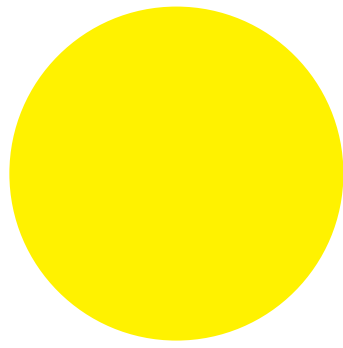


'Somewhere at the End of the Street', portrait of Iran's first martyred nuclear scientist

From European classrooms to Lebanese battle lines on the stage

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# Iran Daily

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President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) poses for a family photo with regional officials in charge of Iranian free trade zones in Tehran on February 7, 2026. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

### US coercive diplomacy toward Iran out of balance

Overreliance on coercion undercuts prospects of diplomacy

INTERVIEW  
EXCLUSIVE



Rahman Gahremanpour

Iran and the United States returned to the negotiating table in Muscat on Friday, months after a war had upended diplomatic engagement between the two sides. The talks came after tensions had escalated to the brink of war, raising concerns across the region and even beyond about the risk of a wide-ranging regional conflict. As before, the discussions in Muscat were held between Iran's foreign minister and the US President Donald Trump's representative, with one notable difference;

the commander of US Central Command joined the talks without prior announcement. The outcome of the negotiations was an agreement to continue dialogue. Yet while both sides described the talks as positive, Washington moved quickly to ramp up pressure on Iran by imposing new sanctions and penalizing Iran's trading partners. Iran Daily discussed the details and outcomes of these negotiations with Rahman Gahremanpour, an international affairs expert. He said the US has retained and continues to pursue a policy of pressure and military threats as an alternative should diplomacy fail, but warned that excessive emphasis on this approach would diminish the chances of diplomatic success.

**IRAN DAILY:** How do you assess the overall trajectory of Friday's negotiations between Iran and the United States? In your view, what were the agendas and priorities of each side, and can these talks be considered a step forward, or merely an effort to manage tensions?

**QAHREMANPOUR:** Both Iran and the United States were, first and foremost, seeking to manage the atmosphere in their own favor: Washington came to the table pursuing coercive diplomacy, while Tehran's focus was on containing the risk of war. At the same time, both sides—particularly Iran—sought to advance their own agendas while managing tensions. Iran was clearly aiming to pin down a specific framework for the negotiations, including defining the subject matter and the timeline of the

talks. Based on the information available so far, the two sides have agreed to hold another round of negotiations, which could potentially be used to finalize the negotiating framework. Yet, it should not be overlooked that Trump is seeking a rapid and early agreement.

**What objective and message did the unannounced presence of the CENTCOM commander at these talks convey? Can this be seen as a sign of the continuation of Washington's security-oriented, pressure-driven approach even alongside diplomatic engagement?**

The unannounced presence of the CENTCOM commander was clearly intended to lend credibility to the United States' military threat.

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# ‘Doctrine of impunity’ for Israel menacing regional stability: *Araghchi*

## Iran’s missile program ‘never negotiable’

International Desk

Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that allowing Israel to act beyond international law would lead to broader regional instability, saying that a “doctrine of impunity does not bring peace.” Speaking as a special guest at the Al Jazeera Forum’s opening panel on Saturday, Araghchi said the war in Gaza has become a defining test for international law and global moral credibility. “Let no one miscalculate: a region cannot be kept stable by allowing one actor to act above the law,” he said, adding, “The doctrine of impunity will not produce peace; it will produce wider conflict.” Araghchi described Palestine as the central issue shaping justice and security in West Asia, noting that Gaza is no longer only a humanitarian crisis but part of a broader expansionist project carried out under the banner of security. According to Araghchi, the immunity granted to Israel has set a dangerous precedent, allowing attacks on civilians, infrastructure, and cross-border assassinations without accountability. Since the beginning of its genocidal war on Gaza in 2023, the Israeli regime has killed about 72,000 Palestinians and wounded over 171,000 people and caused widespread destruction, with approximately 90 percent of Gaza’s civilian infrastructure damaged. Araghchi’s speech in Doha came a day after he held new round of negotiations with the US officials in Oman’s capital over Iran’s nuclear program.



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi addresses the Al Jazeera Forum's opening panel in the Qatari capital of Doha on February 7, 2026. ● AL JAZEERA

The negotiations were the first since nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington collapsed last year following Israel’s unprecedented bombing campaign against Iran, which triggered a 12-day war. During the war, US warplanes also bombed Iranian nuclear sites.

**Iran-US nuclear talks**

Friday’s talks came amid a major US military buildup in the region on the pretext of Iran’s response to recent riots in the country, which were triggered by nationwide protests last month over economic problems. According to the Iranian officials more than 3,100 people have lost their lives in the protests. The two sides hailed the “good beginning” of the negotiations and agreed to resume the talks after consultations with their capitals. Before the talks, Washington had sought to address Iran’s ballistic missile program and its support for resistance groups in the region – issues which Is-

rael has pushed to include in the talks, according to media reports. However, Tehran has repeatedly rejected expanding the scope of the negotiations beyond the nuclear issue with the Iranian foreign minister saying that talks in Muscat only focused on nuclear issues.

According to excerpts published on his official Telegram channel during an interview with the Al Jazeera network, Araghchi reiterated Tehran’s red lines in the talks. He said that Iran’s missile program was “never negotiable” because it relates to a “defense issue.” “There can be no negotiations on missiles, neither now nor in the future, because this is a purely defensive issue.”

**Uranium enrichment**

Araghchi also pointed to uranium enrichment, stressing that the enrichment is Iran’s “inalienable right and must continue” in Iran. However, he said that, “We are ready to reach a

reassuring agreement on enrichment.” Regarding any aggression by the US against Iran in the case of failure of the negotiations, Araghchi warned that Tehran would target US bases in the region. He called the talks “a good start,” but added that building trust would take time. He said the talks would resume “soon.” US President Donald Trump also on Friday called the talks “very good,” and pledged another round of negotiations next week. Despite this, he signed an executive order effective from Saturday that called for the “imposition of tariffs” on countries still doing business with Iran. The United States also announced new sanctions against numerous shipping entities and vessels, aimed at curbing Iran’s oil exports. At the Friday’s talks in Oman, the US delegation was led by Trump’s Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and his influential son-in-law Jared Kushner.

## US coercive diplomacy ...

Washington wanted to signal that, alongside diplomacy, it is prepared for war. Another likely reason relates to the multifaceted nature of the negotiations; given that the talks could touch on various issues, the presence of a senior military commander would allow him both to present his views and to provide expert input to the Trump team.

**While Iran’s foreign minister has described the talks as “a good start,” Washington immediately pursued a path of intensified pressure, without rolling back its regional military deployments. How do you evaluate this approach, and what impact will it have on confidence-building and the continuation of negotiations? Under these conditions, how do you see the future of the talks, and is there genuine will on the US side to reach an agreement?**

I believe the United States is not acting in a contradictory manner. Its approach toward Iran is grounded in what is commonly referred to as coercive diplomacy, or diplomacy

backed by force. Within this framework, Washington seeks a diplomatic solution, but will resort to military action if diplomacy fails. During Trump’s first term, the administration largely pursued a policy of maximum pressure, in which the use of military force did not play a central role. In coercive diplomacy, however, military power and force are integral components of the framework itself. This explains why the United States, even while continuing negotiations, is simultaneously attempting to keep the military option on the table and thereby make its diplomatic message appear more credible. Naturally, however, if Washington places excessive emphasis on force and coercion, the prospects for successful diplomatic negotiations will decline. This may be one of the reasons financial markets have reacted cautiously to the outcome of the latest talks. Despite participating in negotiations, the United States continues to escalate pressure, impose tariffs on Iran’s trading partners, and sanction Iranian officials and companies. This, in effect, undermines the

credibility of diplomacy, disrupts the necessary balance between diplomacy and force, and reduces the likelihood of success.

