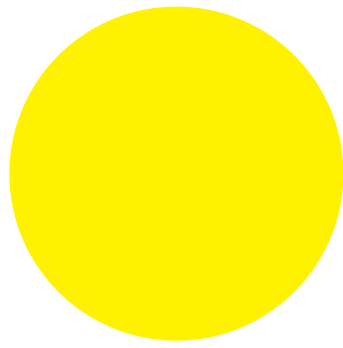


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The combo shows members of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps at a military drill around the capital in Tehran on May 9, 2026. DEFA PRESS



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No scenario delivers victory for US

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

US President Donald Trump has claimed that he had been preparing for renewed military action against Iran but backed down at the request of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar. This is not the first time he has spoken of calling off a planned strike. In an interview with Iran Daily, international affairs expert Abed Akbari argued that a war with Iran would end in Washington's defeat, while the collapse of diplomacy would also tilt in Tehran's favor.



As a result, no scenario leads the United States to victory.

IRAN DAILY: What security and political considerations possibly drove these three countries to make such a request?

AKBARI: If Trump's claim is valid, such a request would point to a strategic failure for Washington in the region. Gulf states no longer trust the United States to protect them and understand that in the event of war, they—not America—would be the first victims. The vulnerability of energy infrastructure is the primary factor. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE know that Iran could bring their oil production close to zero within hours, and the United States would be unable to prevent it. These countries are no longer

willing to pay the price for Washington's adventurism. What they have come to understand is that the United States is not prepared to sustain a war, and its allies must come to terms with Iran themselves. The claim about diplomacy is also false. These states do not want to be destroyed in a war that the United States starts but does not finish. The experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq showed that Washington walks away from its allies. Saudi Arabia and the UAE no longer want to serve as expendable pieces.

What other concrete variables may have shaped US calculations in deciding to call off the strike?

First, fear of economic collapse. A \$200 oil price would paralyze the US economy. Trump, who promised economic growth, cannot be held responsible for a global recession. Washington knows that Iran could close the Strait of Hormuz and bring Europe and Asia to their knees. Second, military incapacity. The United States can strike, but it cannot win. The "Axis of Resistance" could destroy US bases in the region. Hezbollah could paralyze the Israeli regime. [Yemen's] Ansarallah has already shown that the US fleet in the Red Sea is vulnerable. Washington knows it would be drawn into a multi-front war with no winner. Third, the failure of air defense. The 40-day war showed that Iranian missiles can penetrate Iron Dome and Patriot systems. If the Israeli regime, despite full US support, could not defend itself,

how could US bases in the region remain secure? This was a catastrophic failure that forced Washington to accept that its military superiority is a myth. Fourth, domestic pressure. The American public is no longer willing to pay for futile wars. Iraq and Afghanistan cost thousands of lives and trillions of dollars with no gains. Congress also understands that war with Iran would be even more disastrous. Fifth, competition with China. The United States cannot become bogged down in the Middle East and leave China unchecked. War with Iran would mean losing the primary strategic competition. Russia and China would seize the opportunity and erode US global influence. Sixth, the lesson of the 40-day war: Iran demonstrated not only defensive strength but offensive capability. Washington saw that its deterrence had been broken and its allies were vulnerable. This marked one of the most significant strategic defeats for the United States in recent decades.

Given that the US has repeatedly refrained from military action at various junctures, does this pattern reflect operational constraints or a strategic preference for crisis management over escalation?

The pattern of US restraint reflects fear and incapacity rather than strategic calculation. Washington knows it cannot defeat Iran. Operational constraints are real. Iran is a vast, mountainous country with a population of 90 million and a

strong national identity. The Iraq experience is instructive. The United States toppled Saddam but destroyed the country and weakened itself. Iran is stronger than Iraq, and the United States is weaker than in 2003. War with Iran would mean the end of US hegemony. Washington has fallen back on sanctions and cyber operations because it has no other option. Yet these tools have failed. Sanctions did not push Iran back; its missile and nuclear programs advanced, and its regional influence expanded. Assassinations only made Iran more determined.

What conditions might push the United States toward accepting the costs of military action?

The scenarios that might push the United States toward military action would all end in Washington's defeat. First, if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, the United States would be unable to act. Striking underground facilities would be impossible, and Iran would have already relocated its assets. In that case, Iran would become a nuclear power, and Washington would have to accept it. The North Korea experience showed that the United States backs off in the face of nuclear capability. Second, if US forces are attacked, the response would be limited, as Washington knows escalation would lead to disaster. Third, closing the Strait of Hormuz is Iran's most powerful lever. If Iran keeps it closed, the global economy would be paralyzed, and pressure on the United States would increase for negotiations,

not war. Europe and Asia would urge Washington to step back rather than attack. The United States cannot reopen the strait, as Iran possesses thousands of anti-ship missiles capable of sinking the US fleet. Fourth, the failure of diplomacy works in Iran's favor. Over time, Iran grows stronger while the United States weakens. Sanctions are ineffective; Iran trades with China and Russia, and its nuclear program advances. Ultimately, Washington will have to come to terms with a nuclear Iran. Fifth, political change in the United States would not alter this trajectory. Even the most hardline president cannot launch a losing war. Public opinion, Congress, and the military are opposed. Pressure from the Israeli lobby is insufficient, as generals understand the likely outcome. Sixth, there is no tactical window. Iran has a multilayered defense system, and no internal collapse is on the horizon; after four decades of pressure, the Islamic Republic is stronger than ever. Even a limited US strike would trigger retaliation and set the region ablaze. Seventh, coalition pressure has lost its effectiveness. After the 40-day war, Arab states understand that aligning with the United States amounts to self-destruction.

As a result, no scenario leads the United States to victory. The longer Washington waits, the stronger Iran becomes. If it attacks, it loses and its hegemony comes to an end. The only option left is to accept the new reality: Iran is a regional power that Washington cannot stop.

Iran's military cautions US against fresh adventurism

Army warns to 'open new fronts' if strikes resume

International Desk

Iran's Armed Forces warned the United States against renewed strikes on Iran, with the Iranian Army saying it would "open new fronts" against the US after Donald Trump said he had instructed the US military to be prepared for a large-scale assault on Iran if an "acceptable deal is not reached."

"If the enemy is foolish enough to fall into the Zionist trap again and launches new aggression against our beloved Iran, we will open new fronts against it, with new equipment and new methods," said Army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia said on Tuesday.

Washington and Tehran have been swapping proposals in an effort to end the US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which broke out on February 28. The two sides have held a single round of talks so far amid a fragile ceasefire in place since April 8.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump said the leaders of Qatar, Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had asked him "to hold off on our planned Military attack of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was scheduled for tomorrow, in that serious negotiations are now taking place."

But Trump added he had instructed the US military to be "prepared to go forward with a full, large-scale assault on Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable Deal is not reached." Akraminia said his country had used the ceasefire as an opportunity "to strengthen its combat capabilities." The commander of Iran's highest operational command unit also said that any new act of aggression by the US or its allies will be met with overwhelming force, as the Islamic Republic stands stronger and more determined than ever to defend its sovereignty.

Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Headquarters, said that Iran and its battle-hardened Armed Forces are now more prepared and formidable than at any time in his-



Iranian Armed Forces' missiles are on display outside a military museum in Tehran, Iran.

● SHUTTERSTOCK

tory, with fingers firmly on the triggers, ready to protect the proud nation.

"We announce to America and its allies: Do not commit another strategic mistake or miscalculation," the commander said. "They must know that any renewed aggression or invasion by the enemies of our land and our proud nation will be met with a swift, decisive, powerful, and extensive response."

He warned that if the enemies dare to make another mistake, Iran will confront it with far greater power and capability than during the 40-day imposed war.

Mohsen Rezaei, a senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, also reacted to the Trump's remarks, saying that the iron fist of Iran's powerful Armed Forces and the resolute Iranian nation will compel the US to retreat and surrender.



In a post on X on Monday night, Mohsen Rezaei, former chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), ridiculed Washington's inconsistent and cowardly approach.

Rezaei wrote that Trump "sets a deadline for a military strike and then cancels

it himself, in the vain hope of forcing the Iranian nation and officials to surrender!"

"The iron fist of the powerful Armed Forces and the great Iranian nation will force them to retreat and surrender," he added.

Qatar says Iran-US talks require 'more time' to succeed

International Desk

Qatar said on Tuesday that US-Iran negotiations, mediated by Pakistan, required more time to reach a deal, a day after President Donald Trump said he had postponed planned attacks to give the process a chance.

"We are supportive of the diplomatic effort by Pakistan that has shown seriousness in bringing parties together and finding a solution, and we do believe it needs more time," Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said at a press conference.

Trump, who had indefinitely extended the truce and made clear he wanted to exit a war that has proved to be politically damaging, said on Monday he had prepared a new military attack for the following day after Iran rejected his outlines of a deal.

