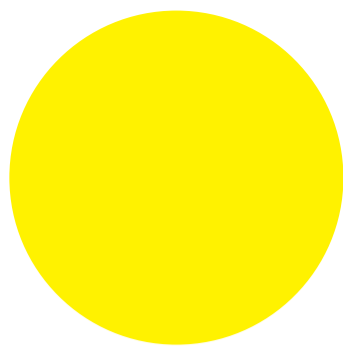


Darak village gains global spotlight with UN tourism nomination



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# Iran Daily

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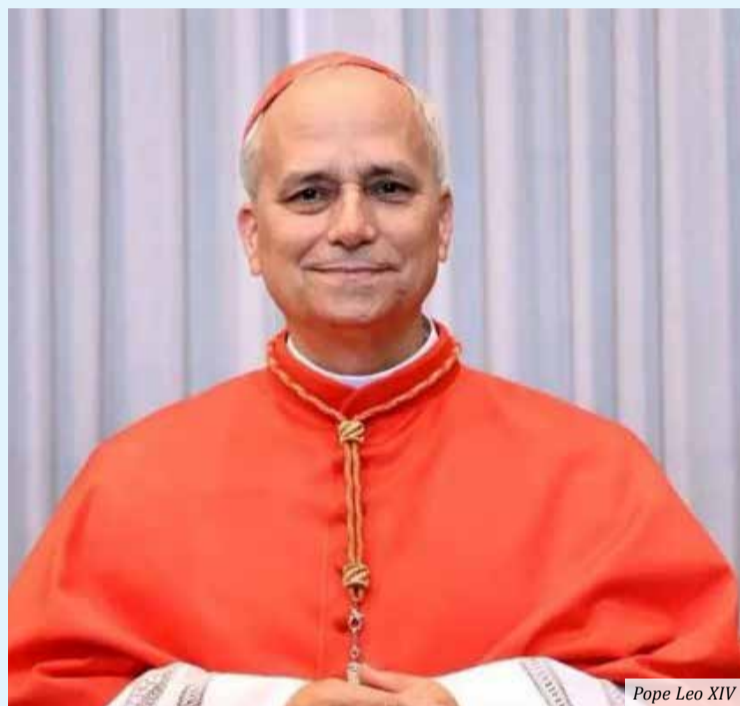
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## Trump's China trip yielded no economic gain

By Majid Shakeri  
Economic analyst

### OPINION

US President Donald Trump's relationship with China remains shaped, in nearly every dimension, by Washington's failed tariff war against Beijing last year. Although the tariffs were initially rolled out against much of the world, China was always the main target, largely because it holds the largest trade surplus with the United States and much of the global economy.

Beijing's response, particularly its use of rare earth minerals as leverage, alongside the US Supreme Court's questioning of the legal basis for the tariff campaign, handed Washington a major setback. The result is that the US now appears compelled, at least for the next four or five years, to dial back its direct confronta-

tional tone toward China while it works to reduce its dependence on rare earth supplies.

That does not mean pressure has disappeared. Washington continues to push through alternative channels. But publicly, the United States can no longer apply the kind of overt pressure it used during Trump's first term or under former president Joe Biden.

For China, the issue extends well beyond trade. Beijing increasingly views any naval blockade targeting Iran as part of a broader American effort to contain China itself. Chinese officials see such moves through the lens of growing US naval pressure on China's own strategic and commercial interests. As a result, Chinese policymakers are now reviewing blockade scenarios not only in relation to Iran, but across a much wider geography stretching from the Sea of Oman to the Taiwan Strait.

Washington announced in 2019 that it would gradually deploy an independent fleet to operate in the Indian Ocean. Since then, Chinese strategists have increasingly framed the concept of blockade as a direct challenge to China rather than simply a pressure tactic aimed at Tehran.

At the same time, worsening global climate conditions have pushed Beijing to treat energy policy as a security issue, not merely an economic one. China is trying, as much as possible, to avoid disruptions to the structure and balance of its energy supply. That concern became even more pronounced after the fall of Nicolás Maduro's government in Venezuela in early January, which reinforced the perception in Beijing that Washington is prepared to use control over oil flows as a geopolitical weapon against China.

In Iran, there has been an assumption that Beijing would refuse to cooperate

with any blockade effort. Now recent developments have made clear that the issue of the Strait of Hormuz is tied first and foremost to ending the American blockade itself. As long as that pressure remains in place, Iran has little reason to reopen the strait or facilitate the movement of goods and energy shipments through it.

From Iran's perspective, it was the United States that turned the strait into a conflict zone in the first place by making it unsafe. That, in turn, strengthened Iran's belief that as long as the US maintains its pressure campaign, the Islamic Republic must preserve security control over the broader strategic corridor, now understood to stretch from southern Iraq to the western shores of the United Arab Emirates. China is fully aware of this calculation.

That is precisely why Beijing continues to insist that the region should not be

militarized. In China's view, the United States should not use the strait as a route for military deployments, nor should it once again expand its bases in the southern Persian Gulf into large-scale international military hubs equipped with long-range radar systems.

Regional American bases have become instruments for destabilizing the Persian Gulf. Iran, China, Russia and several other countries all oppose the militarization of the region.

Although Washington postponed Trump's trip to China in hopes of arriving with stronger leverage on the Iran issue and presenting the visit as a diplomatic step forward, the United States failed to secure any major breakthrough on its core objective. Strategically, the meeting bears little resemblance to the image American officials envisioned four or six months ago, and the gains Washington hoped to achieve have not materialized.



# Pezeshkian hails Pope's stance on war against Iran

President reaffirms commitment to diplomacy to resolve disputes with US

## International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday commended Pope Leo for his recent stance on the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, while urging the international community to counter the "illegal demands and adventurous, dangerous policies" of the US government. In a message to the leader of the world's Catholics, Pezeshkian thanked the Pope for his "ethical, logical, and fair positions" on the war which the president branded as an assault on the rule of law at the global level, international law, human values, and the teachings of divine religions. Pezeshkian said that the "destructive approach" of the United States and Israel, along with their "illegitimate

attacks," were not directed solely against Iran.

"The costs of this dangerous approach will inevitably be borne by the entire international community," he pointed out.

Leo, the first American pontiff, had decried the deaths of "so many" civilians in the conflict and lamented the collapse of US-Iran peace talks. According to the Pope, the aggression created a "chaotic situation for the global economy," along with "a whole population in Iran, of innocent people, which is suffering because of this war."

His criticism met with a sharp reaction from the US President Donald Trump who criticized Leo, calling him "weak on crime".

The war broke out on February 28 with airstrikes that assassinated

senior Iranian officials and commanders, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. More than 3,700 people were killed in the strikes on Iran.

The president noted that Iran had consistently proven its "commitment to diplomacy and peaceful solutions for resolving issues," including with the US government.

"Despite repeated US betrayals of the negotiating table, Iran has welcomed mediation and entered the Islamabad talks in good faith and professionally."

The president also warned that the use of US military bases in Persian Gulf Arab countries for the aggression forced Iran's Armed Forces, in self-defense, to target aggressor interests and assets in those countries.

"This is while, as history testifies, we have never threatened or encroached upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our neighbors, and we continue to seek the best possible relations with all our neighbors, as well as a life of peace, tranquility, and prosperity in the region," he stated.

The president reaffirmed Iran's commitment to dialogue and peaceful problem-solving, saying that resistance to illegal US demands was tantamount to defending international law and human values.

"The international community is expected to adopt a realistic and fair approach to counter the illegal demands and adventurous, dangerous policies of the United States," he added.



Masoud Pezeshkian  
president.ir

## Hormuz crisis rests with 'initiators of war' against Iran, region: UN envoy



The Gambia-flagged tanker vessel Bili anchors in the Strait of Hormuz off Bandar Abbas, in southern Iran, on May 2, 2026.  
ISNA

## International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations said the responsibility for the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz and its global economic repercussions lies primarily with those who started the war against the Islamic Republic and their regional allies.