**Given the continuation of US military movements and simultaneous threats in the region, how decisive do you see Iran’s deterrence factor in keeping diplomacy on track?**

Iran’s deterrence factor certainly plays an important role. The key issue, however, within deterrence theory, is the extent to which Iran’s message about regionalizing a potential war is perceived as credible by the United States. At times, threats are issued but not taken seriously by the other side, and as a result they lack the desired impact. It appears that, judging by the scale of US military equipment deployed to the region, Washington has taken Iran’s threat of regionalizing a conflict and targeting US bases in the event of war seriously. The United States is therefore seeking to establish three different layers of defense in the region in order to contain Iran’s threat should a military confrontation occur.

## Anti-Iran adventurism to destabilize entire region: *Top general*

Iran’s top military official warned that any adventurist act against the Islamic Republic will bring “strategic defeat” to enemies and spread war across the entire region. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi issued the stark warning in a Saturday message to Brigadier General Bahman Behmard, the commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army Air Force, marking Air Force Day, Press TV reported.

“The enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran are well aware that any adventure or attempt to impose war against Islamic Iran will not only lead to their absolute and strategic defeat but will also cause the expansion of war and crisis throughout the region,” he said.

He added that any adventure or war against Iran will also impose “heavy and irreparable” costs on its supporters.

Iran’s Army Air Force plays a strategic role in strengthening active deterrence, promoting defensive preparedness and confronting enemy threats under the current sensitive circumstances and amid complex domestic and regional developments, especially after the Israeli-American 12-day imposed war against the country in June, he emphasized. Mousavi said the Air Force has constantly been engaged in modernization and upgrading its combat capability and comprehensive preparedness, and currently stands at the “highest level of readiness.”

“In complete coordination with other Armed Forces, the Air Force is ready to give a decisive, rapid, and regrettable response to any threat, aggression, or miscalculation by the enemy,” the top commander emphasized. He reiterated that the Islamic Republic will



Abdolrahim Mousavi ● IRNA


never start a war but will not hesitate to firmly defend its security, territorial integrity, and vital interests. Mousavi also described the force as a symbol of the Army’s deep bond with the nation and the Islamic Establishment. Israel launched the unprovoked war on June 13 last year while Iran was engaged in nuclear talks with the US, which also joined the aggression by striking Iranian nuclear sites. In response, Iranian Armed Forces targeted strategic sites across the occupied territories and at Al-Udeid, the largest US military installation in West Asia. Iran has since moved to enhance both its defensive and offensive capabilities. The region is once again bracing for another potential military confrontation after the United States deployed air and naval forces to the region and threatened to attack the Islamic Republic. Iranian officials have warned that any US attack would prompt an immediate response and could ignite a regional war. Last week, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned that any war initiated by the United States against Iran would turn into a regional war.

## More positive regional reactions to resumption of Iran-US talks

International Desk


Reactions are still pouring in following resumption of nuclear talks between Iran and the United States in Oman, which has brought hope for easing tensions in the region. Secretary-General of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Mohamed al-Budaiwi welcomed the new round of indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States in Oman, expressing hope that the results of the talks would contribute to maintaining stability and security in the region. According to Kuwaiti newspaper “Al-Jarida”, Budaiwi hoped that the negotiations would lead to positive outcomes that help enhance peace, solidify the foundations of security and stability in the region, secure common interests, and strengthen the environment for cooperation and development. Tajikistan’s Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin also welcomed the recent Iran-US talks, saying that Dushanbe supports the peaceful resolution of disputes between the two countries. Speaking at a press conference on Friday, Muhriddin stressed that Tajikistan supports peace, stability, security, and calm in the region. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held high-level discussions with his Omani counterpart and the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the Iranian nuclear file, following a

new round of negotiations between Washington and Tehran. In a telephone call on Friday, Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi briefed Abdelatty on the progress of talks held in Muscat. Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tamim Khallaf stated that Abdelatty expressed appreciation for Oman’s “constructive role” in hosting the dialogue, while Busaidi commended Egypt’s recent diplomatic efforts to bridge viewpoints between the parties. Abdelatty affirmed that Egypt will continue to support all efforts to reach a “consensual settlement” that addresses the concerns of all sides. The diplomatic outreach continued on Saturday with a call between Abdelatty and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi. The Egyptian minister emphasized the need for continued international and regional efforts to lower tensions and priorities diplomatic solutions. The United Arab Emirates welcomed the announcement of talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Sultanate of Oman, affirming that this positive development reflects ongoing efforts to advance dialogue and promote de-escalation. The Foreign Ministry of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a statement expressed hope that such consultations will yield positive outcomes that contribute to de-escalation, strengthen regional security and stability, and support regional and international peace.



**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist

**CARTOON**





# Pezeshkian launches 90 free zone projects, eyeing global competitiveness

**Economy Desk**

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday commissioned 90 investment projects across Iran's free trade-industrial and special economic zones during an online ceremony focused on construction, investment, and tourism developments.

Speaking at the event, Pezeshkian emphasized that strategic planning is necessary for each free zone's advancement. "Strategic planning for each free zone is essential. If we don't have a scientific, expert-based plan for developing each zone based on competition with successful global free zones, and merely rely on construction without a roadmap, we will ultimately fall behind global developments," his website, president.ir quoted Pezeshkian as saying.

The president stressed the necessity of a strategic, forward-looking approach grounded in new technologies to guide development in such areas. He stated that industrial and production units must be designed to ensure sustainability, competitiveness, quality, and reasonable pricing to compete regionally and globally, with resulting benefits flowing to the nation and its citizens.

Pezeshkian also underscored the importance of environmental considerations in project execution. "We hope the spaces created in these zones will be envi-

ronmentally friendly and extensively use solar panels and clean energy, such that a healthy and sustainable environment based on renewable energy is provided for thermal energy supply, heating and cooling," he said.

He expressed hope that this comprehensive, forward-looking, and sustainable approach would pave the way for prosperity, balanced development, and all-around progress in the free zones and surrounding regions.

According to IRNA, the commissioned projects span the Aras, Qeshm, Arvand, and Chabahar free trade-industrial zones, as well as the Sahlan Special Economic Zone. In the Aras Free Zone, 27 projects were inaugurated, generating direct employment for 1,079 people and indirect jobs for 4,495 others. The Qeshm Free Zone saw 25 projects enter operation, creating 248 direct and 417 indirect jobs. Four construction and investment projects were launched in the Arvand Free Zone. In Chabahar, 20 projects commenced operations, providing 201 direct and 22 indirect employment



opportunities. Five projects were inaugurated in the Sahlan Special Economic Zone, yielding 336 direct jobs.

The commissioning aligns with the government's core strategy to achieve developmental objectives, stimulate investment, expand employment, and reinforce the role of free zones in driving national economic growth.

