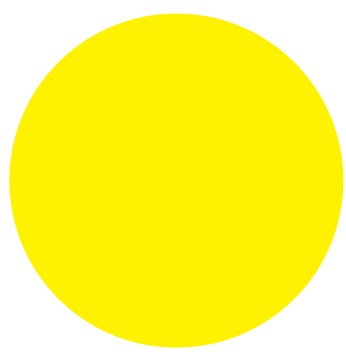


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# Iran Daily

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## Larijani: Strategic Iran-Iraq cooperation must become more tangible

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### Iran's military power shifting from dependency to self-sufficiency

By Shadab Asgari  
Military affairs expert

OPINION  
EXCLUSIVE

Today, Iran has reached an advanced level of technology in producing military equipment and weaponry, achieving both self-sufficiency and deterrence in defense capabilities. This stands in sharp contrast to the period before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, when, despite possessing modern weapons and the strongest army in the region, the country's military power was entirely imported and dependent on Western powers. One of the most frequently cited phrases circulating online and exploited in hostile media narratives against the Islamic Republic is a remark attributed to Imam Khomeini, the late founder of the Republic. In an interview in early 1978, when asked about arms purchases in exchange for oil revenues owed to Iran, he stated, "We do not need scrap iron."

Over the years, this statement has been repeatedly taken out of context to stir up controversy. Critics have claimed that Imam Khomeini failed to appreciate the undeniable importance of weapons and equipment used by the army during the eight-year war imposed by Iraq (1980-88). They turned the phrase into a tool to cast doubt on his judgement and to chip away at the credibility of the Islamic Republic, particularly among younger generations in Iran and across the region. Yet such interpretations miss the point. Imam Khomeini's remark was aimed at exposing the Pahlavi regime's misuse of oil revenues. Under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, oil was effectively sold off cheaply to the United States in exchange for weapons, assembly-line industries or overpriced aircraft and equipment of limited value. One example was the purchase of decommissioned Boeing 747 jumbo jets from the American company TWA, intended for conversion into cargo and refueling aircraft.

General Shapour Azarbarzin, the last deputy commander of the Imperial Air Force, later confirmed this. He recalled, "The Shah said that 11 jumbo jets had been purchased from TWA." Upon inspection, the planes were found to be retired and parked in the airline's scrapyard. "They were entirely unflyable," Azarbarzin noted, adding that the Shah insisted Boeing would refurbish them, but that never happened. On May 10, 1975, one of the converted 747s took off from Tehran with a full crew and nine departing US advisers on board. Over Madrid, the controls failed and the aircraft crashed. Investigations later revealed that the absence of anti-magnetic wiring in the wings had allowed a lightning strike to ignite the fuel tanks – despite Boeing's supposed commitment to a full overhaul. Lufthansa representatives even urged the Iranian Air Force to join in a complaint against Boeing, citing a similar incident with one of their planes.

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## Bolivarian wrath unshackled



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## Bolivarian wrath unshackled

# Maduro vows 'armed struggle' in case of Trump's attack

## Two Venezuelan F-16 fighter jets overfly US warship



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro addresses troops and the nation in a televised speech broadcast on state media on September 5, 2025.

AP

### International Desk

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Friday warned that his country would move to a stage of "armed struggle" if attacked, after US President Don-

ald Trump said Venezuelan military aircraft could be shot down if they approached American vessels in the Caribbean. Maduro's warning came as tensions escalated sharply between Caracas and Washington follow-

ing the overflight of two Venezuelan F-16 fighter jets above a US warship deployed to the region. "We are still in the phase of unarmed struggle," Maduro told troops during what he described as the operational activation of the Bolivarian National Militia. "But if there is an attack, the whole people will respond against aggression, whether local, regional or national." The Venezuelan leader said the country had entered an "enlistment and preparation phase," with plans to deploy defensive, training, and retraining capacities across the population. He announced the creation of 5,336 new militia units and the activation of 15,000 defensive installations, with some 8.2 million members of the Bolivarian Militia called up.

His comments followed Trump's stark warning in Washington earlier in the day. "I would say they're going to be in trouble. We'll let them know about that ... if they fly in a dangerous position," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

The Pentagon said the US vessel was part of a broader deployment aimed at combating criminal organizations and what Trump has repeatedly claimed to be "narco-terrorism." In recent weeks, Washington has dispatched seven warships, F-35 fighter jets, and a nuclear-powered submarine to the southern Caribbean.

Maduro sent a formal letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in late August, denouncing what he described as escalating US aggression and

calling for urgent international intervention.

### Maduro says Trump seeking regime change

The escalation follows a September 3 US missile strike on a speedboat allegedly carrying drugs from Venezuela, which killed 11 people. Maduro denounced the strike as an "immoral threat," saying Venezuela faced "the greatest threat our continent has seen in 100 years." The Venezuelan leader said Washington was pursuing regime change under the guise of anti-narcotics operations. "I demand that Trump abandon his plan for a violent regime change in Venezuela and throughout Latin America, and respect the sovereignty, the right to peace and the independence of our

countries," he said. Maduro rejected US accusations that his government is tied to drug cartels, insisting Venezuela has "always been willing to talk" with Washington but only on the basis of mutual respect. Differences, he added, do not justify a "military conflict."

Trump, a long-time critic of Maduro, denied accusations of being after regime change in Venezuela. "We're not talking about that," he said when asked, but reiterated claims about a "very strange election" earlier this year in which Maduro secured a third term.

Last month, the US president doubled the reward for information leading to Maduro's arrest to \$50 million, accusing him of being "one of the largest narco-traffickers in the world."

## Larijani: Strategic Iran-Iraq cooperation must become more tangible

### Senior Iraqi cleric says 12-day war enhanced Iran's power in region

### International Desk

Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, met with Iraqi cleric and political figure Ammar al-Hakim on Saturday, calling Iraq a "friendly, like-minded and strong country" in the region.

He called Iran-Iraq cooperation "strategic", stressing that, in today's dynamic circumstances, such cooperation must take on a more tangible form.

Hakim, for his part, pointed to Israel's June war against Iran, saying contrary to the regime's intentions, the conflict strengthened Iran's standing in the region, with Muslims praising Tehran's powerful role.

He added that Israel's "malicious behavior" in pursuit of its so-called "Greater Israel" theory has vindicated Iran's longstanding position in branding the regime a "cancerous tumor," adding that the entire region has now grown sensitive to the regime's adventurism.

Hakim arrived in Tehran late Friday for meetings with senior Iranian officials. Upon arrival, he visited the mausoleum of the late Imam Khomeini to pay his respects to the founder of the Islamic Republic, and also met with Hassan Khomeini, the custodian of the shrine.

He said in the meeting that Shiite



and Sunni Muslims alike express solidarity with Iran, emphasizing that Muslims supported any country that defended itself against Israel.

