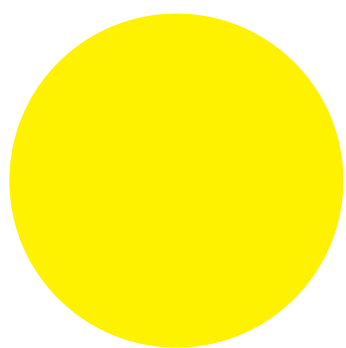


President launches thousands of housing units, infrastructure projects nationwide

3 >



Araghchi: Iran-IAEA deal 'no longer relevant' after UN sanctions

Nuclear issue should be resolved 'via diplomacy'

2 >



IRNA

Iran women claim historic first gold at regional volleyball tournament

Sports Desk

Iran's women's volleyball team captured their first-ever gold medal on Sunday, defeating hosts Uzbekistan in straight sets to win the 2025 CAVA Women's Volleyball Championship.

The Iranians, coached by South Korean Lee Do-hee, produced a flawless display, brushing aside Uzbekistan in a 3-0 victory (25-14, 25-14, 25-19) to seal the Central Asian crown without dropping a single set throughout the whole tournament, IRNA reported.

They had earlier beaten Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the group stage.

The title ends a 62-year wait for gold since the women's national program was first established.

The win has also propelled Iran up the FIVB world rankings, climbing 15 places from 62nd to 47th with 74.24 points — breaking into the top 50 for the very first time. The regional event was held in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent from October 1-5.

Anti-Israel indignation sweeps anew across Europe

2 >



Demonstrators including some holding a banner reading "Stop Genocide" take part in an anti-Israel protest demanding "government action to stop the genocide in Gaza" in Amsterdam, the Netherlands on October 5, 2025.

● AFP

Hamas response to Trump's Gaza proposal, a step toward talks, not deal

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



The new peace plan, unveiled by US President Donald Trump with the stated aim of ending Israel's bloody conflict in the Gaza Strip, lays out a package

of proposals for a ceasefire, reconstruction of devastated areas, and the creation of channels for dialogue among the parties involved. Hamas, in a statement, welcomed some parts of the plan, describing it as a step toward easing the suffering of Gaza's population.

Regional countries such as Qatar, Egypt, and Turkey have also thrown their weight behind the initiative, signaling readiness to act as mediators. With Gaza still grappling with

the humanitarian and infrastructural fallout of the war, Trump's plan could offer a fresh opportunity to get back to the negotiating table and launch a more durable path toward peace.

Nevertheless, since both sides express reservations about key provisions, the path to implementation remains riddled with uncertainties. On this subject, Iran Daily spoke with Mohsen Faezi, a Palestinian affairs analyst.

IRAN DAILY: Given Hamas's positive stance toward Trump's proposed Gaza peace plan, how feasible is its full implementation?

FAEZI: Assuming Hamas's response was positive—because Trump chose to read it that way—does not necessarily reflect the group's actual position. The wording of Hamas's reply was crafted so that Trump could interpret it as approval, but in reality, this has been Hamas's standard tactic with every ini-

tiative over the past year. Virtually no plan has been flatly rejected; instead, Hamas has always said "yes, but..." followed by specific reservations.

With this strategy, Hamas managed to make Trump and others perceive its response as a step forward. Yet, the plan also included elements absent from earlier US rhetoric—most notably the acceptance of a Palestinian presence in Gaza. Only about six months ago, the talk was of forced displacement and even of setting up some sort of international administration in Gaza. But this plan rules out deportation altogether and defines a Palestinian state, albeit one placed under international oversight through what is now labeled the "Peace Council."

Hamas deferred many key points to negotiations: how the state should be formed, how much independence Palestinians would actually have, and above all, the principle that "all decision-making about Palestine's future must remain a Palestinian matter."

That single clause effectively crosses out half of Trump's blueprint, sidelining much of what Washington proposed for supervising Gaza's reconstruction and the governance of a Palestinian state, without directly mentioning them.

In other words, what has just begun is not the implementation of a peace plan but the start of a negotiation process. Hamas neither rejected the proposal outright nor accepted it wholesale. It left the door open by recognizing its positive aspects.

What potential obstacles lie ahead? Could Hamas's refusal to disarm be a stumbling block?

The main issue is what kind of Palestinian governance Israel is willing to accept in Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently argued—and from Israel's perspective, not without logic—that any form of Palestinian statehood, whether emerging from the Palestinian Authority,

Hamas, or even the so-called independents and technocrats mentioned in Trump's plan, ultimately preserves Hamas's influence. That means control over Gaza neighborhoods and, crucially, control over arms.

So, the central question is what the post-war state will look like. The clause in Trump's plan about a Palestinian state monitored by a peace council does not seem likely to satisfy Israel. Even if the plan explicitly required Hamas to hand over its weapons to a new government, and even if Hamas accepts that, the reality on the ground would not change. With continued presence of arms in Gaza, Israel would inevitably fear a repeat of October 7.

The real dilemma is Israel's own unresolved vision for Gaza's future. For two years, it has struggled to come up with a viable alternative to Hamas, trying out different ideas but failing to find a substitute authority.

Page 2 >

Araghchi: Iran-IAEA deal 'no longer relevant' after UN sanctions

Nuclear issue should be resolved 'via diplomacy'



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi speaks in a meeting with ambassadors, chargés d'affaires, and heads of foreign and international missions residing in the capital Tehran on October 5, 2025.

● TASNIM

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that a recent cooperation agreement signed with the UN nuclear agency is no longer relevant following the reimposition of international sanctions on Iran. Speaking to reporters after a meeting with ambassadors, chargés d'affaires, and heads of foreign and international missions residing in the capital Tehran, Araghchi said currently, the deal can no longer serve as the basis for Tehran's cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and that Iran will soon announce its new decision regarding the manner in which cooperation will proceed

with the agency.

On September 9, Iran and the IAEA reached an agreement aimed at paving the way for resumption of cooperation, which had been suspended following the unprovoked Israeli-American attacks against key Iranian nuclear facilities in June.

The agreement with the IAEA was signed as a goodwill gesture by Iran to prevent the activation of the snapback mechanism by the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal.

Despite Iran's efforts to prevent the activation of the mechanism, the three countries — France, Germany and Britain — activated the mechanism which paved the way for the

reimposition of international sanctions that had been removed under the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Araghchi said Iran has endeavored to achieve a fair and balanced negotiated solution to its nuclear issue, but the Western countries rejected the efforts due to their excessive and unreasonable demands.

The Iranian foreign minister underlined that a decades-old dispute over Iran's nuclear program should be resolved through diplomatic means, saying that neither military attacks nor snapback mechanism resolved the problem.

"Three European countries have clearly undermined their standing in the diplomatic process and

have largely forfeited the rationale for engaging in negotiations with them. In any prospective resolution based on dialogue, Europe's role will be considerably more diminished than in the past."

He said the European trio considered the snapback a new leverage to put pressure on Iran, but now they see that the activation of the mechanism resolved no problems and only made diplomacy more difficult and complex.

"Diplomacy never ends; it is always present. The question, however, is under what conditions, with which parties, and based on what balance it continues. The current circumstances are entirely different from the past," he added.

Anti-Israel indignation sweeps anew across Europe



A demonstrator holds a placard during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians and to protest the interception by the Israeli navy of the Global Sumud Flotilla in Istanbul, Turkey, on October 5, 2025.

