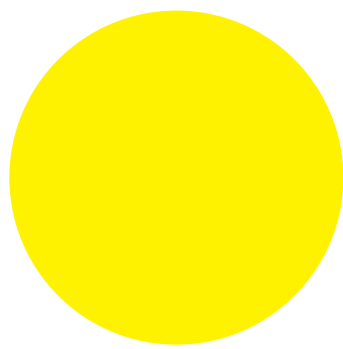


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President Masoud Pezeshkian (C), flanked by CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati (3rd R) and Industry Minister Mohammad Atabak, speaks at a meeting in Iran's Chamber of Commerce in Tehran on May 25, 2026. [president.ir](#)

China leans toward facilitating rather than guaranteeing Iran-US deal

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Asim Munir, Pakistan's army chief who is leading the mediation track between Iran and the United States, has traveled to Beijing alongside Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for talks with Chinese officials. The visit comes shortly after his trip to Tehran regarding negotiations with Washington. Islamabad is said to be pressing Beijing to take on the role of guarantor in any agreement between the US and Iran. What has driven Pakistan to turn to China, and what capacities Beijing brings to the table, were discussed by Iran Daily with Afifeh Abedi, an international affairs expert. She argues that Beijing is likely to accept a facilitating role but will shy away from acting as the ultimate guarantor, where responsibility for any breach of the deal would fall on its shoulders.



IRAN DAILY: If this claim holds, why has Pakistan turned to China? Is this choice primarily rooted in Islamabad's close strategic ties with Beijing, or in China's own distinct features and capacities?

ABEDI: Both factors can be cited to explain this push. A successful mediation effort between Iran and the United States, given Pakistan's own capacities, would

elevate Islamabad's geopolitical standing, and tapping into China's capabilities could further reinforce that goal.

At the same time, Iran, after the failed experience of the JCPOA, is seeking a "stronger and more durable" guarantee and has repeatedly signaled that it sees China as better suited to provide it.

Alongside Tehran's need, two additional factors come into play: first, the strategic relationship between Iran and China. Ties between Tehran and Beijing run deeper than ordinary cooperation. Iran recognizes that for any international diplomatic initiative to gain traction, China and Russia must be brought on board and aligned.

Second, and more importantly, China's unique capacity to engage with the United States. China is the only country that commands Washington's respect. Despite ongoing competition in the global order, major powers are compelled to work together in certain areas, and ending the war in West Asia could be one of them—though it would certainly not dial down broader rivalries.

Does China fundamentally have an appetite for stepping into such a role? What variables could push Beijing toward accepting or avoiding the role of guarantor?

Shifts in the international landscape have prompted China, unlike in previous decades, to step up its diplomatic role in global crises. Acting as a "guarantor of peace" in the Middle East's largest conflict would elevate China's image from an "economic actor" to a "global leader."

Other drivers include the need for energy security and global economic stability. The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has disrupted China's energy supply chain and dealt a blow to its economy. Beijing is keen to see the strait reopened swiftly and has the capacity to help ensure that outcome. Meanwhile, the end of the war would open up reconstruction opportunities that could benefit China's economy. Still, China's strategic pattern suggests it is unlikely to replace the United States in the Middle East or become militarily entangled. History shows that China tends to avoid "committing itself" to other actors. Moreover, a US war with Iran has diverted American attention and military resources away from East Asia. From the perspective of some analysts, the continuation of this situation works against Washington—not Beijing. Why would China give up such leverage prematurely?

Overall, Beijing is likely to accept the role of "facilitator," but will avoid acting as the "ultimate guarantor" where responsibility for any breach of the agreement would fall on its shoulders.

If China were to accept such a role, what tools and levers—economic, political, or security-related—would it actually have to ensure the implementation of a potential Iran-US agreement?

In line with its strategic model, China's tools are primarily economic and political, not military. From Washington's perspective, China is the largest buyer of Iranian oil.

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Municipality of Mashhad
Planning & Human Resources Department
City Diplomacy Center

Mayor of Mashhad

The future trajectory of humanity will be evaluated by our response

The Mayor of Mashhad, Mohammad Reza Ghalandar Sharif, has issued an open letter appeal condemning attacks on civilian populations in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran, warning that continued global silence risks legitimizing what he described as systematic violations of humanitarian law.

Speaking in connection with international city diplomacy efforts, the mayor framed the recent incident in city of Minab as a defining test for the global community's commitment to human rights and civilian protection. His statement called on cities and governments worldwide to move beyond rhetoric and adopt concrete measures against entities allegedly linked to attacks on residential infrastructure and civilian areas.

"The future trajectory of humanity will be evaluated by our response," the statement declared, emphasizing that indifference in the face of civilian suffering would amount to complicity. The mayor asserted that "silence fosters impunity," arguing that only coordinated international action can establish lasting security and accountability.

Among the most significant proposals outlined in the statement was the creation of an International Urban Solidarity Fund under the framework of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). According to the proposal, the fund would support the reconstruction of schools, housing, and essential civilian infrastructure damaged during conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran.

The statement also called on national governments participating in international municipal forums to support arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against individuals accused of ordering attacks on civilian populations. The mayor described legal accountability as an indispensable requirement for preventing future violence and restoring international credibility to humanitarian law.

In one of the strongest sections of the declaration, Mashhad's municipal leadership



urged cities across the world to reassess procurement contracts and sever commercial ties with defense manufacturers whose products have reportedly been used in attacks affecting civilian infrastructure. Companies specifically referenced included Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.

The mayor characterized such measures not as political positioning, but as an "ethical municipal practice" rooted in humanitarian responsibility and international conscience. He argued that municipalities, as the closest governing institutions to ordinary citizens, cannot remain passive while homes, schools, and children become casualties of geopolitical conflict. Mashhad's statement further called for a global coalition of cities committed to justice, humanitarianism, and civilian protection, urging international municipal leaders to transform diplomatic platforms into mechanisms for real-world action.

"May Baku be recognized not merely as a venue for discussing housing solutions," the statement concluded, "but as the turning point where the protection of children within their homes became paramount."

The declaration marks one of the most direct and uncompromising interventions by an Iranian metropolitan authority in ongoing regional tensions, signaling an effort by municipal leadership to elevate humanitarian accountability to the center of international city diplomacy.

FM spokesperson: Progress in US talks on many issues, but no imminent deal

Trump says negotiations 'proceeding nicely'

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Monday that Tehran and Washington have reached conclusions on many topics, but this does not mean that an agreement is imminent to end the US-Israeli aggression against the Islamic Republic.

Speaking in his weekly press conference, Esmail Baqaei said the developments that made news in recent days are the result of several weeks of negotiations through the mediator Pakistan.

Baqaei said the main reason behind the current situation of negotiations is the "institutionalized instability in US decision-making" and the contradictory positions of US officials within the span of a few hours.

US President Donald Trump also gave similar signals on Monday, saying that peace negotiations are proceeding

"nicely."

However, he warned that if a deal is not reached, US attacks would resume on a scale "bigger and stronger than ever before."

"Negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are proceeding nicely! It will only be a Great Deal for all or, no Deal at all - Back to the Battlefield and shooting, but bigger and stronger than ever before - And nobody wants that!" Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The deal under discussion reportedly involves a 60-day ceasefire extension, reopening the Strait of Hormuz and a plan for further negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

During a televised interview on Saturday, Baqaei said the two sides were nearing a "a memorandum of understanding, a kind of framework agreement composed of 14 clauses," in "a trend toward rapprochement."

According to media reports, Wash-

ington has agreed to release part of Tehran's funds frozen abroad under international economic sanctions and to end its naval blockade of ships travelling to and from Iranian ports.

In exchange, "according to this draft, passage through the Strait of Hormuz would return to pre-war levels under Iranian management."

According to Fars News Agency, "Sanctions on oil, gas, petrochemicals and their derivatives would be temporarily lifted during the negotiation period so that Iran can freely sell its products".

The US and Israel launched wide-ranging strikes on Iran on February 28, sparking conflict across the Middle East. Iran responded by attacking Israel and US military bases in the Persian Gulf, and effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20% of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas travels. The move sent oil prices soaring globally.



Esmail Baqaei
MEHR

Shortly after a ceasefire was agreed in early April, the US established a blockade of Iranian ports which Trump says

will remain "in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed."

Pezeshkian reiterates Iran's resolve not to yield to US maximalism

National Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran will not capitulate to US pressures and excessive demands, adding that the country's negotiators will ensure the full restoration of the nation's rights through the diplomatic process.

Speaking at a meeting with members of the Chamber of Commerce on Monday, Pezeshkian noted that after failing on the military front, the enemy has now concentrated its efforts on economic warfare.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not surrender to excessive pressures and demands under any circumstances," he said.

On February 28, the United States and Israel initiated an unprovoked war against Iran with the assassination of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders.

In response, the Iranian Armed Forces carried out 100 waves of counter-attacks over 40 days, targeting US and Israeli military assets, which



President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) speaks during a meeting with members of the Chamber of Commerce in Tehran, Iran, on May 25, 2026.
president.ir

resulted in significant damage. A Pakistani-mediated two-week ceasefire was brokered on April 8, enabling the ongoing negotiations in Islamabad.

The president added that despite the enemy's shift to economic warfare following its military failures, "the government and the private sector, through solidarity, cohesion, and joint cooperation, will successfully navigate this phase as well."

Pezeshkian praised the role of the private sector and economic actors in managing the country's sensitive situation, describing them as pioneers of the economic front in the enemy's comprehensive hybrid war. He said that maintaining market stability, preventing economic volatility,

and meeting the country's needs under wartime conditions have been made possible through the efforts, dedication, and effective presence of economic actors and producers.

"During the recent crisis, no noticeable shortage of goods or serious market disruption was observed," the president added.

Pezeshkian also held a separate meeting with representatives of the Tehran Guild Association and economic stakeholders.

Referring to the necessity of strengthening synergy among the government, guilds, and the private sector, the president noted, "Our belief is that if all economic pillars of the country come together and act with cohesion and coordination, the enemies will not be able to achieve their objectives in the realm of economic warfare."

Qalibaf re-elected as Iranian Parliament speaker



Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf (L) prepares to vote in the election of the members of the Parliament's presiding board in Tehran, Iran, on May 25, 2026.
ICANA

for the position of the parliament speaker.

Qalibaf managed to secure 235 of the 271 votes cast by lawmakers. Naqdali and Salari obtained 29 and seven votes, respectively.

Ali Nikzad with 143 votes and Hamidreza Haji Babaei with 100 votes were also reelected as deputy speakers.

Qalibaf has served as the speaker throughout the four years of the 11th Parliament and the first two years of the 12th Parliament.

The Parliament's presiding board consists of 12 seats; one for the speaker, two for vice speakers, six for secretaries, and three for observers.

The Parliament also has 13 specialized committees, each with its own six-member presiding board comprising a chairperson, two deputy chairs, a spokesperson, and two secretaries.

Members of the presiding board are elected by a direct vote of all representatives. However, the presiding boards of the specialized committees are elected for a one-year term by members of each respective committee.

National Desk

Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was re-elected as the speaker of the Iranian Parliament for another year after securing the majority of the votes in the first in-person session of the parliament after the US-Israeli aggression.

The election for the Parliament's presiding board took place during the third annual session of the legislative body on Monday morning. The Parliament has not held a public session since the US and Israeli attack on March 30 last year. Qalibaf, Mohammad Taqi Naqdali, and Osman Salari had stood as candidates



First Announcement

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0340015

The National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) is seeking to procure the specified goods listed in the table below through a Qualitative Evaluation Call for conducting a public tender via the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD). All stages of the tender process including the receipt of tender documents, submission of bidders' proposals, and the opening of bid envelopes, shall be carried out exclusively through the Government Electronic Procurement System (SETAD) portal at www.setadiran.ir. Bidders who have not previously registered must complete the registration process on the aforementioned portal and obtain an Electronic Signature certificate to participate in the tender.

Item	Material Description	Quantity
1	CASING, NON API, GRADE P-110SS, SEAMLESS, "N.VAM", THD OR EQUIVALENT, RANGE 3 (MAX LENGTH: 40.5 FT), PSL: 3, AS PER API 5CT / ISO 11960 NACE MR0175, MARKING: STENCIL PRINTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT MAX. H.R.C:29, H2S (PPM): 21600, CO2 (PPM): 49000, TEMPERATURE: 225 F, SIZE, WEIGHT, DRIFT AS SPECIFIED; REF. NISOC/NIOC APPROVED STANDARD MANUFACTURES COLLAPSE PRESSURE: 13020 PSI, BURST PRESSURE: 13700 PSI, 7 IN., 35 PPF, DRIFT: 5.879 IN.	4,000 LE
2	COUPLING CASING, API GRADE P-110SS OR ALL WEIGHTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH API 5CT/ISO 11960, TO BE ELECTRO PLATED SIZE & THREAD AS SPECIFIED, 7 IN., NEW VAM, DRIFT: 5.875 IN.	150 NO

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.setadiran.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 56,359/62 EURO or 90,232,646,256 RIAL, in favor of NISOC.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS CFR, BANDAR IMAM KHOMINEI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.A.D INCLUDING 25% ADVANCE PAYMENT, SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex,
Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 341 23589 Fax No.: 061 34457437

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Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Gov't moves to restore Internet access after wartime blackout

Economy Desk

A specialized Iranian government body overseeing cyberspace approved a plan to reconnect the country to the global Internet, the semi-official Fars news agency reported on Monday, after months of severe restrictions imposed over the recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran.

The fourth meeting of the Special Cyberspace Management Headquarters was held under the chairmanship of First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref and attended by members of the body, according to the government's official information portal.

The portal said the meeting approved "important measures regarding the country's Internet situation" that would be sent to President Masoud Pezeshkian for final approval before being communicated to the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology for implementation.

