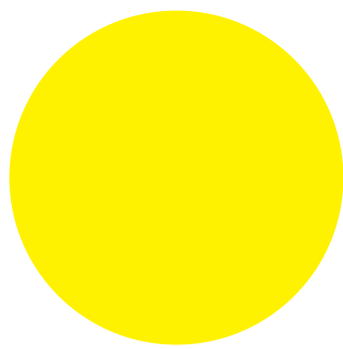


Eslami: Rising demand drives Iran's nuclear exports to dozens of countries

3 >



AEOI: 'Not advisable' to expose info on damaged sites due to technical concerns 2 >

Canada's moral masquerade at the UN: Annual sanctimony, zero credibility



By Ali Karimi Magham
International relations expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Once again, Canada has marched into the United Nations General Assembly with its familiar prop: a Canada-sponsored resolution against the Islamic Republic of Iran, dusted off and paraded like an annual trophy of self-righteousness. Ottawa calls it "human rights." The world sees what it is: a ritual of politicized grandstanding—an exhausted seasonal performance designed to launder foreign-policy hostility through moral vocabulary.

Let us dispense with the pretense. Canada's campaign is not diplomacy; it is pressure-peddling. By its own admission, Ottawa has been "leading" this annual resolution since 2003, and it brags of multiple rounds of sanctions imposed in recent years—measures timed and packaged to reinforce its UN spectacle. That is not the posture of an honest broker seeking improvement; it is rather the posture of a state that has chosen coercion first, last, and always—then demands applause for its "principle."

And even when Canada claims "international backing," the vote tells a more embarrassing story. Each year, Ottawa tries to manufacture the illusion of consensus, and each year the international community refuses to play along. Abstentions and opposition are not a footnote; they are the headline. Canada's text does not command broad support—it survives on a narrow bloc of predictable allies and the diplomatic inertia of those who would rather abstain than waste oxygen arguing with a political script. The world does not rally behind Canada's resolutions; it tolerates them, often reluctantly, as a symptom of a UN ecosystem where certain states treat "rights" language as a lever of power, not a universal ethic.

Ottawa wants this to look like moral leadership. In reality, it is a strategy of selective indictment: isolate a target, inflate allegations into slogans, ignore context, and then declare virtue. Canada's "resolution industry" depends on curated indignation—outrage carefully aimed outward, never inward. It is moral exhibitionism: performative outrage for headlines, while inconvenient realities at home are managed with euphemisms, commissions, and carefully staged apologies that change little.

Because Canada, of all countries, has no standing to lecture any nation on human dignity.

Canada's record—particularly its historic and systemic treatment of Indigenous peoples—remains a glaring indictment of the very hypocrisy it exports. A state still haunted by the legacy of forcibly dismantling Indigenous families and communities, and still reckoning with the brutal consequences of that machinery, is in no position to rebrand itself as the planet's conscience. Human rights are not a costume to be worn abroad while stains at home are treated as minor administrative errors. Ottawa's problem is not that its past is imperfect; it is that it weaponizes moral language as if it were immaculate. This is the obscenity at the heart of Canada's approach: it reduces "human rights" to a foreign-policy instrument—something to be managed, marketed, and synchronized with sanctions—rather than a universal obligation demanding consistency, humility, and self-scrutiny. If Canada genuinely cared about improving lives, it would prioritize non-politicized engagement and respect for the UN Charter's foundational principles: sovereign equality and non-interference. Instead, it invests in condemnation-as-policy and coercion-as-virtue, then congratulates itself for being "tough."

Iran has repeatedly rejected this Canada-sponsored text as selective, unbalanced, and politically motivated. And rightly so. Ottawa's resolution is not an honest assessment; it is a dossier of talking points. It is not designed to help anyone; it is designed to label, isolate, and pressure—while Canada maintains the convenient fiction that pressure is compassion.

Canada's defenders like to chant that "criticism is not interference." But Canada's own framing gives away the game: it treats the resolution as a central element of international pressure—a lever meant to force outcomes. That is coercion, dressed up as concern. It is the oldest trick in diplomatic theater: appoint yourself judge, crown yourself prosecutor, and demand the world clap for your performance.

Page 2 >

President urges integrated, science-based reform of transport networks

Minister: Iran seeks to reclaim role as regional logistics, transit hub

3 >

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian walks onto the stage to address a ceremony that marks the national Transport Week in Tehran on December 20, 2025.

● IRNA



Flash floods claim seven lives in south

2 >



OPINION

'Democracy of masters' or 'Herrenvolk democracy'?

New conceptual frameworks for explaining democracy in occupied territories

4 >



From reluctant beginner to international medalist: Beheshti reflects on ISG breakthrough

6 >



Iranians honor tradition, culture on Yalda Night

PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE

7 >



VP urges national library to counter Iranophobia, boost cultural diplomacy

8 >

AEOI: 'Not advisable' to expose info on damaged sites due to technical concerns

International Desk

The spokesperson for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said on Saturday that from a security standpoint, it is "not advisable" to provide the "enemy" with information on the nuclear sites damaged in the attacks by the United States and Israel in June. Behrouz Kamalvandi said that the UN nuclear agency's insistence on the full implementation of the Safeguards Agreement and its request for access and reporting on materials and the damaged sites is "unreasonable" under the current circumstances.

"I believe that it is not advisable, from a security standpoint, to give the enemy information now about how much nuclear material and how many sites have been damaged. It is in our best interest to protect the country's technical information while fulfilling our commitments," Kamalvandi underlined. Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi on Saturday once again called for access to Iran's nuclear facilities which were targeted by Israel and the US in June.

Referring to the cancellation of an agreement signed between Iran and

the IAEA in Cairo in September to resume IAEA's inspections, he said Iran signed the deal as a "goodwill gesture" to create conditions for interaction with the agency. However, he said the other sides "took advantage of it."

In November, Iran canceled the Cairo agreement following the passage of an anti-Iran resolution at the agency's Board of Governors.

The AEOI's spokesperson underlined that the continuation of cooperation with the IAEA depends on further consultations. He said that giving access to the IAEA's inspectors requires approval of the country's the Supreme National Security Council.

However, he proposed a solution for giving information to the agency about the nuclear material in the damaged sites.

"We should see whether it is possible to measure material through other means and inform the agency, without giving access to the inspectors."

Grossi recently said that the agency's inspectors have returned to Iran but still do not have access to Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan facilities, which were bombed by the US during an unprovoked aggression by Israel.

At the same time, three European pow-



Behrouz Kamalvandi
ISNA

ers — Britain, France, and Germany — along with the US have called on Iran to grant inspectors access to the bombed

sites. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that the targeted

sites were "totally obliterated." Iran has also acknowledged severe damage to the sites.

Iran open to dialogue based on respect for nation's rights, FM says

Iran's foreign minister reiterated Tehran's readiness to engage in dialogue based on respect for the nation's rights, while dismissing any approach based on unilateral pressure.

Abbas Araghchi made the remarks to UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper during a telephone conversation on Friday.

He criticized the irresponsible approach adopted by the European trio of the UK, France, and Germany towards Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program, Press TV reported.

Araghchi emphasized that Iran had never rejected negotiations and dialogue when they were based on respect for the Iranian nation's legal rights and legitimate interests, but made clear that Tehran did not accept negotiations that amounted to one-sided imposition.

The conversation came



Yvette Cooper



Abbas Araghchi

amid heightened tensions following an illegal move by the three European parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran.

On August 28, the troika invoked the so-called "snapback" mechanism under the JCPOA, triggering a 30-day process aimed at restoring all United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iran.