Amir Saeed Iravani made the remarks during a special session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) titled "Protecting energy flows and supply; Supporting global development through international cooperation" on Friday, Press TV reported.

"We declare very clearly that the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz

and its global economic consequences are solely the responsibility of the initiators of the war against Iran and their regional partners," he said.

Iravani went on to say that "growing instability in energy markets, supply chains and global trade flows represents a serious challenge to sustainable development, international cooperation and global economic stability."

He further noted that Iran has faced detrimental impacts stemming from two acts of aggression over the past year, both of which constituted blatant violations of the United Nations Charter and international law.

These attacks, Iravani said, have "resulted in the tragic loss of thousands of

innocent civilians, particularly women and children."

They have "also caused widespread destruction of civilian, economic, energy, and environmentally sensitive infrastructure; the consequences of which will not disappear with the end of military operations," he added.

The Iranian envoy to the UN further emphasized that "the most important question before this special meeting is not only how to respond to the current crisis, but also to honestly ask what are the real roots of these crises and growing instabilities."

Iravani proceeded to illuminate certain realities at the core of the current crisis, asserting that they did not "emerge in a vacuum."

He attributed the prevailing instability to the military escalation and unlawful acts of aggression instigated by the Israeli regime and the United States, adding that "these actions have intensified tensions in one of the world's most strategic energy and trade regions and undermined regional and global stability." Iravani further stated that direct assaults on Iran's oil, gas, and petrochemical infrastructure "have caused severe economic and environmental damage in the Persian Gulf region."

Additionally, these attacks have disrupted global energy and fertilizer supply chains, leading to serious implications for food security and agricultural production on a worldwide scale, he said.

## Araghchi: Fallouts of war on US economy could be avoided

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday predicted more economic problems for the ordinary people in the United States as a result of a recent aggression against Iran, saying that the pains facing Americans were "avoidable".

"Americans are told that they must absorb rocketing costs of war of choice on Iran," Araghchi wrote on his X account.

"Put aside gas price hike and stock market bubble. Real pain begins when US debt and mortgage rates start to jump. Auto loan delinquencies are already at 30+-year high," he added.

"This was all avoidable," the top diplomat said.

The US and Israel waged their latest bout of unlawful attacks on Iran between February 28 and April 7.

The aggression prompted decisive and uncompromising reprisal



AFP

featuring devastating blows to American and Israeli targets across the region. In addition to causing extensive material damage to the targeted sites, the Islamic Republic shut down the strategic Strait of Hormuz to enemies and their allies, therefore, sending shockwaves throughout global energy markets.

Including reconstruction and replacement costs, the war is so far estimated to have run Washington a cost likely ranging between \$40

and \$50 billion. Economists, meanwhile, project the overall cost of continued restrictions imposed on the Strait of Hormuz to end up astronomically higher.

On Friday, Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, Iran's Parliament speaker, warned that the United States' efforts at sustaining military escalation near the strait could trigger a fresh global financial crisis at a time when Washington's national debt already stands at a whopping \$39 trillion.

## Tehran tells German chancellor era of unilateral 'musts' over

## International Desk

Iran's ambassador to Germany on Saturday hit back at the German chancellor who has recently stated Iran must return to the negotiating table and open the Strait of Hormuz, saying that the era of unilateral and authoritarian "musts" has ended.

Following a phone conversation with US President Donald Trump on Friday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz in a post on X said that "Iran must now return to the negotiating table," "the Strait of Hormuz must be opened," and "Tehran must not possess nuclear weapons."

Ambassador Majid Nili responded to the Merz's post, saying that, "The era of commanding and unilateral 'musts' is over."

"If the aim is pressure and excessive

demands, the failed experience of American and Israeli warmongers is there for all to see," he added.

Rejecting the allegations regarding Iran's nuclear program, Nili stated, "You know very well that Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons. Do not point the finger at the wrong address."

Addressing German officials directly, he said, "If your concern truly is peace, then as a first step and as a human responsibility, you must condemn the crime of US aggressors targeting elementary school students in Minab."

As many as 168 people, most of them young schoolchildren, were killed in a US airstrike that targeted a school in the city of Minab in the southern province of Hormozgan on the first day of the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

The aggression began on February 28 with airstrikes that assassinated senior Iranian officials and commanders, including Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

In response to the US-Israeli aggression, Iranian Armed Forces launched daily missile and drone operations targeting locations in the Israeli-occupied territories as well as US military bases and assets across the region.

Iran has consistently maintained that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, and that Western claims of an Iranian pursuit of nuclear weapons lack any credible evidence.

Iranian officials have repeatedly stated that pressure, threats, and unilateral rhetoric cannot form the basis for constructive and lasting engagement.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

## CARTOON



# Tehran, Islamabad agree to ease border trade, expedite transit

## Economy Desk

Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni said Iran and Pakistan agreed to introduce measures aimed at simplifying border trade and speeding up transit procedures, as the two neighboring countries seek to expand economic ties and improve cross-border commerce. Speaking after talks with Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran on Saturday, Momeni said both sides had agreed to facilitate trade and reduce administrative barriers along their shared border. "One of the main topics of today's discussions was border trade," Momeni said, according to remarks published by Iran's Interior Ministry. "It was agreed that both Iran and Pakistan would implement measures and facilities to shorten procedures and make border exchanges, transit, commodity exchange and trade easier."

The two countries also discussed the possibility of opening additional border crossings, he added.

Iran and Pakistan share a border stretching roughly 900 km, much of it in remote and underdeveloped areas where security concerns and smuggling have long complicated trade and infrastructure development.

Momeni described the frontier as a "border of friendship, brotherhood and security," adding that cooperation between the two sides would further strengthen border security.

The meeting comes as Tehran seeks to deepen economic ties with neighboring countries as part of broader efforts to offset the impact of illegal Western sanctions and boost regional trade.

Trade between Iran and Pakistan has remained below the levels targeted by officials from both countries, despite repeat-



Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni (R) meets with his Pakistani counterpart, Mohsin Naqvi, in the capital Tehran on May 16, 2026.

IRNA

ed pledges to increase bilateral commerce and improve transport connectivity.

Momeni said both governments were determined to expand not only political relations but also economic and commercial cooperation.

"Necessary facilities must be created on both sides of the border so that this unity, solidarity and brotherhood are strengthened further," he said. Naqvi, for his part, thanked Iranian officials for hosting the talks and said the two sides had held extensive discussions on bilateral relations and border security.

"As mentioned, we had detailed discussions on various issues



related to Iran-Pakistan relations as well as border securi-

ty," Naqvi said. "We hope that with the path we have taken,

we will soon reach tangible solutions in these areas.

## Petchem, steel export curbs to be lifted in 'coming months': TPO



## Economy Desk

A senior official of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) announced on Saturday that export restrictions on downstream petrochemical and

steel products is expected to be removed "in the coming months," as Tehran seeks to preserve regional export markets and deepen trade ties with neighboring countries. Abdolamir Rabiavi, director

general of West Asia at TPO, said export controls on some agricultural products had been imposed only under emergency conditions to protect domestic supply.

"The needs of neighboring countries, as a stable market for us, are important," Rabiavi said, according to comments carried by state media. "In coordination with the Agriculture Ministry, we exported surplus domestic production in order to preserve our target markets."

Rabiavi said he hoped measures currently under consideration would lead to the removal of export restrictions on downstream petrochemical and steel products in the coming months, without providing

a specific timeline.

Iran, one of the West Asia's largest producers of petrochemicals and steel, has periodically imposed export curbs on industrial and agricultural goods in an effort to manage domestic prices and supply shortages.

The official also highlighted the role of trade fairs and international pavilions in expanding foreign trade, saying licenses for trade delegations and international exhibitions were currently being issued.

