



Leader hails 'very exalted' status of women in Islam, slams Western culture

Arts & Culture Desk

Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, told thousands of Iranian women on Wednesday that Islam grants them a "very high and exalted status" with equal rights to men in social, political, and spiritual life, denouncing what he described as the "corrupt Western culture." Speaking in Tehran, he cited Lady Fatima (PBUH), daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as a model for Iranian women, Khamenei.ir reported.

Fatima, he said, embodied the highest virtues across all arenas: Spiritual devotion, humility, selflessness, resilience, political insight, household management, and raising children.

"The Iranian woman, thank God, takes guidance from such a sun and moves in accordance with her



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses a group of women and girls from across Iran in Tehran on December 3, 2025.
● khamenei.ir

goals," he said.

Khamenei emphasized that men and women have "equal roles in the life and history of humanity" and equal opportunities for spiritual advancement.

"In social activities, business, politics, governmental positions, and spiritual conduct, the path to women's advancement is open," he added.

The Leader sharply criticized Western culture, arguing it undermines family and women's dignity. He said Islam's regulations on gender interaction, dress, and modesty safeguard women and control "dangerous sexual de-



sires," while Western societies largely ignore these issues.

He described men and women as "two balanced elements" whose complementarity is essential for societal management, human continuity, and civilizational progress.

Highlighting women's rights in Islam, Khamenei cited justice in family and social conduct, security, dignity, equal wages, insurance for working women, and specific leave provisions.

He called family formation a cen-

tral role for women, contrasting it with the neglect of family in Western capitalist culture, which he said treats women as objects and fosters social harms including fatherless children, gangs, and sexual immorality.

Khamenei asserted that the Islamic Republic disproves Western claims that restrictions such as the hijab limit women's progress.

He praised Iranian women's unprecedented achievements in science, sports, research, politics, health, and social support, saying the country has never seen such a concentration of learned and active women.

He cautioned domestic media against repeating Western views, urging coverage that emphasizes Islam's "deep and effective" perspective, which he said would attract women globally.

"The Islamic Republic has enabled the advancement of women in all major fields while preserving their dignity and identity," Khamenei concluded, contrasting this with what he described as Western "enslavement disguised as freedom."

Curtains down on 43rd Fajr International Film Festival in Shiraz

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The 43rd Fajr International Film Festival wrapped up in Shiraz on Tuesday, celebrating cinematic excellence from across the globe and honoring filmmakers, photographers, and artists for their contributions to culture, resistance, and poetic cinema.

The closing ceremony at the Pardis Honar Shahr-e-Aftab complex drew senior officials from Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, provincial authorities, international guests, and artists from dozens of countries, IRNA reported.

Festival director Rouhollah Hosseini set aside statistics on guests and films to highlight the emotive power of cinema. "Numbers matter less than the feeling you carry after watching a film. Today, I feel a deep sense of joy," he said, recalling the generosity of Shiraz's residents and the unifying impact of the festival's screenings.

Veteran war photographer Alfred Yaghoubzadeh was honored during the ceremony, receiving recognition for his contributions, while writer Reza Amirkhani was wished a swift recovery after a period of illness.

The festival's competitive awards spotlighted diverse cinematic achieve-



ments. In the photography and video category, Ali Tousali received a diploma of honor for his 60-second film, while Sobhan Farajvan earned the Best Photo Simorgh award.

Palestinian producer by Rashid Masharawi's film 'From Ground Zero' won the diploma of honor in the Broken Olive section, while 'All that Is Left of You,' a multinational production spanning Germany, Cyprus, Palestine, Jordan, Greece, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, took the Best Film award.

Masharawi, speaking via video, said the accolade "encourages Gaza's resi-

dents to create films and believe cinema can save them."

Veteran filmmaker Reza Mirkarimi was recognized for his enduring contributions to Iranian cinema.

Mirkarimi noted the festival's independence and its successful staging outside Tehran, describing it as a "non-political cultural circle connecting Iranian cinema to the world."

Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, stressed the festival's role in promoting dialogue and reflecting collective human experiences. He referenced the recent conflict

in Gaza, highlighting cinema's capacity to convey resilience and solidarity.