Tehran rejected the move as illegitimate, pointing to the United States unilateral withdrawal from

the nuclear deal in 2018 and the European trio's alignment with the unlawful sanctions that were re-imposed on the country following the American withdrawal. It underlined that in place of aligning themselves with Washington, the three states had to rather fulfill their obligations under the agreement.

An effort by Russia and China at the Security Council on September 26 to provide additional time for diplomacy failed to secure sufficient support. Two days later, the

Western allies claimed that previous UN resolutions and the related sanctions against Iran had been re-imposed, calling on UN member states to implement the coercive measures.

The Islamic Republic has, ever since, unexceptionally underlined that it does not consider itself to be bound by the sanctions as it continues to view the allies' move as morally, legally, and procedurally flawed. Cooper, for her part, cited the "necessity" of pursuing diplomacy in relation to Iran's nuclear activities.

The officials also exchanged views on a range of issues related to bilateral relations, including consular matters, and stressed the importance of continuing consultations at various levels to enhance mutual understanding and follow up on issues of interest to both sides.

Flash floods claim seven lives in south



IRCS

National Desk

The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) said that seven people have lost their lives in the flash floods that recently swept through the southern parts of the country.

The victims include a rescuer who died while carrying out relief operations in the city of Jahrom in southern Fars Province, the IRCS said in a statement on Friday evening.

Four others including two men, a nine-year-old boy and a woman, were also killed in the province.

Floods in a village in southern province of Hormuzgan also killed a nine-year-old girl while a 47-year-old man lost his life

in the city of Masjed Soleyman in southwestern province of Khuzestan.

The relief teams provided assistance and support services to more than 23,000 people affected by snow, snowstorms and floods, particularly in the southern regions of the country.

IRCS teams remain on maximum alert in the southern areas, the statement said, urging the citizens to take safety precautions, avoid unnecessary travel and follow weather warnings and rescue teams' instructions to protect lives.

In recent days, many cities in the country, which had been experiencing severe drought over the past years, has been hit by heavy rains, floods, snow and blizzards.

Canada's moral masquerade ...

Worse still, this practice corrodes the very concept Canada claims to uphold. Human rights lose their universality when they are applied as a cudgel against some states while others—especially those aligned with Western power—receive indulgence, silence, or sanitized language. Selective indignation is not morality; it is factionalism in a humanitarian costume. The reason so many UN member states refuse to endorse Canada's ritual is simple: they recognize the pattern. They may not say it loudly, but their abstentions speak with clarity.

In truth, Canada's annual resolution functions less as a principled hu-

man-rights instrument and more as a geopolitical signal: a loyalty test, a branding exercise, a stage-managed display of alignment. It is bureaucratic vanity pretending to be international justice—an annual press release masquerading as conscience.

If Canada had even a minimal commitment to integrity, it would begin with three basic steps:

First, it would stop turning the UN into a billboard for selective outrage and admit that politicized resolutions do not build credibility—they destroy it.

Second, it would end the cynical coupling of "human rights" rhetoric with sanctions escalation. Canada cannot claim humanitarian intent while pub-

licly celebrating punitive measures that inevitably squeeze ordinary lives.

Third, it would confront its own unresolved human-rights crises with the same theatrical urgency it reserves for foreign targets—especially those rooted in systemic discrimination and state policy, not isolated incidents.

Until then, Canada's annual anti-Iran resolution should be called what it is: an exercise in double standards, a spectacle of weaponized morality, and an insult to the universality it pretends to defend. The United Nations deserves better than becoming a stage for Ottawa's sanctimony. And human rights deserve better than being reduced to Canada's yearly ritual of political point-scoring.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



President urges integrated, science-based reform of transport networks

Minister: Iran seeks to reclaim role as regional logistics, transit hub

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday said the country's transportation networks must be reformed through an integrated, science-based approach aligned with international standards, as the government simultaneously moves to reposition Iran as a regional logistics and transit hub. Speaking at a ceremony marking Transport Week, Pezeshkian said short-term and fragmented measures would not meet Iran's long-term transportation and development needs, stressing the need for appropriate technology and sustainable quality in reforming the sector, president.ir reported.

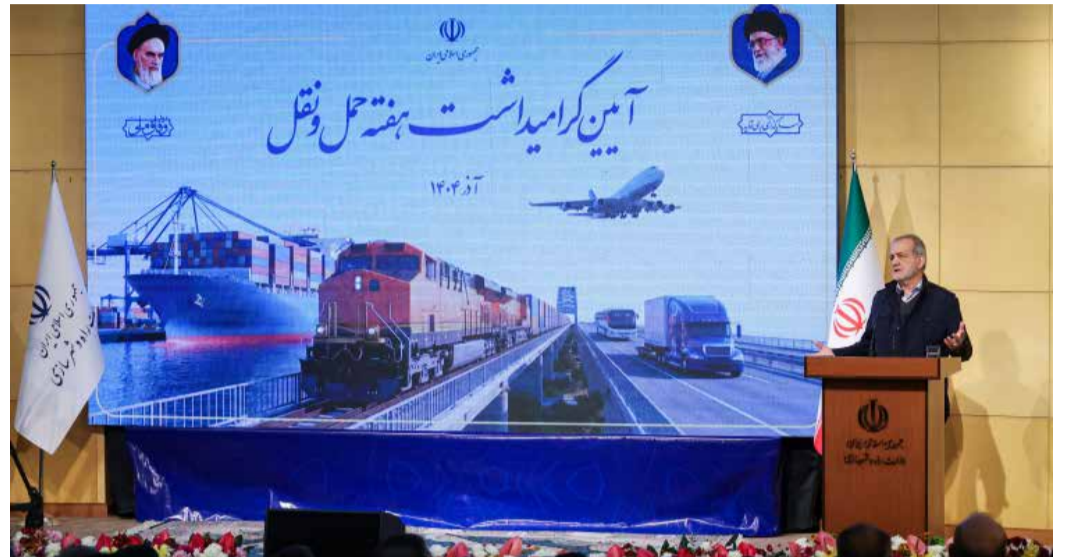
"Reforming the transportation network must be based on international standards, suitable technology and sustainable quality, and short-term, temporary measures will not meet the country's needs," he said. Describing transportation as the backbone of national development, Pezeshkian warned that deficiencies in core networks would lead to imbalance, inefficiency and rising pressures across the economy.

"Transportation is the backbone of the country's development. Any failure in the main transport networks will result in backwardness, imbalance and higher costs, and correcting this path is only possible through a scientific, integrated approach and broad-based participation," he said. Outlining the government's infrastructure strategy, the president stressed the need for a unified and forward-looking vision across road, rail, urban, air and maritime transport, saying all components of the network must function in coordination. The president emphasized the importance of long-term corridor planning, noting that many developed countries designate wide land reserves from the outset to allow for future expansion of rail and road networks, roadside services and complementary infrastructure. Pezeshkian also stressed the need to align route capacity with traffic volumes, warning that both shortages and unplanned surplus capacity could disrupt



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a ceremony marking Transport Week in Tehran on December 20, 2025. [president.ir](#)

network performance. "If this balance is not observed — whether due to insufficiency or unplanned excess — the network will face dysfunction," he said. Citing global experience, he said urban, road, rail, air and maritime transport must be governed within a single coordinated framework under unified policymaking, adding that the government is designing and implementing a model of integrated transport management. Pezeshkian said the administration is prepared to delegate executive authority to professional associations, organizations and the private sector within a structured framework aimed at improving efficiency and service quality. "This process requires dialogue, interaction and the definition of clear and accountable frameworks," he said.