No official details of the measures were released, but Fars reported that a proposal to reconnect

international Internet access was approved by nine votes and sent to Pezeshkian's office for final approval.

Since the start of the recent US-Israeli war against Iran on Feb. 28, access to the global Internet has largely been unavailable to ordinary citizens except for those with "pro Internet," special "white" SIM cards, or access to Starlink.

The shutdown of international Internet access in Iran has become the longest widespread outage in the history of the Internet.

Over the past year, Iran's Internet has been disrupted for more than 100 days, including a record 88 consecutive days of outage during the conflict, according to available data.

Iran ICT Guild Organization blockchain commission head Abbas Ashtiani estimated that the digital blackout has imposed between \$30 million and \$35 million per day in direct, indirect and opportunity costs on the country.

Ehsan Chitsaz, deputy minister for policymak-



The fourth meeting of the Special Cyberspace Management Headquarters is held under First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (c), with members of the body in attendance, on May 25, 2026. **IRNA**

ing, planning and digital economy at the Communications Ministry, wrote in a note published on the government's official website that those who still believed society, the digital economy and younger generations could be managed through prolonged Internet shutdowns "have not understood the reality of today's world."

"The big mistake is that some still see the Internet merely as a media threat, while widespread Internet shutdowns create a chain of security, economic, social and technological crises that can even weaken national security," he wrote.

Chitsaz added that neither the political establishment nor the government would allow "some people, with this naive and anti-development mindset contrary



to the long-term interests of national security, to push the country toward prolonged internet shutdowns and digital isolation."

Speaking at Monday's meeting, Aref criticized Internet restrictions, saying dealing with the Internet in such a way was like closing an entire highway to all vehicles instead of confronting a single offending driver.

Aref said the president had used his legal authority as head of government, chairman of the Supreme National Security Council, chairman of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace and chairman of the Supreme Council of

the Cultural Revolution to establish the body.

He said it was the first time a president had explicitly invoked both the presidency and the chairmanship of the Supreme National Security Council in such a decree, making the body both a government body and a Supreme National Security Council body.

Criticizing what he described as arbitrary and personal approaches toward cyberspace and internet policy, Aref said Iran's young talent and human resources were capable of driving scientific and technological progress, but that restrictive internet policies had

hindered development.

"Now that the enemy is attacking our science and knowledge, should we also damage the country's scientific and technological growth by shutting down the Internet?" Aref said.

During the conflict, 32 research centers across the country had been damaged.

"Do we fundamentally have the right to take this right away from the people because of personal preferences or shortcomings in different sectors? I know that some opposition to reopening the Internet stems from personal preferences and corporate interests."

Iranian delegation in Qatar for peace talks, frozen funds

Economy Desk

A high-level Iranian delegation headed by the country's top negotiator arrived in Doha, Qatar on Monday in a surprise visit as part of ongoing diplomatic efforts to end the war with the United States and secure the release of frozen Iranian funds.

"The trip is part of the diplomatic process that began in recent weeks through Pakistan's mediation to end the conflict," official news agency IRNA said.

According to Tasnim and Fars news agencies, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was accompanied by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and Central Bank Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati.

Fars reported that Hemmati travelled to Qatar to "review the release of frozen assets." IRNA said the delegation would confer about "certain aspects related to negotiations to end the war" with senior Qatari officials.

The Iranian visit came after a Qatari delegation flew to Tehran last week to discuss mediation efforts between Iran and the US.

One of Tehran's demands in negotiations with Washington to end the war launched by the United States and Israel on February 28 is the release of its frozen financial assets.

According to Fars, Washington agreed to free part of Tehran's blocked overseas assets and its lift the naval blockade on vessels travelling to and from Iranian ports in return for reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

In 2023, \$6 billion in Iranian assets frozen in South Korean banks was transferred to Qatar pending the release of five US citizens detained by Iran, according to AFP.

The funds were never released after relations between Washington and Tehran deteriorated following the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

Pakistan has so far served as the main mediator in peace negotiations between the United States and Iran.

The talks, which have continued since the implementation of a ceasefire on April 8, are aimed at reaching a comprehensive deal to end to the war.

In recent weeks, Qatar, which has previously mediated between Iran and the US, appears to have been stepping up its role in advancing negotiations.

Earlier this month, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani met senior US officials including Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in the United States to push forward diplomacy.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz since early March, through which around one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas normally flows, has also halted vital Persian Gulf maritime exports, including Qatar's LNG shipments.

Mazandaran's ICTP opens as national push for AI ranking gains traction



Economy Desk

A new Information and Communications Technology Park (ICTP) was inaugurated in the northern province of Mazandaran on Monday, as part of a national initiative aimed at positioning the country among the world's top 10 in Artificial Intelligence (AI). The latest ICTP, under the name of Digital Economy Growth and Development Center, was launched in the city of Sari, state news agency IRNA reported.

Mostafa Mafi, head of Iran's ICTP organization, said the establishment of provincial technology parks aligns with the country's Seventh Development Plan as eight ICTPs have been estab-

lished to date.

"Provincial parks operate independently, and technology companies and digital firms based in these centers will benefit from various exemptions," Mafi said during a meeting with technology firm managers and startup representatives following the inauguration.

Mafi noted that government support for the digital economy is prioritized for less-developed provinces. He emphasized the strategic importance of digital technology development in Mazandaran, given the millions of tourists visiting the northern region annually.

"With the presence of millions of tourists and travelers in the north-

ern region, especially Mazandaran, the development of digital technology in this area is very important and necessary," he said.

He added that technology companies could now present smartification projects across various provincial development sectors.

"With the creation of this center, technology companies can present smartification projects in various development sectors of the province, which will definitely receive serious financial support from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology," Mafi said.

Esmail Aezi, Mazandaran's director-general of communications and information technology, said at the inauguration ceremony that ICTPs would provide comprehensive support to knowledge-based companies, startups, accelerators and technology incubators.

"ICTPs, as one of the special technology branches of the Ministry of Communications, will provide full-scale support to knowledge-based companies, startups, accelerators and technology cores," Aezi said.

CAO says 20 airports resume flights after US-Israeli attacks



Economy Desk

Iranian civil aviation authorities said 20 airports across the country have successfully resumed operations following the recent US-Israeli aggression.

Speaking to Fars news agency on Monday, Civil Aviation Organization (CAO) spokesman Majid Akhavan said 20 airports, representing 40% of the country's airports, have resumed operations following the US-Israeli war, which began on February 28.

Akhavan added that Iran's third-busiest international airport in the northwestern city of Tabriz is expected to resume operations within

the next few days.

Tabriz International Airport serves nine foreign destinations, including Istanbul, Baghdad, Dubai, Baku and Hamburg.

Seven Iranian airports were targeted during the 40-day war, with attacks focusing more on tourism, passenger and cargo infrastructure than on military facilities, according to Iranian media.

Following the ceasefire reached on April 8 between Washington and Tehran, Iran Air resumed domestic flights on April 25 after a 55-day suspension, with its first service operating between Tehran and Mashhad.