● AFP

International Desk

Hundreds of thousands of people once again took to the streets in several European cities on Sunday to show their anger at Israel's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip.

In the Netherlands, an estimated 250,000 people, most dressed in red, gathered in the capital Amsterdam to press the government to take tougher action against Israel.

After packing the central Museum Square, the protesters walked through the city center, holding Palestinian flags and peace emblems. One placard read, "Ashamed of the government."

The Dutch government has long been a staunch supporter of Israel but has in recent months been more critical as international support for Israel has ebbed. On Friday, Foreign Minister David van Weel said it was unlikely he would grant an export license to send parts for F-35 fighter jets to Israel.

"The bloodshed must stop. And that we unfortunately have to stand here because we have such an incredibly weak government that doesn't dare to draw a red line. That's why we are here. In the hope that it helps," protester Marieke van Zijl said.

Istanbul held the largest of multiple demonstrations being staged in Turkey. The marchers called for Muslim solidarity with Palestinians.

The protests were among others planned in European cities to mark

the second anniversary of Operation al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023, by Hamas against Israel, which has since killed more than 67,000 Palestinians. In the Turkish capital of Ankara, protesters held up flags and placards condemning the "genocide" in Gaza. "This oppression, which began in 1948, has been continuing for two years, turning into genocide," Recep Karabal of the Palestine Support Platform told crowds in the northern city of Kirikkale.

Anniversary of Oct. 7 operation

In Britain, meanwhile, hundreds of people rallied to mark Hamas' 2023 operation and mourn the victims of an attack on a synagogue in Manchester.

In Paris, protesters and relatives of the French nationals, who took part in a flotilla carrying pro-Palestinian activists and aid for Gaza and are still detained in Israel, marched with Palestinian flags towards the Hotel Matignon, the French prime minister's official residence.

In Africa, demonstrators in Morocco called for an end to war in the Gaza Strip and protested the normalization of relations between Morocco and Israel.

A day after mass demonstrations across Spain, thousands of people held smaller marches in several cities, calling for an "end to genocide" and trade relations with Israel.

Rallies in Santiago and Gijon, both

in the north of Spain, were among the largest, with several thousand attendees. In Gijon, a group of women marched carrying white bundles symbolizing the bodies of children killed in Gaza.

Sunday's demonstrations came a day after hundreds of thousands marched in Rome, Barcelona and Madrid in a show of growing international outrage at Israel's two-year military campaign in Gaza. Smaller rallies took place in Paris, Lisbon, Athens and Skopje, North Macedonia, and in London and Manchester.

Truce deal

The protests came as Hamas movement in Gaza has accepted some elements of a plan laid out by US President Donald Trump to end the war, which has left Gaza's largest city in famine and stirred accusations of genocide against Israel.

Hamas on Sunday called for a swift start to a hostage-prisoner exchange with Israel, as negotiators from the two warring sides were set to meet in Egypt for crucial talks aimed at ending the war.

Foreign ministers of several countries, including Egypt, said the talks were a "real opportunity" to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable cease-fire.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Israel needs to stop bombing Gaza for an eventual release of captives by Hamas to take place.

"I think the Israelis and everyone acknowledge you can't release hostages in the middle of strikes, so the strikes will have to stop," Rubio told CBS News talk show "Face the Nation."

"There can't be a war going on in the middle of it."

banking and financial relations. Seyyed Farid Mousavi, another lawmaker, said that given the return of UN sanctions on Iran, no one should expect that Iran's accession to the CFT will remove all the obstacles facing Iran's economy.

"Our problem isn't just the sanctions — even non-Western banks are unwilling to cooperate due to Iran's presence on the FATF high-risk list."

Another parliamentarian Ahmad Nikfar called the FATF a "tool" in the hands of powerful countries used to undermine the rights of other nations.

Hamas response to ...

Considering Israel's record of violating agreements and continuing its occupation, how likely is it that Tel Aviv will break commitments during implementation of this plan?

For now, Israeli officials have largely kept quiet, with only Netanyahu's office issuing a statement. Yet the language of Israeli media, citing sources, indicates Israel is ready to go along with the first stage. That stage involves halting the war and exchanging prisoners—something both Hamas and Israel want.

Recent reports have suggested a slowdown of attacks, with some Israeli units halting or even pulling back in parts of Gaza. The message is that these steps are meant to prepare the ground for prisoner swaps. But moving to the second phase—negotiating the broader terms—is far more serious.

Here, Palestinians insist that the strongest guarantee against Israel backtracking lies in US hands. They argue that Washington calls the shots, under both [former US president Joe] Biden and Trump. From Hamas's perspective, the fact that the war was not stopped under Biden was due to America's lack of sincerity. The view is that if Trump wants the war to stop, it will stop. For this reason, Hamas intends to rope Trump in as a guarantor. Given Trump's influence and his personal characteristics, such involvement could indeed make it harder for Israel to slide back into conflict.

But there is also the risk of a repeat of past experience: the first stage of a ceasefire being implemented, only for talks to stall before reaching the second phase.

One clause in Trump's plan calls for removing Hamas from Gaza's future gov-

ernance. Is Hamas ready to step aside from executive power? And if so, what would its political future look like?

Hamas's stance—both before and after October 7—has consistently been that it is willing to hand over governance to a national unity government or one formed through national dialogue. This has been a longstanding position and was reiterated again in its recent statement. But Hamas added one condition: that this decision must stem from Palestinian consensus.

During the "Al-Aqsa Flood" period, intra-Palestinian dialogue was held in Cairo and even in Beijing, with all factions participating. Hamas had no objection to the Palestinian Authority taking charge of Gaza's administration. Israel, however, rejects this because any Palestinian government in Gaza still means Hamas remains alive as a political and security actor.

The major challenge after the war is reconstruction. Hamas understands that rebuilding Gaza will require a different government, and it does not oppose the idea—it has accepted such arrangements in previous talks and initiatives. The sticking point remains Israel's search for its favored alternative capable of running Gaza.

So far, Israel has tried to break Gaza down neighborhood by neighborhood, tapping into the role of clans, which are highly influential in Palestinian society. Each clan often dominates a particular district. Recent clashes between Hamas and a clan in Khan Younis, illustrate this struggle. Israel has attempted to empower certain clans by giving them local authority, but Hamas, aware of the implications, has moved swiftly to eliminate rivalries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iranian MPs welcome decision to join CFT

National Desk

Several Iranian lawmakers welcomed the country's decision to join the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (CFT).

On Wednesday, Iran's Expediency Council approved the country's conditional accession to the CFT, a council spokesperson said.

Mohsen Dehnavi said on X that after four full sessions and joint committee meetings, the council approved Iran's conditional accession to the CFT. The ratification is a key step toward

improving Iran's position with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as accession to the CFT remains the final requirement for the country's membership in the taskforce.

Iranian lawmaker Javad Arian Manesh said the first and most important impact of approving the CFT in the Expediency Council is getting out of the FATF blacklist.

He said Iran's presence on the FATF blacklist has prevented banks and international financial institutions from cooperating with Iran.

The removal of Iran from the blacklist can facilitate Iran's international

President launches thousands of housing units, infrastructure projects nationwide

Economy Desk

Iran on Sunday inaugurated 57,226 supportive housing units and 202 projects in transport, urban development, and meteorology across the country in an online ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Pezeshkian, in the third phase of the "Path to Transformation" plan, ordered the opening and commissioning of Ministry of Roads and Urban Development's projects in several provinces, IRNA reported.