But on Monday, Trump said on social media that he had suspended the attack after the leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates asked him to give negotiations a chance.

"We want to protect the people of the region from being basic-



Majed al-Ansari
● GETTY IMAGES

ly the main losers of any escalation in the region," al-Ansari said. Since the ceasefire took hold on April 8, Tehran and Washington have held a single round of talks which failed to culminate in a deal.

However, the two sides have been exchanging proposals to resolve disagreements and end the war in the region.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday that the US has sent a set of "revised" points and considerations to Iran through mediator Pakistan despite publicly rejecting Tehran's 14-point peace proposal.

"After Iran sent its 14-point plan, the US side conveyed its considerations. We also presented our considerations in return. Although the American side publicly announced that this plan

was rejected, we received from the Pakistani mediator a set of revised points and considerations from their point of view," Esmail Baqaei said during his weekly press conference.

Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said on Tuesday that Tehran's latest peace proposal to the US involves ending hostilities on all fronts including Lebanon, the exit of US forces from areas close to Iran, and reparations for destruction caused by the US-Israeli war.

He added that Tehran also sought the lifting of sanctions, the release of frozen funds and an end to the US marine blockade on the country.

Trump said on Monday he had paused a planned resumption of attacks on Iran after Teheran sent a new peace proposal to Washington, and that there was now a "very good chance" of reaching a deal.

Speaking to reporters later on Monday, he said the United States would be satisfied if it could reach an agreement with Iran that prevented Tehran from what he claimed was obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Hormuz to remain under Iranian control as permanent asset: MP



National Desk

Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Ebrahim Azizi said that the Strait of Hormuz would remain under Iran's control following its closure due to the US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

Speaking during an interview published on Tuesday, the Iranian parliamentarian described the vital waterway as Iran's permanent asset that would remain under the control and management of the Iranian nation.

Azizi warned countries seeking to project power in the chokepoint that Iran would pursue its legal rights in the waterway "with full strength" and "will show no leniency toward anyone" in this matter.

Referring to the strategic position of the Strait of Hormuz and its role in regional and extra-regional dynamics, the legislator said the waterway constituted a perma-

nent strategic position with an instrumental role in broader geopolitical equations. "We have tried during this period to act in line with proper management [tactics], while preserving our authority," he said. As a retaliatory measure, Iran shut down the corridor to enemies and their allies following the launch of the latest bout of American-Israeli aggression targeting the Islamic Republic.

It began applying stricter controls after US President Donald Trump announced continuation of an illegal naval blockade of Iranian vessels and ports on April 13.

On Saturday, Azizi announced in a post on X that Iran has devised a new mechanism to control maritime traffic through a "designated route" in the Strait of Hormuz, which includes charging fees for "the specialized services." Devising the mechanism, he added, is in line with Iran's national sovereignty and will guarantee international trade security.

Adding to his remarks made during the interview, the lawmaker stressed that the Strait of Hormuz was not merely a maritime transit route, but a "strategic achievement" for the Islamic Republic.

He described the strait as "a full-fledged economic, political, and military lever" that would forever remain under the management and control of the "courageous and powerful Iranian nation."

Tehran blasts Berlin's baseless claims as blatant hypocrisy



Esmail Baqaei
● IRNA

Iran's Foreign Ministry strongly rejected "baseless and selective accusations" leveled by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz against the Islamic Republic regarding a mysterious failed explosion incident near a nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates.

In a post on X on Monday night, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail

Baqaei sharply criticized Merz for invoking international law and regional security only when it suits Western political interests, while turning a blind eye to clear acts of aggression against Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities, Press TV reported.

"Mr. Friedrich Merz, hypocrisy becomes evident when a clear attack by the United States and the Zionist regime on Iran's nuclear facilities, which are under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is not only not condemned, but is effectively justified," Baqaei wrote.

"Yet, regarding an incident that was a false flag operation by the enemies of peace and regional harmony -- and even the UAE has not officially blamed Iran for it -- suddenly the language of 'international law' and 'regional secu-

urity' is invoked," he added.

The spokesperson said that any genuine concern for the safety of nuclear sites and the people of the region must be applied equally and without double standards.

"If an attack on nuclear facilities is considered a threat to the people of the region, this principle must apply equally to all countries, not only when it serves Western political interests," Baqaei stated.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that Western powers and the Israeli regime routinely apply international norms in a hypocritical manner, condemning incidents involving their adversaries while justifying or ignoring their own acts of sabotage and aggression against Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Tehran Stock Exchange reopens after 80-day war closure, indices post rise

Economy Desk

Trading on the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) resumed after an 80-day suspension on Tuesday, with Iranian equities ending the session stronger than expected and showing early signs of stability following a prolonged halt caused by the war.

The stock market had been closed since February 28 after the US and Israeli attacks on Iran and the outbreak of war.

The Iranian news agency Tasnim reported that trading began at 9:00 a.m. local time on Tuesday in the Tehran Stock Exchange's trading hall, with shares of more than 40 companies affected by the war remaining closed. Most of the shares belonged to the chemical and basic metals sectors.

According to Mehr News Agency, selling pressure eased significantly during Tuesday's session while buy queues increased, presenting a markedly different picture from the tense trading conditions seen before the closure.

Data showed the total value of retail transactions, including stocks, shareholders' preemptive rights and equity funds, reached 16.937 trillion rials, or about \$94.1 million. Retail trades accounted for 8% of the total market turnover and were accompanied by an inflow of 2.7 trillion rials, or roughly \$15 million, in retail investor money, a sign of a relative return in con-



fidence among small investors. At the close of trading, Tehran's benchmark TEDPIX index rose 2,503 points, or 0.07%, to 3,716,458, remaining about 15.5% below its mid-January peak of 4.4 million points. According to Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization

(SEO), more than 500 companies participated in Tuesday's trading session.

The equal-weight index, which tracks smaller listed firms, rose 2,661 points, or 0.28%, to 955,342, indicating that gains were not limited to large-cap stocks.

On the self-regulatory Iran Fara Bourse, the main index rose 4.91 points, or 0.02%, to 28,397, while the equal-weight over-the-counter index gained 0.39%. Despite the reopening, trading has not fully resumed across the market. The Securities and Exchange Organization said 42

symbols remained suspended and would reopen at a later date.

The suspended symbols account for around 35% of the market's total value, and some of the companies linked to them suffered damage during the US-Israeli war against Iran.



Pezeshkian touts water, energy protection as national security priority

Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said safeguarding the country's water and energy resources was a matter of national security and social stability, stressing the need for stricter consumption management, protection of strategic water reserves and expansion of smart infrastructure.

"Today, preserving the country's water and energy resources is not merely an economic issue, but part of national security, social stability and the country's resilience against pressures and crises," Pezeshkian said during a specialized meeting with senior officials from Iran's Energy Ministry.

As part of the government's ongoing field assessments and oversight of executive agencies, Pezeshkian visited the ministry to review the latest status of the country's water resources and energy production and supply networks with the energy minister, deputies and senior managers.

The officials presented reports on dam reservoir levels, strategic water reserves, power plant performance, efforts to expand energy production capacity, the stability of the national electricity grid and projects under development in the renewable energy sector.

Pezeshkian praised the ministry's efforts in managing the country's current conditions.

Referring to the sensitive state of Iran's water and energy resources, the president said, "The issue of conservation and reforming consumption patterns must become a broad and public discourse across the country."

Pezeshkian also stressed the need to protect Iran's stored water resources and called for tougher action against illegal extraction, including intensified oversight of unauthorized wells and excessive withdrawals from underground aquifers.

Over the past five years, the country has faced continuous drought.

According to the latest official data on Iran's major dams, reservoirs are currently 66% full. Khabar Online, citing figures from the Iran Water Resources Management Company, reported that inflows into the country's reservoirs from the start of the water year on September 23, 2025 through May 16, 2026 reached 37.04 billion cubic meters, up 69% from 21.90 billion cubic meters during the same period a year earlier.

ISNA reported that total outflows from Iran's dams rose 12% year-on-year. Water stored in reservoirs stood at 34.23 billion cubic meters, up 26% from 27.21 billion cubic meters a year earlier, while overall dam capacity utilization remained at 66%. However, conditions at several major dams remain critical, with five dams reported to be less than 10% full.

Total nationwide precipitation has reached 227.1 millimeters, compared with 225.7 millimeters in the long-term average and 140.8 millimeters during the same period of the previous water year.

Tehran airports extend hours as postwar flights rebound



Economy Desk

The two main airports in the capital Tehran, Mehrabad and Imam Khomei-

ni, extended their operating hours as air traffic continues to recover following a suspension of international flights during the US-Israeli war against the

country in late February.

Majid Akhavan, spokesperson for Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, said the country's main domestic and international gateways — Mehrabad Airport and Imam Khomeini International Airport — will now operate from 4:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. local time.

With the expanded schedule, flight delays "will decrease," Akhavan said.