He added that regional offices of the Trade Promotion Organization were coordinating with Iranian commercial centers abroad, as well as trade counselors at embassies and consulates, to strengthen trade

cooperation.

Rabiavi said the organization was also overseeing subcommittees linked to joint economic commissions with countries including Iraq, Turkey, Oman and South Africa, covering trade, industry and mining cooperation.

"We intend to operationalize these committees in order to seriously pursue the organization's responsibilities for facilitating and strengthening foreign trade with neighboring and non-neighboring countries," he said.

## 'Eurasia System' ready to launch

Separately, the Trade Promotion Organization announced that infrastructure for a new

"Eurasia System" had been completed and was ready to launch.

The platform is designed to digitize customs-related procedures tied to the free trade agreement between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), with the aim of increasing transparency, speeding up trade formalities and improving predictability for businesses.

According to the organization, companies seeking preferential tariffs and customs exemptions for imports from EAEU member states will be required to register certificates of origin and complete related procedures through the new customs system.

## Kharg still has oil storage capacity despite US claims, TankerTrackers says

## Economy Desk

Iran still has available oil storage capacity at its main export hub on Kharg Island and retains a sizeable fleet of tankers capable of transporting crude, oil-tracking service TankerTrackers.com said, amid renewed US claims that sanctions pressure is constraining Tehran's oil exports.

"Kharg Island isn't maxed out of storage space. If it were, they would grab the nearest available tankers and top them up. Instead, oil production has slipped to match the drop in tanker loadings. There are still plenty of tankers they can load," TankerTrackers wrote in a social media post on X. Washington continues to intensify sanctions and blockade enforcement targeting Iran's oil sector, with US officials repeatedly stating that measures aimed at shipping networks, intermediaries and tankers are designed to curb Tehran's crude exports and restrict revenue flows.



Kharg Island  
MEHR

TankerTrackers also said Iran still has access to numerous oil tankers capable of loading and transporting its crude shipments, suggesting Tehran retains logistical flexibility despite years of Western sanctions on its energy and shipping industries.

Kharg Island, located in the Persian Gulf, handles the vast majority of Iran's crude exports and serves as the country's most important oil export terminal. Since May 13 and after a 40-day

illegal war of aggression, the US has imposed a so-called blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil supply passes, disrupting shipping routes and energy trade.

Oil traders and analysts say any sustained disruption to Iranian exports could tighten global crude balances, particularly as OPEC+ producers manage supply cuts and geopolitical risks remain elevated across the West Asian region.

## Agriculture Ministry urges expanded FAO support in crisis conditions

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Agriculture Ministry called on the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on Saturday to expand technical and emergency cooperation with Tehran, including support for development and crisis-response projects.

Hassan Momeni, head of international affairs and specialized organizations at Iran's Agriculture Ministry, called for continued FAO technical assistance to the agricultural sector during a meeting with the agency's representative in Tehran, according to the ministry.

Momeni said Iran wanted stronger cooperation in joint Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) projects as well as FAO emergency initiatives typically provided to countries facing crisis conditions such as war. He thanked the FAO for maintaining cooperation during wartime conditions in Iran and

cited the organization's role in laboratory support and capacity-building for the ministry.

"With the help of the FAO, a specialized regional hub can be created to transfer agricultural knowledge to neighboring countries that need Iran's expertise," Momeni said.

He also urged the organization to intensify efforts to attract international financial donors for Iran's agricultural sector despite existing restrictions. FAO representative in Iran Farukh Toirov said the agency had continued its cooperation with Iran's Agriculture Ministry over the past two months despite difficult conditions and that joint projects and services had not been disrupted.

Toirov said expanding FAO projects could also help develop Iran's agricultural trade and economic sectors because agricultural products are not directly subject to international sanctions.



He added that financing constraints and sanctions-related limitations remained obstacles to expanding projects, but said he would discuss increasing Iran's allocation in FAO programs with senior officials at the organization.

Iran's agricultural sector has faced growing challenges in recent years from drought, inflation, currency depreciation and sanctions that have complicated access to financing, technology and imported inputs, although food and agricultural goods are formally exempt from most Western sanctions regimes.

# Despite budget surge, ICE fails to make US safer

By Mark Krass  
& Margy O'Herron

Fellows at the Brennan Center  
for Justice

## ANALYSIS

President Trump ran for reelection in 2024, vowing to “carry out the largest deportation operation in American history”. To do so, the administration has tasked immigration and law enforcement agencies with arresting at least 3,000 immigrants a day inside the country — not counting those apprehended at the border. This figure is more than seven times the daily number of interior arrests during Trump’s first term, which averaged just above 400 per day. Trump has repeatedly and falsely portrayed immigrants as violent criminals, and senior administration officials have asserted that they are arresting “the worst of the worst” — those who threaten national security or public safety. But that is not true. While immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans, the administration is not focused on arresting those who do. As the head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) admitted, the agency has “opened up the whole aperture”. ICE is now arresting broad swaths of immigrants — in some cases, only on the basis of their accent, apparent ethnicity, or work — including people in the United States lawfully. Many immigrants, regardless of status, have been arrested while attending their immigration hearings or during a routine check-in with ICE. In fact, despite an influx of money from Congress that has trans-

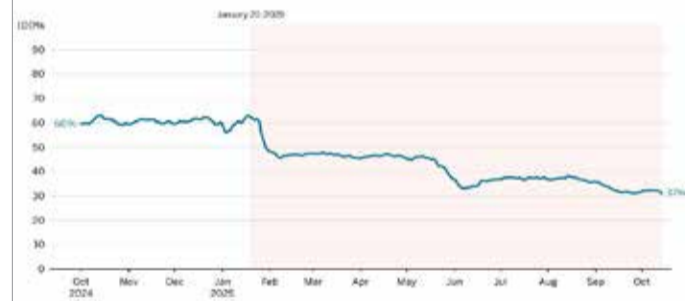


Handcuffed detainees are led into a van by federal agents on South Michigan Avenue as protesters demonstrate on June 4, 2025, outside an ISAP office run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the South Loop. **BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

tion costs the government approximately \$152 per day per person, 38 times the \$4 per day it costs to release someone who doesn’t pose a public safety risk from detention and assign them a case worker to ensure that they show up for key appointments and comply with

land Security Investigations (HSI) agents — almost the subagency’s entire contingent of law enforcement officers — at the expense of their stated mission of combating transnational crimes, such as drug and weapons smuggling, child exploitation, and human trafficking. The result of all these law enforcement personnel being redirected? Arrests have soared, but a diminishing share of those arrested have criminal records. And remarkably, despite ICE tripling its budget since 2024 and more than doubling the number of its officers and agents, the total number of individuals with a criminal history it arrests and detains each day is flat or dropping. According to data provided by ICE to the Deportation Data Project in response to a Freedom of Information Act request and analyzed by the Brennan Center, the share of immigrants arrested and detained

Since Inauguration Day, the share of arrested and detained immigrants who have convictions has dropped by half.

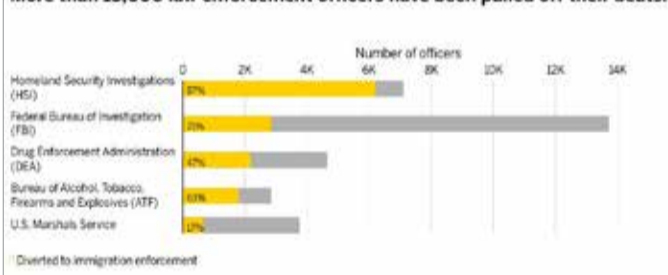


DEPORTATION DATA PROJECT

by ICE with a criminal conviction has fallen dramatically since the start of the Trump administration. In the first two weeks of October 2025, just 31 percent of new detainees had a criminal conviction, compared with 63 percent in the two weeks preceding President Trump’s inauguration. DHS categorizes people with only misdemeanor or administrative offenses — such as driving with-

out a license — as “convicted criminals,” implying that they are dangerous even if they only have a traffic ticket. Nevertheless, in the most recent data, fewer than one in three immigrants in ICE custody were classified as “convicted criminals” under DHS’s broad definition. And ICE is arresting and detaining those with administrative, misdemeanor, and nonviolent offenses (defined narrowly, consistent with

### More than 13,000 law enforcement officers have been pulled off their beats.



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY immigration law. Far from keeping the public safe, the administration is wasting significant public safety resources from across government to find and jail people who pose no discernible threat.