## Gold bullion imports fetch \$140m in foreign investment: ICE



**Economy Desk**

Iran attracted more than \$140 million in foreign investment through the import and sale of standard gold bullion after a cabinet decision in October eased restrictions on such transactions, a spokesman for the Iran Center for Exchange of Currency and Gold (ICE) said on Saturday.

"Following the cabinet's resolution in October to facilitate imports of standard gold bullion by foreign investors, more than \$140

million in foreign investment has been channeled into the economy through bullion imports and sales at the exchange center," spokesman Asghar Balsini said, IRNA reported.

According to the center's latest data, foreign investors have imported and sold 488 kilograms of standard gold bullion since October, Balsini said.

He added that the imports were carried out under this year's cabinet resolution, which lifted restrictions on the entry of standard gold bullion by foreign investors and authorized trading through the Iran Center for Exchange of Currency and Gold.

"Under this framework, 21 foreign companies have imported gold as foreign investors and, after offering it at the exchange center's in-person auctions, reinvested the proceeds in priority economic projects," Balsini said.

He said the investments have been directed into petrochemicals, copper, steel and base oil sectors, calling the move a step toward attracting foreign capital, strengthening the standard gold market and supporting sustainable economic growth.

"The implementation of this mechanism shows that easing restrictions on standard gold bullion imports has, in the short term, helped generate capital inflows and support the production sector," Balsini said, adding that continued implementation could lead to greater foreign participation in other infrastructure projects.

## Gas supply peaks at record 886 MCM as winter demand soars

**Economy Desk**

Iran's natural gas production and transmission reached 886 million cubic meters (MCM) on Friday, setting a new record for the country's supply system, SHANA reported on Saturday.

The National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) statistics showed Friday's volume of sweet gas produced and transmitted to the national grid reached 886 million cubic meters. The new achievement was realized during the winter season amid sharply increased demand for domestic and commercial gas consumption, reflecting sustainable capacity building and optimal operation of production facilities, transmission lines, and pressure booster stations across the country's gas network.

Winter operations for the national gas network this year are being implemented with precise planning, preventive maintenance, and maximum utilization of production capacity from gas fields, including South Pars, to the country's refineries. According to SHANA, this cohesive performance has further underscored the vital role of gas infrastructure in ensuring



national energy security under harsh climatic conditions and maintaining the domestic production cycle.

According to IRNA, the latest figures from the NIGC showed consumption by the domestic, commercial and small industries sector on Friday reached 589 million cubic meters, accounting for 66 percent of the country's total gas production. Analysis of recent daily consumption data for this sector indicates a decline in the intensity of domestic gas usage, with Thursday's consumption recorded at 592 million cubic me-

ters, Wednesday at 549 million cubic meters, Tuesday at 558 million cubic meters, and Monday at 589 million cubic meters. Observing optimal consumption patterns, especially during the coldest days of the year, helps maintain network stability and facilitates gas supply to industrial consumers.

The all-time peak for gas consumption in the domestic, commercial and small industries sector was recorded on January 22 at 737 million cubic meters, equivalent to 85 percent of the country's total gas production at that time.

## RMTO posts nearly 14m tons of cargo transit via land borders in 10 months



**Economy Desk**

Iran transited 13,852,905 tons of goods through its land borders during the first 10 months of the current Iranian year, which began on March 21, a senior official at Iran's Road Maintenance and Transportation Organization (RMTO) said on Saturday.

"This volume of road cargo transit was carried out

through 624,550 trips by international transport fleets crossing the country's territory," said the director general of the organization's Transit and International Transport Office, Javad Hedayati.

During the same period, 11,122,498 tons of goods were exported from Iran through more than 464,000 cargo transport fleet trips, while 2,105,354 tons of goods were imported via nearly 96,000 trips by fleets active in the sector, he said.

A total of 2,944 companies are operating nationwide in the international cargo transport sector, alongside 68 companies and branches active in international passenger transport, Hedayati said.

"With the efforts of 63,000 professional drivers and the use of 51,000 vehicles in the public transport sector, with an average service age of 12 years, the movement of cargo and passengers on international routes is continuing without interruption," the official said.

He added that 26 border terminals operating across 12 provinces are currently facilitating cargo exchange and passenger movement between the Islamic Republic of Iran and neighboring countries.

Citing Iran's favorable geographic position in Asia and access to neighboring markets, the official said, "Developing road transport infrastructure and strengthening logistics services can help increase cargo transit through the country's territory."



# Israel boosts funding to propagandize Americans



By Harrison Berger  
Journalist

## OPINION

Israel's cabinet last month approved and sent to the Knesset a 2026 state budget that sharply increases both military spending and financing for propaganda operations abroad. According to reporting by the Jerusalem Post, the latter funding will be directed toward a variety of projects including foreign media campaigns, digital messaging operations, and efforts to counter and censor criticism of Israel's US-backed genocide in Gaza. The proposed budget, quadruple last year's allocation, also encourages coordination between government ministries and outside contractors, or "civil society organizations," to disseminate Israeli propaganda abroad. It comes as Israel reportedly moves to renew and expand its memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United States, extending it for up to 20 years rather than the traditional ten and likely securing at least \$4 billion annually from US taxpayers. Even as Israel's assault on Gaza slows in pace, its government continues to require uninterrupted US financing, weapons transfers, and diplomatic cover to sustain its occupation, prop up its US-taxpayer-dependent domestic defense industry, and prepare for future regional conflicts, including an openly telegraphed war with Iran. Israel has hemorrhaged US public support after months of live-streamed mass killing in Gaza and growing international exposure of Israel's treatment of Christians and Muslims in its occupied territories. Yet because Israel remains structurally dependent on US political backing and taxpayer funds for its survival, the collapse of American public support represents an existential problem, one that Israeli leaders

hope to solve through a boosted propaganda budget. "What we have to do," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a group of US-based social media influencers-for-hire just six weeks before new MOU discussions were revealed, "is secure that part of the base of our support in the United States," which he said "is being challenged systematically." To "fight back," Netanyahu argued, Israel must win the information war on TikTok and Elon Musk-owned X. He praised TikTok's acquisition by pro-Israel billionaire Larry Ellison as "the most important purchase that is going on," one he said he "hope[s] will go through because it can be consequential." "We have to talk to Elon... he's a friend." The expanded funding would further formalize an Israeli propaganda and censorship apparatus that already operates inside the United States and continues to expand through private contracts with foreign agents even as Israel's budget is pending final approval by the Knesset. Recent Foreign Agents Registration Act filings first reported by Nick Cleveland-Stout of the Quincy Institute and journalist Jack Poulson show that Clock Tower X LLC, a digital media firm run by former Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale, increased its contracts with the Israeli government from roughly \$6 million to \$9 million. A filing dated December 26, 2025, lists Israel's Foreign Ministry as the client, with the contract intermediated by the German branch of HAVAS Media. Those filings describe efforts to influence Americans across digital platforms, including attempts to shape outputs from artificial intelligence like ChatGPT by seeding it with content designed to produce pro-Israel responses, including about Gaza. Ongoing initiatives also include Israeli government-sponsored



President Donald Trump (back-3rd L) hosts a bilateral dinner for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, July 7, 2025, in the Blue Room.