At the same event, Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd said restoring Iran's position as a regional logistics and transit hub is a central objective of the ministry's agenda, ISNA reported. "Our effort is to bring Iran back as a transit hub, so that we can say we are a logistics and transit hub," she said, adding that transport corridors are a top priority

for the ministry.

Sadeq Malvajerd said transport and transit diplomacy, along with renewed cooperation and practical engagement with neighboring countries, is embedded across all of the ministry's programs. She added that removing obstacles facing the private sector is a key focus, describing the government's role as one of facilitation

rather than interference.

Sadeq Malvajerd cited recent steps as examples of the stated approach, including the addition of 2,000 airline seats over the past week, the signing of contracts with private companies in the rail sector, agreements in road, freeway and rail projects, and investment packages scheduled to be unveiled over the next two months.

Eslami: Rising demand drives Iran's nuclear exports to dozens of countries



Economy Desk

The Islamic Republic is currently exporting nuclear products, including radiopharmaceuticals, heavy water, and its derivatives, to dozens of countries, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) said, noting that about 56 nations have requested and continue to seek such items. In an interview with the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA), AEOI chief Mohammad Eslami said, "About 56 countries have requested our products and continue to do so. For those not affected by transport sanctions,

we are exporting. For those facing transport sanctions, we are seeking solutions to deliver products to end users." Eslami emphasized that Iran's nuclear products enjoy strong and growing international demand. "Our product balance is global, and there is a worldwide market for them," he said. "We also receive formal programs from interested countries that wish to become regular consumers of our products." The remarks follow Iran's unveiling of four new strategic achievements in nuclear technology last week at the 26th

International Research, Technology, and Innovation Exhibition, which included two radiopharmaceuticals for the early diagnosis and treatment of metastatic melanoma, an automated system for producing bone pain palliation drugs, and the launch of a national nuclear education network. At the ceremony, Eslami highlighted the AEOI's dual scientific and industrial role, noting that its innovations carry significant social and economic impact.

"We are a successful symbol of sustaining the cycle of creativity and innovation — where knowledge is transformed into technology, and technology into usable systems and solutions in the shortest possible time," he said. "This transformation — from science to practical, people-centered solutions — has been realized within our organization." Recalling past milestones, Eslami noted that Iran announced 50 domestically produced radiopharmaceuticals in 2023, with 20 more in the research phase. "Today, I am proud to report that we have reached up to 70 radiopharmaceuticals," he said.

Gov't drafts near-zero deficit budget for coming year, vows no CBI financing



Finance Minister Ali Madanizadeh addresses a ceremony marking the opening bell of the Tehran Stock Exchange on December 20, 2025. [meja.ir](#)

Economy Desk

Finance Minister Ali Madanizadeh said on Saturday that Iran's draft budget for the next fiscal year — which begins on March 21, 2026 — has been structured to achieve a near-zero deficit, imposing no pressure on the Central Bank (CBI), and helping control inflation. Speaking on the sidelines of a ceremony marking the opening bell of the Tehran Stock Exchange, held Saturday morning, Madanizadeh emphasized that the government is not using the capital market to cover budget shortfalls. "As the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, I categorically state that we are absolutely not pursuing this objective," he said, IRNA reported. He acknowledged that under the current fiscal year's budget law — which started on March 21, 2025 — the government is obligated to privatize state-owned companies. "Naturally, one of the means of privatizing state companies is the capital market, which is highly trans-

parent," he said. "Rather than privatizing behind closed doors, the process is carried out transparently." Madanizadeh added, "Privatizing state companies through the stock exchange is one of the measures that will be implemented. The government is required by law to divest to secure budgeted resources, but our plan is not to turn to the capital market to finance a budget deficit. Rather, we are using the capital market to advance privatization and implement Article 44 of the Constitution." In November, Madanizadeh said the government has seen no decline in oil revenues and will proceed with its budget planning as scheduled, adding, "Oil income will be included in the budget according to the usual plan." Benchmark Brent crude has recently traded around the mid-\$80s per barrel, and the Iranian government typically submits its draft budget to Parliament toward the end of the calendar year (March 20). The government has not dis-

closed its oil export assumptions for next year's budget. Iran does not release detailed figures on crude exports due to US sanctions, which it says require confidentiality. Addressing the reporters on Saturday, the minister expressed hope that, by resolving conflicts of interest, eliminating administered pricing, and reducing interventions in the capital market, "We will have a market that reflects the real economy — and I hope this market can restore public trust." On the upcoming budget, Madanizadeh noted that while the general framework has been approved by the government, details regarding feed pricing have not yet been finalized. "The good news is that the budget has been closed with minimal deficit," he said, "and it has been prepared in strict adherence to the president's directives to reduce redundant agencies and unnecessary expenditures." He explained that many government structures are either being dissolved or merged, resulting in lower state spending. "Currently, the drafted budget has a deficit close to zero and imposes no pressure on the Central Bank — a major step toward the inflation control program for the next year."

ISPA: Steel imports drop in first eight months in boost to domestic industry

Economy Desk

Iran's steel imports fell by 42% in volume and 36% in value during the first eight months of the current Iranian year — from March 21 to end of November — a decline that is being assessed as good news, according to data released by

the Iranian Steel Producers Association (ISPA). The association said nearly \$650 million worth of steel products were imported in this period, with steel sheet products accounting for more than 93% of the total, IRNA reported. Close to \$600 million of those

imports consisted of various steel sheets. Yet the necessity of such imports is under serious doubt, as more than 55% of the country's cold-rolled sheet production capacity and about 70% of its galvanized sheet capacity remain unused. The report added that the downward trend in iron and

steel chain imports over the eight-month period is clearly evident and explicitly described the reduction as "good news." ISPA also warned that, given the ongoing risk of dumping by China and Russia, policymakers must remain vigilant to protect domestic production.



'Democracy of masters' or 'Herrenvolk democracy'?

New conceptual frameworks for explaining democracy in occupied territories



By Sajjad Attazade

Researcher at the
Center for Political
and Int'l Studies

OPINION

The starting point of any serious analysis lies in understanding that Israel has never been a conventional nation-state grounded in civic equality; from its very inception, it has built its legitimacy on the principle of the "exclusive Jewish ownership of the land". Over time, this political philosophy has evolved into the legal and institutional backbone of the regime, casting its shadow across all levels of governance. From this perspective, the distinction between the 1948 borders and the territories occupied after 1967 is not a legal distinction but rather a difference in the method and intensity through which the same governing logic is applied.

The concept of "Herrenvolk" originally stems from German political thought and literally denotes a "master people" or "ruling nation". Its intellectual roots lie in the racial-nationalist discourse of late 19th-century Germany and the subsequent rise of Nazi ideology; a discourse grounded in the belief that a particular racial group — especially "Aryans" — was inherently destined to rule over others. Within this framework, Herrenvolk was not merely a cultural belief but was institutionalized as a political-legal order in which citizenship rights, political participation, civil liberties, and even the very right to a dignified life were reserved exclusively for the "ruling people," while other groups — from Jews to Slavs and political dissidents — were relegated to the status of a rightless "other".

In political science, the concept was later employed to describe regimes that preserve the outward appearance of electoral structures and democratic institutions only for the dominant group, while other populations are effectively excluded from equal participation in power. In other words, Herrenvolk represents the point of convergence between "restricted democracy" and "structural supremacism"; a system that may hold elections in form, yet whose foundations rest upon the monopolization of political rights by a single group and the marginalization or exclusion of others. It is for this reason that the connection between this concept and the experience of Nazi Germany is not merely historical but also theoretical: both illustrate how ideologies of ownership, racial superiority, and exclusive definitions of "the people" can generate structures that carry the name of "democracy" while being, in their essence, anti-egalitarian, discriminatory, and hierarchical.