### Failure to arrest more criminals

To meet the administration’s ambitious quotas, law enforcement agencies across the federal government have diverted agents from criminal investigations to help the 6,000 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations officers tasked with arresting immigrants. That includes nearly 3,000 FBI agents — nearly one in every five — who have been reassigned to arrest immigrants instead of conducting complex criminal investigations of corruption, espionage, terrorism, cyberattacks, and transnational gangs. It also includes around one in every two Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agents; two in three Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) agents; and one in five US marshals, based on the most recent available staffing numbers. From within ICE, it also includes 6,000 Home-

formed ICE into the country’s largest law enforcement agency, arrests of immigrants with criminal convictions — particularly for violent crimes — have flatlined. The reason for ICE’s failure to boost arrests of violent criminals is the administration’s singular focus on meeting quotas for total immigrant apprehensions. To boost its numbers, the administration has reassigned law enforcement officers across the federal government from conducting targeted investigations to arresting and detaining people who might pose a threat to the community. Instead, officers are increasingly picking up easy-to-find people with no criminal record because officers suspect they are immigrants. In past administrations, ICE prioritized arrest and deportation of immigrants who posed a public safety or national security threat for arrest; now, it insists on locking up nearly everyone officers think may be an immigrant while their legal status is assessed. Keeping them in jail during the weeks or months it takes to resolve their cases leaves taxpayers on the hook for millions of dollars a day to imprison non-criminals. Incarcera-



Frilei Brás embraces his wife while his children comfort one another on the sofa in the family’s living room in Stoughton, Massachusetts, United States, as he says his goodbyes. Facing the possibility of arrest despite having no criminal record, the undocumented native of Brazil chose to self-deport. **JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF**



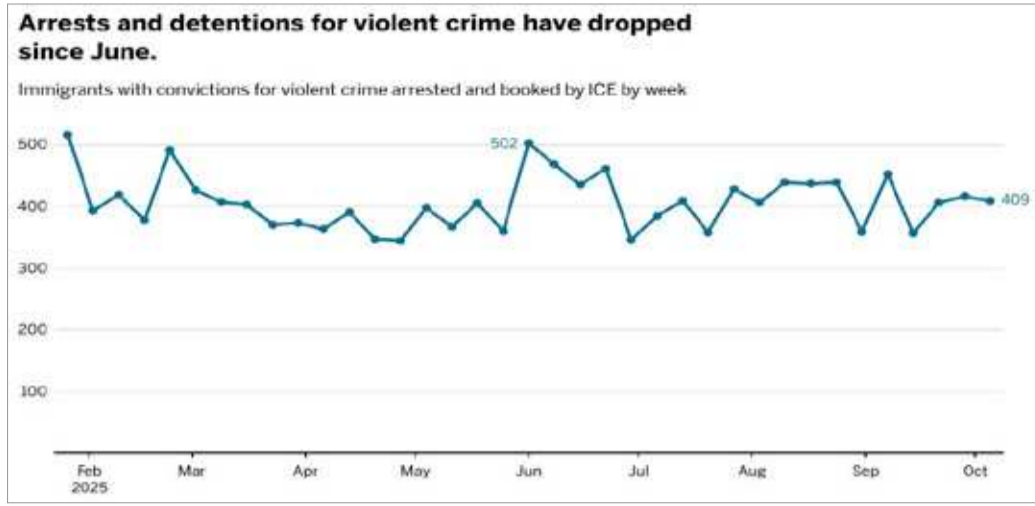
The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is now arresting broad swaths of immigrants — in some cases, only on the basis of their accent, apparent ethnicity, or work — including people in the United States lawfully. Many immigrants, regardless of status, have been arrested while attending their immigration hearings or during a routine check-in with ICE.

prior Brennan Center analysis) at unprecedented rates.

Take immigrants whose only offense is the misdemeanor of crossing the border without documentation, known in the law as an improper entry. Someone with an improper entry offense might be ordered deported after a hearing by an immigration judge. But their crime does not inherently make them a danger to the community such that they should be kept behind bars while awaiting the judge's decision. Yet in September 2025, ICE detained more individuals whose most serious crime was improper entry or reentry (1,776) than those guilty of violent crimes, such as assault or robbery (1,707). Of the 30,000 immigrants ICE arrested and jailed that month, only a fraction of a percent had been convicted of the most heinous criminal offenses, amounting to 0.05 percent for murder and 0.2 percent for rape.

That same month, ICE imprisoned around 716 individuals whose most serious crime was a minor traffic offense, such as driving without a license. That is far higher than the number of people ICE arrested and detained in the same period for more dangerous crimes — 280 percent more than the number of people with convictions for theft, 260 percent more than the number arrested for drug trafficking, and nearly 340 percent more than the number of people convicted of burglary.

The rise in detentions is fueled by arrests of people with no criminal conviction or who committed only a nonviolent crime. Meanwhile, the share of arrests of those convicted of violent crimes is trending in the opposite direction. The share of new detainees with a conviction for a violent crime has plunged from about 16 percent in the two weeks before President Trump's inauguration to about six percent in the first two weeks of October 2025.



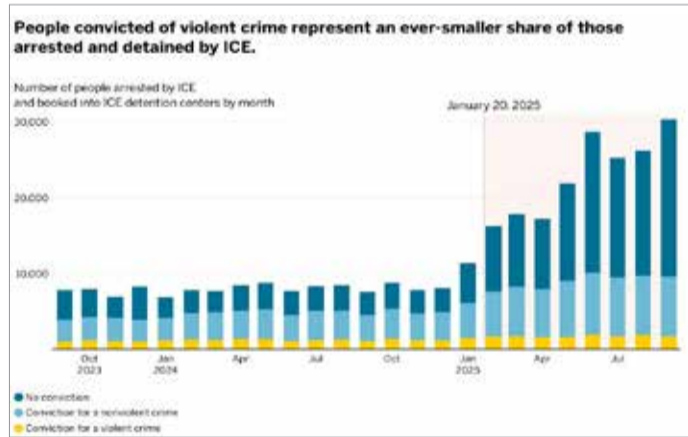
DEPORTATION DATA PROJECT



Children are torn from their father by ICE inside the immigration court at 26 Federal Plaza in Lower Manhattan on August 26, 2025. JDEAN MOSES/AMNY

**ICE diverting resources from own programs on criminals**

ICE has programs dedicated to arresting and deporting immigrants with criminal backgrounds, but,



DEPORTATION DATA PROJECT

The overall number of people detained for violent crimes has stagnated and even dropped since a peak last summer. In the first week of October 2025, ICE arrested and booked 409 people convicted of violent crimes into detention, compared with 502 in the first week of June, a nearly 20 percent decline. That means that the billions of dollars flowing into immigration enforcement — and away from traditional law enforcement at HSI, the FBI, the ATF, and the DEA — have failed to produce more arrests and deportations of immigrants convicted of violent crimes. Such arrests remain a tiny fraction of all immigrant arrests.

It is too soon to tell from publicly available data whether diverting specialized law enforcement officers from their core functions has reduced the number of criminal investigations and prosecutions they are pursuing. Because those officers specialize in complex cases, it may be years before we see the full effects. But using them to find and imprison noncriminal immigrants is a waste of their training and expertise.

as with other federal law enforcement agencies, they, too, have been redirected.