International flights also resumed in late April, beginning with an Iran Air Hajj flight to the holy Saudi city of Medina from Imam Khomeini International Airport, with flights to three destinations operating on the first day.

China leans toward ...

Threatening to reduce or halt these purchases would amount to maximum pressure on Tehran. Likewise, China provides arms-related support to Iran, and cutting off that support would exert additional pressure.

At the same time, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China can back international guarantees in the form of resolutions. It can also cut deals with the United States. Regardless of geopolitical rivalry, Beijing and Washington remain economically interdependent and vulnerable to one another in key areas.

If China declines to act as guarantor or opts for a limited role, how

would that affect the trajectory of negotiations and the balance among the actors involved?

This scenario appears more likely—that China would manage the process from behind the scenes rather than stepping in directly. In any case, the parties to the conflict in West Asia will continue along their path under pressure from regional actors who have been affected by the war.

At the same time, China's absence from a direct role in Iran's peace equation would not hinder Tehran-Beijing relations. Bilateral ties are already moving along their natural trajectory toward becoming strategic. Should conflict flare up again, China could still step in and play a significant role on the ground.

Israel's arrogance becoming evidence in case against it



By Mohamad Elmasry
Professor in the Media Studies program at DIGS

OPINION

On May 20, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted a video showing Israeli security officers abusing Sumud flotilla activists who were attempting to break Israel's siege of Gaza. In the footage, Ben-Gvir is heard taunting activists, who are forced to kneel with their foreheads to the floor and their hands tied behind their backs. At one point, a female activist who tried to speak up was grabbed by the back of the neck and forced violently to the ground. Disturbing as it is, the video will not surprise anyone who has followed Israel's treatment of either Palestinian detainees or foreign activists and aid workers.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem published, in August 2024, "Welcome to Hell," a comprehensive report on the abuse of Palestinian detainees "as a matter of [state] policy". According to B'Tselem, Palestinians held without charge are routinely subjected to sexual abuse, beatings, attack dogs, sleep deprivation and humiliation. Earlier this month, veteran New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof published a detailed account of Israeli abuses, including allegations that dogs are used to sexually abuse Palestinian detainees.

These reports follow an August 2024 video leak showing Israeli officers gang-raping a Palestinian prisoner at the Sde Teiman detention facility, as well as a 2024 United Nations Special Commission report, which found that sexual abuse had become part of Israel's "standard operating procedures". Israeli soldiers and officers have also targeted foreign nationals. Activists, journalists, aid workers, medics and humanitarian personnel have routinely been killed, attacked or abused without consequence.

In 2003, 23-year-old American activist Rachel Corrie was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza as she tried to prevent the



Israel's Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir (3rd-L, standing) taunts the activists of the Global Sumud Flotilla, who set out to deliver aid to Gaza and break the blockade and were later illegally arrested and held face down in a squatting position with their hands tied, in the Ashdod Port on May 20, 2026.

demolition of a Palestinian home. In May 2010, Israeli commandos intercepted a Gaza-bound flotilla in international waters and killed nine activists on board the Mavi Marmara. Autopsies found that the victims had been shot at close range. In May 2022, Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who worked for Al Jazeera, was shot in the head and killed by an Israeli sniper in the occupied West Bank. An investigation by the research agency Forensic Architecture and the Palestinian rights group Al-Haq, drawing on visual, audio and spatial analysis, found "clear intentionality" and "intent to kill".

In April 2024, Israeli drones struck three vehicles belonging to World Central Kitchen in Gaza, killing seven aid workers from several countries. The vehicles were clearly marked, and the convoy had coordinated its movements with the Israeli military while travelling in a deconflicted zone. After one vehicle

was struck, passengers fled to a second, which was also hit; a third was struck separately. An investigation suggested all three attacks were intentional.

Ben-Gvir's video, then, does not represent a departure from the general behaviour of Israeli forces. It reflects a broader pattern of abuse, humiliation and dehumanisation. Tellingly, there has been no meaningful accountability for any of these incidents: No Israeli official or soldier has faced criminal prosecution in connection with any of them. What is perhaps most striking about the Ben-Gvir video is that he posted it himself — suggesting not only pride in his behaviour, but confidence that neither he nor his officers would face punishment.

That self-assurance reflects a wider pattern among Israeli political, security and media figures, who have grown accustomed to being celebrated rather than punished for abusive behaviour.

More broadly, soldiers and settlers have become openly boastful about apparent crimes, often posting the evidence themselves. During the height of the Gaza genocide, Israeli soldiers posted sniper videos of themselves shooting at unarmed civilians, alongside footage of

themselves detonating Palestinian homes, looting shops, trying on Palestinian women's lingerie and playing with the toys of children whose homes had just been destroyed. A 2024 Le Monde report documenting many of these videos suggested that a "sense of impunity" may have motivated soldiers to post them.

Israeli political, military and media figures have also felt comfortable making genocidal statements openly. In a televised address on October 8, 2023, Netanyahu promised to "turn Gaza into an island of ruins". Later that month, he repeatedly invoked the biblical injunction against the "Amalekites," a group the Israelites were commanded to destroy completely, including "women, children and infants" — a reference South Africa would later cite at the International Court of Justice.

In October 2023, former National Security Council head Giora Eiland argued that creating a "humanitarian crisis" in Gaza would help Israel win the war; he later set out what became known as the Generals' Plan, a proposal for the forced starvation of Palestinians in northern Gaza. Genocidal rhetoric has proliferated in Israeli media. On Israel's Channel 14, a host asked a guest whether it was acceptable for Is-

rael to "shoot civilians" in Gaza; the guest, a political analyst and lawyer, replied, "Of course! Of course!" According to Le Monde, three Israeli NGOs documented several hundred similar statements on the channel.

Ben-Gvir himself has a long history of supporting extremist violence and making genocidal statements about Palestinians. Both he and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich have encouraged violent settler attacks in the occupied West Bank, advocated illegal settlement expansion, promoted the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and called on the military to block humanitarian aid from reaching starving Palestinians.

The Israeli scholar Menachem Klein has argued that Israel is a "genocidal society," a conclusion hard to dismiss given how Israeli policy, military conduct, media rhetoric and public discourse have converged to normalise systemic violence with near-total impunity.

The abuse of the flotilla activists is therefore not an aberration. It is the predictable behaviour of a system that has learned it can kill, humiliate and starve people without consequence.

But evidence suggests Israel's arrogance may be catching up to it. Within hours of the video's



Ben-Gvir's video of abused flotilla activists reveals a state so accustomed to impunity that it documents its own cruelty, even against Westerners. It is likely only a matter of time before the arrogance catches up. South Africa's genocide case against Israel is ongoing at The Hague, and much of its evidentiary record comes directly from Israeli officials, soldiers and journalists — through their own videos, speeches, interviews and social media posts.



Traces of injuries inflicted by Israeli soldiers are visible on the body of one of the male members of the Global Sumud Flotilla upon their arrival at Istanbul International Airport, Turkey, on May 21, 2026. AFP confirmed on site.