The housing units included 28,192 urban and 29,034 rural residences delivered simultaneously nationwide. In addition, under a presidential directive, 11,760 land plots were allocated under the Population Youth Plan, and 4,500 hectares of land were made available for the housing sector.

The newly inaugurated projects also comprised 84 in transport, 12 in ur-

ban regeneration, 11 in new cities, and 95 in meteorology. Speaking at the ceremony, the president praised the efforts of ministry managers, specialists, and provincial officials in executing the projects and stressed environmental protection in development plans.

"One of the country's current challenges is the threat to water resources, particularly underground reserves, and development should not rely solely on wells in various regions," he said.

"Policies related to urban development must seriously consider maintaining balance between resources and consumption," he said.



Parliament okays plan to slash four zeros from national currency



Economy Desk

Iran's Parliament on Sunday approved a long-debated plan to remove four zeros from the national currency, the rial, aiming to facilitate financial transactions and make banknotes more "functional." Lawmakers approved parts of an amended monetary and banking reform bill returned by the Guardian Council, with 144 votes in favor, 108 against and three abstentions out of 263 lawmakers present, IRNA reported.

Under the law, the rial will remain the official currency, with each rial equivalent to 100 qerans.

According to head of the Economic Committee of the parliament, the measure's main purpose is to "make

banknotes more functional and facilitate financial transactions."

On the sideline of the parliamentary session, Shamseddin Hosseini told reporters, "The Central Bank has two years to prepare the groundwork for the redenomination plan and to carry out public awareness campaigns. After that, a three-year transition period is planned, during which old and new banknotes will circulate simultaneously."

The plan — first proposed by the government in 2019 and discussed across three administrative terms — has undergone multiple revisions. The latest version retains the rial as Iran's official currency, dropping earlier proposals to rename it the toman.

The head of economic policies at the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said on Sunday that a national committee chaired by the president will be established to oversee implementation of the plan.

"Preparing the necessary infrastructure for implementation requires a two-year period," Ja'far Mehdizadeh said, adding that after the law is passed and promulgated, an executive bylaw must first be drafted, approved by the CBI's Supreme Board, and then endorsed by the government.

Mehdizadeh said preliminary steps began in 2019, when four zeros were faded on the note design, and some operational measures have already been taken, allowing authorities to meet the timeline for full implementation.

He stressed that the scope of the plan extends beyond issuing new banknotes, involving broader legal aspects, accounting adjustments, and software updates to ensure the transition is carried out effectively.

According to the new law, after the transition period, all financial obligations denominated in the current rial will be settled using the new unit.

Iran, Norway weigh ties in renewables amid push for clean power

Economy Desk

A senior official from Iran's Energy Ministry and Norwegian ambassador on Sunday explored bilateral cooperation on renewable energy, technical knowledge exchange, and electricity network management, IRNA reported.

Mohsen Tarzatab, head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA), met with Norwegian Ambassador Paul Bjornstad in Tehran to discuss his country's extensive renewable energy development plans.

"Given Norway's remarkable progress in power grid management, there is potential for cooperation in training, technical knowledge exchange, and transferring expertise in operating networks with widespread renewable power plants," Tarzatab said.

He added that Iran, with legal and financial frameworks supporting clean energy investments, including the Energy Exchange's Green Board and various incentive models, is ready to cooperate with Norway on improving energy efficiency and implementing new renewable projects.



Green Board has been established to create a direct supply-and-demand market, promote the renewable economy, and foster a competitive environment for electricity exchange. During the meeting, the Norwegian ambassador highlighted his country's expertise in designing, building, and operating offshore wind and solar power plants, as well as ongoing projects in neighboring countries.

He also outlined Norway's overall electricity production and supply structure, including regional exchanges with

Germany, Denmark, and Sweden.

"These interactions have earned Norway the reputation as Europe's 'green battery,'" he said.

Despite being the world's third-largest gas exporter, Norway has in recent years relied almost entirely on clean electricity generated from hydro, wind, and solar power.

Nearly 90% of vehicles sold in Norway in recent years are electric, reflecting the country's push toward electrification and advanced renewable energy policies.

National Post Company climbs 14 spots in global rankings

Economy Desk

Iran's National Post Company has jumped 14 places in the rankings of the 174 member countries of the Universal Postal Union, moving from 52nd to 37th, the head of the company said on Sunday.

"The country's ranking among the 174 UPU member states over the past year

has risen 14 spots, from 52 to 37," Mohammad Ahmadi, CEO of the National Post Company said.

The deputy minister of communications attributed the quantitative and qualitative growth in postal activities to program-focused planning, infrastructure development, digitization of processes, the completion of data for the national 'Genaf' project — a comprehensive ad-

ressing and postal database — and the expansion of new services.

Ahmadi added that during the current government's first year, total mail traffic exceeded 302.957 million items, reflecting a 7.2% increase compared with the same period in the past.

E-commerce deliveries rose 21%, while electronic services increased by 38.6% over the same period, he said.



War of narratives

How public perception of Iran is being targeted



An Israeli soldier takes photos with his phone in the occupied West Bank on March 2, 2023. ● NASSER ISHTAYEH/SOPA IMAGES

ANALYSIS

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” The preceding seems to be a saying by the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu from the 6th century BC. Former British prime minister Winston Churchill also said, “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.” These ideas still form the backbone of every military action worldwide, with the United States and Israel standing as some of the strongest advocates of this mindset. Since the end of the Israeli-American war against Iran up to the writing of this piece, the Western media and propaganda apparatus have been casting the shadow of war over the region and Iran, laying out signs — both real and imagined — every hour to shore up their claims, news, speculations, and even rumors. The fact is, although given the conduct and stance of the US and Israel in the region, war and military strikes remain the most likely possibility in the Middle East, the reason this possibility is played up more conspicuously at times has a host of political and strategic motives. Clearly, this article does not intend to write off any possibility on Israel’s part, a regime that in the past month has carried out one of its most unpredictable attacks in the region by bombing Doha, Qatar’s capital.

Therefore, considering the US and Western support for Tel Aviv’s adventurisms in the region, ignoring the chance of a war would not be a sound analysis. But the key question remains: What is the end-game behind this relentless drumbeat of war and the distortion of Iranian military capability in the strategic equation?

Are deployments signs of war or political pressure tactic?

“The movement of the aircraft carrier Gerald Ford towards the Mediterranean,” “refueling aircraft en route to the Middle East,” “dozens of US Air Force planes refueling in the air flying towards the Middle East” — these news snippets are examples of coordinated coverage by American, Israeli, and European media in recent weeks. The repeated announcements about the deployment of new warships, aircraft, and troops to the Middle East, along with the buying, selling, and manufacturing of arms, have become daily news routines. For instance, Bloomberg reported recently that the Pentagon inked a \$123 million contract with Boeing to produce 14 large bunker-buster bombs. Twelve of these bombs have been used for the first time in the US’s attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities in Esfahan, Natanz, and Fordow. Moreover, recent months have seen frequent alerts about troop readiness in Europe, the US, and the region, as efforts to keep up the pressure of a looming war

over the Middle East and Iran continue without letup. For example, on August 1, the US Department of Defense issued a statement saying it would send additional military equipment to the Middle East in response to threats from Iran and its allied groups, aimed at beefing up the defense of US forces and Israel in the region.