Hakim described Iran as the frontline bastion of the Islamic world, noting that regional states have recognized that if Iran were weakened in its fight against Israel, the entire region would suffer.

In a separate meeting with Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, Hakim said relations between Iran and Iraq went beyond those of two ordinary neighbors, and offered his assessment of the political and social climate in Iraq.

Ejei underlined the strong ties between Tehran and Baghdad, say-



Senior Iraqi cleric and political figure Ammar al-Hakim (r.) meets with Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, in Tehran on September 6, 2025.

IRNA

ing recent regional developments showed that enemies opposed the empowerment of Muslims.

He stressed Iran's neighbor-first policy, adding that Iraq held a special place given the many commonalities between the two nations. "We do not seek confrontation with any of our neighbors, even those aligned with our enemies—except in cases where they openly act in line with hostile plots against us," he said.

## Araghchi raps 'deafening Western silence' over Israel's nuclear arsenal

### International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Friday accused Western powers of turning a blind eye to Israel's reported expansion of its nuclear arsenal, calling their silence "deafening" and proof of double standards.

"Iran has long warned that Western hysteria over nuclear proliferation in our region is all fluff," Araghchi wrote on X. "It is therefore not a surprise that there is deafening Western silence over the apparent expansion of the only nuclear weapons arsenal in our region—the nukes in the hands of their genocidal ally."

He attached an Associated Press report citing satellite images of Israel's Dimona nuclear site,

which experts said may point to work on a new heavy water reactor or facilities linked to weapons assembly. Israel is widely believed to possess between 90 and 300 nuclear warheads, though the figure has never been officially confirmed. Israel is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its program is not open to international inspections.

By contrast, Western powers have long pressured Iran over its nuclear program, which Tehran insists is purely civilian. In June, Israel and the United States launched a war on Iran, accusing the Islamic Republic of moving toward a nuclear weapon with no concrete evidence, a conflict that derailed ongoing negotiations over Tehran's atomic activities.

## Iran to push IAEA resolution

### International Desk

Iran plans to present a draft resolution at the upcoming General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), declaring attacks on nuclear facilities unacceptable.

Diplomatic sources said the document is being drafted and will be submitted at the forthcoming session. Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's ambassador and permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna, confirmed the move in a post on X on Friday.

According to the announced schedule, the IAEA General Conference will be held in Vienna on September 14 for five days. Iran's nuclear sites

came under attack by Israel and the United States in June. The strikes triggered a 12-day war during ongoing diplomatic negotiations between Tehran and Washington over Iran's nuclear program, effectively halting the talks.

Tehran blames what it calls a biased report by the IAEA Director General—which paved the way for a Board of Governors resolution against Iran just before Israel's attack—as one of the factors behind the conflict. In response, Iran suspended its cooperation with the Agency. The latest round of talks between Iran and the IAEA over a new cooperation framework took place on Friday but yielded no concrete results.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Iran's military power ...

The Shah, however, refused, saying, "We made the mistake of buying them."

**Page 1 >** How can we now complain?" Notably, no other country used jumbo jets as refueling tankers, given the prohibitive costs.

Azarbarzin added, "Each 747 cost \$150 million, but the Shah's government paid \$40 million apiece to have them converted. When we asked US advisers for

manuals on how to operate the tankers, they laughed, saying no such manuals existed – because even the US military didn't have such aircraft."

Today, the contrast is stark. Thanks to the knowledge and determination of its young scientists, Iran has made tangible advances in defense, reaching a high level of deterrence. Despite decades of sanctions – particularly targeting the defense sector – Iran has developed

ballistic and cruise missiles, advanced drones, air defense systems, tanks and armored vehicles, and has kept up with the latest global technologies.

Unlike the monarchy, which relied heavily on foreign suppliers, the Islamic Republic is now recognized as a nation that has achieved self-reliance in its defense industry. Its military power no longer depends on outsiders but rests firmly on domestic capabilities.



# Agriculture Ministry should overhaul crop planning, spending discipline: *Pezeshkian*



President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at a meeting with the Agriculture Ministry officials in Tehran on September 6, 2025.  
● [president.ir](#)

**Economy Desk**  
Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday set priorities for the Agriculture Ministry, calling for an overhaul of crop planning and

tighter oversight of foreign currency spending to curb inflation and boost benefits for consumers and farmers. Listening to the reports and views of the ministry officials in a meeting in Tehran, Pezeshkian outlined his

most important expectations from the executive body, ILNA reported. He said the ministry's top priority should be defining what crops to plant, where to plant them and how, based on available resources, calling

for a serious review of conventional planting methods, with comprehensive planning that considers social consequences and involves maximum cross-sectoral cooperation. "Greenhouses should be relocated to southern coastal areas, where water resources and export conditions are more favorable," he said. He noted that agriculture is among the largest users of government foreign currency allocations and urged stricter scrutiny to ensure commodities are not bought at inflated prices, and that subsidies reach the main target groups. Pezeshkian pressed for eliminating overlapping responsibilities, cutting current expenses, improving efficiency and making the ministry's structure leaner. "Because administrative costs have a significant impact on inflation," he said, "managing them carries a double necessity."

**Investment in technology**  
The president emphasized in-

creased investment in technology and the use of modern equipment and solutions in agriculture, the simultaneous management of consumption and demand alongside supply, the optimization and strict supervision of the process of purchasing and supplying essential goods from abroad in order to prevent higher costs at every stage from foreign procurement to domestic delivery, and the fullest use of regional trade capacities as among his other expectations from the ministry. Making use of idle capacity in food production and processing to create more added value with an export-oriented approach, drawing on successful global experiences in combating desertification, reviewing the policies, missions and performance of agricultural research centers to boost productivity and maximize their potential in line with allocated resources, and closing the gap from farm to fork to cut out middlemen, prevent unjustified price increases, ensure real producers gain the profits and protect consumers from exploitation were also among the president's expectations raised in this meeting.

## RAJA ready to allocate land at Aprin to neighbors, eyes 40m-ton rail transit

**Economy Desk**  
Iran's railway authority said on Saturday it is ready to allocate land in the second phase of the Aprin dry port to neighboring countries and aims to raise rail transit to 40 million tons. Jabbarali Zakeri, CEO of Iran's national railway company (RAJA), mentioned that the first phase of the Aprin dry port was completed last year with customs operations established and private sector investment in place. Work on the second phase, covering 700 hectares, has begun, IRNA reported. "We have informed neighboring countries that we are prepared to allocate part of the port's land," he said. The deputy roads and urban development minister also said rail crossings at border points should be streamlined to minimize obstacles and ensure customs, standards and border security procedures are resolved. Iran currently has joint rail links with Turkmenistan, Afghanistan,

Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Iraq, which he said needed to be strengthened. "Our railway diplomacy has been active over the past year," Zakeri said, noting that Turkmen and Uzbek officials were in Iran this week, with Kyrgyz and Turkish counterparts due to visit next week. Iran shares border rail connections at Sarakhs, Incheh Borun, Amirabad, Caspian port, Lotfabad, Astara and Jolfa. "If we can move one to five million tons of cargo annually through each of these points, we can say we have set a record," Zakeri said.