Take ICE's Fugitive Operations. Its web page proclaims: "We remove criminals from our communities." In the last year of the Biden administration, roughly 69 percent of individuals detained by Fugitive Operations had at least one conviction. No longer. In the first nine months of the second Trump administration, the share of criminals it detained flipped: only 33 percent of people detained by Fugitive Operations had any conviction — and less than 10 percent of all people detained had a conviction for a violent crime, compared with around 20 percent in the last year of the Biden administration. The number of people convicted of a violent crime detained by Fugitive Operations fell from almost 100 per week in June 2025 (and during certain weeks under the Biden administration) to between 50 and 60 in the four weeks ending October 15, 2025. Ditto the Criminal Alien Program (CAP), which screens people held in federal, state, and local jails and prisons for immigration status.

Although CAP has been criticized for eroding relationships between immigrant communities and local law enforcement, ICE claims it is a key tool to "protect the homeland through the arrest and removal of aliens who threaten the safety of our nation's communities". Yet, in the first nine months of the Trump administration, only about 43 percent of people detained through CAP had any conviction at all — and that share was just 36 percent in the four weeks ending October 15. The share with a violent conviction dropped from 17 percent in the last year of the Biden administration to nine percent in the first nine months of the second Trump administration.

Whatever one thinks about these ICE programs, they at least claim to specialize in identifying the relatively few immigrants whose presence may pose a genuine public safety risk — "the worst of the worst," in the administration's words. By pulling officers from these beats to arrest and imprison immigrants who do not pose a public safety threat, they fail to make the country any safer.

**Women and Venezuelans comprise majority of non-criminals arrested**

DHS's claims notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of detainees have never been convicted of a crime. If not individuals with criminal histories, who is ICE detaining?

The immigrants with no criminal convictions who have been caught in ICE's dragnet are more than twice as likely to be women (12 percent) as those with criminal convictions (5 percent). The women are typically in their mid-thirties. On average, they spend 6.5 weeks in ICE's prisons.

ICE does not track the personal circumstances of the women being detained. Although funding bills starting in 2019 required ICE to report the number of preg-

nant women in detention, the current Republican-controlled Congress removed that requirement in March of 2025. And a Biden-era policy that limited detention of pregnant, postpartum, and nursing mothers appears no longer to be "current practice". Since these changes, ICE arrested a woman recovering from a C-section as she was on her way to visit her 15-day-old infant in intensive care. Another woman was arrested when she was five months pregnant and detained without sufficient medical care for most of the remainder of her pregnancy — 1,500 miles from her husband and two young children. Neither of the women had criminal histories. An assessment by Sen. Jon Ossoff found 14 credible reports of mistreatment of pregnant women in immigration detention between the beginning of Trump's second term and the end of July 2025.

The Trump administration also renewed its policy of detaining families, resulting in a sixfold increase in the number of children and infants being detained since Trump returned to office. Venezuelans are also overrepresented among detainees without convictions. Only 15 percent of Venezuelans booked into ICE detention since the start of the Trump administration have a conviction, whereas 40 percent of people of other nationalities do. Venezuelans make up nine per-

cent of detainees without a conviction and two percent of those with one. This is in part a product of the administration's legal strategy. It invoked the wartime Alien Enemies Act by dubiously claiming that a Venezuelan gang was using "mass migration" to "undermin[e] public safety" — a move that would have stripped tens of thousands of Venezuelans in the United States of their due process rights but has been temporarily enjoined by the Supreme Court. (The Brennan Center has argued that the invocation is illegal.) The administration used that same authority to send more than 200 Venezuelans to a notorious prison in El Salvador. It has also stripped Venezuelans of lawful parole and temporary protected status and banned many Venezuelans from coming to the United States lawfully. While some of these efforts have been stymied by the courts, Venezuelans who pose no demonstrable threat to public safety remain far more likely to be imprisoned by ICE than noncriminal individuals holding any other citizenship.

**No report on number of US citizens ICE has arrested**

The ICE data on which this analysis is based does not record the arrest or detention of a single US citizen. And DHS has made the demonstrably false claim that it has not arrested any citizens. ProPublica has documented more than 170 improper arrests of citizens during the second Trump administration, including children. In at least one detention facility, ICE has reportedly even designated cells for US citizens. In prior years, ICE reported dozens of US citizen arrests annually — figures that are likely closer to the truth despite themselves being incomplete.

The mismatch suggests the administration is hiding the extent to which US citizens' lives are being disrupted by the immigration enforcement surge. Despite the administration's claims, immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans. Even so, the administration is not focusing on arresting those who do. Instead, federal law enforcement officers have been sidelined from protecting the country from genuine threats, such as child exploitation and drug trafficking, to indiscriminately increase the number of immigrants arrested.

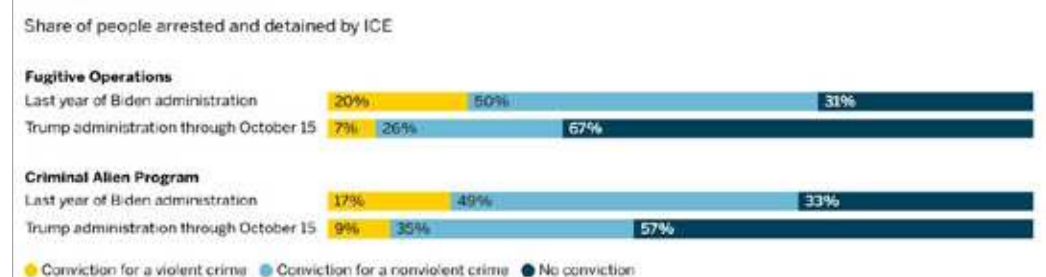
In addition to posing a profound threat to the rights of immigrants and US citizens alike, the dragnet approach isn't a good value for taxpayers. There is no reason to lock up immigrants unless they pose a threat to public safety or a demonstrable risk of flight. Detention keeps people separated from their families and prevents them from working for American employers. Instead, those who pose no risk can safely be released while they await a determination about whether they may remain in the country. Doing so would be more humane. And it would allow tax dollars to be put to better use on behalf of all Americans.

The article was first published by the Brennan Center for Justice.



A Biden-era policy that limited detention of pregnant, postpartum, and nursing mothers appears no longer to be "current practice". Since these changes, ICE arrested a woman recovering from a C-section as she was on her way to visit her 15-day-old infant in intensive care. Another woman was arrested when she was five months pregnant and detained without sufficient medical care for most of the remainder of her pregnancy — 1,500 miles from her husband and two young children. Neither of the women had criminal histories. The Trump administration also renewed its policy of detaining families, resulting in a sixfold increase in the number of children and infants being detained since Trump returned to office.

**Specialized components of ICE are no longer focused on arresting and detaining convicted criminals.**



DEPORTATION DATA PROJECT

## AVC Men's Champions League:

## Foolad crushes JTEKT Stings to advance to final, secures world spot



## Sports Desk

Iran's Foolad Sirjan progressed to the final showpiece of the AVC Men's Champions League in emphatic fashion, routing JTEKT Stings Aichi of Japan in straight sets (25-22, 25-19, 25-20) in Pontianak, Indonesia, on Saturday. Iranian outside hitter Pouria Hosseinkhanzadeh picked up where he left off in Thursday's 3-0 win against Indonesian outfit Jakarta Garuda Jaya, chipping in a joint game-high 16 points – alongside international opposite

teammate Ali Hajipour. Bulgarian world-class outside hitter Aleksandar Nikolov – who joined the club on a short-term contract for the showpiece – added 14 for Foolad, which remained on course for a third title in six editions. Middle blocker Amirhossein Toukhteh also played his part in the massive win with an eight-point performance. The victory also saw the Iranian top-flight champion make amends for last year's setbacks against Japanese opposition, after former Iran coach Behrouz Ataei's men had fallen to a four-set defeat against Osaka Bluteon in the semifinals in Kyoto and then were beaten by Suntory Sunbirds Osaka in three sets to miss out on the bronze medal. French opposite Stephen Boyer topped the scoring chart for JTEKT with 15 points, while

Brazilian star Ricardo Lucarelli was thoroughly kept at bay, limited to eight points. Japanese international middle blocker Kentaro Takahashi and American outside hitter Torey DeFalco, meanwhile, contributed seven points apiece for the Japanese club.