● DANIEL TOROK/WHITE HOUSE

trips for propaganda training, part of what Israeli officials describe as "public diplomacy efforts." These programs recruit American thought leaders from the US constituencies most important for Israel's long-term survival as a state: Christian Zionists, whose ideology is increasingly viewed as illegitimate and politically bankrupt by Christians around the world, and American college students, whose growing identification with Palestinians living under Israeli occupation has long been considered to be an "existential threat" by Israeli policymakers. Last month, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought to Jerusalem "over 1,000 pastors" for coordinated hasbara training, an influence operation convention promoted by prominent American Zionist evangelists such as US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee and Rev. Johnnie Moore, who headed the so-called "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation." Speaking to the attendees,



Israel's 2026 budget sharply increases funding for military spending and propaganda operations abroad. The government plans to expand media campaigns, digital messaging, and influence programs targeting US audiences, including social media and AI platforms.

Huckabee urged pastors to "go to their pulpits" and "push back" against what he described as a dangerous trend within evangelicalism of questioning the state of Israel's role in Christian theology. Friends of Zion founder Mike Evans, a partner in the program, celebrated the historic nature of the initiative and outlined a goal to reach one million pastors and "100 million people worldwide." As CBN reported: This gathering is a prelude to a massive campaign planned for next year. Evans said, "We're launching in 2026 a global program to reach one million pastors and one million churches globally, to teach them a biblical worldview so they'll realize God's not canceling any promises to the Jewish people. And He's not canceling for the Christians, either." A few weeks later, more than 80 "student leaders" from North America, part of the Israeli government-funded "Hasbara Fellowship" program, traveled to Israel for coordinated propaganda

training, according to Israeli media, with i24NEWS describing the delegation as visiting "not just to tour but to prepare for the fight back at home." In an interview with Israeli television, Elijah Wiesel, the grandson of famed Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel—warned of rising campus opposition to Israel, labeling those free speech activities "antisemitism," while citing being called a "Judeo-Nazi" by another Jewish student at Yale. "My worst experiences with antisemitism have been from other Jews," Wiesel said, acknowledging that many of the campus protestors punished and censored by universities for so-called "antisemitism" are actually just Jews who do not have loyalty or affection for a foreign government.

The Israeli government and its lobby in the United States have made clear that their latest propaganda efforts are oriented toward manipulating long-term perception of Israeli behavior. In an appearance at the MirYam Institute's Israel Security Briefing, former CIA director Mike Pompeo was applauded for arguing that "we need to make sure" history books "don't write about the victims of Gaza." It is unclear at the moment which exact programs the proposed hasbara budget seeks to finance in 2026. In previous years, "public diplomacy" funds have been used to finance NGOs like ISGAP and CyberWell which work to censor Americans on social media and lobby to discipline college campuses on behalf of Israel. Readers can safely assume we will see more of both.

The article first appeared on *The American Conservative*.

# Israel set to sell defense company stakes to offset war costs



A rocket is launched near residential buildings in an urban area in Israel, in this undated photograph. The projectile leaves a trail of smoke as it rises into the sky above the city skyline.

● AP

## ANALYSIS

Israel plans to sell stakes in some of its largest weapons manufacturers as it seeks to raise revenue to offset a surge in defense spending from the past two years of conflict, senior government officials said. Yali Rothenberg, the finance ministry's accountant general, told the FT that work had already begun on the privatization of Israel Aerospace Industries, whose products include the Arrow air defense system, missiles and drones. It is also examining the possibility of privatizing Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, which manufactures Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling air defense systems. Rothenberg said that in light

of "the additional resources required for defense", the government was considering "the partial privatization of certain defense-related assets". However, Rothenberg and Gil Pinchas, who spoke to the FT shortly before he stepped down as chief financial adviser to the Israeli military and defense ministry this month, cautioned that privatizing Rafael would be more complicated. The finance ministry estimates the direct security cost of the two years of conflict triggered by Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023, to be \$62 billion, a figure that excludes the impact on the economy. Israel's defense budget soared to 8.3% of GDP in 2024, double the figure from two years earlier, as the country fought conflicts



Israel plans to sell stakes in major defense companies, including Israel Aerospace Industries, to raise funds and offset soaring costs from two years of conflict. The defense budget jumped to 8.3% of GDP in 2024, while exports and profits for these firms also hit record levels.



on at least seven fronts, including in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran. In addition, the US has provided at least \$21.7 billion to Israel since Hamas's attack, according to the Quincy Institute for Responsible Tradecraft. Following US-backed ceasefires in Gaza and elsewhere, Israel's defense budget is forecast to fall to about 5 percent of GDP this year, or \$35 billion, and remain at that level for the medium term, Rothenberg said. The huge spend on defense and the broader economic impact of

the war meant growth declined and the budget deficit widened to 6.8 percent of GDP in 2024. Rothenberg said the government's "working assumption" was that it would sell a 25 percent stake in IAI, "with an upper range of up to 49 percent, subject to government decisions". In a separate interview Pinchas, an Israeli brigadier general, put the initial sale at between 20 percent and 25 percent of the state-owned company, predicting it would happen "within a year or two".

It was too early to determine IAI's valuation, Rothenberg said, but cited the company's order book of almost \$30 billion in arms sales as an indicator of its size. IAI reported sales of \$6.1 billion in 2024, and net income of about \$493 million, a 55 percent increase on the previous year. Rafael has enjoyed a similar boost, with its sales in 2024 increasing by more than a quarter to \$4.8 billion and its net profit rising 64 percent to \$257 million compared with the previous year.

It developed Israel's vaunted Iron Dome system, which was designed to intercept short-range rockets fired from Gaza and elsewhere, with US funding and support, but Israel has never sold the system to a third country despite numerous requests. Israel's defense industry had record exports of \$14.8 billion in 2024, even as the country faced increasing international condemnation over the conduct of its war against Hamas in Gaza. Pinchas said income generated from the sale of a stake in IAI

would help both Israel's state finances and reinvestment into the firm itself. The finance ministry often finds itself in a struggle with the defense ministry over spending and budgets. But the latter could also be expected to make changes to help replenish the government's coffers, including moving some of its operations, such as major bases like the Kirya military headquarters, located in a prime area of central Tel Aviv, to areas where property prices

are cheaper. Rothenberg said "discussions are taking place regarding the relocation of certain Ministry of Defense activities to lower-cost areas, which could allow for the monetization of existing land assets". "Any such measures are intended to help offset the long-term fiscal and financial implications of increased defense expenditure," he said.

*This article was originally published in Financial Times.*

# Why Israeli counterterrorism tactics are showing up in Minnesota

By Connor Echols  
Journalist

## OPINION

A decades-long partnership has included resource sharing and a lot of joint training for ICE and CBP with their counterparts in Israel. In the past few weeks, thousands of federal law enforcement officials have descended on Minneapolis. Videos show immigration officers jumping out of unmarked vans, tackling and pepper-spraying protesters, and breaking windows in order to drag people from their cars.

Prominent figures in the Trump administration have defended this approach despite fierce local backlash. When federal agents killed a protester named Alex Pretti on Saturday, for example, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem quickly accused him of "domestic terrorism."

For observers of the conflict in Israel-Palestine, these scenes can seem eerily familiar. That similarity may not be a coincidence.

Over the past two decades, US immigration officials have maintained a close relationship with the Israeli government. This collaboration has included trips ferrying high-level US law enforcement officials around Israel, joint training for immigration officers, and technology transfers that have put sophisticated surveillance capabilities in the hands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The result has been an increasing mind meld between security agencies in Israel and the United States.