International flights departing from Iran, which were halted after the start of the US-Israeli aggression against Iran in late February, resumed in late April. During the conflict, US and Israeli forces carried out airstrikes targeting several Iranian airports and aircraft.

At Imam Khomeini International Airport, flight operations have risen sharply. Ramin Kashf-Azar, CEO of Imam Khomeini Airport City Company, told state news agency IRNA on Tuesday that the airport began operations on April 25 with 10 daily takeoffs and landings, a figure that has since

climbed to more than 40 per day.

Kashf-Azar said that with restrictions lifted and 24-hour operations restored, the airport "will definitely return to desirable and stable conditions."

"Currently, flights from Imam Khomeini Airport are operating to destinations including Armenia, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Iraq, Turkey (on two routes: Ankara and Istanbul), Muscat, New Delhi, Moscow, Baku, Kabul, Islamabad, Bangkok, China (to five destinations), and also Medina," he said.

Between April 25 and May 17, the airport handled 42,590 inbound passengers and 49,586 outbound passengers, he said. A total of 839 flights operated during that period, including 808 passenger flights and 31 cargo flights.

The increase in daily movements, passenger traffic, and route diversity signals a gradual return to normal operations for Imam Khomeini Airport and a strengthening of its role in Iran's air transport network.

Plans unveiled to revamp logistics network after Hormuz blockade

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq Malvajerd announced plans to restructure the country's logistics network and expand northern port capacity as the country seeks alternative trade routes following a US naval blockade on the Strait of Hormuz and disrupted operations at the UAE's Jebel Ali port. Sadeq Malvajerd made the announcement on the sidelines of a meeting with members of Parliament's Agriculture, Water,

Natural Resources and Environment Committee, according to the Mehr news agency.

Sadeq Malvajerd said the meeting reviewed the restructuring of Iran's logistics network, border terminals, and the capacity of northern ports, citing hostile US actions. With the committee's input, cooperation will be strengthened for the optimal distribution of essential goods nationwide, she said.

Since May 13, following a 40-day conflict, the US has imposed an illegal naval blockade on Iranian ports in the Strait of Hor-

muz — a critical chokepoint for about a fifth of global oil supply — disrupting shipping routes and energy trade. Iran is seeking to diversify its logistics corridors amid mounting pressure. In a separate development, Masoud Polmeh, secretary-general of the Shipping Association and Related Services, told ISNA that Iran can source essential goods, including animal feed, from the Caucasus and CIS countries.

"We can easily supply a significant portion of wheat, corn, barley and similar items from Kazakhstan, Russia and other

countries without needing to pass through various routes," Polmeh said.

He addressed challenges with neighboring countries including the UAE, noting that the UAE was not Iran's main export destination but rather a hub for "re-exports" to global markets. Iran is redirecting cargo and logistics operations to ports in Pakistan, India and Oman after activities at the United Arab Emirates' Jebel Ali port stopped amid wartime conditions.

"With one of the target mar-

kets, considering field logistics management, we have shifted part of our activities from sea to rail," Polmeh said. He added that for buffer markets or transshipment ports linked to the UAE, Iran should consider at least three locations for logistics management rather than concentrating operations in the UAE and Jebel Ali port as before.

"We definitely should use other countries including Oman and Pakistan and maintain balance in economic communications in logistics," the shipping official said.

Reverse engineering of national identity

Role of monarchist groups in overthrow project, frameworks of int'l responsibility



By Ashkan Pirzadeh
Strategic affairs
analyst

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

In today's complex international order, threats to national security have moved beyond the classic conventional form (hard war between states) and entered the realm of hybrid warfare. Within this context, one of the most intricate and insidious layers is the exploitation of apparently political opposition groups by a hostile regime (in this case, the Zionist regime) to advance subversive, terrorist, and ultimately overthrow-oriented objectives against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Monarchist groups, which claim to be the heirs of an extinct political system, have transformed from a marginal phenomenon within the Iranian diaspora into a transnational network performing intelligence-operative functions for Israel's Mossad. This substantive shift necessitates a legal redefinition of these groups from "opposition group" to "terrorist network under foreign patronage". This piece demonstrates that these networks lack any popular legitimacy inside Iran and merely serve the interests of the regime occupying Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in the heart of Europe and the United States.

Historical genealogy and paradigmatic shift

To understand today's phenomenon, one must review the historical evolution of these groups. The monarchist movement in the diaspora suffered a rupture in legitimacy following the Islamic Revolution. In the first decades, these groups largely relied on low-impact propaganda activities and political lobbying. However, repeated failures to attract public opinion inside Iran and frustration with the project of a "miraculous return" propelled them towards a dangerous paradigmatic shift. This shift occurred in three stages:

1. The stage of accepting foreign tutelage: Frustration with domestic mobilization led them to conclude that only by relying on a foreign power could they preserve their existence.

2. The stage of integration into the Zionist regime's security apparatus: Shared interests in "anti-Iranianism" and "anti-Islamism" prompted Mossad to identify and recruit these groups as cheap contractors, equipped with Persian language and social cover, for its infiltration and psychological operations projects.

3. The stage of direct action: At this stage, certain radicalized offshoots of these groups, receiving financial and logistical support from Israel, moved beyond mere propaganda and specifically engaged in designing and executing sabotage operations inside Iran or attacking Iran's diplomatic missions, its diplomats, and patriotic Iranians in Europe.

The outcome of this shift is the birth of a "proxy force" from a pre-existing entity, which reduces

Israel's operational costs and mitigates the risk of direct attribution.

Int'l legal framework: establishing the terrorist character

From the perspective of international law, the terrorist character of these networks can be proven using three legal rationales:

a. The broad definition of terrorism in Security Council resolutions:

UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and subsequent resolutions define terrorism as any criminal act with political motives that aims to create terror among the population, compel a government to do or abstain from doing something, or destabilize the political structures of a state. Monarchist networks fall within this framework on the following grounds:

- **Financing of terrorism:** Receiving direct funding from entities affiliated with the Zionist regime, which itself has been repeatedly accused of state terrorism.

- **Incitement to violence:** The media outlets of these groups have repeatedly engaged in direct incitement to assassinate scientists, destroy public property, and create armed unrest.

- **Links with operational elements:** Intelligence reports from the Islamic Republic of Iran and some independent Western sources have documented the logistical connections of these networks with sabotage teams inside Iran.

b. Violation of the right to self-determination and the "non-intervention" doctrine:

These groups, by presenting a false image of the Islamic Establishment's lack of legitimacy and claiming to represent the Iranian nation, effectively provide Western powers with a narrative cost-justification for "humanitarian intervention" or R2P. This act is a manifest violation of Article 2(7) of the UN Charter (the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs) and Article 1 of the two Covenants (the right of peoples to self-determination). Ignoring the will of millions of Iranians expressed in rallies and elections and labeling a structure with religious democracy a "dictatorship" constitutes a clear violation of this fundamental right.

c. The doctrine of State Responsibility of the host state:

The European countries and the United States that have provided haven to these groups are bound, according to the International Court of Justice's ruling in *Nicaragua v. United States* (1986) and the International Law Commission's Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts (ARSIWA), to ensure that their territory is not used to organize and equip armed or terrorist groups against another state. Records and films of public meetings between certain leaders of these groups and Mossad officials on European and American soil provide compelling evidence to establish the "international responsibility" of the host states.

Strategic synergy with the Zionist regime

This collaboration is not merely



Reza Pahlavi (R) meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) in Israel, on April 17, 2023.



UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) and subsequent resolutions define terrorism as any criminal act with political motives that aims to create terror among the population, compel a government to do or abstain from doing something, or destabilize the political structures of a state. Monarchist networks among Iranian diaspora fall within this framework on three grounds.



The screengrab shows a rioter setting a law-enforcement officer on fire during the violent riots in the streets of Shiraz, southern Iran, on January 3, 2026.



scientists. Moreover, the social media accounts of these groups have frequently been used to call for and coordinate acts of sabotage inside Iran (such as arson of public places), and the algorithms of Western platforms, by amplifying their content, facilitate this process.

False portrayal of the Iranian nation

The most fundamental ploy of these networks is the expropriation of Iranian identity and the presentation of a caricatured image of the Iranian society to the West.

a. The "people" vs. "establishment" dichotomy: Drawing on 19th-century colonial literature, this movement claims the existence of a deep chasm between the people and the state. It deliberately ignores credible scientific polls and, relying on biased sampling from social media users (mostly their own like-minded followers), presents claims of the Islamic Establishment's illegitimacy. This project is legal groundwork for foreign intervention (regime change).

b. Forging national identity and appropriating historical symbols:

One of their most treacherous actions is the appropriation of the Lion and Sun flag, Persepolis, and national luminaries. Through this, the groups seek to insinuate that the "real Iran" is the 2,500-year-old imperial regime and that the Islamic Republic is a non-Iranian, exogenous phenomenon — overlooking the fact that numerous polls (including those conducted by the University of Maryland and the BBC, at least those not censored) show that an overwhelming majority of

Iranians view Islam, the Islamic Republic system, and the culture arising from it as their modern national identity.

c. Inverting economic grievances into a legitimacy crisis:

The strategy of these networks is to frame the economic difficulties caused by sanctions (for which they themselves are principal lobbyists in the US Congress) as the "inherent inefficiency of the Establishment" and a "sign of public anger". This creates a vicious feedback loop: Israel and the monarchists lobby to intensify sanctions against the Iranian nation, then exploit the resulting livelihood hardships as a pretext for protest and destabilization.