**Targeting 40m tons**  
He said reaching 40 million tons of rail transit was achievable "with process reforms, stronger inter-agency coordination, avoiding fragmented approaches, and using each other's capacities to increase efficiency." Rail-based transit development is a key national policy, he said. "If we have defined the North-South and



East-West corridors, we must base them on rail, and these corridors are the long-standing aspiration of the country's transport sector." Iran moved five million tons of transit, export and import cargo by rail last year, well below potential. Zakeri said under the Seventh Development Plan, with Parliament

and government support, Iran hoped to close the gap and achieve brighter prospects in rail transit. In the short term, he added, co-operation among institutions, avoiding parallel investments and easing conditions for public and private sector participation would be essential to reach the target.

## CBI gives go-ahead to Russia's VTB for opening Tehran branch



**Economy Desk**  
The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has granted preliminary approval for Russia's VTB bank to launch a branch in the capital Tehran, board member Olga Basha said, as reported by IRNA. "The Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran has issued preliminary approval for the opening of our branch in Tehran," Basha said on Friday, stressing that the Tehran branch would initially provide services to Russian and Iranian companies engaged in bilateral trade. Russia's second-largest lender has operated a representative office in Tehran since May 2023. The office would also handle trade finance, export operations and settlement mechanisms, including cross-border payments in national currencies, she added. Basha said the bank had completed the initial steps in establishing the branch and was continuing the next stages. "We are establishing the necessary contacts, shaping the right chain of interaction, and studying all the legal subtleties in the process of VTB's operations in Iran," she said. Basha declined to give forecasts about the future of the branch but added, "We see good prospects." Earlier, in response to a question from IRNA, Basha said the representative office was viewed "as a gateway to enter the Iranian market" and that the model had so far fully met the needs of the bank's customers and partners. Basha also said VTB was studying the Iranian market and exploring options for conducting foreign transactions between Russian and Iranian companies in national currencies, using the bank's central infrastructure.

## IMIDRO: Mining exports surpass \$4b in first four months, post 14% surge



**Economy Desk**  
Iran exported \$4.1 billion worth of mining and mineral industry products in the first four months of the calendar year (began on March 20, 2025), up about 14% in volume but down 4% in value compared with the same period last year, the state-run Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) said. From the start of the year

to the end of the fourth month, Iran exported 23.77 million tons of products from the sector worth \$4.132 billion. That compared with 20.89 million tons worth \$4.319 billion in the same period a year earlier, IRNA reported. Exports of steel, aluminum and copper accounted for the bulk of shipments, totaling 14.27 million tons valued at \$3.243 billion. A year earlier, exports of those three product chains

stood at 11.02 million tons worth \$3.385 billion. The figures showed a 30% increase in volume and a 4% drop in value. Imports of mining and mineral industry products reached 999,580 tons worth \$2.076 billion in the four-month period. In the same period last year, imports stood at 1.22 million tons valued at \$1.977 billion, marking an 18% decrease in volume but a 5% rise in value.



# ‘Greater Israel’ vision should alarm Mideast: Experts

**INTERVIEW** Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of the Zionist regime, recently laid out his vision in an interview on the Israeli channel i24, stating, “I’m on a historic and spiritual mission and emotionally connected to the vision of Greater Israel.” These remarks by the prime minister of the Israeli occupation regime set off strong reactions from countries and officials around the world, especially regional leaders, and sparked widespread condemnation among Muslim nations. Foreign ministers from 31 Arab and Islamic countries, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council issued a statement slamming Netanyahu’s comments on the so-called “Greater Israel” plan, denouncing it as a direct threat to Arab national security and the sovereignty of states. In response, Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s foreign minister, also pointed out that Western media usually clap back at anyone mentioning the Zionists’ “Greater Israel” idea by accusing them of “anti-Semitism”. To dive into various aspects of this plan, an interview was conducted with Palestine experts Seyed Hadi Borhani and Mansour Barati, a translated section of which follows:

To what extent do you think Netanyahu’s “Greater Israel” plan serves domestic purposes, and how feasible is its implementation?

**BORHANI:** This plan has a dual nature: It has both domestic appeal and deep ideological roots in Zionist history. Domestically, Netanyahu is currently under pressure from public opinion in Israel. He has lost out on much of the secular and non-religious support, and his main base now consists of hardline religious groups and the extreme right. Naturally, he aims to hold onto this faction. Promoting the “Greater Israel” idea fits into this framework because this faction openly and boldly backs such a plan. However, it doesn’t stop at the domestic level. If we look back at the history of Israel and Zionism, we see a clear pattern: Whenever given the chance, this regime set its sights on territorial expansion. For instance, during the 1948 war, although the UN partition plan allotted 55% of Palestine to Jews and 45% to Arabs, Israel ended up taking over about 80% of the land, and in 1967, it took control of the West Bank and Gaza as well. Subsequently, they occupied the Sinai desert from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and parts of southern Lebanon. Israel’s modus operandi is clear: They first declare temporary occupation, then drag out the process, and finally make their presence permanent. The same played out in Syria and the Golan. This history indicates that this is not just domestic rhetoric or political talk; The region must take this seriously. **BARATI:** The roots of the “Greater Israel” idea go back to the 1930s and 1940s, when Zionist ideology for founding Israel was shaping up. At that time, two main currents emerged: mainstream Zionism (left-wing), which pushed for territorial minimalism to increase the chances of coexistence and recognition by neighbors, and revisionist Zionism (right-wing), which demanded maximum territorial claims and distinguished between Jews and non-Jews. From 1949 to 1977, the left-wing held power, but right-wing forces, especially the Likud party since it came to power, have always been the flag bearers of expansionism. The 1967 war was a turning point; Israel tripled its controlled territory in six days. Though later the “land for peace” idea was introduced — whereby territory was gradually returned in exchange for recognition by various countries, like Sinai’s return to Egypt — the Golan Heights, West Bank, and other areas remain occupied. Today’s situation echoes 1967. Israel’s ruling elite thinks it has won the game and believes it can get away with anything. This mindset has been strengthened after the Gaza war and upheavals in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt.



An aerial view shows the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. ● REUTERS



Mansour Barati



Seyed Hadi Borhani

talks, and attacks on Iran. The extreme right, including Likud and religious parties, openly talk up annexing Gaza and the West Bank, and are practically rolling out this policy. Even the army, initially opposed to re-occupying Gaza, ultimately backed down under Netanyahu’s pressure.