● ABDELRAHMAN ALKAHLOUT/IMAGO



An activist from the Global Sumud Flotilla is carried on a wheel stretcher due to the injuries inflicted by Israeli soldiers, upon her arrival at Istanbul Airport, Turkey, on May 21, 2026.

● EMRAH GUREL/AP

release, condemnations poured in — Canada, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the Netherlands all summoned Israel's ambassadors — including from allies who appear increasingly embarrassed by Israeli actions. Since the last months of 2023,

global public opinion has shifted dramatically against Israel, with Netanyahu recently admitting that Israel is losing the global public relations battle. This matters: In democratic societies, it is difficult to sustain foreign policies the public views as morally

indefensible, and unconditional support for Israel is becoming a political liability in US elections. Some within Israel's establishment recognise the danger. Condemnations of Ben-Gvir came not only from abroad but from figures such as Benny Gantz and

Gideon Saar, who accused him of harming the nation. Even Netanyahu, a close ally, rebuked him. It is likely only a matter of time before the arrogance catches up. South Africa's genocide case against Israel is ongoing at The Hague, and much of its eviden-

tiary record comes directly from Israeli officials, soldiers and journalists — through their own videos, speeches, interviews and social media posts. The problem for Israel is that a system predicated on impunity eventually stops concealing it-

self. Once abuse becomes normal enough to be filmed, posted and celebrated, it becomes far harder for the rest of the world to look away.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

Itamar Ben-Gvir suddenly villain of Israeli politics for one reason

He revealed Israel's true face to world



● YENI ŞAFAK



By Jonathan Ofir
Israeli musician,
conductor and writer

OPINION

This week, Israel's Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir became an unlikely target of derision across the Israeli political spectrum, including the right-wing. His offense? Revealing the true face of Israel to the world.

The story begins with the latest Gaza freedom flotilla, which again was sending boats and activists to try to break Israel's illegal and inhumane siege on Gaza. Similar to past flotillas, Israel hijacked the boats at sea, and detained the activists. 430 activists were kidnapped in Israel's recent act of piracy, coming from over 40 countries.

This time, all of the activists were to be taken to Israel. Ben-Gvir was waiting for them and

made a video mocking the activists for social media. "This is how we welcome the terror supporters," he wrote in Hebrew, where his English title was "Welcome to Israel".

At the beginning of the video, an activist who is standing up, chanting "free free Palestine" is seen being pushed violently to the floor by security who shout "quiet, quiet," Ben-Gvir continues to march in, waving an Israeli flag, and a mass of kidnapped activists is seen being forced into stress positions with their heads down to the floor. "Good work," Ben-Gvir says to the guards, and shouts to everyone: "Welcome to Israel! We are the masters of the house!"

It is important to note that this is a common scenario in these arrests, and there is nothing really new about it. It is a light variation of what is being done to Palestinians every day, and various snuff videos showing

such systemic torture have been aired on mainstream Israeli television channels. These videos have also commonly included Ben-Gvir's mantra "We are the masters of the house," which was his election slogan.

The Israeli Prison Service even went as far as issuing a statement to Ha'aretz, saying that the detention was "carried out in accordance with procedure and professional considerations". Times of Israel notes that this was done "as media outlets suggested the prison officials present in the clip were acting against political and military policies". These are, in fact, their procedures, these are their policies.

Yet, despite this, and perhaps in a sign of how Israel's international standing has fallen, Ben-Gvir's video set off an international firestorm, and has become a PR problem of its own. Both Poland and France have issued entry bans against

Ben-Gvir with French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Noël Barrot saying, "We cannot tolerate French nationals being threatened, intimidated, or brutalized in this way, especially by a public official" and calling for other EU countries to issue sanctions against him. Italy's Giorgia Meloni said it was "unacceptable" that "these demonstrators, including many Italian citizens, are subject to this treatment." British Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper was "truly appalled" by the video, which "violates the most basic standards of respect and dignity in the way people should be treated".

Of course, no such outrage is to be found when it's Palestinians, but that's always another story. Now, it's a problem that internationals, including Europeans, are being jeered at by Ben-Gvir as they were paraded through detention like animals. Given the response, Israel's has-



Of course, no such outrage is to be found when it's Palestinians, but that's always another story. Now, it's a problem that internationals, including Europeans, are being jeered at by Ben-Gvir as they were paraded through detention like animals.

bara central turned to damage control mode, and Ben-Gvir was thrown under the bus as a bad apple.

Prime Minister Netanyahu claimed that Ben-Gvir's video was "not in line with Israel's values". It wasn't the what, it was the how: "Israel has every right to prevent provocative flotillas of Hamas terrorist supporters from entering our territorial waters and reaching Gaza. However, the way that Minister Ben-Gvir dealt with the flotilla activists is not in line with Israel's values and norms," he added.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, who thus heads the hasbara office, shared Netanyahu's message, but had a message of his own, even more condemnatory of Ben-Gvir, claiming Ben-Gvir wasn't the face of Israel: "You knowingly caused harm to our State in this disgraceful display — and not for the first time. You have undone tremendous, professional, and successful efforts made by so many people — from IDF soldiers to Foreign Ministry staff and many others. No, you are not the face of Israel," he wrote in his sharing of Ben-Gvir's tweet. And then the Foreign Ministry posted a tweet with one video and three photos:

A video of a guard giving water to a hostage; A photo of another offering water to a hostage; a hostage being questioned at a table; a woman smiling (presumably a hostage).

"These are our values," says the caption.

All we're missing is candy being handed around, and maybe a choral performance to top it off. The reality of the situation was that the activists had been held in these stress positions for many hours, and the human rights organization Adalah reported that activists were sent to the hospital, suspected of having broken ribs due to breathing difficulty, having been subject to electric shock, and shot with rubber bullets. Activists also reported sexual assault. On one particular Israeli ship, at least 12 sexual assaults were documented. This is, of course, standard procedure when it comes to Palestinians.

So, this moral panic over Ben-Gvir's crude behavior is really an attempt to draw attention away from this abuse, and it appears to be working. He is being made out to be an obnoxious fascist outlier, when, in fact, Ben-Gvir represents the true face of Israel.

This is all about Israel, as a whole. It's Israel's siege, it's Israel's genocide, and the world needs to awaken to this understanding. It's not just about a few rotten apples, a particularly vile minister, or a few bad cops.

The article first appeared on Mondoweiss.



Right-wing protesters applaud the suspects of the abuse of a Palestinian detainee outside the Sde Teiman detention facility near Beersheba, occupied Palestine.
● JILL GRALOW/REUTERS

Volleyball Nations League:

Esmaeilnejad among four Iranians omitted for Week 1



L-R: Abdolreza Abdolhamidi, Esmail Mosafer, Amin Esmaeilnejad, and Ehsan Daneshdoust have been crossed out of Iran's squad by head coach Roberto Piazza for Week 1 of FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League.

● volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

Amin Esmaeilnejad is among four players omitted from Iran's squad by head coach Roberto Piazza for Week 1 of the upcoming FIVB Men's Volleyball Nations League.

Outside hitters Ehsan Daneshdoust, Esmail Mosafer, and Abdolreza Abdolhamidi will also miss the trip to Brasilia, where Iran opens its campaign with a daunting matchup against volleyball powerhouse Brazil on June 10.

Esmaeilnejad's omission comes as a surprise. The prolific 29-year-old was Piazza's first choice for the opposite role in last year's VNL campaign before an ankle injury on the eve of September's World Championship ruled him out of the tournament in the Philippines. He was Iran's top scorer, logging 158 points in 10 matches, as the Asian powerhouse finished eighth in the 18-team prelim-

inary table with six wins in 12 games. However, Iran ultimately missed out on the VNL Finals; China, despite finishing second from last, secured a quarterfinal spot as the host nation.

The Iranian Volleyball Federation confirmed that all four players remain in contention for selection during the remaining two weeks of the preliminary phase. With Esmaeilnejad sidelined, Foolad Sirjan's Ali Hajipour – who joins the national team's training camp today after a silver-medal campaign at the AVC Men's Champions League – and Bardia Sa'adat are expected to lead the race for a starting spot. Hajipour emerged as Piazza's top choice during the world event, where Iran reached the quarterfinals before being knocked out by Czechia.

Tricky tests will come thick and fast in Week 1 for Piazza's men. They will face Bulgaria – a World Championship finalist – on June 11, before taking on

Argentina and Belgium later in the week at the Nilson Nelson Gymnasium.

Iran will then travel to Orleans, France, for Week 2, starting with a mammoth task against the host and reigning Olympic champion France at the CO'Met Arena on June 24. That match will be followed by games against the United States (June 25), Japan (June 26), and Cuba (June 28).

The third and final week of the preliminaries will see Iran face Ukraine in Belgrade on July 15, with further tests against Germany (July 16), Slovenia (July 17), and Türkiye (July 19).

The top eight teams in the standings will advance to the VNL Finals, which begin July 29 in Ningbo Beilun, China. China is again guaranteed a quarterfinal spot as the host.

Iran will aim to build on a promising first year under Piazza by securing its first quarterfinal berth in four years at the prestigious tournament.

Wushu great Mohammadseifi confirms retirement after injury heartbreak

Sports Desk

Iranian wushu veteran Mohsen Mohammadseifi has called time on his illustrious career after an injury setback during national team trials ruled him out of September's Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games.

The five-time world sanda champion was hoping for a fitting finale by securing a third Asian Games gold. However, he was forced into a premature retirement following a ligament injury sustained against reigning world champion Erfan Mo-

harrami in the first bout of their best-of-three series in the 70kg weight class on Saturday.

"On the verge of turning 37, I was in the best physical, mental, and emotional condition of my life," Mohammadseifi wrote in an emotional social media post on Monday.

"Every calorie I consumed was calculated. Every training session was carried out with absolute precision. I fought for every second in pursuit of my goal. "I was standing in the best version of myself when something happened that had never even

crossed my mind. And the final chapter of my life as an athlete – in the sport to which I had devoted my youth – was taken away from me.

"Continuing would have meant putting my health at risk. And so, between relentlessly pushing on – something that had become part of my daily life for many years – and protecting what I had spent a lifetime building, I chose the latter.

"From the outside, it may look like a bitter ending. But for me, this decision is about preserving and honoring all the years

shaped by love, pain, tears, pressure, and fighting with every cell in my body."

Mohammadseifi first tasted Asian Games glory at Guangzhou 2010, then repeated the feat in Incheon 2014 and Jakarta-Palembang 2018, before settling for silver at Hangzhou 2022. Along with his five world gold medals, Mohammadseifi also has two world silvers to his name from the 2009 and 2025 editions.

The Iranian also holds an 8-2 record – including four knockouts – since embarking on a mixed



● iranwushufed.ir

martial arts career in 2019, winning the 2024 PFL MENA Lightweight Tournament in Riyadh. His last bout as a professional

fighter was a decision loss to Mohammad Fahmi at the PFL MENA 3 event last September in the Saudi capital.

Trampoline Gymnastics Asian Championship: Iranian duo wins historic women's silver

Sports Desk

Yalda Hassan-Shokati and Shaqayeq Cheraghi etched their names into Iranian sports history by winning the country's first women's medal at the Trampoline Gymnastics Asian Championship in Hong Kong.

The Iranian duo advanced to Sunday's senior synchronized final and finished with a precious silver medal.

Hassan-Shokati also reached the final of the women's individual event but settled for fourth place, while her Iranian teammate Fate-meh Tavasolli finished fifth.

There was further team success for Iran in Hong Kong as Arya Akhavan and Emad Balanejad teamed up to win bronze in the men's junior event. Balanejad and Akhavan also finished fourth and sixth, respectively, in the boys' 15-16 age category,



● gymnastic.ir

with Padra Pajarang in fifth place in the 13-14 category.

Arya Mamabdollah and Sajjad Kargar, meanwhile, finished fourth in the men's senior pair final.

"China, Japan, North Korea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, India, and Tajikistan all arrived with full-strength squads, with every team aiming to achieve the best possible result as the event served as a

qualification pathway for September's Asian Games," said Vajiheh Naqavi, the caretaker of the Iranian Gymnastics Federation, highlighting the intense level of competition in Hong Kong. On the challenges Iran faced in sending its first women's team to an international tournament since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Naqavi said: "Our first challenge was the issue of women's attire. We had to design a uniform that would not

only receive approval from domestic authorities but also be accepted by the Asian Gymnastics Union and the International Gymnastics Federation."

Naqavi added that several training camps had been organized for the women's team and praised the coaching staff and trampoline discipline officials for their efforts during nearly 10 preparation camps – both in-person and on-line – during a period of wartime constraints.

"Our primary objective for the women's team was securing Asian Games qualification, while also targeting a possible medal in the synchronized event," Naqavi said. "Iranian girls delivered an impressive performance, reaching the final and winning a silver medal, which marks a significant achievement for Iranian gymnastics."

Iranian judokas bag three golds at Algiers African Open

Sports Desk

All three Iranian judokas finished on a high at the latest African Open event in Algiers, claiming gold medals in their respective men's divisions. Amirabbas Chooan brought the curtain down on a perfect run for the Iranian trio by defeating home favorite Sid Ali Benaboura in the -90kg showdown on Sunday – improving on his bronze medal

finish in Tunis in February. Former Asian junior silver medalist Elyas Parhizgar, meanwhile, defeated Canada's Olivier Ganons in the -81kg final to secure his third gold medal of this year's African Open series. Sobhan Hakimi opened Iran's account by grabbing gold in the cadet -81kg competition, thanks to a final victory over Algeria's Abdallah Djili. Hakimi had also tasted success earlier in this year's series, winning silver at

the Tunis Cadet African Cup. The three-gold haul saw Iran finish second to Algeria in the medals table, with Russia in third place.