In Israel, this pattern has emerged in a modified form, such that the political order grants full civic rights to part of the population (Jews), while for others — especially Palestinians — it operates in a restricted and conditional manner. Moreover, Israel's basic legal framework, particularly the so-called "Nation-State Law," constitutes precisely the formal and legal articulation that adapts the substance of Herrenvolk to



contemporary conditions. This law stipulates that the right to national self-determination belongs exclusively to Jews, thereby equating "the nation" with a single ethno-religious group. At the same time, land policies, settlement expansion, spatial segregation, and demographic engineering provide the executive mechanisms of this logic. Through a network of "state" and "quasi-state" institutions, control over land ownership and urban expansion is vested in bodies whose mission is the preservation of a "Jewish majority." These instruments not only reproduce economic and social cleavages but also stabilize a structure of power in which Palestinian presence is persistently treated as subordinate, limited, and securitized.

In assessing the nature of the Zionist regime, a clear distinction must be drawn between two territorial domains. In the territories occupied after 1967, Israel functions openly as a Herrenvolk democracy: a system in which political rights, freedom of movement, access to resources, and even the right to life itself are organized entirely along ethnic lines, and in which Palestinians live under a rule in which they possess no political participation whatsoever. Within the 1948 borders, however, a different pattern prevails, better captured by the concept of a "democracy of masters". In this domain, Israel formally maintains electoral and citizenship mechanisms for all residents, yet the legal and ideological foundation of the so-called "state" rests upon the principle of exclusive Jewish ownership of the land. For this reason, Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship enjoy only limited political rights, while at the level of identity, territory, and institutions, they are defined as non-masters. This distinction reveals a dual structure: overt apartheid in the post-1967 territories and an exclusive "democracy of masters" within the 1948 borders.

The concept of "democracy of masters" is often employed to explain this particular type of political regime: a regime in which the principle of the dominant group's exclusive ownership of land con-

stitutes the source of legitimacy and the organizing logic of all legal and political mechanisms. In this model, democracy is not understood as legal equality among citizens, but as a managerial instrument through which the masters of the land administer populations that are not fully included. This structure, much like the classical Herrenvolk model, renders political rights limited and hierarchical; yet in the Israeli version, the element of "sacred and historical ownership of the land" plays a central role and gives the political order its distinctive configuration.

This "democracy of masters" rests upon three pillars: exclusive sovereignty, exclusive homeland, and exclusive right to self-determination. These pillars have been formally and institutionally entrenched within the Zionist narrative of "statehood". According to this logic, Jews are presented not merely as citizens of a so-called "state" but as the "master nation," a people inherently and historically entitled to the land. Other groups — especially Palestinians — may formally carry the title of "citizen," yet they are citizens without a share in ownership and without the right to define the identity of the so-called "state". The result is the emergence of a political order in which a dense network of institutions, laws, and policies systematically and con-

tinuously reproduces the political and identity-based distance between "masters" and "non-masters".

The distinctive feature of a democracy of masters is that structural discrimination within it is not a deviation but the very essence of the regime. This system does not rely merely on police control or economic discrimination, but on a legal-ideological foundation in which land and national self-determination are formally assigned to a single group. For this reason, the regime does not need to justify discrimination; discrimination is understood as the natural function of maintaining ownership. Unlike liberal models of democracy, this form can never evolve into a system of equal rights because the realization of equality would negate its foundational principle of "exclusively Jewish ownership".

The "Jewish Nation-State Law" is the most explicit and comprehensive instance of policy-making within the framework of a democracy of masters as it articulates — clearly and unambiguously — the three core pillars of this regime: exclusive ownership, exclusive homeland, and exclusive right to self-determination. The basic law states that "the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people" and that "the realization of the right to national self-determination in the State of

Israel is exclusive to the Jewish People." These statements are not merely political declarations but constitute the legal and foundational definition of the nature of this so-called "state". In other words, the law designates Jews as the "master nation" and Palestinians as "rightless inhabitants," a distinction that stands in fundamental tension with the modern principle of equal citizenship. The law further institutionalizes the spatial and cultural dimensions of ownership: Arabic is downgraded from an official language to one with a "special status"; Israel's calendar, symbols, and public rituals are defined exclusively on the basis of Jewish identity; settlement-building is recognized as a national value; and the role of institutions such as the Jewish National Fund in land acquisition and management is legally reinforced. Such an arrangement engineers the social and spatial structure of the country in the direction of entrenching the ownership of the dominant group. The "Nation-State Law," therefore, is not a ceremonial text but rather a constitutional law of ownership — a law that elevates the "democracy of masters" from the level of theoretical to legal obligation and political mandate.

The article was first published by the Institute for Political and International Studies.



An Israeli soldier looks over a roadblock at Al-Shuhada Street within the Old City of al-Khalil in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Palestinians gave the street the moniker "Apartheid Street" because it was closed to Palestinian traffic and open only to Israeli settlers and tourists.

● AFP



In Israel, this pattern has emerged in a modified form, such that the political order grants full civic rights to part of the population (Jews), while for others — especially Palestinians — it operates in a restricted and conditional manner. Moreover, Israel's basic legal framework, particularly the so-called "Nation-State Law," constitutes precisely the formal and legal articulation that adapts the substance of Herrenvolk to contemporary conditions. This law stipulates that the right to national self-determination belongs exclusively to Jews, thereby equating "the nation" with a single ethno-religious group.



Israeli-Arab Knesset Member Ayman Odeh (c) holds a sign reading "Equality" during a protest against the so-called "Nation-State Law" in Tel Aviv, the occupied territories, before the measure passed in July 2018.

● ABIR SULTAN/EPA

Liberation is not integration

On liberal Zionism, one-state fantasies, and what Palestinians actually want

By Lara Kilani
Researcher, member of the
Good Shepherd Collective

OPINION

A few weeks ago, on our walk back from the market in Bethlehem's old city, my friend abruptly turned to me and declared that she could not imagine a one-state solution because it would certainly mean the transformation of our beautiful city as we know it and the alteration of so many of the things we love about it. Her comment and the discussion that followed, our voices rising in volume as we carried on down Star Street, stayed in my mind on the way home and over the weeks that have followed. The questions that arise from discussions of political solutions and decolonization are many, and since publishing some thoughts on decolonization two years ago, the practical questions remain, nagging to be answered — or at the very least, put to words and shared.

As my friend astutely noted, the common slogans representing what has seemingly become the international leftist vision for Palestine's future can be boiled down to a few, vague catchphrases: "one-state solution," "one democratic state," "equal rights for all," and the like. There is significant scholarly engagement with this concept as well — academic treatises on the need for a binational approach, Omar Barghouti's emphasis on "equality" over separation, and the ever-present lamentations that the two-state solution is dead. Still, there is no shortage of liberal organizing spaces in the West in which these fuzzy, imprecise calls for a one-state solution are bandied about without tackling the difficult questions that come with them. For example, who makes up the "all" in "equal rights for all"? What does it mean to be "equals" when one group of people has built their collection of rights and privileges by stripping them from others? Furthermore, do settlers who have freshly arrived from the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, or the United States have the same rights as Palestinians who will return from languishing in Lebanon's refugee camps for almost 80 years? Do Israelis have collective rights? Do Palestinians? Who controls the military? What is the economic arrangement of the state? Do Israelis have to return more than 100 years of looted wealth, land, and resources, and if so, to whom? What will the process of unmaking their settler status look like? For those of us who understand anti-Zionism as a necessary form of decolonization, the question of recent settlers — dual citizens who arrived from the United States, Australia, and Europe — is not ambiguous. Historical decolonial movements in Algeria, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and elsewhere recognized that dismantling settler-colonial structures required the return of settlers to their metropolises. This was not punitive but necessary as it facilitated breaking the material and ideological infrastructure of colonialism, establishing legal precedents for indigenous sovereignty, and creating the political conditions for genuine self-determination.



