in Bela Bela.

Arab Ahmadi criticized Tehran’s limited engagement with Africa, saying the government “has yet to prioritize” the continent in its cultural diplomacy. He pointed to countries like Turkey and China that actively use their media exports to build soft power in Africa.

“African film festivals are golden opportunities,” he said. “They’re not just showcases — they’re gateways to global recognition.”

## Parliament to review lethal force law for park rangers amid rising casualties

## Social Desk

Iran’s Parliament is to review legal reforms concerning the use of firearms by environmental enforcement officers, following a sharp rise in deadly confrontations between park rangers and armed poachers, the country’s top environmental protection official said on Friday.

The move was announced by Brigadier General Reza Rastegar, commander of the Protection Unit of Iran’s Department of Environment, after a closed-door session with Parliament’s Legal and Judicial Committee in Tehran, IRNA reported.

He said a joint legal team was formed to revise provisions of a 1994 law governing the use of weapons by military and security forces, which also applies to rangers.

The law, initially drafted for armed forces in wartime conditions, sets strict criteria for opening fire — including verbal warnings and warning shots — even when rangers face armed threats. Environmental officials argue the statute is outdated, given the evolving nature of threats to protected areas and personnel. Proposed amendments seek to enhance legal protection for rangers and reduce their exposure to prosecution in



cases of self-defense.

“The goal is to strike a fair balance between citizen safety and the responsibilities of armed officers,” Rastegar said, calling the reform “a national security necessity.”

Iran has one of the world’s highest ranger mortality rates. At least 121 park rangers have been killed in the line of duty, according to official data. Over 379 rangers have been permanently injured or disabled in similar confrontations, some facing life-altering trauma.

“The imbalance between law enforcement responsibilities and legal protection has turned our rangers into moving

targets,” said a senior official involved in the legislative effort, noting that fewer than 40 fallen rangers have been recognized as martyrs by the government.

Under current rules, rangers are barred from using firearms unless directly fired upon. As a result, many are killed or injured before they can act. “It’s not just about defending wildlife anymore — it’s about survival,” said a conservation analyst in Tehran.

Iran employs roughly 3,500 park rangers to patrol millions of hectares of protected land, meaning each ranger is responsible for over 10,000 hectares — more than double the international standard.