The primary focus of this collaboration is preventing acts of terrorism — a necessary, if fraught, objective. But, as the Trump administration has increasingly reframed its crackdown on undocumented immigration as a sort of new war on terrorism, it has applied these counter-terror tactics to an ever-growing number of people in the United States. This shift, which has drawn backlash despite broad public support for countering illegal immigration, is now giving Americans a taste of how the Israeli military operates in the West Bank, according to Josh Paul, who previously led the arms transfer office at the State Department.

"There are some striking parallels there," Paul said. "You have units of a security force that are imposed on the local authorities, imposed on the local police, that engage in check-

points, detentions, including of children [...] And it seems to operate broadly with impunity."

### A two-decade relationship

When Bill Ayub returned from his trip to Israel, he was impressed — but a bit wary. Israeli surveillance software is "a little more invasive than you would see here in the US," the former Ventura County sheriff told Jewish Currents in 2022. And the use of force in arrests was "shocking," Ayub said. "It was like, 'Wow, you do that?' [...] We'd be in jail if we did something like that here."



Federal agents face protesters in south Minneapolis after Alex Pretti was fatally shot by immigration officers in the area on January 24, 2026. ● GETTY IMAGES

Ayub is one of hundreds of senior American law enforcement officers who, over the last two decades, have toured Israel and met Israeli law enforcement officials with the help of non-profit organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA). Public information about these trips, which focus on counter-terrorism, is limited. But an itinerary from a 2016 ADL delegation showed meetings scheduled with Israeli officials at a notorious prison and in Hebron, a segregated city in the West Bank. Publicly available information shows that ICE officials participated in eight ADL trips between 2013 and 2016. Joseph Harhay, the current assistant chief of Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), joined a JINSA junket back in 2018. These privately-funded trips are just one facet of the rela-

tionship. The Bush administration created ICE and CBP in 2003, when it restructured the federal government following the 9/11 attacks. The agencies, both of which are part of the Department of Homeland Security, became part of a government-wide effort to combat terrorism. "ICE has grown with the global war on terror," said Anthony Aguilar, a retired Army officer and activist. Congress quickly looked abroad for help, setting up a DHS office focused primarily on learning from Israeli officials, according to supporters of the legislation. "I think we can learn a lot from

ICE officers in particular have regularly participated in training alongside Israeli police, according to Aguilar, who said he personally witnessed some of these sessions at Israel's National Urban Training Center while serving in the Army. (The former senior DHS official confirmed that ICE officers often train in Israel; DHS did not respond to a request for comment.) Technology transfer has been another important point of collaboration. Part of this is due to the close ties between the military and surveillance tech industries in both countries. The Israeli military, for example, uses software from Ameri-

can companies like surveillance giant Palantir, which also works with ICE. ICE, for its part, has purchased sophisticated phone hacking technology from controversial Israeli companies like Cellebrite and Paragon. These tools have helped ICE build what critics call a surveillance "dragnet," gathering data on large portions of the American public, including citizens. It is unclear whether the US government has facilitated these transfers of surveillance technology. But we do know that American officials are interested in promoting this sort of collaboration. Since 2015, the Binational Industrial Research and Development (BIRD) Program has brought together DHS and Israel's Ministry of National Security to "develop advanced technologies for homeland security needs," according to DHS. In 2022, the Biden administration launched

“

US immigration agencies ICE and CBP have long trained with Israeli security forces, adopting surveillance tools and counterterror tactics. This collaboration, originally aimed at preventing terrorism, has increasingly shaped domestic immigration enforcement, leading to aggressive operations in Minneapolis against protesters and undocumented immigrants.

”

Observers note striking parallels between Israeli military practices in the West Bank and recent US federal actions. Critics warn that the use of these tactics, including detentions, forceful arrests, and advanced surveillance, on American soil raises ethical and legal concerns, even as administrations defend them as necessary for security.

another initiative aimed at promoting collaboration between DHS and Israel's National Cyber Directorate.

Other similarities may simply stem from the close relationship that US and Israeli officials have maintained over the years. DHS Secretary Kristi Noem, for example, met last year with Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir, a controversial official who shares Noem's commitment to hard-nosed policing.

And some parallels have nothing to do with the US-Israel relationship per se. Israel's military, for example, has shown a lack of discipline and combat readiness during the war in Gaza, which some experts blame on poor training and a rapid expansion of active duty call-ups. ICE has faced similar discipline challenges amid its head-spinning growth under the Trump administration, which has boosted the agency's annual budget by roughly 200% and more than doubled its officer headcount in less than a year to more than 20,000 agents. (3,000 ICE and CBP officers have been sent to Minnesota alone.) "It's kind of every man for himself. They are obviously not operating under any standard operating procedures," said Aguilar, who observed protests in Minneapolis this week and worked as a military contractor in Gaza during the war. "This is exactly how the Israel Defense Forces operate in Gaza."

Of course, scenes in Minneapolis have sparked a reaction that the administration will be hard-pressed to ignore. Indeed, President Trump has already started to shift his approach in recent days, demoting a controversial CBP commander and sending his border czar, Tom Homan, to oversee operations with an eye toward de-escalation. Trump has even changed his tune about the killing of two US citizens by ICE, calling both incidents "terrible."

But, given the extent of US-Israel security collaboration and Trump's desire to move quickly on deportations, Minnesota may not be the last state to see these sorts of tactics — and technologies — deployed on its streets. "None of this surprises me," the former senior DHS official said, adding that they still hope internal pressure could encourage the administration to change course. "I'm kind of shocked that people are just now making these comparisons."

*This article was originally published in Responsible Statecraft.*



# Iran to open VNL campaign against Brazil



## Sports Desk

Iran will begin its 2026 Men's Volleyball Nations League campaign against Brazil in Brasília on June 10. Volleyball World announced the full match schedule for the annual flagship event on Friday, with 18 teams learning their paths in the preliminary round. Iran and Brazil also squared off in their VNL opener last year in the Brazilian capital, with the South American powerhouse emerging victorious in straight sets. Tricky tests will come thick and fast in Week 1 for Italian head coach Roberto Piazza's men, who will take on Bulgaria — finalists at last September's World Championships — on June 11, before facing Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium. Iran also played Argentina and Bulgaria in last year's edition, defeating the former 3-1 before concluding the preliminary phase with a straight-sets win against the European powerhouse. Iran will then visit Orléans, France, for the second week

of action, starting with a daunting task against the hosts and reigning Olympic champions France at the CO'Met Arena on June 24. This will be followed by matches against the United States (June 25), Japan (June 26) and Cuba (June 28). Iran's game against France will be a repeat of last year's preliminary encounter, which the European heavyweights comfortably won in straight sets. Meanwhile, Iran squandered a two-set lead to fall to the United States in a five-set thriller in Brasília. The third and final week of the preliminaries will see Roberto Piazza's men go head-to-head with Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, with further tests against Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17) and Türkiye (July 19). Iran will again be looking to make amends for last year's preliminary setbacks, having suffered defeats against both Germany and Slovenia. The top eight teams in the 18-team standings will progress to the VNL Finals, which begin in Ningbo Beilun, China, on July 29. Hosts China are already guaran-

teed a place in the quarter-finals. Iran will aim to build on a promising first year under Piazza by securing its first quarterfinal berth in four years at the prestigious tournament. After finishing in the bottom three in the two previous editions, Iran staged a late surge in the 2025 preliminaries to place eighth with six wins from 12 matches. However, Piazza's team ultimately missed out on the Finals, as China's host status secured them a quarterfinal spot despite the Asian side finishing second from bottom. Momentum from several impressive VNL performances carried into the World Championship in the Philippines, where Iran advanced to the quarterfinals before suffering a 3-1 defeat to surprise package Czechia.