Comprehensive Counter-Strategy in the International Arena

To neutralize this hybrid threat, the Islamic Republic of Iran requires a multifaceted strategy as follows:

a. Legal-judicial strategy — from passive defense to judicial offensive:

It is proposed that Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Judiciary, compile a comprehensive dossier with the following details:

- **Drafting an indictment against monarchist networks:** citing Article 186 of the Islamic Penal Code (sedition and corruption on earth) and aligning it with international conventions on combating the financing of terrorism (CFTF), to which Iran is a party.

- **Filing complaints in host states based on universal jurisdiction:** lodging complaints in European courts against individuals and networks that openly call for assassination and sabotage. Even if such actions do not result in convictions, they will force the targeted parties from an offensive posture into a defensive and accountability phase.

- **Reviving the "state terrorism" case against the Zionist regime:** Appending Israel's crimes and its relationship with monarchist networks as a new chapter in Iran's ongoing lawsuit against the United States at the International Court of Justice.

b. Diplomatic-political strategy — coalition-building against transnational terrorism:

- **Issuing an executive directive to missions:** All Iranian embassies should be instructed to expunge the keywords "monarchist" and "opposition" from their lexicon concerning these groups and use solely the designations "Mossad-sponsored terrorist groups" or "mafia-media anti-security networks". This renaming is the first step in delegitimation.

- **Active lobbying of national parliaments:** Distributing documentary packages containing evidence and records of these networks' ties to Israel and their acts of sabotage. This can pave the way for the adoption of restrictive resolutions against the media and financial activities of these groups in Europe.

- **Leveraging international bodies:** Sending a comprehensive report to the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee

(CTC) and the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism, stressing that certain states, by hosting these networks, are violating binding Security Council resolutions.

Conclusion

The monarchist groups opposing

the Islamic Republic of Iran are not a political phenomenon that can be treated with tolerance or analyzed within the framework of conventional political competition. The legal and strategic examination demonstrates that these networks:

1. Fall within the definition of ter-

rorism under international law and are clear examples of “proxy agents” of the Zionist regime.

2. Lack any social base in Iran and have built their survival project on the reverse engineering of public opinion in the West through disinformation media.

3. The responsibility of the Euro-

pean and American host states in harboring these elements is established in accordance with the principles of international state responsibility.

Countering this threat requires moving beyond passive gestures and entering into a full-fledged legal-media battle. Iran

must, using precise, universal legal language, introduce these groups not as an “opposition” but as “criminal and terrorist networks” and exercise all its diplomatic and judicial capacities to pursue, prosecute, and dry up their financial and logistical roots. In this endeavor, a

unified approach in the lexicon of the diplomatic apparatus and national media centered on exposing the treason and dependency of this movement is the first and most crucial step in reclaiming the truth from the clutches of the merchants of lies.

Iranian royalists' thuggish edge

By Robert F. Worth
Former bureau chief
for The New York
Times

OPINION

In early February, while much of the world was focused on a looming war in the Persian Gulf, an outspoken Iranian exile named Masood Masjoody disappeared in Canada. Days later, 10 other well-known diaspora figures were tagged in a menacing anonymous message on X: “Soon you’ll have to find the corpses of many.”

But when Masjoody’s body was found in March, the investigation did not point toward the Islamic Republic. Instead, the Canadian police brought murder charges against two followers of Reza Pahlavi, the 65-year-old son of Iran’s last shah and the most prominent leader in the Iranian opposition. Masjoody, a fierce critic of Pahlavi’s, had been denouncing the prince’s movement for months and had singled out the two suspects by name, saying that they were plotting to silence him.

The murder, in other words, appears to have been part of a war within the Iranian opposition — one that pits Pahlavi against a growing host of critics who see him and his movement as dangerously autocratic.

This rift has revolved in part around Pahlavi’s decision to hitch his movement to Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In late February, well before the American and Israeli military campaign against Iran began, Pahlavi and his supporters telegraphed their eagerness for war, claiming that more than 100,000 defectors were waiting to help the former crown prince usher in a new era. Pahlavi seemed almost to expect the kind of welcome granted to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who flew back from exile to Tehran in 1979 and was greeted by millions of adoring people and the banner headline, “He Has Returned.”

Pahlavi has not returned. More than two months into the war, the Strait of Hormuz is still blocked, and the Iranian regime is still firmly in place. Pahlavi and many of his supporters have made clear that they feel betrayed by the peace talks now under way and are hungry for more air strikes.

“The war didn’t go according to my liking,” one prominent Pahlavi supporter who is on the board of the prince’s nonprofit posted on X. The prince’s critics, meanwhile, have lashed out more angrily than ever, calling him an Israeli stooge, a fascist, a dullard presiding over a noxious, warlike cult. “A man with inherited privilege, no serious achievement, a talent for drifting with the wind, and a remarkable ability to keep millions emotionally invested while delivering little beyond contradiction, illusion, and disappointment,” Nik Kowsar, a well-known journalist and cartoonist who was once close to Pahlavi, wrote in April. These bitter judgments are the

expression of a split that has been widening for years. Some say that Pahlavi stands out from a feckless opposition movement as the only viable alternative to the Islamic Republic. In the past decade, Pahlavi has employed young advisers who have adopted MAGA-style tactics and openly embraced Israel.

But Pahlavi’s campaign, like the populist movements it emulates, has a thuggish edge that is alienating many potential supporters even as it energizes his base. Although Pahlavi continues to say that he favors a diverse and democratic opposition, his advisers and followers, many of them committed monarchists, routinely threaten and insult anyone who is not entirely loyal to the man they see as a future king. “You are either with Prince Reza Pahlavi or with the Islamic Republic,” Saeed Ghasseminejad, the prince’s economic adviser, posted on X earlier this year.

“They’ve been inciting hatred against Pahlavi’s critics for years now, and they’ve been warned this would result in something bad,” Alireza Nader, a policy analyst who was once close to the prince, told me. Masjoody’s killing appears to have vindicated those warnings. It has also sharpened the contradiction at the heart of Pahlavi’s movement: The former crown prince says that he wants a democratic future for Iran, but his aides and supporters treat him like a monarch whose word cannot be questioned.

The makeover appears to have begun about 10 years ago, when Pahlavi brought on two new deputies — Ghasseminejad and another young adviser named Amir Etemadi — who were openly aligned with autocratic movements in the United States and abroad. Ghasseminejad spent eight years as an economic analyst at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a right-wing think tank based in Washington, D.C., that has for years been closely allied with Netanyahu and his cabinet.

The younger men had a flattering message for their new boss. They grew up in Iran under the Islamic Republic; Pahlavi, by contrast, has not set foot in his native country since 1978, before the revolution that overthrew his father. They knew firsthand that Pahlavi’s brand was changing inside Iran. The hatred of the Pahlavi dynasty that fueled the 1979 revolution had faded, and a nostalgia for prerevolutionary Iran began to spread. The London-based satellite-television channel Manoto, founded in 2010, broadcast gauzy images and documentaries about the zaman-e shah — “the era of the shah” — featuring carefree Iranians at parties and on beaches, with rarely any mention of SAVAK, the shah’s brutal secret-police agency. Pahlavi’s new advisers believed that the prince was poised to capitalize on this nostalgia, and on a newly revolutionary mood that came alongside it.