**Given the internal political divisions in Israel, can Netanyahu’s expansionist plan turn into a reality?** **BORHANI:** It is true that the Israeli right-wing religious faction explicitly promotes expansionism. Politically, the left-wing in Israel has never been weaker than today, holding just five seats in the 120-member Knesset. Israeli public opinion also leans towards the right, indicating the internal trend favors right-wing religious groups, who will likely gain more clout in the future. However, expansionism is not just a right-wing monopoly. Even Ben-Gurion, Israel’s founding prime minister, envisioned a much larger Israel in his writings. Zionism generally justifies Palestinian land seizure using three main arguments: historical (David and Solomon’s ancient kingdom), religious (the Promised Land from the Nile to the Euphrates), and geopolitical (need for defensible borders and sufficient resources) — arguments all Israeli factions have used to date. Israel has always seen itself as a tiny entity surrounded by massive adversaries. Recently, Trump

remarked that Israel is a “tiny little spot” on the Middle East map, signaling vulnerability, which drives their territorial ambitions. With such justifications, Zionists feel entitled to annex parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even Egypt. Hence, the idea of “Greater Israel” is embedded in Zionism; The right-wing states it bluntly, while the left-wing speaks more cautiously for political and diplomatic reasons. Overall, history shows that whenever the opportunity arose, Israel snapped up more territory. Netanyahu’s idea shouldn’t be dismissed as mere political sloganeering or domestic posturing; It needs to be taken seriously since a shift in the balance of power could turn it into concrete action.

## Considering Israel’s admission



The map shows how the “Greater Israel” plan eyes large parts of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt. ● WIKIMEDIA

**of about 900 soldiers killed in the Gaza war and the fact that it has opened up multiple fronts, with a physically and mentally fatigued army and rising suicide rates, how capable is Israel’s military of carrying out the “Greater Israel” plan?** **BARATI:** Implementing this plan is extremely challenging. It claims vast areas, including large parts of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and even Egypt. Clearly, occupying such an expanse is very tough. However, some aspects are pursued on a smaller scale: occupation of the Gaza Strip, alterations in the West Bank to pave the way for annexation, military presence in Syria, which is now defensively weak, and the ongoing occupation of five Lebanese points. Although the US has pushed for Is-

rael’s withdrawal from some parts of Lebanon, it remains unclear if Israel will face down this demand. Thus, what we see on the ground is a piecemeal push rather than full implementation. It is noteworthy that Netanyahu’s talk of “Greater Israel” hasn’t sparked a strong reaction from the Arab world. Although Arab countries have reacted, their responses have been weak and haven’t significantly affected Israel’s behavior. Regarding Gaza’s occupation, the Israeli army faces serious challenges. After nearly two years of war, their army is suffering severe wear and tear and, according to Israel’s own media, needs 300,000 fresh troops to fully occupy Gaza — something the Israeli society does not possess. Israeli society is made up of diverse groups: moderate seculars, left and right, traditional religious Jews, national-religious (far-right supporters), and ultra-Orthodox (Haredim). Among these, only Haredim do not serve in the military, though there is now intense pressure to draft them. Israel’s Supreme Court has ruled that from September 2025 onward, the army must recruit from the 54,000 Haredim, potentially sparking a new political crisis for Netanyahu, who relies on Haredi parties for his coalition. Reserve forces are exhausted after two years of conflict, and the lack of fresh recruits is a major problem for the army. This partly explains why some army commanders opposed a full occupation of Gaza.

The full interview first appeared in Persian on IRNA.

“Zionism generally justifies Palestinian land seizure using three main arguments: historical (David and Solomon’s ancient kingdom), religious (the Promised Land from the Nile to the Euphrates), and geopolitical (need for defensible borders and sufficient resources) — arguments all Israeli factions have used to date. Israel has always seen itself as a tiny entity surrounded by massive adversaries. With such justifications, Zionists feel entitled to annex parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and even Egypt. Hence, the idea of “Greater Israel” is embedded in Zionism.



# Why it took Palestinians starving for many to finally admit genocide in Gaza



By Maryam Jamshidi  
Professor at the University of Colorado Law School

As anyone who studies the crime of crimes knows, genocide is a process, not an event. For some NGOs, politicians, and other public figures, concluding that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians has also been a “process”. It has taken months, at times nearly two years, for some to admit that Israel has violated the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. One factor has been decisive in prompting these admissions. That factor is “starvation,” namely, Israel’s deliberate starvation of 2.1 million Palestinians who inhabit this tiny, densely packed strip of land. Israel intensified its long-standing use of starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza immediately following October 7, 2023. Nearly 23 months later, Israel’s starvation project has brought widespread and sustained famine to the Strip, with over 200 people, including over 100 children, dying of starvation since October 7. 61% of those deaths have occurred since July 20, 2025. Deaths related to malnutrition and malnutrition-related disease are significantly higher. But why has starvation been so pivotal as compared to Israel’s other horrors, which have brought even more death and destruction to Gaza? Ironically, it is the dehumanization of the Palestinian people, which continues to prevent some from acknowledging the genocide even until now, that explains why starvation has played such a decisive role in naming Israel’s actions.

**Seeing genocide in starvation**  
Since October 7, Israel has either fully or partially blocked aid, including food and water, from entering Gaza, leading the UN, humanitarian orgs, and other experts to repeatedly raise the alarm bells regarding the spread of famine in the Strip. Many experts and groups have understood these starvation practices to be an important part of Israel’s genocidal plan. But, for some prominent individuals and organizations, Israel’s starvation policies have been the most important, if not exclusive, piece of evidence that genocide is occurring in Gaza.

For example, starvation was decisive in convincing Aryeh Neier, the co-founder of Human Rights Watch and its former executive director, that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. On June 6, 2024, Neier wrote a piece for the New York Review of Books, titled “Is Israel Committing Genocide?” about his awakening. That piece, which was published nearly 7 months to the day that Israel’s genocidal onslaught began, came a week after the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs calculated over 36,000 deaths and 82,000 injuries in Gaza, as a direct result of Israel’s kinetic attacks. Neier’s article also followed three provisional measures orders from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a genocide case brought by South Africa against Israel. All three of those measures, issued between January and May 2024, concluded that there was a plausible risk that Israel was violating the Genocide Convention based on a host of evidence, including but not limited to Israel’s blockade of the Strip. Neier’s newfound belief in Israel’s genocide had nothing, however, to do with the ICJ’s pronouncements or any of the traumatic deaths and injuries that had occurred in Gaza over the preceding 7 months. Rather, Neier declared it was Israel’s starvation policies that had convinced him that genocide was unfolding. As he wrote: “[w]hen South Africa brought to the ICJ its accusation that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, I did not join some of my colleagues in the international human rights movement in their support of the charge. I was deeply distressed by Israel’s bombing campaign, particularly by its frequent use in densely populated areas of 500- and 2,000-pound bombs... that were killing large numbers of civilian noncombatants... Such weapons are clearly inappropriate for use in those circumstances. Yet I was not convinced that this constituted genocide... I am now persuaded that Israel is engaged in genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. What has changed my mind is its sustained policy of obstructing