How US, Israel exploit military strikes, sanctions

While troop movements and the shipment of arms and equipment are routine globally, this practice, dating back to Cold War traditions, has now been turned up by the US into a new weapon of threat — a psychological tool to beat down rivals, sell arms, and intimidate foes. Psychological, media, narrative, and soft warfare — or anything besides firearms that affects the enemy — are as critical, if not more, than conventional military weapons in today’s global conflicts. Moreover, while emphasizing that the psychological warfare launched against peace in the region does not necessarily rule out a real war, other signs of this psychological campaign appear in narratives about negotiations, Iran’s nuclear program, sanctions, and the snapback mechanism. From late April to late September 2025, the Trump administration claimed diplomacy and negotiations with Iran, but the results were far from diplomatic. Over



The most important goal of this psychological war is to shape the public perception of citizens, which is even more crucial than influencing decision-makers because changing the former inevitably forces change in the latter. For Israel and the US, managing Iranian domestic opinion is worth more than managing conflicts on the battlefield.

the past six months, the US invited Iran to talks, and Iran accepted negotiations despite the reimposition of maximum sanctions. Iran also agreed to acceptable terms within its national interests and held five rounds of talks, but at the start of the sixth round, with Trump’s approval, Netanyahu ordered air strikes against Iran. After the war, despite all breaches of laws and all breaches of its rights, Iran agreed to renewed cooperation with the IAEA, negotiated with Europe, and complied with their conditions. Yet, sanctions were snapped back and reimposed, giving fresh ammunition for ongoing psychological warfare on the Iranian populace. Persian-language media outside Iran played up the snapback as a complex, novel, and catastrophic phenomenon for domestic public opinion, with two clear objectives: instilling fear of the US and despair about Iran. Meanwhile, the reimposed sanctions are nothing new compared to the heavy, varied sanctions America has previously slapped on Iran. Although these resolutions and their details impose undeniable costs on the country and its people, two key facts should not be lost in media propaganda: Tehran has engaged with the West with maximum flexibility over the past six months, thus the blame is to be put elsewhere — in Washington, Brussels, and Tel Aviv. Secondly, the constructed narrative of the situation is far from the on-the-ground reality, and it is essential for people to grasp this difference. The most important goal of this psychological war is to shape the public perception of citizens, which is even more crucial than influencing decision-makers because changing the former inevitably forces change in the latter. For Israel and the US, managing Iranian domestic opinion is worth more than managing conflicts on the battlefield. The choice of June 2025 for the attack on Iran was based on the reading of think tanks and foreign ministries of Israel and the US of how profoundly this psychological war had sunk in with the Iranian people. Accordingly, their efforts were not merely about military aims or nuclear sites but a fundamental shift. A miscalculation in analyzing and interpreting Iran’s conditions, its people’s mindset, and field realities caused Israel’s regime to miss the mark in its original objectives and fail to achieve its goals afterward. Consequently, the psychological weapon remains in use under various titles and fields to turn around public perception. The media narrative peddling Israeli military superiority in the region is at odds with Tehran’s actual conditions and capabilities. Despite even losing 30 of its senior commanders, Iran managed to hit back hard by launching missiles at cities in the occupied territories within hours of the Israeli aggression. Thus, part of this psychological warfare seeks to shore up deterrence and reduce psychological pressure from Tel Aviv. Netanyahu has played up power amid fear as a tactic over the past two years. Also, one should not forget that regional countries, especially Persian Gulf neighbors, constitute another key audience of this psychological war. For various reasons, our neighbors tend to buy into the narrative of Israeli and US hegemony in the region to justify their indifference to Palestine’s fate and their own armory purchases. Past experience with American psychological warfare in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq and some North African countries shows that countering this war is even more vital than dealing with open armed conflict. The US and Israel’s psychological war against peace in the region, backed by media power, will have more clout than actual military moves if not smartly countered with well-crafted narrative warfare.

The article first appeared in Persian on IRNA.



US President Donald Trump applauds on stage at the Al-Udeid Air Base in Doha, Qatar, on May 15, 2025. ● ALEX BRANDON/AP

Israeli cabinet likely behind AI-generated disinfo campaign in Iran: **Researchers**



● brookings.edu

By Derek B. Johnson
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

A coordinated Israeli-backed network of social media accounts pushed anti-government propaganda — including deepfakes and other AI-generated content — to Iranians as real-world kinetic attacks were happening, with the goal of fomenting revolt among the country’s people, according to researchers at Citizen Lab.

In research released this week, the nonprofit — along with Clemson University disinformation researcher Darren Linvill — said the so-called PRISONBREAK campaign was primarily carried out by a network of 50-some accounts on X created in 2023, but was largely dormant until this year.

The group “routinely used” AI-generated imagery and video in their operations to try to stoke unrest among Iran’s population, mimic real news outlets to spread false content, and encourage the overthrow of the Iranian government.

Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, launched following a coordinated attack by Hamas in October 2023, eventually expanded to include air strikes in Lebanon and Yemen.

In June, the Israel Defense Forces launched an attack against Iranian

nuclear facilities while also targeting senior Iranian military leaders and scientists for assassination. Those strikes expanded to other Iranian targets, like oil facilities, national broadcasters, and a strike on Evin Prison in Tehran.

In the early days of the conflict, the networks shared images and videos — of uncertain authenticity — claiming to show Iran in a state of chaos and instability.

One widely circulated video, likely altered with AI, depicted people standing in line at an ATM before breaking into a riot, accompanied by messages like “The Islamic Republic has failed!” and “This regime is the enemy of us, the people!”

But the bulk of Citizen Lab’s research focused on the period between June 13–24, 2023, during the “12-Day War” between Israel and Iran, and social media activity during and after a real June 24 Israeli air strike on Evin Prison. The facility is known for housing thousands of political prisoners.

The strike happened between 11:17 a.m. and 12:18 p.m. Iranian local time. By 11:52 a.m., accounts associated with the network began posting about the attack, and at 12:05 p.m., one posted an AI-generated video purporting to show footage of the attack, tricking several news outlets into sharing the content as genuine.

“The exact timing of the video’s posting, while the bombing on Evin Prison

was allegedly still happening, points towards the conclusion that it was part of a premeditated and well-synchronized influence operation,” wrote researchers Alberto Fittarelli, Maia Scott, Ron Deibert, Marcus Michaelsen, and Linvill.

Other accounts from the network began quickly piling on, spreading word of the explosions, and by 12:36 p.m., accounts were explicitly calling for Iranian citizens to march on the prison and free the prisoners.

Most of the posts failed to gain traction with online audiences, except for one. A message calling on “kids” to storm Evin Prison to free their “loved ones” also contained a video with AI-generated imagery. It managed to rack up more than 46,000 views and 3,500 likes.

“This second video about the Evin Prison, which shows the hallmarks of professional editing and was posted within one hour of the end of the bombings, further strongly suggests that the PRISONBREAK network’s operators had prior knowledge of the Israeli military action, and were prepared to coordinate with it,” researchers wrote.

Those posts and others by PRISONBREAK operators led researchers to believe the campaign — still active as of today — is being carried out by either an Israeli cabinet agency or a subcontractor working on behalf of



This second video about the Evin Prison, which shows the hallmarks of professional editing and was posted within one hour of the end of the bombings, further strongly suggests that the PRISONBREAK network’s operators had prior knowledge of the Israeli military action, and were prepared to coordinate with it.