Saturday's triumph meant Foolad will be part of the draw at the FIVB Club World Championship later this year, returning to the competition after a bronze-winning campaign at the 2024 edition in Uberlândia, Brazil, where the Iranian club defeated Italian powerhouse Volley Lube in a five-set thriller in the third-place playoff.

Standing between Foolad and the Asian title in today's showdown at the Terpadu Gymnasium are either Jakarta Bhayangkara Presisi or South Korea's Hyundai Capital Skywalkers.

Foolad Sirjan middle blocker Amirhossein Toukhteh (5) hits a spike during a 3-0 victory over JTEKT Stings Aichi of Japan in the AVC Men's Champions League semifinals in Pontianak, Indonesia, on May 16, 2026.

● AVC

## Asian Taekwondo Championships:

## Iran aims for continental glory as Saei retains helm

## Sports Desk

The Iranian men's and women's taekwondo squads left the country for Ulaanbaatar on Friday ahead of taking part in the upcoming Asian Taekwondo Championships – starting Tuesday in the Mongolian capital – in what will be the first major event of Hadi Saei's second term as president of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation.

Saei, who was recently appointed as the vice chairman of the Technical Committee at the Asian Taekwondo Union (ATU), claimed 39 of the 53 votes during last week's election to retain the helm of the national governing body for another four years.

The most decorated Iranian in Olympic history, with two golds and one bronze medal, the 49-year-old Saei drew on his illustrious career to restore the glory days of Iranian taekwondo in his first term. He was credited with numerous achievements – including a clean sweep of

four medals at the Paris 2024 Olympics; a historic women's gold at the World Championships by Nahid Kiani; a maiden women's team title at the Asian Championships in his first year in charge; as well as the men's crown at the inaugural U21 World Championships last December in Nairobi.

Given that impressive track record and with September's Asian Games and the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics on the horizon, expectations are high for Saei's new term to match or even surpass past successes – starting with the men's kyorugi team title defense at the Asian showpiece.

Former world silver medalist Ali Tajik, meanwhile, will look to prove his credentials in Ulaanbaatar after replacing Majid Aflaki – under whom he worked as the number two – as the head coach of the men's team last week.

Olympic champion Arian Salimi will headline the eight-man kyorugi roster, aiming to make

up for a below-par World Championships campaign last year in Wuxi, China – where he suffered a last-16 exit in the +87kg weight class – by defending his continental title.

Abolfazl Zandi – Asian bronze medalist in 2024 – will be the favorite for the top prize in the -58kg division this year, stepping into the competition as the reigning senior and under-21 world champion, while Mahdi Haji-Mousaei (-63kg) will also be among the Iranians to watch after winning a silver medal at the world showpiece.

Joining the trio in the Iranian team are Yassin Valizadeh (-54kg), Amir-Abbas Rahnama (-68kg), world U21 champion Radin Zeinali (-74kg), Amirreza Sadeqian (-80kg), and Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani (-87kg) – a gold medalist in the previous edition – across different weight categories.

World bronze medalists Amir-Sina Bakhtiari (-74kg), Mohammad-Hassan Palangafkan (-68kg), Ali Ahmadi (-87kg), and Mahdi



Hadi Saei, the president of the Iranian Taekwondo Federation, reacts during the taekwondo contests at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November 2025.

● VARZESH3

Mahla Mo'menzadeh, who will vie for glory in the -49kg event. Yalda Valinejad, meanwhile, will step into the -62kg contest on the back of a silver medal at last November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

Ma'soumeh Ranjbar (-46kg), Fereshteh Fat'hi (-67kg), Baran Ne'mati (-73kg), and Fatemeh Ahmadi (+73kg) complete the Iranian women's team, which is coached by Mahrouz Saei, the younger sister of the Iranian federation's chairman.

Iran will also be represented by four contestants in the poomsae contests, with Yasaman Limouchi and two-time world silver medalist Marjan Salahshouri competing in the women's category, while Yassin Akbari and Yassin Zandi will be part of the men's draw.

## Asian U15 &amp; U17 Boxing Championships:

## Iranian boys cap off with seven medals

## Sports Desk

Iranian boys enjoyed an impressive campaign at the Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships, collecting seven medals across the two age categories in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Matin Chamipa spearheaded Iran's medal hunt in the under-17 division by grabbing gold in the 57kg class, thanks to a final victory over Jordan's Hasan Salem via a 4-1 points decision on Friday. Farzan Ahmadi was the other Iranian in final action but had to settle for silver in the 70kg category following a 4-1 setback against Uzbeki-



Iran's Matin Chamipa (R) won the 57kg gold in the boys' under-17 event at the Asian U15 & U17 Boxing Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

● IRANAIBA

stan's Abduvohid Abdumajidov.

The other showdown featuring Uzbek and Iranian boxers in Friday's under-17 finals saw Mohammad-Yassin Ziar fall short against the host's Sabyrzhan Sagym after the referee stopped the bout midway through the

contest. Abolfazl Maleki, meanwhile, finished his campaign with a joint bronze in the 52kg after suffering a semifinal defeat against Oybek Alimdjonov of Uzbekistan.

Mehrshad Sherafatmand and Pouyan Norouzi were the other two Ira-

nians in the under-17 contests, finishing empty-handed in the 80kg and 54kg divisions, respectively.

In the under-15 event, Abolfazl Pishavar defeated Kazakhstan's Zhaksylyk Yermekuly via a unanimous 5-0 points decision to claim the top prize in the 35kg weight class.

Amir-Mahdi Shad (52kg) and Ariya Mousavi (58kg) added two bronze medals to Iran's haul.

## Asian Women's U16 Handball Championship:

## Iranian girls defeat Kyrgyzstan to progress to last four

## Sports Desk

Iran secured a last-four place at the inaugural Asian Women's U16 Handball Championship courtesy of an emphatic 44-16 victory over Kyrgyzstan on the final day of the league phase in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Hasti Mirakhorli topped the scoring for the Iranian girls with eight goals, with Fatemeh Shafiei and Tamana Aram adding six apiece, as Iran claimed a second victory in five outings to finish fourth in the table. Featuring six teams, the tournament is held in a round-robin format, with the top four progressing to the semifinals. Iran will face China in today's semifinal in a rematch of the

league stage, which the East Asian team won 41-21. Iran got off to a flying start in the competition, defeating Hong Kong 33-29, before suffering successive setbacks against Kazakhstan (38-33), Uzbekistan (48-31), and China. The other last-four clash will see Kazakhstan and Uzbeki-

stan go head-to-head today. The tournament also serves as the qualification pathway for the 1st IHF Women's U16 World Championship, with the two finalists securing a place at the global showpiece, scheduled to take place from October 15 to 24.



● IRIHF

# Darak village gains global spotlight with UN tourism nomination

## Iranica Desk

In the southernmost region of Iran, where the endless waters of the Sea of Oman meet golden desert sands, lies a village that is increasingly drawing attention: Darak village. Located in Zarabad, in the southern part of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, it has been nominated as one of Iran's candidates for UN Tourism's Best Tourism Villages 2026 program. If successful, this recognition would represent not only a tourism milestone but also a new narrative for the lesser-known face of Baluchestan.

For years, Darak has been regarded as a legendary destination among experienced travelers and nature enthusiasts — a place where desert and sea converge and palm trees rise just steps away from ocean waves. Many first-time visitors find it hard to believe such a landscape exists in Iran, where shifting sand dunes reach directly to the shoreline and sunsets create a striking fusion of land and water, according to chn.ir.