the movement of humanitarian assistance into the territory.” It was not the massive numbers of civilians Israel killed using weapons that are, even by Neier’s account, indiscriminate. Instead, it was Israel’s failure to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza — particularly, food and water — that served as the exclusive evidence of its genocidal plan. Shortly before Neier’s article was published, Karim Khan, the prosecutor at the International Criminal Court, filed applications with the ICC for arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and then-war minister Yoav Gallant. Here, again, acts of starvation were decisive. Based on publicly available evidence, the arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant — which were eventually issued by the ICC — revolve around starvation and starvation-based crimes. In particular, in his warrant application, the ICC prosecutor accused Gallant and Netanyahu of the crime of extermination based on their starvation policies. Extermination is closely related to genocide. Much like Neier, then, starvation was decisive in establishing extermination and, by analogy, the crime of genocide, for the ICC prosecutor. Starvation was also crucial to the analysis of Human Rights Watch, the organization Neier helped found nearly 50 years ago. In December 2024, HRW issued a report concluding that Israel was committing genocidal acts. While the report stopped short of saying whether Israel had the intent to commit genocide, HRW’s conclusion that acts of genocide were occurring was based on Israel’s deliberate effort to deprive Gaza of potable water. Since launching its recent blockade on March 2, 2025, Israel has been roundly and widely condemned for unleashing genocidal starvation on the Strip. As desperate Palestinians have been gunned down while waiting for aid at the “killing field” otherwise known as the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, and as UN agencies have warned that key famine thresholds have been crossed,

some of Israel’s staunchest allies have reached their breaking point. Those allies include prominent Israeli writer David Grossman. In early August, Grossman announced that, at long last, he was willing to describe Israel’s actions in Gaza as genocidal. Alongside comments blaming Palestinians in Gaza for their current fate, insisting that Hamas too was “responsible for... the atrocities we are witnessing,” and emphasizing how personally “painful” the realization was for him, Grossman admitted that Israel’s starvation policies proved it was committing

genocide. Citing Grossman’s interview, Jeremy Ben-Ami, the president of J-Street — a liberal Zionist organization — conceded a few days later that Israel was likely committing genocide in Gaza.

**‘Innocence’ of starving**  
In his article, Aryeh Neier captures what is, at least partly, driving this focus on starvation. As he says, “The obstruction of humanitarian assistance is unlikely to affect Hamas combatants directly. Even in conditions of famine, men with guns find a way to get fed. It is those who bear no responsibility for Hamas’s crimes who are suffering most.” “Those who bear NO responsibility...” In his new book, Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal, Palestinian writer and poet Mohammed El-Kurd captures the discursive effect of this framing. As El-Kurd writes, “We [Palestinians] are not human automatically, by virtue of being human — we are to be humanized by virtue of our proximity to innocence...” As he goes on to observe, “[This] [h]umanization diverts critical scrutiny away from colonizer and onto the colonized, obscuring the inherent injustice of the colonial project. In misplacing their focus, advocates... insinuate that the oppressed must demonstrate their worthiness of liberty and dignity, first and foremost. Otherwise, occupation, subjugation, police brutality, dispossession, surveillance, and ‘extrajudicial executions,’ would be excusable or even necessary.” El-Kurd’s observations apply to many starvation-focused accounts of Israel’s genocide. In order to be a victim of genocide, as a Palestinian, one must be “innocent”. And to be innocent, one must not be “responsible”. One cannot engage in resistance, sympathize

with resistance, be in proximity to resistance; One cannot actively try to defend one’s homeland or even have the intent or capacity to do so. One must be, in El-Kurd’s words, “docile and defanged”. Otherwise, one’s “genocide” would be “excusable or even necessary”. Hospitals that may be sheltering so-called “Hamas” fighters are not sufficiently “innocent”. Ambulances and medics who work for the civil service arm of Gaza’s government — which is run by Hamas’s political wing — are tainted. Family members or those allegedly living in the same building as family members of Hamas fighters are not innocent enough either. Even where there is no real evidence of any Hamas affiliation, the mere allegation strips Palestinians of the necessary passivity and docility, of the requisite “innocence”. As a result, the systematic targeting of Palestinian homes, schools, hospitals, places of worship, and the killing of tens of thousands of civilians — men, women, and children — is not sufficiently convincing for a charge of genocide. Because “Hamas” could always be lurking somewhere, soiling the passivity of those targeted by Israel, making their killing permissible rather than prohibited. It is hard, however, to taint the innocence of the starving. Because starvation is slow and long. Because it isn’t a place, but rather a condition. Because by the point a person is starving, they have become docile and submissive. Because, as Aryeh Neier suggests, those who are the most vulnerable — the young, the old, the sick, the frail — are the ones most likely to be impacted by starvation. Because they are weak, they are the ones entitled to be protected by international law. Because they are weak, they pose very little obstacle or threat to Israel’s colonial project. Because they are “perfect victims,” as a result of their weakness, they are permitted to live. The legal prohibition against genocide makes no distinctions between combatants or non-combatants, between fighters or children. You can commit genocide against another country’s entire army as long as you commit an act of genocide — like deliberately depriving a population of food and water — and have the requisite genocidal intent. In practice, however, some believe genocide is permissible when committed against certain groups or subgroups of a population. Many of those who admit Israel is committing genocide, exclusively because starvation has set in, implicitly subscribe to this belief, whether they know it or not. Over the last several decades, the international community has become more outspoken about harm to civilians during armed conflict. Some governments have responded by using starvation as a tool to achieve the same ends, without fearing the same level of criticism. In Gaza, that trend has dramatically reversed. As Mohammed El-Kurd observes, “Palestinians exist in a false — and strict — dichotomy: We are either victims or terrorists.” For many who see starvation as central to Israel’s genocide, Palestinian life remains bifurcated into these two categories — terrorist and victim — separating those who may be eradicated from those who should be protected, making starvation outrageous but the bombing of civilians insufficiently genocidal.

The speech was first given at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and published in Mondoweiss.

“In order to be a victim of genocide, as a Palestinian, one must be “innocent”. And to be innocent, one must not be “responsible”. One cannot engage in resistance, sympathize with resistance, be in proximity to resistance; One cannot actively try to defend one’s homeland or even have the intent or capacity to do so. One must be, in El-Kurd’s words, “docile and defanged”. Otherwise, one’s “genocide” would be “excusable or even necessary”.