Debris of the main entrance of the Evin prison, which was destroyed in Israeli strikes, is pictured in northern Tehran, Iran, on July 1, 2025.

● MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/NURPHOTO

the Israeli cabinet.

The press office for the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., did not immediately respond to a request for comment from CyberScoop.

Despots, democracies fuel disinformation ecosystem

It’s not the first time the Israeli cabinet has been tied to an online influence campaign related to the Gaza conflict, nor would it be the first time the entity has reportedly tapped private industry to wage information warfare.

Last year, researchers at Meta, OpenAI, Digital Forensic Research Lab, and independent disinformation researcher Marc Owen Jones all tracked activity from a similar network on Facebook, X, and Instagram that targeted Canadian and US users with posts calling for the release of Israeli captives kidnapped by Hamas, criticism of US campus protests against Israeli military operations, and attacks against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Meta and OpenAI both flagged STOIC, a firm based in Tel Aviv that is believed to be working on behalf of the Israeli cabinet, as behind much of the activity.

Citizen Lab’s report identified two other Israeli firms, Team Jorge and Archimedes Group, that sell disinformation-for-hire services to cabinet clients.

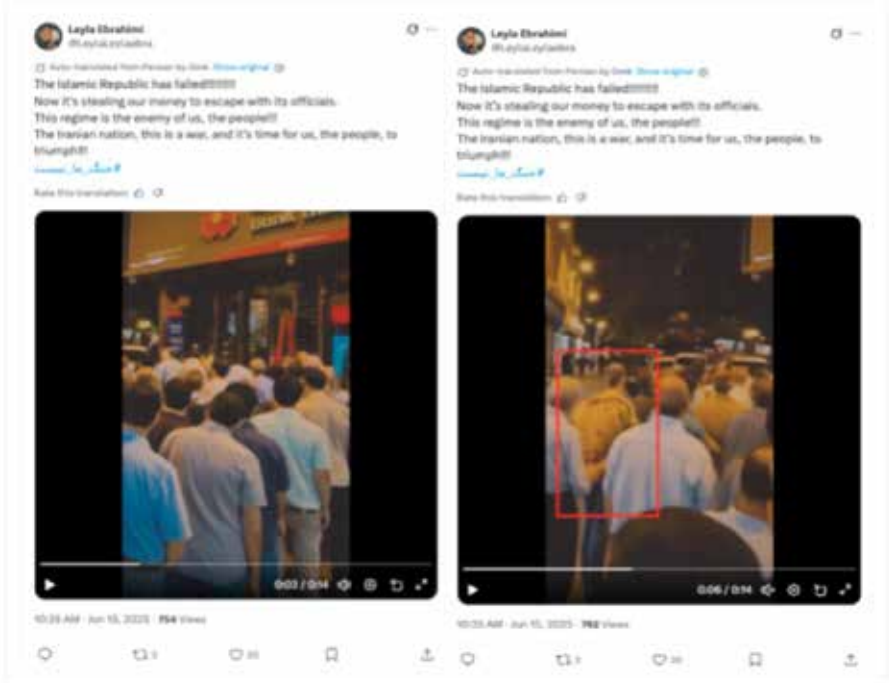
“Both companies offered their services to a wide array of clients globally, used advanced technologies to build and conduct their covert campaigns, and advertised existing or prior connections to the Israeli intelligence community,” Citizen Lab researchers wrote.

While Western threat intelligence companies and media outlets can present disinformation campaigns as mostly a tool of autocratic or authoritarian countries, researchers have warned that democratic governments and private industry are increasingly playing key roles in information warfare.

David Agranovich, Meta’s senior policy director for threat disruption, told CyberScoop last year that commercial marketing firms provide governments an additional layer of obfuscation when attempting to manipulate public opinion without leaving direct digital fingerprints.

“These services essentially democratize access to sophisticated influence or surveillance capabilities, while hiding the client who’s behind them,” Agranovich said.

The full article first appeared on CyberScoop.



An X post shared by the PRISONBREAK network on June 15, 2025, shows a video of people waiting in line at ATMs in Iran. The misshapen figure seen in the screenshot on the right is an indicator of the video being AI-generated.

● CYBERSCOOP



Israeli cabinet likely behind AI-generated disinfo campaign in Iran: **Researchers**



● brookings.edu

By Derek B. Johnson
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

A coordinated Israeli-backed network of social media accounts pushed anti-government propaganda — including deepfakes and other AI-generated content — to Iranians as real-world kinetic attacks were happening, with the goal of fomenting revolt among the country’s people, according to researchers at Citizen Lab.

In research released this week, the nonprofit — along with Clemson University disinformation researcher Darren Linvill — said the so-called PRISONBREAK campaign was primarily carried out by a network of 50-some accounts on X created in 2023, but was largely dormant until this year.

The group “routinely used” AI-generated imagery and video in their operations to try to stoke unrest among Iran’s population, mimic real news outlets to spread false content, and encourage the overthrow of the Iranian government.

Israel’s military campaign in Gaza, launched following a coordinated attack by Hamas in October 2023, eventually expanded to include air strikes in Lebanon and Yemen.

In June, the Israel Defense Forces launched an attack against Iranian

nuclear facilities while also targeting senior Iranian military leaders and scientists for assassination. Those strikes expanded to other Iranian targets, like oil facilities, national broadcasters, and a strike on Evin Prison in Tehran.

In the early days of the conflict, the networks shared images and videos — of uncertain authenticity — claiming to show Iran in a state of chaos and instability.

One widely circulated video, likely altered with AI, depicted people standing in line at an ATM before breaking into a riot, accompanied by messages like “The Islamic Republic has failed!” and “This regime is the enemy of us, the people!”

But the bulk of Citizen Lab’s research focused on the period between June 13–24, 2023, during the “12-Day War” between Israel and Iran, and social media activity during and after a real June 24 Israeli air strike on Evin Prison. The facility is known for housing thousands of political prisoners.

The strike happened between 11:17 a.m. and 12:18 p.m. Iranian local time. By 11:52 a.m., accounts associated with the network began posting about the attack, and at 12:05 p.m., one posted an AI-generated video purporting to show footage of the attack, tricking several news outlets into sharing the content as genuine.

“The exact timing of the video’s posting, while the bombing on Evin Prison

was allegedly still happening, points towards the conclusion that it was part of a premeditated and well-synchronized influence operation,” wrote researchers Alberto Fittarelli, Maia Scott, Ron Deibert, Marcus Michaelsen, and Linvill.

Other accounts from the network began quickly piling on, spreading word of the explosions, and by 12:36 p.m., accounts were explicitly calling for Iranian citizens to march on the prison and free the prisoners.

Most of the posts failed to gain traction with online audiences, except for one. A message calling on “kids” to storm Evin Prison to free their “loved ones” also contained a video with AI-generated imagery. It managed to rack up more than 46,000 views and 3,500 likes.

“This second video about the Evin Prison, which shows the hallmarks of professional editing and was posted within one hour of the end of the bombings, further strongly suggests that the PRISONBREAK network’s operators had prior knowledge of the Israeli military action, and were prepared to coordinate with it,” researchers wrote.

Those posts and others by PRISONBREAK operators led researchers to believe the campaign — still active as of today — is being carried out by either an Israeli cabinet agency or a subcontractor working on behalf of



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Debris of the main entrance of the Evin prison, which was destroyed in Israeli strikes, is pictured in northern Tehran, Iran, on July 1, 2025.