The village now stands at a turning point. Inclusion in the global tourism villages list is far more than a ceremonial title; it could reshape development in southern Sistan and Baluchestan, boost tourism investment, and redefine how the region is perceived both nationally and internationally.

Tourism experts say Darak has all the essential elements required to become a world-class destination, from its untouched natural environment and authentic Baluchi culture to its traditional lifestyle, handicrafts, local music, and the warm hospitality of its people, where simplicity and sincerity remain deeply rooted.

Widely known as the "meeting point of desert and sea," the village is often described in almost



● asriran.com

symbolic terms, yet a short walk along its shoreline confirms the reality of this unique geography. Few places on Earth offer such a rare combination, where moving dunes extend toward the waters of the Oman Sea and lush palm groves grow nearby. This distinctive landscape has made the village one of the most visited nature tourism destinations in southern Iran in recent years. Travelers from across the country often remark that the village feels unlike anywhere else in Iran.

As experiential tourism gains momentum globally, destinations like Darak have attracted growing attention — places where visitors do not merely take photographs but engage directly with nature, culture, and local ways of life. For photographers, Darak has become an almost dreamlike setting, where sunrise and sunset produce extraordinary color palettes. The rhythm of waves reaching the shore and wind patterns shaping desert sands create scenes that resemble postcards more than real landscapes.

For many years, rural areas in southern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, despite their rich natural and cultural assets, remained on the margins of development. Limited infrastructure, distance from major urban centers, and



security-related perceptions contributed to their underrepresentation in tourism. That situation is now beginning to change. Darak's nomination reflects formal recognition of the region's vast potential — a potential that has long been preserved by local communities and is now gaining visibility. According to the criteria of UN Tourism, villages must demonstrate not only natural attractions but also strong performance in cultural preservation, sustainable development, community involvement, and environmental protection to qualify for the list.

In Darak, these characteristics are clearly evident. Local architecture, livelihoods, traditional Baluchi clothing, cuisine, and

hospitality form a living cultural identity that, unlike many tourist destinations in the country, has not been eroded by excessive commercialization.

What sets Darak apart is not only its extraordinary landscape but also its people. Residents have increasingly come to understand that environmental protection and cultural heritage are among their most important assets for the future.

Tree-planting initiatives along the village and coastal areas have been carried out with direct participation from local residents, who have taken responsibility for maintaining and irrigating the saplings — an example of strong community commitment to preserving green spaces.

This local engagement is considered one of the key strengths of Darak's nomination dossier. In many tourism projects, development follows a top-down model where local communities remain passive observers; in Darak, they are active participants in the process.

Visitors frequently highlight the warm hospitality of the Baluchi people — from unsolicited servings of tea to genuine smiles offered without expectation. This form of hospitality is regarded as an irreplaceable asset that no infrastructure project can replicate. Alongside environmental conservation, strengthening the local economy is a central pillar of preparations for international registration. Plans include establishing a handicraft and local products market aimed at showcasing regional culture while increasing income opportunities for residents.

According to the head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department of Zarabad, a market for local handicrafts and products will be established in the nominated tourism village of Darak.

Anvar Singleh noted that, given Darak's selection as one of Iran's candidate villages for the 2026 World Tourism Villages list, the

development of necessary infrastructure has been placed on the agenda.

He added that the town benefits from valuable handicraft production and unique tropical and indigenous fruits, which are in high demand among visitors and tourists to the region.

The Darak market is intended to be more than a commercial space; it is envisioned as a showcase of Baluchestan's cultural identity. From traditional Baluchi needlework to tropical fruits and local cuisine, it will form part of the overall visitor experience.

He further stated that, through cooperation between the provincial cultural heritage organization and other stakeholders, and with the active participation of local artisans and residents, a dedicated market for handicrafts, tropical fruits, and food products specific to the village and Zarabad will be established.

For many years, the dominant portrayal of Sistan and Baluchestan in the media was incomplete and often unfair, focusing mainly on deprivation and marginalization rather than its vast cultural and tourism potential. Darak now offers a new narrative — showing that southeastern Iran is not only a land of intense sunlight but can also be a global destination for nature-based, cultural, and adventure tourism.

Tourism experts believe that if infrastructure is properly developed, Darak could become one of Iran's leading tourism brands, attracting not only domestic visitors but also international travelers. Global experience shows that inclusion in such tourism village lists can significantly transform local economies, provided that development remains aligned with environmental protection and meaningful community participation.

## Belqeys Citadel bridges legend, history in North Khorasan

## Iranica Desk

The ancient Belqeys Citadel, located near the city of Esfarayen on the edge of the vast plains of North Khorasan Province in northeastern Iran, is considered one of the country's most significant yet lesser-known historical landmarks.

The massive mud-brick complex is not merely an archaeological monument, but the remains of an ancient city that once played a major social, economic, and defensive role in the region. Despite centuries of natural erosion and the passage of time, the citadel remains one of North Khorasan Province's most important historical attractions, with strong potential to draw tourists interested in history, architecture, and cultural travel, according to IRNA.

Archaeological studies indicate that the origins of the site date back to early historical periods, particularly the Sassanid era, before undergoing further expansion during the Islamic period. Researchers say this continuity demonstrates that the citadel preserved its strategic function for centuries while adapting to the needs of



successive periods.

Historians believe the complex was once part of a larger urban settlement that occupied a key position along eastern Iran's historic trade and communication routes.

The citadel is considered one of the largest mud-brick structures in Iran. Its thick defensive walls, watchtowers, and vast internal layout suggest that it was far more than a military fortress; it functioned as a fully functioning urban settlement. Some towers rise more than 10 meters high, reflecting the sophisticated engineering skills of Iranian architects and their ability to utilize local materials suited to the region's dry and semi-arid climate. Archaeological investigations

have uncovered residential quarters, storage facilities, passageways, and public spaces within the site. Experts say the complex urban structure indicates that residents lived their daily lives entirely within the fortified city, making Belqeys Citadel not only a defensive stronghold but also a highly organized historical settlement. Local legends have linked the site's name, "Belqeys," to the Queen of Sheba, although historians note that the connection is largely mythical. Nevertheless, the story has added to the cultural and tourism appeal of the landmark.

Recent excavations have revealed previously undiscovered sections of the citadel and provided valuable insight into



● IRNA



its structure, functions, and various phases of occupation and reconstruction. Findings suggest that the site remained important across multiple historical periods.

Visitors can access the citadel through Esfarayen in North Khorasan Province. Travelers from Bojnord, the provincial capital, must drive approximately 60 to 70 kilometers southwest to reach the city.

From Esfarayen, the site is accessible via a clearly marked road and can be reached within 10 to 15 minutes by car.

For travelers arriving from outside the province, Bojnord Airport is the nearest airport, while overland routes from Mashhad and Sabzevar also provide convenient access through northeastern Iran's main highways.

Tourism officials recommend visiting the site during spring and early autumn, when temperatures are milder and conditions are more suitable for outdoor exploration. During the summer, visitors are advised to tour the site early in the morning or near sunset to avoid midday heat, while winter travelers are encouraged to

bring appropriate cold-weather gear.

The site is generally open during daylight hours, allowing visitors to fully appreciate the scale and structure of the ancient fortress.

Entering the Belqeys Citadel offers what many travelers describe as a journey back in time. Its towering mud-brick walls, partially ruined watchtowers, and expansive inner spaces provide a vivid glimpse into Iran's ancient past.

Cultural heritage experts say the historical complex remains one of northeastern Iran's most valuable destinations for history enthusiasts, photographers, and cultural tourists alike.

Despite enduring significant natural damage over the centuries, the citadel continues to stand as a symbol of the ancient civilization of North Khorasan Province and one of Iran's most important mud-brick heritage sites.

Experts emphasize that broader recognition, proper preservation efforts, and increased promotion of the site could play a major role both in safeguarding Iran's cultural heritage and boosting regional tourism development.

