

# Widespread library damage across Iran inflicts cultural loss

## Arts & Culture Desk

Over 50 public libraries across Iran sustained damage in recent unrest that began in January 8, with several rendered completely inoperable, according to Azadeh Nazarboland, Secretary-General of the National Library and Archives of Iran. The incidents, which have targeted vital cultural institutions, have raised concerns about the long-term impact on literacy and access to knowledge, particularly for vulnerable populations, IRNA reported. The destruction represents a significant setback for Iran's cultural infrastructure, impacting not only physical buildings but also the crucial role libraries play in fostering intellectual discourse and community engagement.

Experts warn that the loss of these resources will disproportionately affect children, adolescents, and those who rely on libraries as safe havens for learning and cultural enrichment. The most devastating incident occurred at the Mohammadieh Public Library in Borujen, Chahmeh and Bakhtiari Province. This venerable institution, bequeathed as a cultural endowment over five decades ago in 1970 by the grandson of Ayatollah Seyed Abolhasan Isfahani, housed a priceless collection of over 12,000 volumes, including rare manuscripts, stone prints, encyclopedias, and authoritative Arabic and Persian dictionaries. Notably, the library also contained a curated selection of significant works from Sunni Islamic scholarly centers in Lebanon

(Beirut), Egypt (Cairo), Iraq (Najaf and Baghdad).

Tragically, during the disturbances, the manuscript section, publications, children's resources, and educational materials were completely consumed by fire.

Further damage was reported at the Ferdowsi Public Library in Sureshjan, Chahmeh and Bakhtiari Province, a popular hub with 30,000 books and 700 active members.

The Imam Hassan Mojtaba (PBUH) Public Library in the underprivileged Zarneh district of Ilam, Ilam Province, which served as the sole cultural center for the region, was also entirely destroyed by fire, along with its 17,000 volumes and 400 members.

In Yazd Province, the Ayatollah A'rafi Public Library in Maybod



suffered a fire, resulting in the loss of over 7,000 books, primarily educational resources intended for students. Nazarboland emphasized the breadth of the damage, encompassing arson, vandalism, theft of equipment, and severe structural and resource degradation.

The National Library and Archives of Iran is currently assessing the extent of the losses and formulating plans for the swift reconstruction of these vital cultural centers, aiming to restore them as spaces for intellectual exchange and community cohesion.

## Cinema Organization of Iran chief calls for deeper research integration amid AI advancements

### Arts & Culture Desk

Chairman of Cinema Organization of Iran Raed Faridzadeh stressed the critical role of research in Iranian cinema, particularly in light of rapidly evolving artificial intelligence technologies. Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 8th Annual Iranian Cinema Research Awards on January 25, Faridzadeh asserted that research is not merely an option but a "fundamental condition" for thoughtful filmmaking, IRNA reported. The event, held in Tehran, highlighted the growing need for Iranian cinema to engage with interdisciplinary fields, including religious studies, philosophy, and media studies, to unlock deeper meaning within visual narratives.

Faridzadeh cautioned against a passive acceptance of AI, suggesting that the industry risks becoming "a product of circumstances" rather than harnessing technology as a tool.

He stressed the necessity



Chairman of Cinema Organization of Iran Raed Faridzadeh addresses the audience during the closing ceremony of the 8th Annual Iranian Cinema Research Awards in Tehran on January 25, 2026.

IRNA

of understanding the "nature" of this new technological landscape. The chairman's remarks come as Iranian filmmakers grapple with the potential impact of AI on creative processes and distribution models. Integrating rigorous research, he argued, elevates cinema beyond conventional boundaries, fostering a richer understanding of its function and impact. Without it, he warned, the medium risks "stuttering" and losing its expressive power.

Faridzadeh acknowledged a historical disconnect be-

tween research and practical application within the Iranian film industry. He expressed hope that recent foundational research conducted by the organization's Studies and Technology Development Department will facilitate a closer alignment between theory and policy.

The awards ceremony saw the evaluation of 109 works across four categories: Books (authored and translated), scientific articles, completed research projects, and master's and doctoral theses.

Alireza Esmaeili, Secre-

tary of the 8th Annual Iranian Cinema Research Awards, emphasized the importance of strengthening ties between academia and the professional film community to enhance the quality of Iranian productions. He noted the organization's efforts to foster collaboration through workshops and consultations with university film departments. The event also included a tribute to prominent Iranian artists who passed away in the previous year, including Saeed Mozaffari, Hadi Marzban, Saeid Piroozi, Reza Rooygari, Nasser Taghvai, and Bahram Beyzaie, with particular recognition given to Beyzaie's extensive research background.

## Oman, Iran discuss enhanced cinematic cooperation

### Arts & Culture Desk

Head of the Omani Film Organization Yaqoub Al-Khanjari, met with Jalal Ghafari Qadir, secretary of the 19th International Resistance Film Festival, in Tehran on January 25, to discuss bolstering cinematic collaboration between the two nations.

The meeting underscored a shared commitment to promoting films with themes of resilience and freedom, Ana News Agency reported.

The festival, increasingly recognized

as a pivotal platform for showcasing

films addressing pressing regional

and global issues, has gained con-

siderable traction within the Mid-

dle East and beyond, according to

Al-Khanjari.

Its focus on narratives reflecting the

struggles of marginalized commu-

nities, particularly those stemming

from the conflicts in Palestine and

Gaza, has resonated strongly with

audiences and filmmakers alike.

The festival's recent iterations have

mirrored the evolving geopolitical

landscape of the Middle East, ampli-

fying the voices of those impacted by

oppression.

Al-Khanjari lauded the festival's abil-

ity to serve as a conduit for convey-

ing the plight of the oppressed, not-

ing a surge in interest from artists

across the globe.

Ghafari Qadir echoed this sentiment,



characterizing the festival as a gathering for "free and liberated people" worldwide.

He emphasized the event's ambition to foster global dialogue and leverage cinema as a tool to unite individuals and intellectuals dedicated to dismantling the influence of Zionism and global hegemony.

"The International Resistance Film Festival does not belong solely to Iran," Ghafari Qadir stated, "but to all free people of diverse cultures, religions, and backgrounds."

He stressed the importance of promoting a culture of resistance and translating it on an international stage.

Al-Khanjari extended an invitation to an Iranian delegation to visit Oman for a "Resistance Film Week," signaling a concerted effort to expand cultural and artistic ties.

The initiative aims to further cement the burgeoning relationship between the two countries through the medium of film.

## Cartoon biennial bolsters Iran's cultural diplomacy efforts: Minister

### Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance has hailed the 12th Tehran International Cartoon Biennial as a potent tool for advancing cultural diplomacy and promoting global peace, according to a message released on Sunday. Abbas Salehi underscored the event's significance in fostering intercultural dialogue and understanding, IRNA reported.

The biennial, which showcases artistic



creativity, serves as a vital platform for exchanging ideas between artists, the public, and social actors, Salehi noted. It reflects societal shifts and contributes to the world's visual cultural heritage. The event's prominence is bolstered by the exceptional creativity and critical perspective of Iranian cartoonists, who have garnered international acclaim. The Tehran biennial has evolved into a dynamic and impactful international event, attracting prominent artists from

across the globe, he added. This transformation is attributed to the innovative use of contemporary imagery and techniques by young Iranian artists, capitalizing on the proliferation of new media and digital platforms.

The biennial's message of peace, friendship, and human solidarity is particularly crucial in today's complex geopolitical landscape, Salehi added.

He commended the organizers and wished success to all participating artists in their pursuit of truth and justice.