Iranian middle-blocker Mohammad Valizadeh (27) hits a spike during a straight-set defeat against Brazil at the 2025 Volleyball Nations League in Brasilia, Brazil, on June 11, 2025.  
● VOLLEYBALL WORLD

## Zagreb Open Ranking Series:

# Jarkani grabs Greco-Roman gold, Dalkhani settles for bronze

## Sports Desk

The opening day of the Greco-Roman contests at the Zagreb Open saw Iranian wrestler Erfan Jarkani cap his 63kg campaign with a gold medal, while former world champion Meisam Dalkhani finished with bronze on Friday. A world junior and under-23 bronze medalist in 2024, Jarkani overcame Kazakhstan's Saifulla Kurman (10-1), Uzbekistani Khushniddin Olimboev (9-1) and Moldova's Vitalie Eriomenco (3-1), before

defeating India's Chetan Chetan 8-4 in a thrilling final at Arena Zagreb. With the opening Ranking Series event of the season serving as the second phase of Iran's team selection process for major events later in the year, the gold medal secured the 22-year-old a place at April's Asian Championships in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, Dalkhani, who beat Uzbekistan's Islomjon Bakhramov 2-0 in the quarterfinals, was outclassed 14-5 by

Chetan in the semifinals, but recovered to hammer Kazakhstan's Dastan Zarlykhanov by technical superiority (8-0) and claim a shared bronze medal alongside Eriomenco. Elsewhere, Iran's Mohammad Kamali and Ahmadreza Mohsennejad endured disappointing runs in the 67kg category. Kamali bounced back from a last-16 defeat (6-4) to Georgia's Diego Chkhikvadze by edging former European champion Murat Firat of Türkiye 5-4 in the repechage, before falling 3-2 to

Japan's Katsuaki Endo in the bronze-medal bout. Mohsennejad's campaign ended in the qualification round after the 21-year-old – winner of the 2024 world junior title and a world under-23 bronze medalist last October – suffered a 9-0 rout at the hands of Uzbekistan's Oybek Sharibjonov. The Iranian duo's results mean compatriot Saeid Esmaeili is all but guaranteed a shot at a second successive World Championships gold in Manama, Bahrain, in October.



Iranian Greco-Roman wrestler Erfan Jarkani (red) has his hand raised as the winner against India's Chetan Chetan in the 63kg final at the Zagreb Open in Zagreb, Croatia, on February 6, 2026.  
● IAWFIR

## CAVA Women's League:

# Sepahan sweeps Nepal Police to maintain perfect run

## Sports Desk

The third day of action at the CAVA Women's League saw Iran's Foolad Mobarakeh Sepahan continue its perfect start to the event in Malé, Maldives, with a straight-set victory (25-14, 25-15, 25-18) over Nepal Police

Club in Pool B on Friday. The Iranian side set the tone early and sustained its level throughout the match to remain in pole position for a place in the semifinals. Fatemeh Khalili topped the scoring for Sepahan, with additional contributions from Elaheh Poursaleh, Ma-

soumeh Qadami and middle blocker Zahra Karimi. Sepahan had opened its campaign with a 3-1 win over home favorite Huraa Community Club the previous day at the Social Center Indoor Hall. Iranian international outside hitter Khalili also impressed with a game-high 19 points as Sepahan won the opening set 25-14 but slipped 25-23 in the second, before easing to 25-14 and 25-12 in the following sets to close out the contest. Organized by the Central Asian Volleyball Association (CAVA), the tournament features seven clubs from across Central and South Asia and serves as a qualification pathway for the upcoming AVC Women's Champions League, with the champion earning a place at April's showpiece event in Goyang, South Korea.



Sepahan outside-hitter Fatemeh Khalili (16) hits a spike during a 3-0 victory over Nepal Police Club at the CAVA Women's League in Malé, Maldives, on February 6, 2026.  
● AVC

## Sabzi wins U21 silver at Asian Snooker Championships

## Sports Desk

Iran's Shahin Sabzi settled for silver in the under-21 event at the Asian Snooker Championships in Doha, Qatar, after a 4-1 defeat to Pakistan's Ahsan Ramzan in a drama-filled, error-strewn final on Friday. Ahsan, the 2022 World Amateur Snooker champion, edged a scrappy opening frame 79-30, producing a superb clearance after Sabzi – who had led by 26 points – missed several chances to close it out.

Sabzi leveled the match by claiming the second frame with a 57 break, capitalizing on Ahsan's frustration following a missed straightforward shot. The 20-year-old Ahsan responded emphatically in the third frame. A clinical 65 break, followed by a sublime 54 clearance, restored his lead at 2-1. The fourth frame encapsulated the tension of the contest. Sabzi, trailing throughout, mounted a gritty comeback from the colors, only to miss

a simple green with the frame at his mercy. After both players traded further errors, Ahsan eventually potted the blue and pink to move within one frame of the title at 3-1. With the championship in sight, the fifth and decisive frame turned into a nerve-racking safety battle. Sabzi started strongly but was repeatedly wasteful, while Ahsan capitalized on a fluked pink to establish a lead. With only the colors remaining, the drama of the previous frame resurfaced. After both players missed the brown, Sabzi made the final error, allowing Ahsan to pot the pink and seal the title. The result marked Sabzi's second medal in Doha, following his impressive bronze in the men's senior event. Armin Javaheri and Shahab Ali Esmaeili were the other Iranian competitors in the under-21 age group, exiting in the last 16 after 4-0 defeats to opponents from Pakistan and Hong Kong, respectively.



Iran's Shahin Sabzi (l) poses for a photo alongside Pakistan's Ahsan Ramzan ahead of the men's under-21 final at the Asian Snooker Championships in Doha, Qatar, on February 6, 2026.  
● ACBS



# Traditional ponds shape comfort, culture in Khorasan Razavi Province

## Iranica Desk

In the vast, arid expanses of Khorasan Razavi Province, where architecture is deeply shaped by dry and semi-arid climatic conditions, the courtyard pond — or *howz* — is no longer an optional feature. It is a vital and intelligent necessity in the design of both private and public spaces.

The presence of a pond in the center of traditional homes in cities such as Mashhad, Neyshabur, and Sabzevar reflects the profound understanding of survival principles possessed by our ancestors in harsh climates and their pursuit of moderation. This water element creates an inseparable link between humans, architecture, and the region's challenging natural environment, according to ISNA. Within the province's traditional urban fabric, the pond represents a clear balance among the four classical elements. While soil and wind dominate the area, water serves as a regulating factor, making the living space more habitable. Its role goes far beyond aesthetics, directly influencing the internal microclimate and comfort of the home.

From a climatic standpoint, ponds in the province function much like natural evaporative cooling systems. Continuous evaporation from the water surface adds necessary moisture to the dry air and effectively lowers temperatures around the courtyard — a crucial benefit during long, hot summers. The reflection of sunlight on the water, rather than absorbing heat, helps moderate lighting and reduces direct, harsh exposure on courtyard walls. This natural mechanism not only eliminates energy consumption but also positively impacts the respiratory comfort of residents. Beyond homes, large ponds were often designed in historical complexes and caravan-



serais across the province to store greater volumes of water and extend their cooling influence to broader spaces. In Persian gardens, often conceived as miniature earthly paradises, the central pond functioned as a primary reservoir, distributing water through channels and aqueducts (*qanats* and guided streams) to irrigate trees and plants, sustaining life in an otherwise arid landscape.