The tournament was part of Iran's preparation for the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in September, after the country missed out on April's Asian Championships in Ordos City, China, as a result of the military conflict involving the United States and Israel.



● IRIJF

Iron Age cemetery discovered in Mazandaran Province

Iranica Desk

The head of the archaeological excavation team at the historical Chasar Elit site in Marzanabad of Chalus has announced the discovery of a cemetery dating back to the Iron Age and Parthian periods during the second season of excavations at the site. According to Hossein Ne'mat, the findings from this season include valuable remains of indigenous architecture, weapons, ritual objects, jewelry, and well-preserved ancient vessels, offering new insights into the lifestyle, rituals, and cultural structures of ancient communities in western Mazandaran, IRNA wrote.

Ne'mat stated that the Chasar Elit Site, comprising three areas, is one of the most important settlement centers in western Mazandaran Province. The site was registered on Iran's National



IRNA

Heritage List in 2019 and shows evidence of continuous human habitation from the Iron Age, Parthian, and Sassanid periods, through to the Islamic and Safavid eras.

Emphasizing the region's geo-

graphical and environmental conditions, he noted that the surrounding mountainous terrain supports the hypothesis that the site was used for seasonal settlement, nomadic movement, and temporary hab-

itation, making it highly significant for anthropological and cultural archaeological studies. The excavation project began with a first season aimed at defining the boundaries of the site. The second season, carried out in 2024 with the participation of five senior archaeologists and five university students, focused on test trenches across various parts of the ancient mound. According to Ne'mat, these investigations led to the discovery of residential architectural remains constructed using local materials such as wood, rubble stone, and river stones, reflecting the inhabitants' adaptive use of the natural environment. He identified the most significant discovery of the second season as a cemetery dating to the Iron Age and Parthian period. A range of weapons — including spearheads, swords, daggers,

and javelins — were uncovered at the burial site, providing valuable information about military structures, burial practices, and social relations of ancient communities in the region.

The excavation head also reported the discovery of diverse ancient jewelry, including bracelets, necklaces, garment beads, earrings, hairpins, and rings made of bronze, iron, and silver. These artifacts are considered highly significant for the study of ancient metallurgy, craftsmanship, and cultural practices.

Among the most remarkable finds, Ne'mat highlighted a finely crafted jet seal engraved with a mountain goat, textile-related tools, and a rare Parthian rhyton decorated with the image of a horse. He noted that these objects were likely used for ritual and ceremonial purposes and could play an important role

in understanding the symbolic systems and belief structures of ancient societies in the region.

He further reported the discovery of several well-preserved historical vessels at the site, emphasizing that their condition and diversity provide valuable material for comparative studies in the archaeology of northern Iran.

Ne'mat noted that one of the long-term goals of the project is to convert the Chasar Elit site into an open-air museum or regional museum site. He added that, with the completion of boundary designation and the allocation of funding from local and national heritage authorities, further large-scale excavations and public presentation of this important historical site will become possible, particularly for the local community of Marzanabad and the wider western part of Mazandaran Province.

Darak's fishing heritage strengthens bid for global recognition

Iranica Desk

The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Zabad, Sistan and Baluchestan Province, said that fishing and maritime activities, as one of the most important traditional and deeply rooted occupations of residents of the Darak village, play a decisive role in the economic sustainability of the coastal community, adding that this indigenous capacity could become a key factor in the village's bid for global recognition.

Anvar Singleh stated that a significant portion of the livelihood of its residents is based on marine-related activities, fishing, and the sustainable use of the region's natural resources. He

noted that the local economy has therefore developed around community participation and sustainable capacities, chtn.ir wrote.

He added that Darak village, due to its unique natural attractions — including the rare convergence of the sea, desert, and palm groves — as well as the authentic lifestyle of its residents, is considered one of the prominent tourism and cultural heritage destinations in south-eastern Iran. Strengthening traditional occupations such as fishing, he said, can help preserve the local population and support balanced rural development.

Singleh further explained that one of the key criteria in the process of securing global reg-

istration for villages is economic sustainability, preservation of indigenous identity, and continuity of traditional lifestyles. Darak, he said, with its reliance on native capacities including a fishing-based economy, has the potential to gain recognition at both national and international levels.

According to Singleh, the global registration of Darak village would not only introduce the region's cultural and natural attractions to the world, but also pave the way for tourism growth, sustainable employment opportunities, and increased income for the local community, turning the village into a successful model for sustainable tourism development. 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 chtn.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



chn.ir

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.

Reading Room

Iranians carry history wherever they go

Iranica Desk

"Iran and Its Loneliness", written by late Iranian scholar and writer Mohammad Ali Eslami Nodoushan and published by Enteshar Publishing, explores Iran's historical roots, cultural identity, and the unique position the country occupies in the world.

According to Iran Book News Agency (IBNA), the book examines Iran from both a historical and geographical perspective, while explaining to future generations the country's distinctive civilizational path and its enduring sense of isolation among nations.

"If we cast one glance at history and another at the world," Eslami Nodoushan writes, "we see Iran as a solitary country with a destiny unlike that of others."

He argues that it is natural for today's Iranians, with even a small degree of curiosity and sensitivity toward their homeland, to ask themselves what kind of land they belong to and what place their nation has held in the world.

The author notes that such questions may not have seemed particularly urgent a century ago. However, in

today's increasingly interconnected world, where new realities have emerged and awareness has become essential to national survival, reflection on identity and history has become unavoidable.

Eslami Nodoushan emphasizes that the past, present, and future are now inseparably connected, and that the present cannot be understood without knowledge of the past. At the same time, he writes, humanity must look toward the future with vigilance and awareness.

"Modern humanity," he argues, "carries more responsibility for its own destiny than ever before." People must vote, plan, predict, and ultimately navigate their own path through uncertainty.

In earlier times, reliance on fate and divine providence eased some of humanity's burdens. Today, however, he compares modern civilization to a "second fall" from grace: once humanity tasted the forbidden fruit and became aware of good and evil, it was expelled from paradise; now, with science and technology replacing old certainties, another form of exile appears to confront humankind.

Iran's unique historical position

The book argues that to understand Iran's character and historical position, one must look into what the author describes as the "workshop of time." According to Eslami Nodoushan, Iran has long stood alone in history because its circumstances have differed fundamentally from those of other civilizations.

He explains that most regions of the world belong, to some extent, to broader civilizational groupings. Latin American countries, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Arab Middle East, the Far East, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Indian subcontinent each share certain cultural and historical characteristics despite their differences.

"Iran, however," he writes, "appears as a distinct and solitary entity."

To explain this uniqueness, the author points first to geography, which he considers the foundation upon which Iran's history was shaped. Located at the crossroads of military conflicts and civilizational exchanges, Iran occupied a singular position in the known world before the discovery of the Americas connected

continents in new ways.

This unique geographical position, he argues, exposed Iran to both opportunities and hardships unlike those experienced by many other nations.

"We can hardly find another land," he writes, "where so many distinctive characteristics have converged at once."