## World Wushu Championships:

Moradi wins sanda gold,  
four Iranians progress to women's finals

## Sports Desk

Iranian Mahdi Moradi grabbed a sanda gold to secure a second medal for the country at the World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil, on Friday. Moradi made quick work of Cruz Pérez, knocking out the Mexican in the first round, to walk away with the ultimate prize in the men's 90kg division, which was held in a round-robin format. Shahin Banitalebi had won a first medal for Iran in the Brazilian capital, settling for a bronze in the men's taolu competitions on Thursday. A gold medalist at The World Games in August, Banitalebi scored 9.733 points to finish third in the nandao event,

with Hong Kong's Lau Chi Lung (9.763) and his compatriot Deng Longteng (9.740) collecting the gold and silver, respectively. There were further victories for the country on the third day of the competitions as three Iranian girls progressed to the final showpiece of their respective categories. Sediqeh Daryaei defeated a Mexican opponent in the first round to book a place in the 65kg showdown, while Soheila Mansourian knocked out Tunisian Chaima Naoui to reach the 70kg final. Mansourian's elder sister, Shahrbanou, outclassed American Sydney Carr in the first round of the 75kg semifinal to remain on course for her sixth gold medal at the flagship inter-

national event of the sport. In women's taolu, Zahra Kiani delivered a 9.736 performance to finish second among 23 contestants in qualification to advance to final showpiece of the changquan contest. Meanwhile, Helia Asadian was unfortunate to miss out on the podium by .004 points in the women's nanquan form, while Abolfazl Qarehbaghi stood seventh in the men's jianshu event. The 17th edition of the World Championships concludes today.



Iranian Mahdi Moradi won the men's sanda 90kg gold medal at the World Wushu Championships in Brasilia, Brazil.  
● MAHDI MARIZAD/FARS

## AKF Cadet, Junior &amp; U21 Championships:

Iranian karatekas enjoy  
medal-laden opening day

## Sports Desk

Iranian young guns collected eight cadet medals – including double women's kumite golds – on the first day of the AKF Cadet, Junior & U21 Championships in Shaoguan, China. Setayesh Qaneiefard defeated Malaysian Lalitaanjali Ravindran 3-0 in the final to walk away with the ultimate prize in the -54kg contests. Iran's second gold medal came in the +61kg class, where Setayesh Afshar came out on top against Thailand's Chonlada Nisangkatt 4-2 in the final. Meanwhile, Arshia Mo'alemi and Faryar Bahadori settled for a couple of silver medals in the boys' kumite competitions. Mo'alemi fell to a 6-3 defeat

against the host's Shi Enxi in the -63kg final, while Bahadori suffered a 3-0 loss to Ukko Kaneko of Japan in the -70kg showdown. There were further medals for the Iranian girls in the kumite contests as Ava Farmani and Dina Karimi finished their campaigns with two consolation bronzes. Farmani bounced back from a first-round setback (2-0) against ultimate champion Hana Yamamoto of Japan to beat Yemen's Muaadh Mahyoub 5-0 in repechage before defeating Kazakhstan's Nurinissa Dairkhan 4-0 for a joint-third place alongside Saudi girl Hessah Al Rasheed. Karimi also suffered a defeat against a Japanese opponent in Wakana Karikomi (4-0) but

still managed to outclass the host's Chi Siying 10-0 and share the third podium with Yen Chiao-yun of the Chinese Taipei. Iran also bagged two team kata bronzes in the combined cadet and junior event. Amirreza Chamani, Amirali Mirzazadeh, Matin Farimand, and Ata Farimand teamed up to beat China but fell to a 36.8-36.1 loss to Japan in the semifinals, before recovering to score 38.5 points against Uzbekistan's 36.1 in the boys' third-place contest. The Iranian quadruple of Dina Safari, Fatemeh Sehatbakhsh, Hannaneh Nourollahzadeh, and Kowsar Ranjbar took the bronze in the girls' event following a semifinal loss to Japan.



Iranian girls Setayesh Qaneiefard (l.) and Setayesh Afshar won two cadet kumite golds at the AKF Cadet, Junior & U21 Championships in Shaoguan, China.  
● IKF

Iran placed in Pot 3 for  
Women's Futsal World Cup draw

● AFC

## Sports Desk

The Iranian national team will be placed in Pot 3 for the draw of the inaugural FIFA Women's Futsal World Cup, which will take place in Taguig, Philippines, on September 15. The flagship international event in women's futsal will kick off on November 21 in the Southeast Asian country, where 16 teams will compete for glory across four groups. Joining Iran in the third pot are Colombia, Poland, and New Zealand. Brazil, Spain, and Portugal – the top three in the latest FIFA World Ranking – and the host country are in Pot 1, with Thailand and Japan – finalists in May's Asian Cup in China – as well as Argentina and Italy in Pot 2. Morocco, Canada, Panama, and Tanzania are in Pot 4. Iran secured a place in the competition thanks to a third-place finish at the Asian Cup earlier in the year. A two-time continental champion,

Iranian women's team suffered a first defeat in 15 games across three Asian Cup editions, when it fell to a 3-2 last-four setback against ultimate champion Japan, but still managed to bounce back with a 3-1 victory over China in the third-place decider. However, a run of unconvincing results and performances in China saw the national governing body of the sport part ways with head coach Forouzan Soleimani after the tournament, replacing her with Shahrzad Mozaffar. "The seeding shows the incredibly high level of competition and we are likely to be drawn into a tough group. There are obviously no easy games at a World Cup and our focus will be to perform to our absolute best under difficult circumstances," Mozaffar said after the seeding for the draw was unveiled on Saturday. "The draw is as tough as it gets. Powerhouses like Brazil, Spain, and Portugal are in Pot 1, and

teams like Japan, Argentina, and Italy are in Pot 2. All of them are global futsal giants. "We knew this was a possibility, so we've built our entire preparation plan around this high-level challenge. We wouldn't be in such a difficult position if we had made it to the Asian Cup final. Even being in Pot 2 would have made a significant difference. "Now, with the way the draw works, the odds are very high that we'll end up in the same group as two world-class teams. With only two teams from each group advancing, our path to the knockout stage becomes extremely difficult. But we are ready for the fight. We know what we're up against, and we will be prepared." "We are working to secure high-level friendly matches to properly simulate the intensity of the real tournament. Our goal is to enter this competition with full confidence and a clear plan, taking it step by step to achieve success."

## Tractor closing in on ex-Espanyol keeper Pacheco: Report

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League club Tractor is in advanced talks to sign former Espanyol Spanish goalkeeper Fernando Pacheco as a free agent, IRNA reported on Saturday. The Iranian top-flight champion is desperately looking for a new signing between the posts after Iranian international goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand was handed a four-month ban in August by the Iranian Football Federation's

Appeal Committee due to a year-long contract dispute with his former club Persepolis. Adib Zarei, 22, has served as Tractor's number one in the first three games of the new campaign. Tractor came from behind to beat Esteghlal 2-1 and win the Iranian Super Cup trophy in August, but got off to a losing start to its league title defense, suffering a 1-0 home defeat against the Tehran Blues, and then shared the spoils with Mes Rafsanjan in

a goalless away game before the international break. Pacheco, 33, has been without the team since parting ways La Liga club Espanyol in July. Pacheco, who joined the Catalan team midway through the 2022/23 season, registered 13 clean sheets – conceding 68 goals – in 46 appearances for the club across all competition. Having joined Real Madrid as a 14-year-old youth keeper in 2006, Pacheco was a member

of the Los Blancos until 2015, though his first-team contribution was limited to only a couple of Copa del Rey appearances. Pacheco left Real Madrid for Deportivo Alavés, where he kept 76 clean sheets in 253 games across six seasons, before joining Almería on a four-year contract in August 2022. However, he parted ways with the club the following January after serving as the second-choice keeper during the first half of the campaign.