"Art cannot remain silent in such times," Salehi said, urging continued international collaboration and joint productions.

Awards in the Future Frame section honored 'Riverstone,' directed by Lailith Rathnayake, from Sri Lanka with the Jury's Special Crystal Simorgh, while Best Film prizes were shared between Tunisia's 'Round 13' and 'Two Faces of Autumn,' a co-production between Iran, Australia, and Canada. Director Ronak Taher thanked Shiraz's residents for their hospitality.

In the Eastern Vista section, Behnough Sadeghi won the Best Artistic Achievement for 'Calm Man' from Iran, dedicating her award to her mother. Egypt's 'The Settlement' received the Jury's Special Crystal Simorgh, and Russia's 'Where the White Cranes Dance' claimed Best Film.

Raed Fereidazadeh, head of Cinema Organization of Iran, underscored cinema's role as a bridge for understanding and praised the festival's successful staging in Shiraz after a brief hiatus.

The International competition recognized 'Lessons Learned' from Hungary as Best Film, 'March to May' from the Czech Republic for Best Direction, 'Look at Me' from Russia for Best Screenplay, Ahmed Malek for Best Artistic Contribution in 'My Father's Scent,' and Japan's 'River Returns' with the Jury's Special Prize.

Iranian cinematographer joins jury for Turkey's Amed Film Festival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker and cinematographer Touraj Aslani was appointed as a jury member in the Long Film section of the 3rd Amed International Film Festival, to be held in Diyarbakır, Turkey, from December 7 to 14.

Aslani takes the post after serving on the jury at the Fifth Rojava Film Festival held recently in Qamishli, Syria, Mehr News Agency reported.

The full Long Film jury comprises Ahu Öztürk, Aziz Çapkurt, Silan Özgün Özçelik, Leyla Toprak and Touraj Aslani.



The Amed festival was launched in 2012 by the Middle East Cinema Academy as a platform for independent and Kurdish filmmakers whose works often challenge mainstream cinematic powers. The event aims to spotlight female emancipation, ecological awareness, cultural diversity and themes of resistance and freedom.

After its second edition in 2016 the festival had lain dormant for eight years, owing to the fraught cultural climate in the region. Under renewed support from Diyarbakır municipality the festival will resume this winter with short Kurdish films, Kurdish documentaries and Kurdish feature films on the screen. Selected projects will receive production grants from the Sinebîr Project Fund.

Peregrine falcon stays on CITES' top protection list after Iran blocks bid to ease curbs

Social Desk

Iran said that delegates at the CITES summit in Samarkand rejected a joint US-Canadian proposal that would have downgraded the peregrine falcon from Annex I to Annex II, a move that could have opened the door to legal trade in the prized raptor.

The 20th meeting of the Convention on International Trade

in Endangered Species, hosted by Uzbekistan from November 24 to December 5, voted down the motion after Iran rallied support from Russia, several African states and European members, according to the country's CITES scientific authority, Asghar Mobaraki, IRNA reported.

Mobaraki told IRNA that Washington and Ottawa had drafted the proposal with firm backing

from "Arab countries, and even China".

Approval, he said, would have "seriously threatened" the future of the falcon at a time when Iran is already grappling with organized smuggling. Keeping the bird in Annex I maintains the strictest ban on commercial trade.

He said sustained lobbying on the sidelines of the summit was

crucial. Backed by the head of Iran's environment department and a full technical team, Tehran sought to drum up negative votes in what he described as an "unmatched" diplomatic push.

The delegation argued that easing restrictions would incentivize illicit trapping across West and Central Asia, where prices for trained falcons can surge on the black market.

Mobaraki warned that the matter may resurface at the next CITES COP in four years and urged stronger field enforcement at home to clamp down on trafficking networks.

He said authorities must tighten checks and improve habitat protection if Iran is to fend off renewed attempts to loosen global safeguards.

Separately, the summit agreed

to list the marsh frog *Pelophylax ridibundus* in Annex II, following concern over shrinking wetlands, climate-driven habitat stress and unregulated harvesting.

Mobaraki noted that the species had not previously appeared in any CITES annex. Three related species in the same genus were also cleared for inclusion in Annex II in a bid to head off further population declines.