One of the book's central themes is the idea that Iranians carry the weight of their history wherever they go, whether consciously or unconsciously.

"An Iranian carries a history on his shoulders wherever he goes," Eslami Nodoushan writes.

Referring to the concept of the "collective unconscious" proposed by Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, the author argues that this historical consciousness is especially vivid among Iranians because centuries of continuous upheaval and transformation have deeply shaped the national psyche.

According to the book, Iran's geographical position has created a history marked by constant movement and challenge — a history that, in the author's words, "has never known a moment of complete rest."



Tehran researchers uncover likely final portrait of Yazdegerd III

Arts & Culture Desk

Researchers at University of Tehran identified what they believe is the last known image of Yazdegerd III, the final ruler of the Sasanian Empire, following fresh archaeological excavations at the ancient Bazeh Hur fire temple in northeastern Iran, according to findings published by Italy's peer-reviewed 'East and West' journal.

The discovery emerged from an excavation led by Meysam Labbaf-Khaniki, a faculty member in the university's archaeology department, at the late-Sasanian sanctuary situated about 70 kilometers south of Mashhad along one of ancient Iran's principal trade arteries linking Khorasan to Sistan, Kerman and the central plateau, CHTN reported.

Archaeologists uncovered a stucco panel depicting four figures, including a seated royal figure distinguished by elaborate footwear, ceremonial trousers and imperial ornamentation associated with Sasanian kingship.

Although only the lower section of the panel survived, researchers said archaeological and historical evidence strongly



suggests the enthroned figure is Yazdegerd III, who ruled until the Arab conquest in the seventh century.

The excavation also yielded fragments believed to belong to a Sasanian royal crown. Researchers noted that the unfinished relief and its concealment behind a mud-brick wall pointed to a period of political upheaval during the empire's final days. Historical accounts in 'Futuh al-Buldan' indicate Yazdegerd III sought refuge in Khorasan shortly before his death.

The Bazeh Hur complex, thought by some scholars to correspond to the revered Adur Burzen-Mihr fire temple, has been excavated over eight seasons since 2013. The site revealed a vast religious structure adorned with refined stucco work and wall paintings, showing the artistic vitality of late-Sasanian Iran.

Iran's cultural legacy draws global alliance for repair

Arts & Culture Desk

A senior Iranian cultural heritage official said in Tehran that 149 historic buildings, archaeological sites and museums across 20 provinces were damaged during the US-Israeli strikes which began February 28, as domestic volunteers, diaspora specialists and international institutions move to support a coordinated restoration effort. Farhad Azizi, Director-General for National and World Heritage Sites at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, told IRNA that Iran has begun mobilizing what he described as a "broad wave of global solidarity" to safeguard affected heritage assets.

He said UNESCO had expressed readiness to support World Heritage-listed sites and earmarked resources for emergency assistance, while preparations were under way to send experts once conditions allow full access.



Debris at the historical monument Golestan Palace after it was damaged in an Israeli and US strike, amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Tehran, Iran, March 3, 2026.

● IRNA

Azizi said more than 17 formal communications had been sent to international bodies, including UNESCO and ICESCO, to document the scale of the damage and secure technical cooperation.

He added that Japan had also indicated interest in providing technical and financial assistance, including specialist training and equipment support for restoration teams. He noted that participation is being structured through a framework allowing volunteers to contribute under corporate social responsibility schemes, with a strong role envisaged for Iranian professionals abroad. These experts, including architects, archaeologists and conservation specialists, are expected to



support documentation, damage assessment and phased reconstruction work, forming what officials describe as a four-stage recovery plan.

Azizi said the process begins with detailed documentation and assessment, followed by resource mobilization, prioritization of sites and finally restoration of the most critical heritage locations.

He added that preliminary emergency measures have already been completed, while a second, more detailed technical evaluation is now under

way to classify the extent of damage province by province. He emphasized that while state resources remain central, international cooperation and volunteer engagement are becoming "key pillars" of long-term preservation efforts, framing Iran's cultural heritage as part of a wider shared human legacy.

Restoration plans, he said, will proceed in parallel with training programs and sustained collaboration with international heritage institutions.

Digital platforms to play bigger role in promoting resistance art

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Abbas Salehi called on Monday for the creation of a national platform to archive and consolidate artistic productions linked to the Ramadan War which began on February 28, while urging wider circulation of resistance-themed works across official media outlets and digital platforms. Addressing the 125th session of the Art Council in Tehran, Salehi said cultural policymaking must ensure artistic productions reach audiences "in sufficient measure" through both conventional broadcasters and

cyberspace, as the country strengthens cultural resilience in the wake of recent regional tensions, IRNA reported.

The council reviewed a policy report by the Research Institute for Culture, Art and Communication on the role of art in reinforcing social resilience during times of crisis, with discussions centered on the experience of the Ramadan War.

Salehi also pressed for the establishment of a comprehensive database to register, categorize and document artistic output produced during the conflict period, describing reliable data and coordinated cultural plan-

ning as essential tools for connecting policymaking with social realities.

Council members examined proposals including the therapeutic use of art in mental health strategies, support for independent artists and civic organizations, expansion of local cultural spaces in major cities, and broader use of digital media to widen public access to cultural content.

The meeting also highlighted the role of documentary filmmaking and cinema in preserving collective memory, alongside the growing influence of short-form digital productions designed for online audiences.

Urban regeneration study from Iran shortlisted at UN-habitat forum in Baku

Social Desk

A research project by an Iranian academic from the University of Birjand was shortlisted as a best practice at a United Nations human settlements competition in Baku in 2025, according to the organizers of the 13th World Urban Forum, highlighting innovative approaches to sustainable urban regeneration and financing.

The study, led by Mohammad Eskandari Sani, a faculty member in the Department of Geography at the University of Birjand, alongside research collaborator Afsaneh Hasani, was selected in the international 'Best Practices in Urban Regeneration 2025' competition held

on the sidelines of WUF13, convened under the UN-HABITAT framework in cooperation with Shanghai University.

The project, titled 'Financial Models and Methods for Urban Regeneration Leveraging Startup Potential: A Case Study of Birjand City', was recognized as a shortlisted practice following evaluation by an international panel of experts, positioning it among applied models addressing sustainable urban development challenges.

In a dedicated session at the forum, Eskandari Sani presented a keynote address entitled 'Empowering Marginalized Cities via the Financial Carbon Twin,' a concept that drew attention from urban development spe-

cialists attending the global gathering, where cities are increasingly seeking hybrid financial tools to unlock regeneration pathways.

At a formal recognition ceremony, the certificate of achievement was presented by Pietro Elisei, chair of the IOPUR expert panel, underscoring the project's inclusion among notable international submissions. The World Urban Forum, regarded as a leading global platform for urban sustainability discourse under the United Nations, convened experts, policymakers and researchers in Baku, where emerging financing models and technology-driven urban transformation frameworks featured prominently on the agenda.



World MS Day
30 May 2026

Controlling MS through Resilience in Crisis

www.iranms.org
iranmsociety@gmail.com

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