● ALICIA TATONE/GETTY IMAGES

Allowing settlers to remain unchallenged preserves the very power asymmetries that decolonization seeks to dismantle. At the same time, for settlers arriving from settler colonies like Canada and the United States, is the just response to send them packing back to their more established settler-colonial points of origin? This brings us to the question at the heart of my friend's outburst: who wants to be made to live and share space with genocidares? In Bethlehem, this is not a theoretical question. Already having been separated from Al-Quds (Jerusalem) artificially, by the wall and checkpoints, villages and towns surrounding Bethlehem city are also set to be annexed by Israel, with a census of their residents reportedly beginning in the new year. In September, Zionist forces installed new barriers to separate Beit Sahour, immediately southeast of Bethlehem city, from Dar Salah and cities in the north of the West Bank by disrupting the primary road. Now, a settlement has been approved in Oush Ghrab, only a short distance from Bethlehem and Beit Sahour. As Bethlehem becomes more physically isolated from other Palestinian cities, while its residents are also prevented from reaching the lands occupied since 1948 by Israel's colonial permit regime, and settlements grow closer and closer to the city, the violence of liberal notions of "integration" is foreboding. Under Zionism, integration is not a peaceful affair. The presence of Jewish settlers in Palestine is inherently violent, and until now has been characterized by the continual elimination of Palestinians for the purposes of replacement. The questionable desirability of living alongside settlers as "equals" is also amplified by the conversations happening about Palestinians and around Palestinians by self-described Jewish anti-Zionists, though often without much thought for Palestinians themselves. Just over a month ago, Jewish Currents published a podcast episode titled "Confronting the Anti-Zionist Right," focusing on the expressed rejection of Zionism by white supremacist characters such as Nick Fuentes, Candace Owens, Tucker Carlson, and the like, and discussing the history and politics of the commentators' antisemitism. There is very little in the way of discussion about what anti-Zionist values should be, though the host acknowledged that "we are in a competition with the right for what kind of anti-Zionism we're

going to practice, what it's going to look like, and what, at core, its values are." The podcast episode mimics a recent talk in Jerusalem by Peter Beinart, Jewish Currents' editor-at-large. Beinart also gestured at the growing influence of characters like Carlson in the movement away from Zionism by some elements on the US right, and laudably noted the long ties Jewish American institutions have made to white supremacy and its agents. However, Beinart and the podcasters frame these moves (both Carlson's proclaimed anti-Zionism and the history of collaboration with white supremacists) as dangerous for Jewish people, and fail at what are arguably the more important endeavors beyond this: 1) identifying the responsibility of Jewish institutions and individuals who do not wish to maintain ties to white supremacy and Zionism, and 2) how any of this affects Palestinians, who have long been the victims of both white and Jewish supremacists. Both Beinart and the podcast contributors evade essential questions underlying the reality of the Jewish institutional investment in Zionism: how do we begin to calculate the responsibility of, say, Jewish Federations in the harm they have done to Palestinians by funding Zionist projects? Can organizations that are materially committed to colonization and genocide be reformed? Not even three months ago, the Jewish Federations of North America collaborated with the Jewish Agency to leverage \$130 million in loans to Israeli "reservists," but only those who had served more than 200 days since October 7, 2023. What do these investments in the ongoing violence against Palestinians mean for civic organizations and other "social justice" groups that receive money from these Jewish Federations? Do organizations bear some responsibility for the politics of their funders, whose contributions to their "social justice efforts" may serve as a form of philanthropy-washing, or a smokescreen to distract from a more significant and consistent support for the violence of maintaining this colony in Palestine? Most importantly, figures like Beinart and the Jewish Currents podcasters offer no framework for dismantling structural violence, no mechanisms to prevent the liberal modes of colonization embedded in one-state proposals, and no meaningful centering of Palestinian voices in determining Palestine's future. In

the case of the podcasters, by offering nothing new to consider, they have rendered anti-Zionism as a marketing technique, wholly divorced from theories of justice. Their visions remain abstract, untethered from the material realities of power — outside of where power intersects with antisemitism. Palestinians, meanwhile, need no theoretical education on the imperialism latent in arrangements that promise equality while preserving asymmetry — they have the lived experience of the Oslo Accords, which offered the language of peace and statehood while entrenching occupation, fragmenting territory, and outsourcing the policing of Palestinians to Palestinians themselves. One-state proposals that fail to address land return, settler removal, and the redistribution of power risk becoming the new "Oslo peace process" with different branding. Data shows Palestinians fully understand that Zionism and imperialism can be repackaged within the one-state framework. October 2025 polling from PCPSR reveals the complexity of Palestinian political preferences. While 53% oppose a two-state solution outright, when asked to choose among options, 47% still prefer two states based on 1967 borders — compared to just 12% favoring a single state with equality between Palestinians and Israelis. Opposition increases sharply (to 59%) when a two-state framework is tied to Arab normalization with Israel. Meanwhile, Palestinians show stronger enthusiasm for joining international organizations (73%), unarmed popular resistance

(54%), and dissolving the Palestinian Authority (45%) than for abandoning two-state advocacy in favor of one-state organizing (27%). The apparent paradox — opposing two states while also not embracing integration — reflects deeper currents. For many Palestinians, a single state premised on "equality" with Israelis is not liberation but continued entanglement with a society that has perpetrated and largely supported their dispossession. Separation offers something integration cannot: sovereignty, self-determination, and distance from those who have participated in or were indifferent to ethnic cleansing. There is also justified skepticism that equality within a single polity is achievable given the power asymmetries, institutional racism, and demographic anxieties that define Israeli political culture. For Palestinians emerging from genocide, the desire may be less for coexistence than for safety, autonomy, and the space to rebuild without their survival dependent on Israeli consent. My dear friend's passionate comments on Star Street were not close-minded or lacking in political imagination — rather, they were, as the data suggests, widely shared opinions. The international left's embrace of "one democratic state" as the self-evident endpoint of Palestinian liberation often fails to account for what Palestinians themselves wish to preserve: not just rights in the abstract, but a way of life, a cultural fabric, cities and villages that remain theirs. Bethlehem under a single state would not simply gain Jewish residents; it would be subjected to the same forces of settlement, capital, and demographic engineering that have transformed every inch of land Israel has controlled. The slogans sound liberatory, but they can obscure a kind of erasure dressed in the language of equality. What my friend articulated — and what the polling reflects — is a desire not merely for political arrangement but for protection: of home, of identity, of the right to continue existing as Palestinians in Palestine, without that existence being contingent on integration with those who have sought to eliminate these things.

The article first appeared on Mondoweiss.

The left's view of Palestine's future often reduces to vague terms like "one-state solution" or "equal rights for all," but few address the tough questions they raise, especially: how can Palestinians live with those who carried out the Gaza genocide? Separation offers something integration cannot: sovereignty, self-determination, and distance from those who have participated in or were indifferent to ethnic cleansing.