But Pahlavi’s advisers also appeared to be anointing him as a



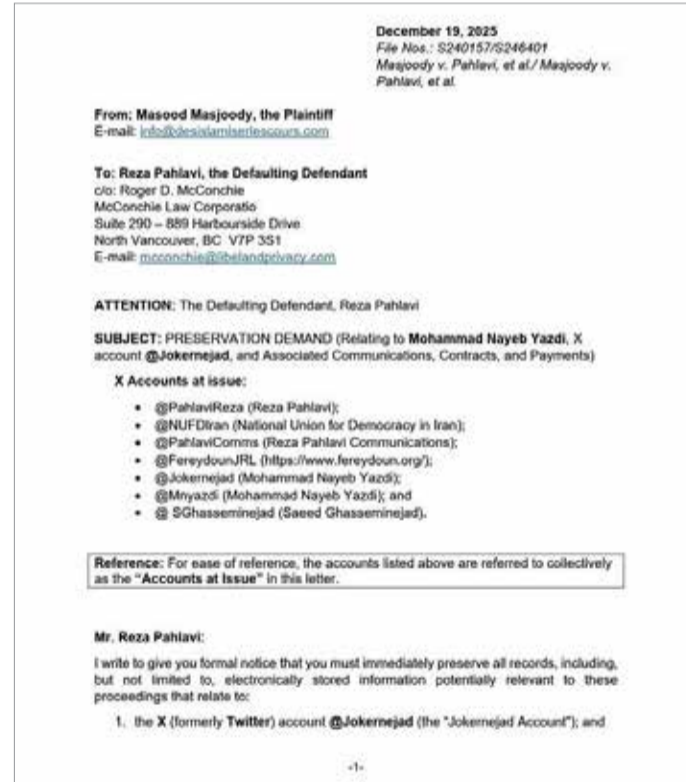
The illustration juxtaposes pictures of Reza Pahlavi (left) and his supporters thanking US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu for bombing Iran in 2026 with pictures of the mass graves and a bloody backpack of the junior victims of said bombings in Minab, southern Iran.

● PRESS TV

The court document, shared by the Plaintiff, shows that Masood Masjoody seeks an order to investigate the cyberbullying and “political violence” of Reza Pahlavi and his supporters against critics. Masjoody later wrote on X on September 24, 2024, that he had initiated “Legal Proceedings to Identify #PahlaviCult as a Terrorist Entity in Canada.”

● X

14. The Defendants’ actions, including the defamatory campaign on X (formerly Twitter) and elsewhere, amount to political violence, as they are aimed at achieving political objectives by intimidating and silencing individuals who oppose the Defendants’ political views. The coordination and dissemination of false information about the Plaintiff are intended to harm his reputation, cause emotional distress, and suppress his advocacy, all of which are consistent with politically motivated violence.



king — the heir to Iran’s “glorious heritage” of a 2,500-year-old monarchy. And that seems to have entailed going to war against anyone who did not acknowledge his primacy. One person who has worked with Ghasseminejad and Etemadi told me that these advisers to Pahlavi believe that “crushing the opposition is as important as fighting the regime. They really believe Pahlavi can’t be effective unless he’s the only voice.”

Ghasseminejad and Etemadi did not take long to start making enemies. In 2018, Kowsar, who was close to Pahlavi at the time, clashed with the two new advisers. They were behaving like “Rottweilers” — obsequious to Pahlavi, and hostile and rude to everyone else — he told me. Soon afterward, Pahlavi’s associates began attacking him online, Kowsar told me, calling him corrupt and a lackey of the Iranian

The document shows that the Plaintiff, Masood Masjoody, has officially requested that the Defendant, Reza Pahlavi, refrain from deleting posts by the listed accounts, including Pahlavi’s own account, on X (formerly, Twitter).

● X

regime, and demanding that he “shut up.” When Kowsar’s elderly father died in Iran, in 2024, some of the same people posted insults about the dead man.

Another opposition figure who fell afoul of Pahlavi’s young advisers was Masjoody, a mathematician and an activist based in Canada. He, too, started off as an admirer of the prince. He belonged to an Iranian exile network called Iran Revival, together with Ghasseminejad and Etemadi. But Masjoody soon became disillusioned, and before long, he was one of the Pahlavi movement’s most forceful and out-

spoken critics, frequently posting and relaying scornful comments about the prince and his entourage. Eventually, Masjoody became convinced that Pahlavi’s two young advisers were secretly working for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. He filed dozens of lawsuits and made some claims that could seem unhinged — among them, that two Pahlavi supporters, Mehdi Ahmadzadeh Razavi and Arezou Soltani, were plotting to kill him.

Masjoody’s body was found on March 6, and the Canadian police charged Razavi and Soltani with first-degree murder soon after. One of the affidavits in the case suggests that the accused pair met with a naturopath in Vancouver in an effort to procure a deadly substance to “get rid of” Masjoody. Masjoody was last seen alive on February 2. On February 5, the X post menacing diaspora figures with a reference to “corpses” went out. One of the recipients was Kowsar, who had been in touch with Masjoody in the weeks before his murder. “It wasn’t like those online attacks I’ve received all these years,” Kowsar said. “This one was scary.”

There is no reason to think that Pahlavi or his advisers are linked to Masjoody’s murder, and I could not find any evidence for Masjoody’s claims that the IRGC is secretly supporting the prince. But the killing has left a legacy of fear and bolstered the sense that Pahlavi’s movement includes its own share of fanatics.

Pahlavi’s new advisers appear to have pushed him to a decision that would further set him apart from the rest of the Iranian opposition. In April 2023, he went to Israel, where he was received warmly by cabinet officials, including Netanyahu and the intelligence minister, Gila Gamliel. Pahlavi conducted himself like a prospective head of state, vowing that a post-Islamic Republic Iran would instantly recognize Israel.

“That put him on the map,” Mehrdad Marty Youssefiani, a political consultant who worked with Pahlavi until 2015, told me. “It broke a taboo, and it did a lot to propel him to a different stage.” Many Iranians seem to have assumed that Pahlavi’s aspirations now had the backroom blessing of the world’s power brokers.

The visit was also intensely divisive. The Iranian opposition was asking itself hard questions. Pahlavi’s message was clear: He now seemed to believe that he spoke for the opposition, and he was firmly allied with Netanyahu, despite the fact that in 2023, much of the Israeli population was protesting Netanyahu’s autocratic agenda, in the largest demonstrations in that country’s history.

One result of Pahlavi’s Israel trip became apparent within months. In mid-2023, an expert on social-media manipulation named Geoff Golberg published a report for the National Iranian American Council documenting a widespread, coordinated

social-media campaign that involved inauthentic accounts praising Pahlavi and demeaning people and organizations (including NIAC) that favored American diplomacy with the Islamic Republic. The report identified 4,765 accounts that were posting more than 100 times a day, producing 843 million tweets. Golberg found links among some of these accounts and official Israeli cabinet accounts. Last fall, the Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz published an investigation that amplified Golberg’s conclusions and documented the existence of a “private entity that receives” cabinet support in Israel, which was dedicated to promoting Pahlavi and had recruited native Farsi speakers to help.

Pahlavi has other powerful patrons. Iran International, a satellite-television network set up under Saudi auspices in 2017, has heavily promoted him. The network appears to have lost hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years and has kept its ownership and finances a secret. Some of Pahlavi’s critics — including Trita Parsi, the co-founder of NIAC — have labeled him an astroturf candidate who has cynically courted political sponsors instead of building grassroots support.

After Trump declared a ceasefire with Iran on April 7, Pahlavi posted a speech to his supporters, saying that he knew the decision “has disheartened many of you.” He embarked on a tour of Europe, preaching regime change and accusing the British government (which did not participate in the war) of appeasement.

But his critics in the opposition are now louder than ever, and late last month, one of the most prominent monarchists inside Iran, a political prisoner named Manouchehr Bakhtiari, joined them. “Among those who claim to support monarchy, it is you who, more than anyone, have turned your back on what you swore to uphold and on the institution of monarchy itself,” Bakhtiari said in a lacerating audio message addressed to Pahlavi. Pahlavi’s appeals for more bombing have taken on a desperate sound now that Trump is visibly fed up with the war. I asked one prominent Pahlavi supporter how he would propose to deal with the Islamic Republic now that so many strategies seem to have failed.

“If the US military could secure a landing for the crown prince within a city in Iran, that would make the difference,” he told me. “I think it would be over for the IRGC.” I was taken aback, and not just by the implausibility of this scenario. Pahlavi might well be unwilling to make such a risky trip. This is the man who told an interviewer back in 2023: “My life has been for the past 40 years here in America. My children live here, my friends live here, everybody that I know is here. If I was to go back, what do I go back to?”

The full article first appeared on The Atlantic.

Dip in European status leaves Team Melli leaning on domestic league

Sports Desk

When the Iranian Football Federation confirmed in April that the Persian Gulf Pro League season – postponed since February 28 due to the country's military conflict with the United States and Israel – would not resume before the upcoming FIFA World Cup, fans and pundits expected Team Melli head coach Amir Qalenoee to build his team around overseas players for the global event in North America.

Last week's announcement of the provisional 30-man squad, however, proved otherwise.

As the squad headed to Antalya, Turkey, on Monday for a final training camp before the showpiece, a stark contrast has emerged between the roster's domestic league players and those plying their trade abroad, compared to previous World Cup campaigns. In fact, with 22 players in the list, the Iranian top flight accounts for the highest number of domestic-based players in the squad in six World Cup editions since the country's debut in 1978, when all members played in the Iranian league.

Upon naming the list, Qa-

lenoee insisted that "nothing other than technical criteria" played a part in his team selection, though a couple of high-profile exclusions have argued against his stated approach.

Sardar Azmoun is the most shocking absentee, as the Shabab Al Ahli striker is set to miss out on a third successive World Cup participation, having been a linchpin of the Team Melli frontline since making his international debut more than a decade ago.