"The architecture of every region tells a complex story of human adaptation to the environment, cultural values, and the practical needs of inhabitants," said Ehsan Fakhraei, an expert in Iranian architecture. "In Khorasan Razavi Province, with its dry, hot climate, this story is most vividly about survival." Fakhraei explained that in traditional urban layouts, the pond was usually placed at the center of both inner and outer courtyards, playing a vital role in climate regulation and mitigating extreme heat. He emphasized that ponds were not merely a source of water for homes or gardens, but the "beating heart" of semi-open spaces, carrying emotional and aesthetic significance and giving meaning to the contrast of water and sun. With rapid urbanization and the proliferation of concrete apartment blocks in cities like



Mashhad, Fakhraei expressed concern over the gradual disappearance of ponds from Iranian homes. "This removal has caused irreparable damage to urban quality of life and weakened people's connection to their architectural heritage, especially in a region historically dependent on water for comfort," he said.

He stressed that ponds are an integral part of the province's cultural identity and indigenous water management knowledge. Their absence in contemporary architecture not only creates a critical gap in thermal comfort but also increases disconnection from nature and cultural heritage.



● [vista.ir](#)

ter-scarce provinces, applied remarkable strategies to design spaces that ensure serenity and well-being."

As urbanization and apartment living have risen, traditional ponds are increasingly absent from modern homes. This not only reduces environmental quality but negatively affects residents' mental health. Life in concrete apartment blocks, disconnected from nature, contributes to stress and fatigue while weakening people's relationship with their cultural and environmental heritage.

Ali Reza Yavari, an expert in historical building restoration, described the pond as more than a cooling feature, but as a visual and symbolic centerpiece. He noted that in the province's historical fabric, ponds were intelligently positioned so that surrounding ivans, halls, and rooms enjoyed direct, unobstructed views. This spatial organization established a visual hierarchy, making the pond the central focus of the home.

He emphasized the aesthetic dimension of reflected water, harmonizing with local decorative elements. The water's surface acts like a clear mirror, reflecting turquoise and lapis-lazuli tilework — symbols of the region's architecture — enhanc-

ing spatial depth and creating a perception of expansiveness within relatively enclosed courtyards. This reflection also brings the sky and exterior elements into interior spaces.

Yavari said that revisiting architectural principles and incorporating these intelligent elements — which simultaneously manage water, provide climate comfort, and create visual beauty — can enhance quality of life in modern Iranian cities while strengthening our connection to nature and cultural heritage.

He described ponds as a passive engineering masterpiece, central to regulating courtyard microclimates. He also highlighted the auditory impact, explaining that the gentle sound of flowing water or fountains creates a constant, calming ambient soundscape. This natural "white noise" effectively masks disruptive external sounds, providing an ideal environment for meditation and deep conversations.

Yavari criticized modern architecture for eliminating courtyards in favor of enclosed interiors, pointing out the significant challenges this creates. "The removal of natural evaporation has forced reliance on expensive mechanical systems. Meanwhile, living in concrete boxes with little interaction with nature increases stress and mental fatigue, as humans inherently need contact with water, sound, and the reflection of light," he said.

He stressed that while fully reproducing historical ponds everywhere may not be feasible, their instructive lessons — the integration of water, evaporative cooling, and nature-centered visual focus — should form the foundation for new public and private spaces in Khorasan Razavi and across Iran. Investing in these heritage principles ensures the quality of life for future generations.

## Qasemabad preserves Iran's Chadorshab tradition

## Iranica Desk

Qasemabad is a village in the Oshiyani rural district of Roodsar, located in the eastern part of Gilan Province. For many Iranians, the name Qasemabad is closely associated with color, joy, and traditional craftsmanship. The village is widely known as one of Iran's most important centers of handwoven textiles, celebrated for its vibrant fabrics and traditional clothing featuring horizontal, multicolored stripes.

The most significant product of Qasemabad is Chadorshab — locally known as Lavan. This traditional fabric, made of cotton, silk, or wool, has long been woven in Gilan and Mazandaran provinces. It is produced mainly by women using a traditional handloom called Pachal. Owing to the widespread employment of women in this craft, the high quality of the textiles, and the establishment of several local centers dedicated to preserving and pro-



● [bazarekar.ir](#)

moting the art, Qasemabad was nationally registered in 2018 as Iran's Village of Chadorshab Weaving. It became the second national handicrafts village in Gilan Province, after Fashtakeh of Khomam. The strong connection between Chadorshab weaving and the local lifestyle — along with its authenticity, creativity, and on-

going innovation — soon attracted international attention. Following evaluations and visits by inspectors from the World Crafts Council, Qasemabad was inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Cities and Villages of Crafts in January 2020, earning the title World Village of Chadorshab Weaving. Qasemabad's Chadorshabs are



● [IRNA](#)

especially admired for their vivid colors and distinctive designs, most of which are created through imaginative weaving without pre-drawn patterns. Many motifs are inspired by nature, including Sheneh-Gol, Qali-Gol, Sarv-Gol, Chehel-Cheragh, Parand, and Booteh-Charkh. In the past, women in northern Iran tied Chadorshab around

their waists while working in rice fields. Today, the fabric has found new applications as tablecloths, curtains, bed linens, and elements of modern clothing.

Currently, more than 600 women in Qasemabad are engaged in Chadorshab weaving. Numerous centers support the education, promotion, and innovation

of this traditional craft, including weaving workshops, handicrafts shops, and the dedicated Chadorshab Weaving Museum. While Qasemabad remains the heart of this tradition, the approximately 2,000-year-old craft is also practiced in other villages in eastern Gilan and Mazandaran, such as Band-e Bon.

In the broader context of Gilan Province, Qasemabad's Chadorshab weaving stands alongside a wide range of traditional handicrafts that reflect the region's close relationship with nature and daily life. Crafts such as mat-weaving from rice straw, silk weaving, wood carving, pottery, and traditional clothing production continue to shape Gilan's cultural landscape. Together, these handmade arts not only preserve centuries-old knowledge and skills, but also support local livelihoods and strengthen the province's identity as one of Iran's most important centers of living handicraft traditions.





# Iran posts €224m in annual handicrafts exports

## Anbaran kilim drive underpins push towards €1b target

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran exported €224 million worth of handicrafts over the past year, with an equal volume carried out through so-called suitcase trade, lifting the sector's total overseas sales to nearly €500 million, the tourism minister said on Saturday during a provincial visit to northwest Iran.

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks while touring the permanent handicrafts exhibition in Anbaran, a town in Ardabil Province designated as Iran's national center for kilim (a flat tapestry-woven carpet) weaving, IRNA reported.

He added that the government had set an ambitious target under the Seventh Development Plan (2023-2027) to raise annual handicrafts exports to €1 billion and create 100,000 jobs each year across the sector.

During the visit, the minister said 60 trillion rials in funding and concessional facilities had been earmarked nationwide for handicrafts and eco-tourism,

stressing that the resources were legally allocated to the public and that banks were obliged to disburse them.

He also acknowledged persistent bottlenecks, including access to raw materials, high insurance premiums and weak market linkages, saying talks were under way with the Social Security Organization and Parliament to resolve artists' insurance coverage.