The writing on a roadblock in Bethlehem near the separation barrier, built by Israel along and within the West Bank, reads, "This is illegally occupied land." ● [travelsofadam.com](#)



From reluctant beginner to international medalist: Beheshti reflects on ISG breakthrough

Sports Desk

Iranian girl Mahsa Beheshti's breakthrough moment came on the international stage in Riyadh. Competing in November's Islamic Solidarity Games, the 16-year-old weightlifter powered her way to a clean and jerk gold in the -86kg division and added two bronze medals in the snatch and total – an achievement that marked a turning point in a career that had not begun with absolute certainty. Beheshti says weightlifting was not a lifelong dream at the outset. "At first, I wasn't very determined to stay in the sport," she told IRNA. "But little by little, I became interested, and that interest turned into passion." Her journey into weightlifting began at the age of 13, encouraged by a sports-loving uncle. A cousin was already active in the discipline, competing in domestic leagues, and that family connection helped steer her toward the platform. What followed was a rapid rise fueled by persistence and an awareness of time. "In sport, the younger you are, the better your body recovers and the better records you can achieve," she said. "As you get older, it becomes harder."



Iranian weightlifter Mahsa Beheshti makes a lift during her -86kg campaign at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on November 11, 2025.

Before her medal-winning performance in Saudi Arabia, Beheshti's international experience was limited. Her first exposure to top-level competition came at the Asian Youth Games in October, where she competed in the +77 kg category

and captured a bronze medal in the snatch. It was a confidence-building result, but also a daunting one. "I had only competed in provincial and national championships before that," she said. "The level was much higher than what

I was used to, and I was very stressed." The pressure was intensified by the presence of physically imposing rivals and powerhouse teams such as China and South Korea. "Their body size and strength were intimidating," she recalled.

Support from the coaching staff proved decisive. Beheshti said her coaches repeatedly reassured her that she was capable of winning medals, helping her manage the pressure and focus on her lifts. The effort paid off, and her performances did not go

unnoticed. After her medal-winning showing, Sajjad Anoushiravani, the chairman of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation expressed his satisfaction with her results.

Beheshti also spoke highly of her coach, Elham Hosseini, describing her as a figure she looks up to both professionally and personally. "She is very strong scientifically and technically, and she understands athletes very well," Beheshti said. Alongside Hosseini, she credited Anoushiravani for providing critical support and facilities, naming them as her role models in women's and men's weightlifting respectively.

Though she hails from Ardabil, Beheshti said she has not had direct conversations with legendary weightlifter Hossein Rezaazadeh, but remains inspired by watching footage of his iconic lifts from past competitions.

With her first major international medals now secured, Beheshti is already looking ahead. "With God's help and hard training, I will try to win medals of even better color in the future," she said – eyes firmly set on lifting heavier, higher, and further onto the global stage.

Head coach Rangraz hails emerging Greco-Roman talents at National Ch'ships



● FARSHAD BANDANI/IAWFIR

Sports Desk

Iran head coach Hassan Rangraz expressed strong satisfaction with the recently concluded National Greco-Roman Wrestling Championships, praising both the high level of competition and the emergence of new talent at the competition in Ahvaz. Mohammad Hosseinvand Panahi (55kg), Pouya Nasserpour (60kg), former world champion Meisam Dalkhani (63kg), Mohammad Kamali (67kg), Mohammadjavad Rezaei (72kg), Ali Oskou (77kg), Mohammad-Amin Hosseini (82kg), Behrouz Hedayat (87kg), four-time Asian champion Nasser Alizadeh (97kg), and Morteza Alqousi (130kg) were crowned champions across 10 weight categories at the annual event, which served as the opening phase of Iran's selection process for next summer's World Championships in Manama. Speaking to the official website of the Iranian Wrestling Federation, Rangraz said the

country has now completed the fourth year of staging the national championships as the first stage of the national team selection process. "We witnessed very good competitions, with the presence of promising young wrestlers as well as established names and emerging talents," he said. He added that the transparent and fair selection system – through which wrestlers clearly understand the steps and evaluation filters required to earn a place on the national team – has helped create better conditions for building depth and long-term support in Greco-Roman wrestling. Commenting on the absence of some wrestlers from the championships, Rangraz noted that those who submit valid documentation approved by the federation's medical committee may be eligible for their cases to be reviewed. Looking ahead, Rangraz announced that the first national team training camp

in preparation for the Asian Championships will be held from December 22 to 30, with the participation of the champions. "During this camp, the athletes will go through a transition phase based on a program, and a series of tests and evaluations will be conducted," he explained. Rangraz further noted that a team of under-23 wrestlers will be sent to the prestigious Vehbi Emre Tournament in Turkey – starting January 8 in Antalya, Türkiye – as part of preparations for the U23 World Championships in Las Vegas next October. He added that first-place finishers will subsequently be sent to the Ranking Series event in Zagreb in February as part of the ongoing selection process. "God willing, they will be rewarded for their hard work," Rangraz said. Finally, he noted that participation in the Muhamet Malo Tournament in Tirana in late February is also on the agenda.

Sports Desk

Tehran will host two FIP Tour events in March, the Padel Association of Iran announced. The first of the two major global professional padel tournaments, the FIP Bronze, will take place at the city's Next Level Padel Club from April 20 to 26, followed by the week-long FIP Bronze II competition at the FGB venue, starting April 27. Both events will feature top-tier male players from around the world, giving Iranian athletes the opportunity to improve their positions at the FIP Rankings.

Tehran to host FIP Tour events in April



Iran sees drop in doping violations in 2025

Statistics from the past year indicate a decline in doping violations among Iranian athletes. According to Mehr News Agency, with just 10 days remaining in the 2025 calendar year, Iran's National Anti-Doping Organization (NADO) has closed the cases of 12 athletes by issuing final and definitive sanctions. Wrestling accounted for the large-

est share with seven cases, followed by cycling with two, and athletics, basketball, and wushu with one each. Wrestling's seven confirmed doping violations make it the sport with the highest number of offenders in Iran this year. Distance runner Hossein Kayhani was the most prominent Iranian athlete to commit a doping vio-

lation. A 3,000m gold medalist at the 2018 Asian Games, the 35-year-old was banned for a second time in July and will serve an eight-year suspension after testing positive for erythropoietin (EPO) and stanozolol. This marks a shift from last year, when powerlifting was the most affected sport. In 2024, 21 Iranian athletes across nine disciplines were found guilty of doping, with powerlifting accounting for eight of those cases. According to the rulings issued so far, based on testing across various sports, both the number of athletes and the number of disciplines involved in doping have decreased. However, among the 12 athletes sanctioned this year, the identities of two minors have not been disclosed due to their age, raising a potential red flag for the future of Iranian sports. With the remaining time until the end of 2025, these figures could still change, and the number of sports and athletes involved in doping may rise.





Iranians honor tradition, culture on Yalda Night



By Leila Imeni
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

Yalda Night, or Shab-e Chelleh, is one of Iran's oldest traditional celebrations. For thousands of years, Iranians have commemorated this night — the longest and darkest of the year — marking the transition from autumn to winter. The festival not only symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness but also reflects the rich cultural identity, art, and longstanding heritage of the Iranian people. With origins dating back nearly 7,000 years, Yalda Night, is considered one of the most significant national festivities after Nowruz, the Persian New Year. Historically, Yalda Night observed every year on December 20 or 21, coincides with the winter solstice, the moment when nights are longest and the sun begins to shine more strongly in the northern hemisphere. By celebrating Yalda, Iranians reaffirm their connection to nature and the annual cycle of the seasons. The festivities mark the return of light, bringing joy and hope for new beginnings. Interestingly, Yalda falls close to Christmas, and Iranian Christians celebrate both Yalda Night and the birth of Jesus Christ, highlighting the convergence of cultural traditions.

Recognition and cultural significance

Yalda Night has been officially recognized as part of Iran's intangible cultural heritage. On December 20, 2008, the festivity was registered in the Iranian National Heritage List. Later, during the 17th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO, Yalda Night was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a joint nomination by Iran and Afghanistan. Through the various customs and practices of Yalda Night, values such as cultural identity, respect for nature and traditional calendars, appreciation of the roles of women and children within the family, reconciliation, friendship, hospitality, and recognition of diverse cultural expressions are transmitted and preserved for future generations. This recognition highlights the importance of Yalda Night not only as a festive event but also as a carrier of social and ethical values.