● EUROPA PRESS



# Tracing 12,000 years of human habitation at Chogha Golan



● IRNA

### Iranica Desk

Chogha Golan Archaeological Site, located in Mehran, Ilam Province, is recognized as the oldest agricultural site in both Iran and the broader Middle East, according to an archaeologist Habibollah Mahmoudian. He emphasized that within the Golan region, a wealth of human settlement remnants from various historical periods have been discovered, painting an extensive timeline of continuous habitation largely supported by the steady flow of the permanent Kanjan Cham river. This water source has been instrumental in sustaining human life and settlement in the area over millennia. Mahmoudian highlighted that archaeological investigations reveal significant contributions from the late Ali Mohammad Khalilian, who conducted studies in Mehran from the 1980s

through the early 2000s. Khalilian successfully identified notable ancient sites within the region, including Chogha Golan 1 and Chogha Golan 2. Further reinforcing the historical significance of the area, in 2003, additional discoveries were made encompassing the ancient site itself, its historic qanat irrigation system, a caravanserai, an ancient mound, and remains from Islamic-period settlements. These findings have been comprehensively documented, leading to their nomination for inclusion on Iran's National Heritage List, ISNA wrote. In the same year, an exploration led by Mohsen Zeidi focused on the eastern area of the site, which naturally separates the Mehran and Dehloran plains. This survey uncovered archaeological sites from a wide temporal span, ranging from the Proto-literate peri-

od to the historical era. Mahmoudian went on to state that systematic excavations and surveys began in 2010 to create detailed mappings of the area. These efforts continued through two excavation seasons, and radiocarbon dating of collected samples revealed uninterrupted human habitation at Chogha Golan from roughly the mid-10th millennium BCE through to the end of the 8th millennium BCE. The archaeologist described that excavations at Chogha Golan unveiled early evidence of gypsum production alongside the remains of ancient architectural structures. Dating back between 12,000 and 9,500 years ago, Chogha Golan is identified as one of the earliest known sites associated with the beginnings of agriculture and settled rural life, not only in Iran but globally. During the second excavation phase, notable archi-

tectural remains were uncovered, including twisted room layouts constructed with adobe and clay walls, complemented by gypsum-coated floors. As a specialist in prehistoric archaeology, Mahmoudian shared that thousands of specimens from wild barley, wild wheat, lentils, chickpeas, beans, and animal fodder were excavated at the site. Isotopic carbon analysis dated these botanical finds between 9,800 and 11,700 years ago, underscoring a remarkably extended duration of habitation which was unprecedented in the Neolithic era. This era marked humanity's critical transition from a lifestyle based on hunting and gathering wild seeds to the cultivation of crops and the domestication of plants and animals. Mahmoudian emphasized that Chogha Golan's location within the peripheral plains of the Zagros Mountains was pivotal

to early human agricultural endeavors, as it is here that some of the first known attempts to domesticate wild plants occurred. From a botanical perspective, this research has yielded a pioneering discovery of 30,000 plant remains representing 75 different species groups spanning approximately 2,000 years. The evidence reveals nearly 2,200 years of cultivation of wild plants alongside the emergence of the first domesticated plant species at Chogha Golan. Throughout this extensive period, wild varieties of barley, wheat, lentils, chickpeas, beans, fodder, and other key agricultural products — the direct ancestors of today's crops — were cultivated and consumed by the inhabitants. The site, referred to as Chogha Golan 2, lies north of an ancient mound on the eastern bank of the Kanjan Cham River and spreads across an area of 1,800

square meters. It is bordered to the north and east by the Kanjan Cham River, to the south by Golan Mound 1, and to the west by a natural mound known as Maleh. On the western edge of Chogha Golan 2, a sophisticated qanat system consisting of 62 wells is present, with each well spaced at intervals of five to eight meters. The spring feeding this qanat is located at the southwestern corner of the Golan mound and remains visible today. Mahmoudian also noted that on the surface of the archaeological site, foundation remains of buildings constructed using dry-stone masonry can be observed. In the northern corner of Golan 2, stone construction remnants align along the ridge of the eastern riverbank, though their exact purpose and function remain unknown, leaving intriguing questions for future archaeological inquiry.

## Iranian culinary heritage reflected in beloved 'Cutlet'



● fararu.com

### Iranica Desk

Cutlet is one of the most popular and delicious traditional yet fast foods in Iran. It can be served as the main course, appetizer, trip food, or hot and cold sandwich. With a unique flavor and aroma, it evokes all childhood memories of Iranians. This beloved meal is typically served without rice and is enjoyed simply with bread. The ingredients of Cutlet include minced meat, potato, egg, onion, and various seasonings. It is worth noting that there are several variations of Cutlet made with different ingredients; these include chicken Cutlet, fish Cutlet, eggplant Cutlet, and more. The dish is also popular in other countries, though often prepared with a higher fat content. The most common method of preparing this dish begins with peeling and grating potatoes. Then, the minced meat is added to the mixture. Eggs are sometimes included to help bind the ingredients together more effectively. Next, salt, pepper, and turmeric are combined with the mixture. The paste is thoroughly kneaded by hand to ensure all the ingredients are deeply incorporated. Afterward, the mixture is chilled in the fridge for about half an hour. In the final step, it is fried in a pan with hot oil until golden and cooked through. Different types of meat can be used to prepare Cutlet, such as mutton, veal, chicken, or turkey. It can also

be made vegetarian by replacing the meat with mushrooms and soybean, allowing vegans to enjoy this delicious dish as well. Cutlet holds a special place in Iranian households, often made with family recipes passed down through generations. It is cherished for its versatility, as it can be adapted to various tastes and occasions — from casual family meals to festive gatherings. Due to its convenient preparation and satisfying taste, Cutlet is also a popular choice for packed lunches, picnics, and street food vendors across Iran. Such Iranian foods reflect a rich culinary heritage filled with flavorful, comforting dishes made from simple, wholesome ingredients. Like Cutlet, many traditional Iranian foods emphasize fresh spices, regional produce, and versatile preparation methods that appeal to diverse tastes and dietary preferences. Iranian cuisine also values the balance of texture and flavor, with dishes often combining tender, crispy, and aromatic elements, as exemplified by Cutlet's crispy fried exterior and soft, flavorful interior. Moreover, foods like Cutlet are emblematic of Iranian hospitality, often served with fresh herbs, pickles, or yogurt-based dips, enhancing their taste and providing a refreshing contrast. This holistic approach to food-making highlights the cultural importance of meals as moments for connection, celebration, and preserving heritage in Iran and beyond.