Salehi-Amiri highlighted Anbaran's bid to secure global recognition for its kilim weaving, saying the town's existing national status and production capacity justified pursuit of registration as a World Crafts City.

Such recognition, he said, would position Anbaran as a major hub for the manufacture and distribution of Iranian handicrafts in regional and international markets.

He singled out the role of local women artisans in sustaining the industry, saying their work met global quality standards and formed a backbone of the local economy. Strengthening the town's visual identity, including the installation of a signature handicrafts



Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks on the sidelines of his visit to the permanent handicrafts exhibition in Anbaran, Ardabil Province, northwestern Iran, on February 7, 2026.

● CHTN

monument, was also on the agenda, he added.

The comments came during a two-day visit to Ardabil Province on February 7-8, during which Salehi-Amiri also inspected a privately funded four-star hotel under construction in Namin county and held meetings with lawmakers and private-sector investors.

He said Ardabil's economy, heavily reliant on tourism and handicrafts, required targeted investment support to unlock growth.

The minister announced that 15 trillion rials in financing would be made available to tourism investors in the province, describing the move as part of a broader effort to address infrastructure gaps in cultural heritage, tourism and



handicrafts.

He apologized for what he called longstanding shortcomings in public service delivery across the three sectors.

Ardabil Province, with a population of about 1.3 million, lies in north-western Iran and is known for its rich craft traditions and tourism assets.

## 'Somewhere at the End of the Street', portrait of Iran's first martyred nuclear scientist

### From European classrooms to Lebanese battle lines on the stage



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

### INTERVIEW

The stage production 'Somewhere at the End of the Street,' written by Mohsen Alemzadeh and co-directed by Ahmad Nadafi and Sadeqh Nasiri, hails from the city of Yazd in central Iran and takes up the life of Martyr Mohammad Hossein Ramezankhani, a figure whom the director describes as Iran's first martyred nuclear scientist.



Ahmad Nadafi

'Somewhere at the End of the Street' is not merely a historical reenactment. It is a dramatic re-reading of the life of a lesser-known yet deeply consequential figure in contemporary Iranian history. Centering on the life of Martyr Mohammad Ramazankhani, the play sets out to restage the bond between science, struggle, and resistance in theatrical form, a bond that stretches from European universities to the tangled arenas of Lebanese politics and civil war.

With a multi-layered narrative, the production carries the audience back to the turbulent years of the 1970s, when political struggle, academic pursuit, and the early formation of resistance networks across the region were tightly interwoven. The dramatic spine of the play is built around Ramezankhani's year-long disappearance and a cryptic letter his companions receive, an entry point into revisiting his life, his ideas, and the intricate power dynamics at play in Lebanon.

The play was staged at the 44th Fad'jr International Theater Festival, with public performances scheduled to continue in theaters across the country. Speaking to Iran Daily, director Ahmad Nadafi discussed the subject matter and the production's genesis, explaining that the core focus is the life of Martyr Mohammad Ramezankhani, a nuclear scientist assassinated in Lebanon. Since Ramezankhani was originally from Yazd, and the theater group is also based in that province, this shared geography became a driving force behind the choice of subject.

Nadafi noted that the play, in part, traces the formation of resistance

forces, forces whose early nucleus included Jews, Muslims, and individuals from various countries. These figures would gather in a café during the evenings, hashing out plans to establish and strengthen resistance cells. Even so, the central axis of the work remains Ramezankhani's life.

Reflecting on an earlier staging, Nadafi explained that roughly four years ago the play was performed for the resistance festival, but in a very different form. It ran for a single performance and then stalled. Afterward, the team rewrote the script from the ground up and relaunched the project with a stronger ensemble. This version, he emphasized, differs radically from the previous one, everything from the staging and set design to the rewritten text, altered narrative lines, and reworked story segments marks a complete overhaul.

Nadafi added that a book and a film on the subject had previously been produced in collaboration with the Art Bureau, and the theater team drew on years of research conducted there. Considerable time was spent shaping the script so that Ramezankhani's activities and struggles would take center stage more forcefully. The 12-day war also served as a catalyst to deepen the play's engagement with themes of war. In the initial version, Ramezankhani's academic field and nuclear work received little emphasis, but in the current production, that dimension comes sharply into focus.

Playwright Mohsen Alemzadeh elaborated on the segments of Ramezankhani's life highlighted in the play, noting that a significant portion unfolded in Lebanon. Ramezankhani studied in Austria before being introduced, through Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, to Mostafa Chamran in Lebanon. The play concentrates on his years in Lebanon between 1974 and 1980.

Alemzadeh explained that during

this period, Ramezankhani was engaged in militant activities, which placed him under suspicion by SAVAK and ultimately led to his abduction. Using the episode of his kidnapping as a narrative pretext, the play probes power relations and the underlying causes of Lebanon's internal wars, conditions that paved the way for the emergence of what came to be known as the resistance, with the Islamic Republic at its helm and Ramezankhani as part of that current.

Tracing Ramezankhani's path, Alemzadeh said that in the mid-1960s, escalating threats and pressure from SAVAK prompted senior figures to advise him to leave Iran and continue his studies in Austria. Alongside his education, he remained active in political and revolutionary work through the Islamic Students Association of Austria. After earning a bachelor's degree in atomic physics, he relocated to Lebanon, enrolled in a doctoral program in atomic physics at the University of Beirut, and took part in founding the Islamic Union Association in Lebanon and the Middle East.

According to Alemzadeh, SAVAK's reach extended into Austria and Lebanon, subjecting Ramezankhani to threats and torture. Beyond Lebanon, he also traveled through Syria and neighboring countries, playing an influential and clarifying role in the struggle against the Pahlavi regime. During his time in Lebanon, Ramezankhani worked closely with Martyr Chamran, tending to orphans and those in need whenever possible and striving to build unity and cohesion within the resistance front.

Describing the play's narrative structure, Alemzadeh explained that before the Revolution, Ramezankhani is abducted by SAVAK and disappears for a year. During this absence, members of his militant circle receive a letter from him, its origin unknown. The letter becomes the dramatic device through which his life is revisited,

ed, while the factional wars and internal party conflicts of Lebanon are examined in parallel.

On the portrayal of Ramezankhani's martyrdom, Alemzadeh said that through his efforts, alongside Iraqi students, several operations were planned against Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime. His calculated and revolutionary actions against the interests of global arrogance and the Zionist regime placed him squarely in the crosshairs of the imperial-Zionist front. Ultimately, on July 3, 1980, as he was returning from his final university exams, this scientific and militant elite was gunned down by Ba'athist mercenaries and attained martyrdom.

Alemzadeh clarified that Ramezankhani had been in Lebanon prior to the Islamic Revolution and was martyred in 1980, four months before the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). The main body of the story is set in 1974 and unfolds through flashbacks. Years after his death, the narrative loops backward to examine his period of disappearance, the roots of Lebanon's ethnic, party-based, and political conflicts, and ultimately the reasons behind his assassination. A doctoral student in nuclear physics, Ramezankhani was killed by the Iraqi Ba'athist regime after an exam session, following his move from Austria to Lebanon. In the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and ahead of its invasion of Iran, the Ba'athist regime, working with Israel, resolved to assassinate active Iranian figures across different countries.

According to both the director and the playwright, 'Somewhere at the End of the Street' will continue its run following its appearance at the 44th Fad'jr International Theater Festival, with public performances planned in Tehran and other cities. The production is also being prepared for participation in the resistance festival.