Customs and rituals

The customs and rituals of Yalda Night vary across regions of Iran, each adding its local flavor to the festivity. One of the most notable traditions is lighting a fire, symbolizing the sun and brightness. Families gather around the fire not only to chase away darkness but also to create a warm and joyful atmosphere. The fire represents life, energy, and positive force, playing a



borna.news



weblight.ir



raskhoon.net

central role in the observance. Storytelling and poetry reading are other essential Yalda rituals. Families gather together to listen to tales and poems shared by elders. These stories often feature mythical beings such as fairies, demons, and magical animals. These practices entertain while also introducing younger generations to Iran's literary and

cultural legacy. Hafez divination (Fal-e Hafez) is another cherished practice. During this ritual, the eldest family member reads from the Divan of Hafez to provide poetic guidance or predictions. Historically performed in person, this practice has adapted to modern times through mobile apps, websites, and text messaging, while still fostering a sense of communal participation

and maintaining the spirit of Yalda Night. Reading from the Shahnameh, Iran's national epic, is an inseparable part of Yalda Night. Performed in the style of Naqqali storytelling, it brings life and drama to the tales, captivating children and adults alike. This practice helps preserve oral storytelling traditions and keeps Iran's rich narrative heritage alive.

The Yalda table is another iconic feature of the celebration, adorned with a variety of foods, fruits, and nuts. Two key fruits are pomegranates and watermelons. Pomegranates, with their many seeds, symbolize fertility and abundance and hold a special place in Iranian culture. Watermelon, a summer fruit with its vibrant red color, represents the sun and warmth; eat-

ing it on Yalda Night is believed to promote health and protection during the long winter. Other fruits, including oranges, apples, persimmons, pears, pumpkins, and beets, are also placed on the table. Nuts and dried fruits are integral to the Yalda feast. Pistachios, almonds, walnuts, and hazelnuts, along with dried figs and mulberries, provide nourishment while symbolizing energy and well-being. Confections such as cotton candy, sugar-based sweets, roasted seeds, chickpeas, and hemp seeds add variety and delight to the table. Historically, dried fruits and nuts were used because fresh fruits could not be stored for long periods, making them practical staples for the winter festival. Yalda Night also serves as a time for transmitting cultural, ethical, and familial values. Families gather, respect customs, and pass down heritage to younger generations. The festival strengthens intergenerational bonds, promotes love and community, and fosters a shared sense of joy. Ultimately, Yalda Night is more than a cultural or traditional celebration. It symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, the preservation of national identity, the transmission of literature and culture, and the reinforcement of family bonds. The customs observed — from lighting fires and storytelling to arranging colorful tables and Hafez divination — reflect the rich cultural and artistic heritage of Iran, offering every family a memorable and meaningful experience.

Exploring Iran's coastal archaeology along Persian Gulf

Iranica Desk

Iran's historical focus on land-based archaeology has left a significant gap in understanding the interactions between ancient civilizations and the sea, despite mounting evidence indicating that the Persian Gulf was one of the most vital cultural and civilizational hubs of the region. Abbas Moghaddam, a leading Iranian archaeologist, emphasized that extensive research potential still exists for uncovering the maritime past of the Persian Gulf. "Historically, Iranian archaeology has concentrated on the Zagros Mountains and the inland plains, which has resulted in relatively little theoretical attention to maritime areas. Today, this oversight presents a new scientific horizon that demands exploration," he said. Referring to studies conducted in the early 20th century, Moghaddam noted that foreign archaeologists often assumed that high sea levels rendered prehistoric coastal settlements in the Persian Gulf largely untraceable. "These views



Chega Sofla
seeiran.ir

were influential in their time and limited large-scale research planning in the region," he explained, according to chn.ir. He added that most archaeological studies in the Persian Gulf have been limited, sporadic, and largely opportunistic. "To date, no comprehensive, systematic program has been established to examine the extensive coastlines of the Persian Gulf. Nevertheless, even these limited studies have

yielded highly valuable findings," he noted. Highlighting one of the most significant discoveries in the field, Moghaddam described a city stretching approximately 30 kilometers and directly connected to the sea. "This site contains diverse structural components that can provide critical insights into how humans lived, earned their livelihoods, and interacted with the maritime environment," he said.



Historical district of Bushehr
mirasbushehr.ir

He further emphasized that a precise understanding of maritime-centered settlements can only be achieved through methodical, scientific excavation. "Without such excavations, it is impossible to fully grasp the role of the sea in shaping ancient civilizations, even though existing evidence clearly shows that Iranian societies maintained broad and meaningful maritime connections," he stated.

Discussing the importance of the Chega Sofla site in Khuzestan Province, the archaeologist explained, "Chega Sofla is a key to understanding this relationship. It demonstrates that the Anshan community, roughly six thousand years ago, deliberately chose a settlement just 20 kilometers from the Persian Gulf. This decision reflects their conscious attention to the sea and its abundant resources."

Moghaddam also underscored the critical role of archaeological excavations in safeguarding cultural heritage. "Without scientific research, urban development and construction could rapidly destroy these invaluable sites. Research is the foundation for informed preservation and sustainable use of heritage," he emphasized. He suggested that Chega Sofla, with its prominent cemetery, has the potential to become the world's first "cemetery museum." "This represents a major cultural asset that could be promoted both nationally and internationally," he said. Reflecting on the 2015 excavations, he added that public access was limited to Fridays, yet approximately 4,200 visitors explored the site over just two months. "This demonstrates that the proper scientific presentation of cultural heritage leads to sustainable protection. People engage with heritage when they can directly witness its cultural value and significance," Moghaddam concluded.



VP urges national library to counter Iranophobia, boost cultural diplomacy



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (4th L) visits the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) in Tehran on December 20, 2025.

● fvpresident.ir

Social Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Saturday the Nation-

al Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) should play a frontline role in scientific and cultural diplomacy, including counter-

pushes to narrow the region's technology gap within three years. Speaking at a meeting of the organization's board of trustees in Tehran, Aref said the library must move beyond a custodial role and define a measurable contribution to national science and technology policy, aligned with Iran's long-term development documents and the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027), fvpresident.ir reported. "The national library is not merely a repository of valuable books and manuscripts," Aref said. "It is a strategic scientific institution with the capacity to shape knowledge production, international engagement and Iran's global academic standing." Aref said the government's strategy aims to compensate for technological lag behind regional peers and move

ahead of them within three years, underscoring the need for scientific institutions to reposition themselves accordingly. He called on the national library to clarify its role within Iran's research ecosystem and expand cooperation with universities and scientific bodies. Referring to recent conflicts, Aref said modern warfare has underscored the centrality of advanced science and technology, adding that Iran has gained the upper hand in areas where it invested in knowledge-based capacity. He said the administration is steering higher education toward third- and fourth-generation universities, with leaner structures and stronger links to innovation, while pursuing scientific authority as a national priority. He also reiterated the leadership's call to elevate Persian as a global scientific language through sustained advances in research output. Aref highlighted cultural and scientific diplomacy as effective tools for international engagement, particularly with neighboring states and countries shar-

ing historical and civilizational ties, including Central Asia. He said the NLAI could anchor academic cooperation with regional blocs such as the Economic Cooperation Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS. Despite what he described as the exposure of hostile narratives against Iran, Aref said some foreign scholars remain reluctant to visit the country due to lingering Iranophobia. He argued that targeted international outreach by the National Library, including hosting foreign researchers, could help shift perceptions. "Direct engagement with Iran's scientific and cultural institutions changes mindsets," he said. Aref also stressed the need to accelerate digitization of manuscripts and archival materials while safeguarding data security. He said physical works would retain their intrinsic value but that digital technologies and artificial intelligence were indispensable for access, preservation and global visibility.