● MORTEZA NIKOUBAZL/NURPHOTO

the Israeli cabinet.

The press office for the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., did not immediately respond to a request for comment from CyberScoop.

Despots, democracies fuel disinformation ecosystem

It’s not the first time the Israeli cabinet has been tied to an online influence campaign related to the Gaza conflict, nor would it be the first time the entity has reportedly tapped private industry to wage information warfare.

Last year, researchers at Meta, OpenAI, Digital Forensic Research Lab, and independent disinformation researcher Marc Owen Jones all tracked activity from a similar network on Facebook, X, and Instagram that targeted Canadian and US users with posts calling for the release of Israeli captives kidnapped by Hamas, criticism of US campus protests against Israeli military operations, and attacks against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Meta and OpenAI both flagged STOIC, a firm based in Tel Aviv that is believed to be working on behalf of the Israeli cabinet, as behind much of the activity.

Citizen Lab’s report identified two other Israeli firms, Team Jorge and Archimedes Group, that sell disinformation-for-hire services to cabinet clients.

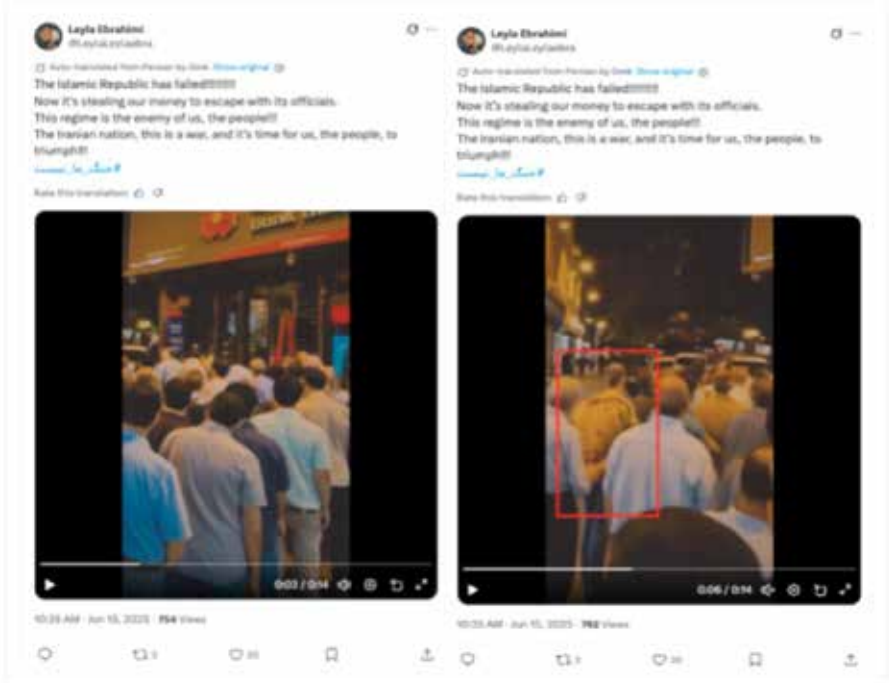
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● CYBERSCOOP



Azmoun suffers fresh injury blow as Iran names squad for friendlies

Sports Desk

Shabab Al Ahli striker Sardar Azmoun will be unavailable for Iran's upcoming friendlies against Russia and Tanzania after picking up a new injury while on club duty.

The Iranian talisman sustained a fractured metatarsal in his foot as well as a torn ankle ligament during a training session on Saturday and is expected to be sidelined for up to fourth months. This is the Iranian striker's second injury setback in nearly five months. He had already missed two previous international breaks before making a scoring return in September, coming on as a substitute to net a last-gasp winner for Shabab Al Ahli in a top-flight win over Al Nasr.

Iran will play Russia in Volgograd on Friday, before facing Tanzania – No. 107 in the latest FIFA Men's World Ranking – in Dubai four days later.

The double header will be part of Iran's preparation for next summer's World Cup finals in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Iran head coach Amir Qalenei named a 24-man squad on Saturday, with Persepolis center-back Hossein Kan'ani, Al Nasr winger Mahdi Ghayedi, and Lech Poznan winger Ali Qolizadeh also set to miss the double header with injury.

Allahyar Sayyadmanesh, playing as a striker for Belgian top-tier club K.V.C. Westerlo, received a first international callout in 13 months, while teenage prodigy Kasa Taheri will be looking to make his senior Team Melli debut after scoring four goals in six Persian Gulf Pro League appearances for Zob Ahan.

The following is Iran's 24-man squad for October's international break:

Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiranvand

(Tractor), Payam Niazmand (Persepolis), Mohammadreza Akhbari (Sepahan), Mohammad Khalifeh (Iralco)

Defenders: Mohammad-Amin Hazbavi (Sepahan), Ali Ne'mati (Foolad Khuzestan), Hossein Abarquei (Persepolis), Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Mohammad-Mahdi Zare' (Akhmat Grozny), Arya Yousefi (Sepahan)

Midfielders: Mohammad Khodabandelou (Persepolis), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (-), Mohammad Qorbani (Al Wahda), Samman Qoddous (Ittihad Kalba), Omid Nourafkan (Sepahan), Saeid Ezzatollahi (Shabab Al Ahli), Mohammad-Javad Hosseinejad (Dynamo Makhachkala), Mohammad Mohebbi (Rostov FC), Mahdi Hashemnejad (Tractor), Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (Tractor)

Strikers: Mahdi Taremi (Olympicos), Kasa Taheri (Zob Ahan), Allahyar Sayyadmanesh (K.V.C. Westerlo), Ali Ali-pour (Persepolis).



● JIA HAOCHENG/XINHUA

World Para Athletics Championships:

Iran's Khosravi shatters world record to retain shot put dominance

Sports Desk

Iran's Yassin Khosravi grabbed a third successive shot put gold at the World Para Athletics Championships, thanks to a world record-breaking performance in New Delhi on Saturday.

Reigning Paralympic champion Khosravi saved his best for last, registering a 16.60m effort on his final attempt in the men's F57 class to improve his own world record – set in July 2023 – by an impressive 59 centimeters.

in the F11 category.

There was further glory for the country in the men's javelin throw contests, as Ali Baziyar won the F54 gold earlier on Saturday, with his compatriot Erfan Bondori settling for the bronze, after Paralympic champion Saeid Afrooz had broken his own world record en route to glory in the F34 division on Thursday.

Hassan Bajoulvand, meanwhile, grabbed the gold medal in the men's discus throw F11 competition.

Elham Salehi was the sole



● TASNIM

Brazilian Thiago Paulino Dos Santos – silver medalist in last year's Paris Paralympics – again had to settle for a runner-up finish behind the Iranian with 14.82m, with the host's Soman Rana took the bronze with a 14.69m effort. This was Iran's seventh gold medal across eight days of action at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium.

Amirhossein Alipour (F11), and Aliasghar Javanmardi (F35) also claimed the ultimate prize in their respective men's shot put events, with Mahdi Olad completing an all-Iranian one-two finish

Iranian gold medalist in the women's competitions, winning the title in the javelin throw F54 contest – the Iranian girl's second medal in New Delhi following a bronze in the shot put F54 event.

Zeinab Moradi won a bronze in the women's javelin throw F56 class, while Iran's only medal in the track competitions came in the women's 400m T12 category, where Hajar Safarzadeh won a precious silver.