Iran's third all-time top scorer with 57 goals in 91 appearances, Azmoun missed the best part of the UAE Pro League season due to two major injury setbacks and managed only three starts – finding the net twice – after returning to action in late February.

His omission, however, is believed to be driven by off-field issues, following his controversial social media post regarding the war in the early stages of the conflict.

Allahyar Sayyadmanesh is also a surprise absentee, after the 24-year-old winger enjoyed an impressive season with KVC Westerlo in the Belgian top flight, bagging seven goals and five assists in 29 outings.



Iranian national team players arrive in Antalya, Türkiye – for their final training camp before the World Cup on May 18, 2026.



Meanwhile, midfielder Mohammad-Javad Hosseini must feel unlucky to be overlooked by Qalenoee despite registering four goals and three assists for Dynamo Makhachkala in 37 appearances across the Russian league and cup seasons.

Drastic shift

In the previous World Cup in Qatar, Iran boasted 14 overseas players in the

squad. Today, only a handful continue their club careers beyond Iranian borders. A closer look at their fate over the past four years tells the story of their diminished status.

Sadeq Moharrami, formerly of Dinamo Zagreb, moved to Tractor last summer hoping for more game time after recovering from a ligament injury, but was barely given a chance by

Qalenoee. Fullback Ehsan Hajsafi has gone from AEK Athens to Sepahan, while Shoja Khalilzadeh, then at Al Ahli Doha, now plays for Tractor, with both veterans expected to be on the flight to the United States.

Milad Mohammadi also departed AEK Athens to join Persepolis. Saeid Ezzatollahi moved from Vejle in Denmark to Shabab Al Ahli. Karim Ansarifard, once at

Omonia Nicosia, has retired from football, while Hossein Kanaanizadegan followed a similar path to Khalilzadeh, leaving Al Ahli Doha for Persepolis.

Of the 12 European-based players from the previous World Cup roster, only Mehdi Taremi, Ali Qolizadeh, Alireza Jahanbakhsh, and Amir Abedzadeh have managed to retain their positions in Europe at all. However, Jahanbakhsh has dropped from Feyenoord to Belgian bottom-side club Dender EH, while Taremi swapped Porto for Inter, before joining Olympiacos last summer. Abedzadeh, who is absent from Qalenoee's list, has gone from being a starting goalkeeper at Ponferradina to a backup at Castellón.

Those profiles suggest a dip in Iranian players' status in Europe.

For the upcoming World Cup, the national team will include four new overseas players: Rostov's Mohammad Mohebi, Al Nasr winger Mehdi Qayedi, Mohammad Qorbani of Al Wahda, and Dennis Eckert Dargahi of Standard Liège. Apart from the former German U19 international Eckert, who began his club career in Europe, the other three are new to the so-called

"legionnaires" pool but play their football in Russia and the United Arab Emirates rather than in top European leagues.

The key takeaway is that the 26-man squad heading to the United States will feature the lowest number of high-profile international and European-based players in recent memory. With only a handful of players remaining in Europe, Iranian football finds itself trailing continental rivals such as Japan, South Korea, and even an emerging Uzbekistan in terms of overseas representation. The coaching staff now faces a monumental task, relying on younger, less experienced domestic players to fill the gap. While there is hope that a new generation of legionnaires will emerge, the current reality signals a clear decline in manpower quality for Team Melli ahead of the World Cup, where, despite all the complications Qalenoee has had to grapple with on and off the pitch in recent months, the Asian powerhouse will fancy its chances of securing a maiden knockout-round appearance in seven attempts when facing New Zealand, Belgium, and Egypt in the group phase.

Wushu veteran Mohammadseifi eyeing 'fitting finale' with Asian Games gold

Sports Desk

Iranian wushu great Mohsen Mohammadseifi says he will draw on years of experience for a fitting tribute to his illustrious career with one last shot at Asian Games glory, should he secure a place at the upcoming Aichi-Nagoya 2026 in September.

of shape and body weight." Despite the training camp starting later than scheduled due to wartime circumstances in the country, the 36-year-old veteran welcomed the fact that preparations have finally begun.

"We have just finished the first phase of training, and on Friday we will take part

however, is a fierce domestic rival in Erfan Moharrami, who won gold on his World Championships debut last year before claiming the top prize at the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

"Erfan is a truly worthy talent, and I'm sure he will have even more to offer in the coming years. I just hope whatever the outcome

Games experience, while the other eight have never competed at the event.

"The atmosphere of the Asian Games is different from world or continental championships. From the moment an athlete enters the Games Village, the environment and emotions can get the better of them," he said. "The young athletes have a lot of work ahead in the coming months to reach the right mindset. I hope that with the efforts of the coaching staff – Ramin Movahednia, Akbar Mohammadzadeh, and Moein Taqavi – we will go to Nagoya as a cohesive and well-prepared team."

Wushu has consistently been a source of success for Iranian sport at the Asian Games, yielding 29 medals, including nine golds, since Mohsen Ojaqi and Mohammad Aqaei won gold and silver, respectively, in Busan 2002. "This year, the Ministry of Sport has made gold medals a key objective, and we will try to achieve that," he said.

Regarding his personal motivation, Mohammadseifi was emphatic. "In the fitness tests, everyone was surprised by my condition. I train hard to achieve my goal. If I succeed in the trials and make the final lineup, I will build on all my years in the sport for a fitting finale to my career," he said. "This is my last Asian Games as an athlete, and I am eager to display the best version of myself."



AP

Speaking to IRNA on Tuesday, the most decorated male athlete in Iranian wushu history said he is in peak physical condition ahead of the team's final selection trials for the multi-sport event in Japan.

"I'm in decent form," said the five-time world sanda champion, adding: "We took fitness tests a week ago, and I was excellent in terms

in the first of three final selection bouts," Mohammadseifi explained. The best-of-three selection process across various weight categories has been a routine for the Iranian Wushu Federation for years and, in the Iranian captain's view, a fair approach.

Standing between Mohammadseifi and a 70kg spot in the Iranian men's squad,

of the trials will be in the best interest of the national team," said the three-time Asian Games gold medalist, who had to settle for silver in the previous edition in Hangzhou, China.

The squad heading to Japan will be relatively inexperienced, as Mohammadseifi and Shoja Panahi are the only members of the training camp with previous Asian



Asian Taekwondo Championships:

Iranian quadruple finish empty-handed in poomsae event

Sports Desk

Iran got off to a disappointing start at the Asian Taekwondo Championships in Ulaanbaatar, as the country's four participants all missed out on a podium finish in the individual poomsae contests.

Competing in the men's freestyle under-30 class, Yassin Akbari scored 8.6 points to progress to the final, before an 8.36-point performance saw the Iranian settle for sixth place in the final standings. The outcome, however, was enough for Akbari to secure qualification for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September.

Yasaman Limouchi represented the country in the women's freestyle event, finishing ninth in the preliminaries with 7.4 points to miss out on the final showdown.

In the individual male under-30 contests, Yassin Zandi began his campaign with a victory over Yubraj Rana of Nepal but suffered a setback against Muhammad Riza of Indonesia to crash out in the round of 16.

The women's event was one to forget for two-time world silver medalist

Marjan Salahshouri, who defeated Hong Kong's Tsz Ki Liu in their opener but was undone by South Korea's Jooyeong Lee in the last 16.

Iran will still eye poomsae glory in the Mongolian capital when the team competitions get underway today.

Given a bye in the first round, Zandi and Salahshouri will team up against the winner of the battle between the Filipino and Singaporean duos in the mixed pair quarterfinals, while Akbari and Limouchi will compete in the freestyle team event.

The poomsae competitions will be followed by the kyorugi contests on Thursday.

Yassin Valizadeh will get Iran's Asian team title defense underway in the -54kg division, while reigning Olympic champion Arian Salimi will be among the favorites in the +87kg class, aiming to make up for a below-par World Championships campaign last year – where he suffered a last-16 exit – by defending his continental title.

In the women's event, Masoumeh Ranjbar will compete in the -46kg class, while Fatemeh Ahmadi will be part of the +73kg draw.

Zanjan's museums preserve centuries of history, culture

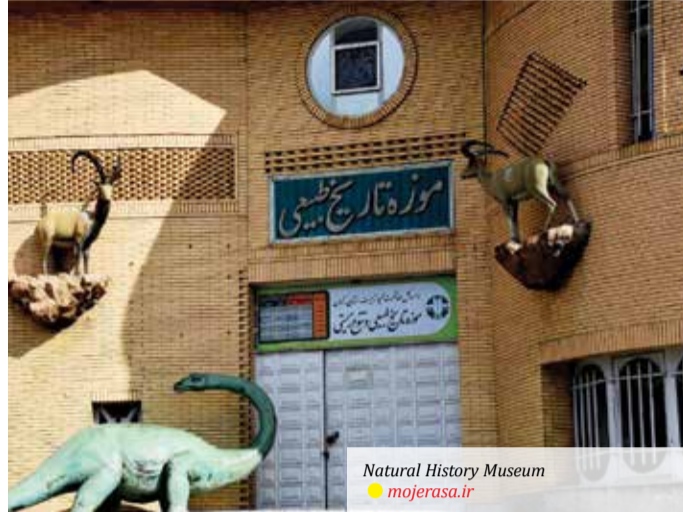
Iranica Desk

Zanjan Province is home to 12 museums spanning various fields, serving as valuable repositories of the region's rich cultural and historical heritage. Officials say preserving and maintaining these treasures requires greater attention and support.