# Tehran Book Fair opens online

## President commends books as humanity's living memory

### Arts & Culture Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday marked the launch of the seventh Tehran Book Fair with a message describing books as "the living memory of human history and civilization" and a lasting embodiment of human wisdom, experience and knowledge. In his statement, Pezeshkian called books a shared heritage through which nations think, engage in dialogue and illuminate their path forward. He said the international book fair reflects society's respect for knowledge and the exchange of ideas. Citing humanity's turbulent past, the president said societies that have successfully navigated crises, wars, extremism and the

darkness of ignorance are those that have placed books, learning and rational thought at the center of their social and cultural life. He warned that in today's unstable global environment—where violence, extremism and domination threaten national security—there is a greater need than ever to promote reading. Sustainable peace, he said, is not forged through destructive power or the shedding of innocent blood, but through knowledge, justice, ethics and mutual understanding among nations, with books serving as the foremost language of such values. Pezeshkian also paid tribute to writers, researchers, translators, publishers and cultural figures, thanking organizers for staging

the event. The seventh Tehran Book Fair, featuring 2,296 publishers, officially opened online on Saturday, May 16, and will run through May 23 under the slogan "Let's Read for Iran." In addition to domestic participants, a number of digital publishers and platforms are taking part, alongside 19 foreign publishers or literary agents. Held virtually—a format tested in previous editions—the fair is framed as an effort to support the resilience of the publishing industry during wartime conditions. The online platform enables readers to access books around the clock with just a few clicks. Books are being offered with a 25% discount—comprising a



The seventh Tehran Book Fair officially opened online on May 16, 2026.

15% publisher reduction and a 10% subsidy from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance—on purchases up to 20 million rials (\$11), with the 15% publisher discount continuing beyond that threshold. Foreign publishers are also offering discounts ranging from 10% to 50% depending on publication year, in addition to a 10% government subsidy. Orders will be delivered free of charge via postal services, and buyers will have access to customer support for their purchases.



## Iranian documentary project wins top prize at DocsBarcelona

### Arts & Culture Desk

The documentary project No Friend but the Mountains, directed and produced by Yasser Talebi, has won the Best Project Award in the industry section of the DocsBarcelona, ISNA reported. The film offers a poetic portrayal of the final days of life in a world on the brink of disappearance. Set deep within the forests and mountains of northern Iran, it unfolds amid mist, snow, the sound of cattle, and the ever-burning fire of an

old cabin. The narrative echoes themes of love, solitude, erosion and the enduring bond between humans and a homeland that is gradually slipping away. In a statement, the jury said the decision was unanimous, praising the project for its clear and compelling storytelling. They noted that the film explores generational change while presenting a multi-generational story of care, love and conflict. Its central characters, the jury added, are portrayed as both vulnerable and resilient, with relationships that



reveal deep layers of affection and tension. DocsBarcelona is considered one of Europe's leading documentary platforms. This year's edition hosted 62 independent projects from 30 countries, alongside more than 700 industry professionals and guests.

## Iran unveils Minab Fund at Cannes Film Market

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's cinema sector is attending the 2026 Cannes Film Market (May 12-20) with a new initiative titled the "Minab Fund," introduced by the Farabi Cinema Foundation. The proposed initiative is aimed at backing feature films, documentaries and short projects about the schoolchildren in Minab, who were killed on the first day of the US-Israeli war against Iran, while also promoting Iranian works on this theme at international events.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Independent Filmmakers Association (IFMA) announced its fourth consecutive presence at the Cannes Film Market. The association's booth is hosting filmmakers, industry professionals, journalists and representatives of international festivals. The IFMA pavilion aims to provide a platform for networking, information-sharing and discussions on the current state of Iran's independent cinema. An opening gathering was held on May 13, bringing together guests and industry peers for



an informal reception. The Cannes Film Market, also called Marché du Film, is an annual marketplace for films and one of the world's largest film markets that is held annually in conjunction with the Cannes Film Festival in France.

## Virtual Book Fair keeps reading within reach



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

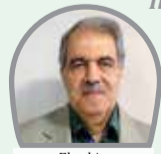
### INTERVIEW

As Iran's publishing industry and book market have grappled with multiple challenges amid the fallout from the 40-day war, the seventh Tehran Book Fair has kicked off online. The event seeks to make up for part of the gap left by restrictions on holding the fair in person. Over the past decades, the Tehran Book Fair has been more than just a marketplace for books. As the country's largest cultural event, it has played a key role in promoting reading, fostering connections between publishers and audiences, and generating cultural momentum across society. Now, with in-person events constrained by various considerations, the virtual edition offers easier access to books through digital platforms. Cultural officials have described this edition as part of efforts aimed at "supporting the resilience of the publishing industry during the imposed war," un-

derscoring the growing importance of sustaining the production and distribution cycle of books.

At the same time, some publishing insiders say the recent uptick in bookstore visits and book purchases signals a renewed public turn toward reading in difficult and turbulent times—where books can serve as more than just cultural goods, but as companions in moments of hardship.

In the following interview, Ebrahim Karimi Zanjani, head of the Publishers and Booksellers Union, discusses different aspects of the virtual Tehran Book Fair, the level of public response, its impact on reading culture, and the current state of the publishing industry.



**IRAN DAILY: Given the current situation—war, economic pressures and other challenges—how do you assess the decision to hold the book fair virtually?**

**KARIMI:** Any effort related to publishing, distributing and making books available—through whatever platform or

means is possible—is naturally viewed as a positive step by book enthusiasts. The virtual fair, as in previous years when it ran alongside the physical event, is fortunately still in place. While it is regrettable that an in-person edition could not be held under these circumstances, it is hoped that readers will make the most of this opportunity and purchase the books they need, especially given the subsidies and discounts offered by the Ministry of Culture and publishers.

**Considering that the fair has traditionally been held in person with strong public engagement, could the absence of a physical edition this year undermine its trajectory or credibility? Can the virtual format replace it?**

It can certainly serve as a partial substitute, but not a complete one. That said, this opportunity should be used to step up outreach and public awareness efforts, ensuring that the necessary conditions for public participation are in place, as in previous years. At the same time, audiences can still visit bookstores during the fair period. Those who would typically browse and select books in person at the exhibition can now turn to bookstores instead—searching for and purchasing

books directly there.

**The book fair has also functioned as a cultural festival that promotes reading. Can its virtual version have a similar impact?**

Holding the fair in any format or platform can be influential in this regard. It is encouraging to see that in recent months, visits to bookstores and book purchases have increased. The reasons may require further examination, but in practice, there has been a noticeable rise in demand, particularly in general and children's books. At the same time, online book purchases have also grown. This is a positive development and should be welcomed. It would be even better to gradually move toward a model where the book fair serves primarily as a venue for showcasing and introducing books, and as a space for interaction among cultural figures—authors, translators and publishers—while actual sales are carried out through bookstores, with readers obtaining their books from these outlets.

**How do you assess the reported rise in public interest in books in recent months? Could it be linked to the war and tensions, with people turning to**

**reading for solace?**

Books are the best companions, especially in solitude or under difficult and exceptional circumstances. The increased inclination toward reading may well be linked to the particular conditions experienced in recent weeks. At the same time, it is encouraging that despite all challenges—including rising costs and the higher price of books—the cultural community has shown such interest toward reading and purchasing books.

**What is your view on the incentives offered this year to encourage book purchases at the fair?**

A subsidy has been provided by the Ministry of Culture, alongside discounts offered by publishers, bringing the total reduction to 25%. In addition, buyers do not pay for delivery. Notably, the publishers' share of the discount has increased this year, even as their costs have risen compared to previous years due to wartime conditions. It is hoped that stronger public response and higher sales will help offset this burden. Given the increased public interest in books, it is expected that turnout for book purchases at this year's fair will remain strong, as in previous years.