● fararu.com



# Five Iranian illustrators reach finals of Shanghai Golden Pinwheel



## Arts & Culture Desk

Five Iranian artists were named among the 69 finalists of the 2025 Golden Pinwheel Young Illustrators Competition in Shanghai, according to the Iran Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults. The annual contest, staged alongside the China Shanghai International Children's Book Fair (CCBF), has grown into one of the world's leading showcases for young talent, IRNA reported. This year's edition drew 2,828 submissions from 78 countries, with jurors selecting 50 works in the publishing category and 19 in the commercial category. The Iranian finalists are Parvin Heydarizadeh, Mojdeh Kianzadeh, Bahareh Sa'adatmandi, Maryam Mahmoudi-Moghadam and Najla Mahdavi-Ashraf. Mahdavi-Ashraf's illustrations for 'A

Sun in the Turkmen Desert,' published by the children's cultural institute, were among the works chosen in the book section.

Organizers said the competition, launched in 2015, aims to "build bridges" between illustrators and publishers worldwide. It not only highlights emerging artists but also runs exhibitions, yearbooks and promotional campaigns.

The jury of eight includes experts from China, South Korea, Italy, Belgium, the United States and Germany. Winners will be announced at the book fair, with top prizes going to one Chinese and one international illustrator, along with a special award and a public choice prize.

The selected works will be featured in a dedicated catalog and displayed from Nov. 14 to 16, 2025, at the Golden Pinwheel showcase during the Shanghai fair.

## 13 looted antiquities repatriated to Iran from Italy

### Arts & Culture Desk

Thirteen Iranian antiquities, including a rare Iron Age vessel and centuries-old ceramics, were formally returned to Tehran in Rome after joint efforts by the Iranian Embassy in Italy and the country's heritage police.

The handover ceremony, attended by Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Reza Sabouri and commander of the Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Italy Giorgio Zarbonello, capped a two-year legal process, Asriran reported.

The artifacts had been seized in the northern Italian province of Trento during investigations that began in 2022. Officials said the restitution underscores growing cultural cooperation between the two nations, which have both been victims of illegal trafficking of historical objects.

Among the returned items are twelve decorative ceramics—bottles, bowls, jugs, and plates—from diverse periods of Iran's history. They include Qajar works from



the 19th century, Nishapur pottery from the 10th century, Tabaristan wares from the 10th and 11th centuries, Kashan and Gorgan pieces from the 12th and 13th centuries, and lusterware and enameled ware ceramics from Rey and Kashan.

The most striking object is a black clay spouted jug, traced back to the second to first millennium BC. Experts said it originated from Lorestan, a region known for its Iron Age craftsmanship. The jug had been smuggled abroad following illicit excavations before resur-

facing in Italy. Scholars noted its resemblance to pieces held at the British Museum in London. Sabouri described the return as a "clear sign" of cultural partnership between Iran and Italy. "Such exchanges help restore the missing fragments of historical and cultural memory to nations," he told reporters at the embassy. Iranian officials said they hope to build on this case by expanding cooperation with Italy to safeguard ancient heritage and prevent further losses to the black market in antiquities.

## Iran sets €6b health tourism target

### Social Desk

Iran is seeking €6 billion in revenue from health tourism under its Seventh Development Plan, a senior official said on Saturday, stressing that medical visitors spend about four times more than leisure travelers.

Anoushirvan Mohseni Bandpey, deputy minister for tourism and head of the Health Tourism Council, said during the International Private/Public Hospitals Congress and Exhibition aka IPH2025 in Tehran that the sector could boost foreign exchange earnings, generate jobs and "strengthen international trade ties," IRNA reported.

The exhibition brought together hospital executives, healthcare specialists and tour operators from Europe, Africa and the Middle East, aiming to showcase Iran's capacity and build new partnerships. He called medical tourism one of Iran's fastest-growing markets.

Iran has about 300 licensed hospitals and treatment centers authorized to serve international patients, along with nearly 700 agencies offering health tourism packages.

Officials say upgrading service quality and ensuring transparency are central to winning trust abroad as Iran seeks to connect more closely with the "global system of health and tourism."

Bandpey said demand is driven by Iran's advanced medical techniques in fields



such as organ transplants, orthopedics and fertility treatment, combined with lower costs, shorter waiting times and cultural proximity to key markets including Iraq, Oman, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

He outlined four policy priorities: building a national brand for health tourism, strengthening oversight through new regulations and digital platforms, training and empowering professionals, and fostering cooperation between ministries and private operators.

He said responsibilities had been divided, with the Health Ministry overseeing hospitals, the Foreign Ministry handling visas, and the Tourism Ministry managing accommodation, transport and wellness packages.

The Tehran event, billed as the region's largest medical and health tourism gathering, was backed by the Tehran Health Tourism Association, the Health Tourism Development Center of Islamic Countries and other international groups.

## Environment chief urges global unity to combat plastic pollution

### Social Desk

Iran's Vice President and Head of the Department of Environment (DoE), Shina Ansari, emphasized the necessity of international collaboration to address the escalating plastic pollution crisis. Speaking at the 'Addressing Plastic Pollution: Challenges and Opportunities' conference in Tehran on Saturday, Ansari highlighted that environmental issues cannot be resolved in isolation, IRNA reported. She stressed that "environmental issues must be addressed regardless of political challenges," underscoring the importance of

global cooperation in tackling such crises.

Ansari pointed out that plastic pollution, particularly microplastics, poses significant threats to human health and ecosystems. She noted that these pollutants have infiltrated water sources and even human bloodstreams, leading to widespread concern. Despite the challenges, she acknowledged the petrochemical industry's growing commitment to environmental responsibility. Ansari praised the sector's shift towards sustainable practices, including the development of eco-friendly polymers and waste reduction initiatives. She

expressed optimism that these efforts would contribute to mitigating plastic pollution's adverse effects.

The conference also featured discussions on Iran's strategic plans to enhance its petrochemical sector's sustainability. Currently, polymers account for approximately 10% of Iran's annual petrochemical production capacity, with plans under the Seventh Development Plan to increase this figure to 130 million tons.

The focus is on producing recyclable materials and reducing waste, aligning with global trends towards environmental efficiency. Ansari emphasized that address-

ing plastic pollution requires a multifaceted approach, combining technological innovation, industry cooperation, and public awareness.

She reiterated that "no single organization will be able to successfully preserve the environment on its own," advocating for collective action across all sectors of society.



Head of Iran's Department of Environment, Shina Ansari, addresses attendees during the 'Addressing Plastic Pollution: Challenges and Opportunities' conference in Tehran on September 6, 2025.  
● SHANA