The International Council of Museums (ICOM), operating under UNESCO, designated May 18 as International Museum Day during its 12th General Assembly held in Moscow in 1977. Since then, museums around the world have marked the occasion annually by discussing key issues facing the sector, while museum experts and the public engage in dialogue about the challenges confronting these institutions. Special ceremonies are also held at several renowned museums worldwide, according to IRNA.

International Museum Day provides an opportunity to strengthen global scientific and cultural cooperation among museums through coordinated international initiatives and joint programs aimed at promoting cultural understanding.

A museum is defined as a place for collecting, preserving, studying, and exhibiting cultural or natural heritage for the purposes of education, research, appreciation, and



Natural History Museum
● mojerasa.ir

public enjoyment.

Today, museums are widely recognized as institutions that showcase the history, civilization, culture, and hidden stories of nations spanning thousands of years.

Speaking to IRNA, Mohammadreza Mohammadpour, Deputy Head of Zanjan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, highlighted the importance of museums in society.

"Museums play a unique and enduring role in human societies through the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage," he said.

"Museums are among the few institutions safeguarding the legacy of past generations. Ev-

ery historical object, though silent, tells countless stories and serves as an authentic document of art, culture, and history."

Referring to International Museum Day and Cultural Heritage Week, observed in Iran from May 18 to May 24, Mohammadpour stressed the need for a large museum complex in Zanjan featuring sections dedicated to archaeology, anthropology, contemporary arts, and traditional occupations.

"The province lacks such a specialized facility, and the issue has long been neglected at the national level due to funding shortages and other constraints," he said.

According to Mohammadpour,



Rakshshouykhaneh Anthropology Museum
● IRNA

the large number of archaeological and anthropological artifacts stored in provincial repositories demonstrates the need for a major museum meeting international standards.

He added that the current site displaying unique artifacts such as the Salt Men is a historic house lacking the facilities and standards of a modern museum. Addressing the impact of museums on tourism, Mohammadpour said cooperation among historical sites, museums, hotels, and travel agencies strengthens tourism networks and increases visitor numbers. "Museums work closely with tourism agencies to attract visitors and pay special attention to tourism development," he said.

He explained that the strategic location of a museum enhances the image of a region and supports the growth of tourism and leisure industries.

Research on sustainable tourism development has highlighted the importance of heritage attractions, historical monuments, and museums, he added, noting that stronger museum marketing strategies can significantly contribute to broader tourism promotion.

Mohammadpour emphasized that museums reflect the culture and lifestyle of local communities while illustrating the diversity of human societies.

"Regional museums introduce the culture and heritage of local residents and promote tourism

by highlighting indigenous and regional characteristics," he said. He warned that shortcomings in this sector could undermine efforts to introduce local culture, customs, and traditions.

Mohammadpour said Zanjan currently has 12 active museums, including the Natural History Museum, Rakshshouykhaneh Anthropology Museum, Martyrs Museum, Archaeology and Salt Men Museum, Abhar Archaeology Museum, Soltanieh World Heritage Site Museum, Botanical Garden Museum of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Handicrafts Museum, Postal Museum, History and Culture Museum, Mehraneh Museum, and the Sacred Defense Museum.

He added that several additional museums are under development, including the Health Museum, Carpet Museum of Qoltuq village, Water Museum, and Zanjan University Museum, which are expected to open within the next year in cooperation with relevant organizations.

Mohammadpour also announced that 30 cultural and educational programs will be held during Cultural Heritage Week.

"These programs are designed to introduce, protect, and promote the province's rich cultural and historical heritage while honoring those active in this field," he said.

Branding; a key to tourism development in Semnan Province

Iranica Desk

The deputy head of Semnan Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization has emphasized the need to develop the tourism industry by focusing more on branding across various sectors, including handicrafts.

Samaneh Soltani, speaking to ISNA, referred to the upcoming national gathering of eco-lodge operators in Qaleh Bala village of Shahrud, describing it as an opportunity. She noted that Qaleh Bala, a designated tourism target village, is a well-known name in the tourism sector both nationally and province-wide. Soltani identified branding, marketing, and market development as serious needs for

the trade sector, particularly in handicrafts. "Unfortunately, these areas have received insufficient attention in our country, which has caused economic difficulties for those involved in this field. However, in recent years, significant steps have been taken that could help revive these industries nationwide," she said.

Highlighting the high tourism capacity of the picturesque village of Qaleh Bala, Soltani discussed the process of its global registration. "Having this village listed among internationally targeted tourism destinations can greatly enhance its recognition," she added.

She referred to efforts made to support the village's global registration as one of eight villages

nominated by Iran. "To develop tourism in the province, we need branding — both in handicrafts and in cultural heritage and tourism sectors," she stated. Soltani described cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts as three interconnected circles, noting that growth in any of these sectors can further develop this lucrative industry in the province.

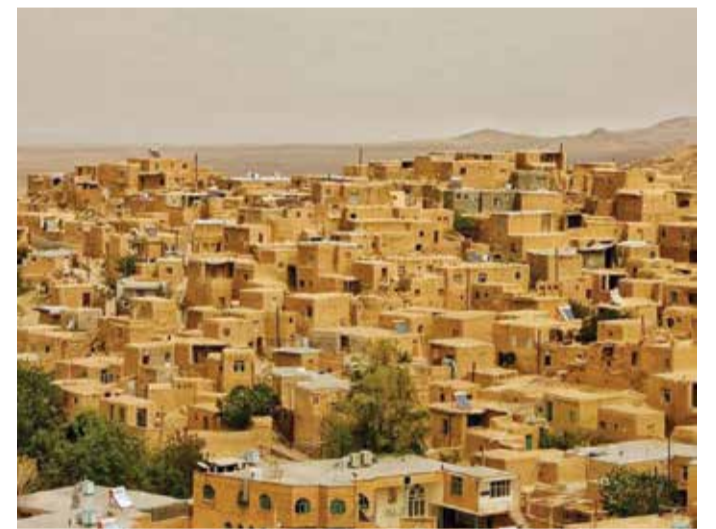
She also noted that holding handicraft exhibitions is a key policy of the department year-round. Over the past year, 52 handicraft exhibitions have been organized by her office in various parts of the province and country.

Soltani announced plans to establish a handicraft house in the village, which is on the

verge of global registration. "Fortunately, the people of this village have long paid special attention to various tourism sectors, including handicrafts. Some local accommodations and eco-lodges have historically made efforts in this area, as life in this region has always been intertwined with handicrafts," she explained.

She also reported that a handicraft exhibition will be held on the sidelines of the national eco-lodge operators' gathering in Qaleh Bala. "Showcasing local products and handicrafts from the region at this exhibition can help further introduce and promote the village," she added.

Soltani assessed the holding of such exhibitions as effective in



● IRNA

improving the tourism economy and emphasized that the prod-

ucts displayed should match consumer tastes and needs.

UNESCO-listed Akbariyeh Garden hosts traditional food festival



● chtn.ir

Iranica Desk

The Director General of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of South Khorasan Province announced the holding of an Iranian Food Festival in conjunction with Cultural Heritage Week and International Museum Day. Seyyed Ahmad Barabadi said the cultural and tourism event was organized to preserve intangible cultural heritage, showcase local potential and strengthen the role of women in safeguarding authentic Iranian traditions. The festival was held on Monday at the

UNESCO-listed Akbariyeh Garden and Mansion in Birjand, according to chtn.ir.

Barabadi noted that the participation of female artists and exhibitors from Birjand showcased the close connection between Iranian culture, art, and culinary traditions in one of the province's most valuable historical sites. He added that 50 pavilions were set up during the festival, where participants displayed a wide range of traditional and local dishes, homemade pastries, desserts, and handicrafts for visitors and judges. The scenic atmosphere of Akbariyeh, combined with the

aroma of traditional cuisine, created a memorable experience for attendees.

Referring to the diversity of the exhibits, Barabadi said the festival featured dishes from different parts of Iran, particularly traditional foods from Birjand and several northern cities. Although some fast-food items were also presented, the majority of the offerings consisted of traditional and local cuisine.