Hanukkah light serves as justice, humanity in today's world



By Farhad Aframian
Iranian Jewish lawyer and journalist

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

As a lawyer and journalist with two decades of professional experience, I have consistently sought to understand identity not as a fixed or static phenomenon, but as something shaped at the intersection of lived experience, legal and ethical responsibility, and historical context. For me, Hanukkah is far more than a traditional ritual. It represents a miracle that reveals the power of preserving light and justice under the most difficult conditions, and it reminds us that every individual, within their professional, social, and legal sphere, can take small yet meaningful steps toward the promotion of justice. This article is written with the aim of drawing the attention of human rights advocates and globally concerned readers to the importance of justice and the imperative to resist violence. Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Dedication or the Festival of Light, commemorates the historical rededication of the Holy Temple and the symbolic triumph of light over darkness. The miraculous continuity of a small flame in a modest menorah became, over time, a powerful symbol of hope, spiritual resilience, and the preservation of cultural identity across generations. In Jewish tradition, this celebration is associated with purity and illumination, and more than anything else, it embodies the safeguarding of truth and human dignity against the turbulence of history. This ritual is not rooted in narratives of conquest or domination, but in the miracle of endurance, a light that teaches us that even a small flame of justice, when sustained with sincerity

and integrity, can transcend material calculations and pierce the darkness. The miracle of Hanukkah, the survival of a single flame in a time of hardship, stands as a symbol of resilience grounded not in force or domination, but in commitment to reason, ethics, and the rule of law. This light reminds us that justice and ethical-legal responsibility, whether at the individual, social, or international level, require constant care. Neglecting these principles risks weakening the rule of law, expanding inequality, and undermining the fundamental rights of human beings. Within this framework, the historical experience of Iranian Jews can be understood as part of Iran's, and the contemporary world's, moral and civic capital. This experience reflects sustained civic participation, the preservation of cultural institutions, and active engagement in urban and economic life. From the perspective of social rights and historical analysis, it demonstrates how a community can endure without resorting to violence, relying instead on law and ethical commitment. This small yet influential community, with a history spanning several millennia, stands as a living example of the possibility of coexistence and cultural cooperation. Hanukkah is not only a narrative of liberation from imposed constraints; it is also a legacy that places an added ethical and legal responsibility on today's Jewish generations. A community shaped by historical memories of violence and discrimination bears a particular duty to ensure that this spiritual heritage and collective memory of suffering are never transformed into a justification for the violation of others' rights. Jewish identity must not become an excuse for injustice; rather, it should serve as a guiding principle for unwavering commitment to justice and respect for the rights of all human beings. Such an approach not only prevents the repro-

duction of cycles of injustice, but also protects faith and tradition from being reduced to instruments of inhumane objectives. This idea finds further expression in the symbolic convergence of Hanukkah with Yalda Night and Christmas, traditions that, each in their own language and symbolism, speak to humanity's endurance in the face of darkness. Yalda, rooted in ancient Iranian culture, marks the passage through the longest night of the year and affirms belief in the birth of light at life's darkest moments. Christmas signifies renewal, hope, and peace. Hanukkah recalls the perseverance of a light that refuses to be extinguished. What unites these traditions, all celebrated around the winter solstice, is a shared belief that light is the product of ethical conduct, inner resilience, and human responsibility. This message offers clear guidance to all who seek a world free from violence and grounded in respect for human rights. When we speak of violence and the erosion of justice, it is essential to consider all its forms, from the overt violence of war to economic pressure, legal restrictions, or imposed peace arrangements that lack a foundation in dialogue and fairness. The repetition of these rituals reminds us that light and justice endure only when rooted in human dignity and the protection of rights. Genuine security and peace, whether at the individual, social, or international level, are not achieved through coercion or the denial of agency, but through mutual respect, trust-building, respect for rights, and dialogue. Even in the most difficult circumstances, it remains possible to chart a path guided by reason, human dignity, and the rule of law, a path that prevents the reproduction of new cycles of violence. It is equally important, in the current context, not to remain indifferent to international sanctions imposed on

Iran. According to official reports by the United Nations and human rights bodies such as the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), these sanctions have resulted in serious restrictions on people's access to essential goods, healthcare services, and economic opportunities. Such pressures have had a direct impact on the quality of life of ordinary citizens and clearly undermine the principles of social justice and economic and social human rights. The Iranian Jewish community, as part of the broader society, has also been affected by these constraints, an experience that offers a tangible example of how sanctions policies impact minorities and underscores the necessity of upholding human rights and justice at both national and international levels. These legal findings highlight the importance of adherence to justice and human dignity in the face of pressure and sanctions, and demonstrate that any political or economic measure that restricts people's rights carries long-term consequences for social stability and the prospects for peace. For me, Hanukkah today is not merely a commemoration of the past, but an opportunity to reconsider our legal and ethical responsibilities in the present. Yalda, Hanukkah, and Christmas remind us that lasting peace is not achieved through pressure or imposition, but through human dignity, the protection of rights, and dialogue. In a world where silence can reproduce cycles of violence, lighting these candles becomes a symbol of commitment to awareness and responsibility. It is hoped that individuals, societies, and even the wider world may find a new path, one grounded in justice, ethics, and humanity, and capable of creating shared meaning for all people, regardless of identity or geography. It is a legacy that can inspire future generations more deeply than ever before.

Mokri's 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit' earns Kerala jury citation for technical excellence

Arts & Culture Desk

Indian festival jurors awarded Iranian filmmaker Shahram Mokri's 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit' a special jury mention for technical excellence at the 30th International Film Festival of Kerala, which wrapped up in Thiruvananthapuram on December 19. The Tajikistan-United Arab Emirates co-production was cited for its "exploration" and "pursuit" of new cinematic forms, the jury said, recognizing Mokri's formally rigorous approach as the film screened in the international competition during the December 12-19 event. The film's international sales are handled by DreamLab Films, led by Nasrin Mirshab, according to ISNA. Three seemingly unrelated narratives gradually interlock, combining dark humor with flashes of magical realism. The screenplay was co-written by Mokri and Nasim Ahmadpour, with Negar Eskandarfarid producing. Shot in Tajik and Persian with the support of Tajikfilm Studio, the project underscores Mokri's reputation for technical bravura. Kerala's top prize went to Japan's 'Two Seasons, Two Strangers' by Sho Miyake, which also previously secured the Golden Leopard at Locarno. The NETPAC Award was claimed by 'Cinema Island' by Gözde Kural, a Turkey-Iran-Bulgaria-Romania co-production. Argentina's 'Before the Body' won best director, India's 'Shadow Box' took best first director alongside an acting citation, and India's 'If on a Winter's Night' received the FIPRESCI award. The Kerala citation follows a strong festival run for 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit'. At the Hainan International Film Festival in China, the film won the Golden Coconut for best film, with jury president Juliette Binoche and artistic director Marco Müller presenting the honor. The jury also singled it out in Hainan's Emerging Talents section. Mokri, attending the Red Sea Film Festival at the time, sent a message read on his behalf, calling the recognition a "significant" milestone for the production. The film has screened at Busan and other Indian festivals and is slated for further showings in London and Chicago, before a China-wide tour. Tajikistan has selected the title as its official submission for the Academy Awards' best international feature category.