Amanollah Papi got Iran of the mark in New Delhi with a consolation bronze in the men's javelin throw F57 showdown.

Iranians collect four medals in Karate 1 Series A

Sports Desk

Iranians bagged four kumite medals, including one gold, at

the final Karate 1 Series A event of the season in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

On Sunday, Asian silver medalist



Iran's Morteza Ne'mati won the men's -75kg gold medal at the final Karate 1 Series A event of the season in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
● IKF

Morteza Ne'mati overcame opponents from Kuwait, the Philippines, Chile, Turkmenistan, and France before defeating Russian European champion Ernest Sharafutdinov, competing as a neutral athlete, 6-1 in the men's -75kg final – the Iranian's second Series A gold of the season following his final victory over the Russian karateka in February's edition in Larnaca, Cyprus. Ne'mati's fellow-Iranian Ali Rahimi, meanwhile, bounced back from a last-four setback (10-4) against Sharafutdinov to beat Indonesia's Joshua Ignatius 7-5 and finish with a consolation bronze alongside Chilean Matias Rodriguez Fuentes.

Elsewhere, a second final showpiece featuring Iranian and Russian contestants saw former

world champion Aliasghar Asia-bari settle for the silver medal in the -84kg category after suffering an 8-7 loss to Eduard Gasparian.

Earlier in the competition, former Asian champion Saleh Abazari had won a consolation bronze, thanks to a 9-0 victory over Frenchman Faadel Boussag in the men's +84kg weight class. Abazari began his campaign with victories over Egypt and Italy but fell to a third-round loss to Japan's Kentarou Yamauchi, who went on to beat Türkiye's Kadir Furkan Genc for the gold medal. The Iranian still managed to beat Indonesia's Daniel Daniel and Italian Michele Ciani in repechage before sharing the third spot with Daniel Tielen of Australia.

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Tractor, Sepahan fire blanks in goalless stalemates

Sports Desk

Defending champion Tractor shared the spoils with Foolad Khuzestan in a goalless encounter in the Persian Gulf Pro League at Ahvaz's Foolad Arena on Saturday. This was Tractor's fourth goalless stalemate in nine outings across all competitions this season – third in a row following a domestic league draw at home against newly-promoted Fajr Sepasi and the game against the UAE's Al Wahda in the AFC Champions League Elite last Monday.

The frustrating draw was still enough to send Dragan Skocic's side back atop the Iranian top-flight table with nine points from six games – courtesy of a superi-

or goal difference over Golgozar Sirjan, Malavan, and Iralco.

Tractor will play Malavan at home next, with Foolad playing away to Zob Ahan after the upcoming international break.

It also finished without a goal between Zob Ahan and Sepahan in the Isfahan Derby at the Naqsh-e Jahan Stadium on Saturday.

The result meant Sepahan has now managed a single victory in eight games in all competitions this season – a 1-0 away win against Khaybar last time out in the league – heaping pressure on head coach and club legend Moharram Navidkia, who was appointed to the role for a second spell in June.

Sitting 12th in the 16-team table with six points from as many



Tractor midfielder Regi Lushkja (31) is tackled by Foolad Khuzestan center-back Ali Ne'mati during a goalless draw in the Persian Gulf Pro League in Ahvaz, Iran, on October 4, 2025.
● FFIRI

games, Sepahan will chase the second victory of the season when

taking on Esteghlal Khuzestan in Ahvaz on October 17.

A'alamian bros withdraw from Islamic Solidarity Games

Sports Desk

Nima and Noshad A'alamian withdrew from the table tennis competitions at the upcoming Islamic Solidarity Games – starting November 7 in Riyadh – due to club commitment, Iran head coach Jamil Lotfollahnasabi confirmed.

"Nima and Noshad were to be part of the Iranian squad in Riyadh. However, the table tennis event was brought forward by seven days to November 8, meaning it will now clash with the brothers' club commitments in the French league," Lotfollahnasabi said. The brothers will be replaced by

Mohammad Mousavi and Benjamin Faraji – third and fourth in the Iranian ISG trials respectively – at the sixth edition of the multi-sport event, joining Amirhossein Hodaiei.

Hodaiei defeated Nima A'alamian in the men's singles final at the previous edition of the Games in Konya 2021.



● IRNA

Shahrak-e Hezarani village brings growth to Ilam’s rural landscape



● neshan.org

Iranica Desk

Shahrak-e Hezarani village, situated in the heart of Ilam Province, holds a strategic position enriched by a deep historical background and significant agricultural and livestock resources, establishing itself as one of the key centers for rural development in southwestern Iran. Ilam Province, known for its diverse climate, rich cultural tapestry, and historical significance, encompasses numerous villages, each telling a unique story of the region’s identity. Among these, Shahrak-e Hezarani — the largest village in Abdanan — stands out as a prominent example of these attributes. This village not only captivates with its stunning natural landscapes and historical monuments but also plays a vital role in supplying the needs

of the region through an economy primarily based on agriculture and animal husbandry. This report aims to detail the geographical, social, economic, and tourism-related features that define this vibrant village. Shahrak-e Hezarani is administratively part of the Central District in Jaber Ansar Rural District and is located eight kilometers east of Abdanan, positioned along the main route connecting Abdanan with Dehloran and Andimeshk. The village rests at an average elevation of 735 meters above sea level and experiences a moderate and humid climate. Its distinctive geographical setting, close proximity to the regional airport, and location on a critical communication corridor between Ilam and Khuzestan Provinces impart a strategic significance to the village.

With a population exceeding 2,860 individuals distributed among 828 households and 885 residential units, Hezarani is recognized as the largest village within Abdanan and functions as a central service hub for surrounding villages. The village’s name reflects the ethnic diversity of its residents, stemming from various tribes and communities settled in the area. Omid Esmaeili, an expert from the Ilam Province General Governorate told ISNA that the availability of abundant water resources — such as the Abdanan and Hezarani rivers — and the presence of fertile agricultural lands have been crucial factors contributing to the establishment and growth of this settlement. Esmaeili further emphasized that agriculture and livestock

farming continue to be the primary sources of livelihood for the village inhabitants today, with 44 percent of the active workforce engaged in farming and animal husbandry, while 56 percent are employed in the service sector. Among the village’s 600 hectares of farmland, 590 hectares are rain-fed, and only 10 hectares are irrigated. The main agricultural products include wheat and barley, with a limited cultivation of rice. Despite water limitations, horticulture thrives on 5.5 hectares, featuring crops such as grapes, figs, olives, pistachios, almonds, and pomegranates. Livestock farming prospers in Hezarani due to the availability of suitable pastures on the slopes of the Dinarkuh and Kabirkuh mountains.

Esmaeili explained that the village also has promising developmental potentials including beekeeping, home-based mushroom cultivation, medicinal plants, narcissus flowers, ornamental plants, and agricultural processing industries. These sectors offer attractive opportunities for investment and employment generation within the community. Farzad Sharifi, Director General of Ilam Province’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization, highlighted that in addition to the village’s economic potentials, Hezarani is home to one of the province’s significant historical landmarks — Hezarani Castle. Constructed from stone and plaster, the castle dates back to the Sassanid era. It is situated atop a natural hill north of the

road leading from Abdanan to Murmuri. The castle’s architectural layout includes rectangular corridors, large rooms, vaulted arches, and watchtowers. Sharifi added that visiting this historic castle offers a valuable opportunity to connect with history and appreciate the architectural heritage left by ancestors. Tourists visiting the castle can also include a visit to the nearby Siah Gav Twin Lake, enjoying the pristine and unspoiled natural beauty of the area. Shahrak-e Hezarani village, with its unique combination of history, nature, and productive capacity, embodies the dynamism of Ilam’s rural communities. It stands as a striking example and potential model for sustainable rural development and tourism in western Iran.