He emphasized that a variety of local soups and traditional Birjandi breads were among the festival's highlights and attracted considerable attention from visitors. Local sweets and pastries

were also warmly welcomed. Barabadi further explained that the festival included a competitive section in which three judges evaluated entries in the categories of food, pastries, and local bread. One winner from each category was selected and honored.

He stressed that such festivals not only help introduce the province's intangible cultural heritage and tourism potential, but also provide a valuable opportunity to showcase women's capabilities and promote authentic Iranian culture at the historical and internationally recognized sites of South Khorasan Province.

Eco-tourism expansion aims to revive rural economies, preserve cultural identity

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is stepping up investment in rural tourism and eco-lodges as part of a broader strategy to revive village economies, strengthen national unity and safeguard Iranian-Islamic cultural identity, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Tuesday. Speaking at the National Ecotourism Day conference in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said the administration of President Masoud Pezeshkian had mobilized financial, banking and executive resources to remove barriers facing rural communities and eco-tourism operators, positioning village revitalization as a national priority aimed at curbing migration to urban centers and boosting local employment, according to CHTN.

He described eco-tourism as more than a hospitality business, calling it a platform for safeguarding Iran's cultural memory, social capital and indigenous traditions. He added that Iran's ethnic and cultural diversity, spanning Kurdistan, Baluchestan, Khuzestan, Lorestan and Torkman Sahra, forms a unified national identity rooted in centuries of civilization. "Iran possesses one of the world's richest civilizational treasures," Salehi-Amiri said, citing more than one million historical sites, including 43,000

nationally registered monuments and 29 UNESCO-listed sites. The minister said strong domestic demand during the Nowruz (Persian New Year) holidays, when millions travelled to villages and eco-lodges, highlighted growing public interest in experiencing rural life, traditional crafts, local cuisine and regional customs. Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh, vice president for rural development and deprivation alleviation, said sustainable development cannot rely solely on infrastructure and construction projects. He said eco-tourism could foster what he described as a "relationship economy" built on social interaction, cultural exchange and community participation, warn-

ing that weakening social ties could threaten rural sustainability and accelerate depopulation. Deputy Tourism Minister Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey said a specialized rural tourism desk had been established to streamline policy and expand support for local communities, adding that eco-lodges are key to job creation and encouraging reverse migration to rural areas. Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs Zahra Behrouz-Azar said family-run eco-tourism businesses act as custodians of Iran's civilizational heritage and cultural identity, with the government aiming to integrate dispersed rural capacities into a unified development network for balanced growth.



Iran's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks at the National Ecotourism Day conference in Tehran on May 19, 2026. ● CHTN

Tehran Virtual Book Fair bridges cultural gap with free postage

Arts & Culture Desk

A top Iranian book fair official said free postal delivery for online purchases, costing as much as the state book subsidy itself, guarantees readers in remote provinces equal access to the country's biggest literary event, calling it a deliberate push toward balanced cultural development. Ebrahim Heydari, deputy director of the 7th Tehran Virtual Book Fair and managing director of Iran Book and Literature House, told state news agency IRNA that the virtual fair's free shipping policy ensures buyers in Sistan and Baluchestan, Kurdistan, North Khorasan, Azarbaijan and other far-flung regions benefit from the same discounts as residents of the capital. 179100 toman convert toman to dollar "The postal subsidy almost matches the book subsidy," Heydari said. He explained that each Iranian national can receive free postal delivery for up to 1,500,000 rials (less than \$1) worth of books, with no weight restrictions on parcels. The first postal package is entirely free for both the buyer and the publisher, while the publisher covers 30



percent of the cost for a second package. Organizers opted for an online format due to what he described as a "semi-ceasefire" situation gripping the country, which made a physical gathering unfeasible. He said the decision followed broad consultations with publishers, booksellers and senior cultural authorities. Heydari framed the virtual fair as a symbol of cultural resilience, arguing that it demonstrates how everyday life continues despite external pressures and wartime conditions. "This event carries the message that contrary to slogans and images sometimes presented by foreign media, Iranians are moving forward with their work properly," he said. The official also detailed the fair's discount structure. Buyers receive a 25-percent reduction on new books published

within the past five years, consisting of a 15-percent publisher discount and a 10-percent state subsidy capped at 20 million rials (almost \$33) per person. He noted that the cultural deputy's budget allocates more than half of its annual funds to the book fair, underscoring the event's priority in Iran's cultural policy. Heydari added that a separate subsidized online sale for booksellers would follow roughly 40 days after the fair wraps up. That scheme will cover all books regardless of publication year, allowing bookshops across the country to clear older stock. He recalled that last year's similar post-fair program generated about 300 billion rials (\$0.5 million) in sales, double the volume of previous years in terms of both revenue and copies sold.

Golestan Palace draws wide attention on Chinese state TV

Arts & Culture Desk

Chinese state broadcaster China Global Television Network (CGTN) marked International Museum Day on May 18 by featuring Tehran's Golestan Palace in a global cultural program that drew strong engagement from Chinese audiences, Hossein Khalifi, representative of Iran's Touring and Automobile Centre in China, said. The UNESCO-listed Qajar-era complex emerged as one of the most-watched segments in CGTN's "Bridging the World Through Museums", a multinational showcase spanning museums and cultural institutions from Iran, Greece, Tunisia, Brazil, Argentina and Slovenia, ISNA reported. Khalifi said the Iranian entry stood out for blending Khorasani folk music



with sweeping imagery of the palace's mirror halls, luminous tiles and royal courtyards. The soundtrack, performed by Iranian vocalist Gholamhossein Ghaffari, lent the production a lyrical cadence that resonated with Chinese viewers' longstanding interest in Iran's traditional arts, he said. CGTN described museums as living arenas of cultural exchange that preserve

civilization across generations and geographies. In its portrayal of Golestan Palace, the network highlighted the site as a meeting point between Persian craftsmanship and European architectural influence, where "the echoes of shared heritage" ripple through vaulted chambers and mosaic-lined halls. The program juxtaposed Golestan Palace with landmarks including China's Old Summer Palace and Greece's Acropolis, framing museums as active spaces where history, memory and artistic dialogue continue to converge. Iranian cultural bodies, including the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, and the Owj Arts and Media Organization, collaborated on the production.

Ferdowsi's enduring legacy resonates with Italian academia

Arts & Culture Desk

Italian and Iranian studies scholars gathered at the Vivarium Academy in Rome to honor Persian poet Ferdowsi and examine the enduring influence of the 'Shahnameh' (Book of the Kings) on European Iranology and Iran's cultural identity. The event placed 'Shahnameh' at the center of a widening cultural dialogue between Iran and Europe, with academics describing the epic as a living archive of Persian language, justice, mythology and historical memory, IRNA reported on Tuesday. Professor Simone Cristoforetti characterized the work as a vast tapestry interweaving cosmology, ethics, philosophy and heroic narrative, stretching from the



reign of Keyumars, regarded in Iranian tradition as the first king, to the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century. He said the poem's legendary cycle, dominated by the heroic figure of Rostam and

the House of Sam, remained one of the pillars of Persian literary consciousness, while its historical sections chronicled the Parthian and Sassanian eras with sweeping narrative force. Mario Mazzari of the University of Rome traced Italy's scholarly engagement with Ferdowsi back to the Medici Press in the late sixteenth century, highlighting the role of Giovanni Battista Raimondi and the Vecchietti brothers in collecting Persian manuscripts and laying the groundwork for Oriental studies in Europe. Speakers said the 'Shahnameh' had preserved the bond between Persian language, wisdom and historical continuity across centuries, retaining a singular place in global epic literature and intercultural scholarship.

Bushehr on track to become Iran's maritime tourism hub

Social Desk

Iran's Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, Anoushirvan Mohseni-Bandpey, said on Tuesday in Bushehr that the southern coastal province is poised to become one of the country's leading maritime tourism hubs, as the government moves to expand infrastructure and support private-sector investors.

Bandpey said Bushehr's extensive Persian Gulf coastline, strategic geography and rich cultural heritage had positioned the province as a high-potential destination for marine, eco and industrial tourism, according to IRNA. He said the ministry stood ready to deepen cooperation on tourism infrastructure, professional training and the

promotion of Bushehr's attractions at domestic and international exhibitions. Governor General Arsalan Zare' said the province's historical quarters, indigenous music, favorable climate and long seafront had given Bushehr a competitive edge in southern Iran's tourism economy. He said new accommodation projects, coastal redevelopment schemes and improved transport links were being pri-

oritized to stimulate visitor inflows and broaden local employment. Zareh said tourism activity and traveler numbers had weakened during the recent imposed war, squeezing revenues for hospitality operators and eco-lodge owners across the province. He called for government-backed relief measures, including concessional financing, deferred loan repayments and

insurance and tax support, to help revive the sector. He said strengthening tourism would generate sustainable jobs, raise household incomes and restore momentum to one of Bushehr's most promising economic sectors, as the province seeks to reclaim a larger share of Iran's tourism market along the glittering Persian Gulf coast.