Plan autumn trip to Baliran Spring, nearby meadows

Iranica Desk

If you are an experienced tourist who enjoys forest trekking, head to the heart of the Hyrcanian forests in Mazandaran Province to discover the beautiful Baliran Spring. Also known as Lalehzar Spring, this stunning natural wonder features captivating turquoise waters and is located just five kilometers from the nearby village, attracting many visitors. As previously mentioned, the spring is located beside a village named Baliran, a forested region positioned at an elevation of 150 meters above sea level. This village is encircled by a

natural boundary composed of rivers, forests, and mountains, classifying it as one of the notable tourist villages. Baliran lies 80 kilometers from Sari, the provincial capital, and 20 kilometers from Amol. For travelers coming from Tehran, expect over three hours via Haraz road and less than five hours via Chalous road. Emerging from the ground at an altitude of 240 meters above sea level, this spring contains a high concentration of sulfur. Owing to the strong sulfurous odor around the spring, camping or setting up tents nearby is not permissible. Hence, if camping is planned, forested areas lo-

cated slightly before the spring offer suitable spots for resting and dining. Swimming and diving can be enjoyed in the spring’s turquoise waters, which reach a depth of about 80 centimeters and maintain a temperature of 34 degrees Celsius during autumn. The sulfur content in the water aids in treating ailments such as joint pain, rheumatism, and skin conditions. It is recommended to undertake this trip in groups, with family, or as part of nature tour groups, while also taking advantage of the beautiful forests and lush meadows surrounding the spring.

The best time to visit Baliran Spring is from mid-April to mid-November. As temperatures decrease, the water temperature also drops, making swimming less feasible with seasonal changes. Furthermore, by late autumn, the visual appeal of the season fades, paths become slippery due to heavy rainfall, and the opportunity to enjoy wild fruits such as wild plum, medlar, hawthorn, and barberry diminishes. ● Due to fog in the Baliran forests, it is essential to use a local guide. ● On rainy days, when paths may be slippery and muddy, it is advisable to avoid visiting the hot spring due to potential

hazards. ● Using off-road vehicles along the route harms the nature and forests of Baliran. The best practice is to walk and appreciate the area on foot. ● Employing special trash bags is vital to protect the environment. ● If setting up a tent and cooking near Baliran spring, be sure to gather dry wood along the route to use for firewood. ● Because of water pollution and the sulfur content in the spring, it is advisable to bring your own drinking water.

Baliran Forest

As part of the Hyrcanian forests, Baliran Forest is a scenic and

beautiful area housing various plant species alongside natural and therapeutic springs. Visitors can enjoy a rich diversity of vegetation, including elm, maple, oak, and beech trees, accompanied by the birdsong that fills the forest. Traveling through a traditional village and dense forests, crossing the picturesque banks of a river, listening to the birdsong in this natural setting, and enjoying numerous springs such as Baliran hot spring constitute the best recreational and travel experience during the cool autumn days. So, pack your bags and prepare yourself for this natural delight.



● IRNA



● kojaro.com



● IRNA



ADVERTORIAL

Iran, Iraq launch joint Shalamcheh market linking Arvand, Basra

A new chapter of economic and border cooperation between Iran and Iraq has begun with the signing of a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint border trade market in Shalamcheh. The initiative, led by Iran's Arvand Free Zone Organization in cooperation with Iraq's Basra Provincial Council and the General Authority for Free Zones, is expected—if infrastructure plans are fully implemented—to unlock the untapped potential of southwestern Iran and turn the Shalamcheh crossing into a key hub of regional trade.

According to the public relations and international affairs of the organization, Mostafa Khanzadi, the organization's managing director, explained, "the creation of the joint Shalamcheh trade market is a strategic project aimed at revitalizing border regions, cutting transaction costs, strengthening local enterprises, and facilitating the flow of goods between Iran and Iraq. This move will help promote formal trade, curb informal exchanges, and create sustainable employment on both sides of the border."

He added, "both parties have committed to providing the necessary infrastructure and establishing customs, administrative and logistics facilities. To enhance transparency and control over transactions, the installation of X-ray scanners at the Shalamcheh crossing has also been placed on the agenda."

Arvand Free Zone's trade role

Due to its geographical proximity to Basra, the Arvand Free Zone has long been one of the main centers of trade between Iran and Iraq. Among Iran's free zones, Arvand maintains the highest level of direct interaction with Iraq, and the Shalamcheh border crossing gives it a strategic position in bilateral commerce.

Reza Masrour, Secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Free and Special Economic Zones, stressed the importance of the plan, saying, "launching the Shalamcheh border market is one of our top priorities. The Arvand Free Zone can serve as the core for establishing a joint Iran-Iraq free zone—an initiative that will help balance trade, expand joint investments, and facilitate the two countries' economic relations."

He further noted, "among Iran's 18 free zones, Arvand is the most important in economic exchanges with Iraq. Our goal is to implement previous memoranda of understanding between Iran and Iraq to further



strengthen the foundations of economic cooperation."

Infrastructure enhancement, operational coordination

The recent memorandum extends beyond goods trade, focusing significantly on customs and infrastructure coordination. Key elements include activating the electronic manifest system, publishing a list of prohibited goods prior to trade, synchronizing customs working hours, establishing 24-hour operations at the Shalamcheh crossing, launching the TIR system in Iraq, implementing the ATA carnet system for temporary admission of exhibition goods, and developing international transport services between Basra and the Arvand Free Zone.

Alongside these measures, the Shalamcheh-Basra railway project is advancing as a vital link connecting Iran's rail network to Iraq's ports. Seyyed Mohammadreza Mavalizadeh, the province's governor-general, said,

"the demining and bridge construction on the Iranian side have been fully completed, and the Spanish contractor on the Iraqi side has begun its work. The rail connection between the two countries will play a decisive role in expanding transit and reducing transportation costs."

He also underlined the importance of administrative coordination, stating, "the Shalamcheh-Basra railway is one of the strategic joint projects between Iran and Iraq, and its completion will transform trade exchanges."

Economic opportunities, challenges ahead

The joint Shalamcheh trade market could create substantial economic opportunities for both sides of the border. Boosting local trade, attracting joint investment, increasing employment, curbing smuggling, and promoting medical tourism in Abadan and Khorramshahr are among the potential benefits.

Masrour highlighted the importance of stable border regulations, saying, "one of the main demands of economic actors is to avoid sudden bans on border exchanges. If any restrictions are to be applied, they should be announced at least one month in advance to prevent harm to traders and businesses."

Shalamcheh set to be regional trade hub

If implemented coherently and managed effectively, the joint Shalamcheh market could become a successful model for other Iran-Iraq border crossings. This three-year project is expected to position Shalamcheh as a key node in the regional supply chain and lay the foundation for long-term, structured cooperation between the two countries. The agreement forms part of a broader strategy to develop border economies, deepen Iran-Iraq relations, and strengthen the Arvand Free Zone's role in the regional economic landscape.

