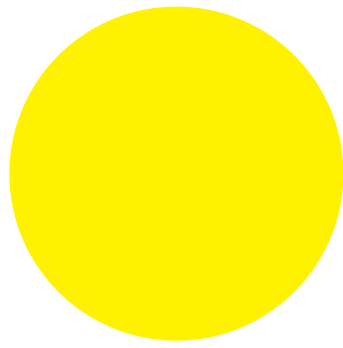


Iran's oil exports near 18m barrels after US blockade removal



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# Iran Daily

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (R) meets with Pakistani Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi in Tehran, Iran on June 20, 2026. IRNA



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#### Football World Cup 2026

### Iran's challenging 90 minutes against Belgium

Chance to keep path to qualification open

#### FEATURE REPORT

After drawing with New Zealand, Iran's national football team is now preparing to face Belgium on June 21 in a match that could prove decisive in determining its fate in the group stage. Although Iran's performance, particularly in defense, came under fire from analysts and fans following the opening match, major tournaments have repeatedly shown that one poor display cannot serve as the ultimate measure of a team's capabilities. The World Cup has often seen top sides get off to unexpected starts before turning things around and reshaping their fortunes as the tournament progresses. Against New Zealand, Iran appeared noticeably below its usual standards in terms of focus and cohesion. However, securing a point has kept the path to qualification open, making the clash with Belgium a major

opportunity to make amends. Belgium, too, was held in its opening match against Egypt, demonstrating that, contrary to initial perceptions, it is not an unbeatable side. That alone could provide Iran's players with an additional source of motivation as they take to the field with greater confidence. One of Iran's strengths lies in the wealth of experience within the squad. While the team's average age has drawn criticism from some analysts, experience at major tournaments can prove invaluable in matches of this nature. Players who have spent years competing at different levels understand better than anyone how to cope with the psychological pressure of high-stakes encounters. That experience, coupled with the desire to prove themselves, could become Iran's trump card against its European opponent. In matches like these, technical quality is not the only determining factor. Motivation, concen-

tration and faith can sometimes alter the equation. Iranian football has repeatedly shown that when the team steps onto the pitch with determination and self-confidence, it can produce valuable results against renowned opponents. More than anything, that fighting spirit is what the national team needs now—a mindset capable of transforming the pressure generated by the opening result into motivation for a standout performance. Football has repeatedly proven that names and statistics do not decide outcomes. If Iran can enter the match with greater focus, improved defensive organization and a high level of motivation, it has the ability to secure an encouraging result and revive its qualification hopes. The match against Belgium is not merely another game; it is an opportunity to restore confidence and showcase the capabilities of Iranian football on the world's biggest stage.

Speaking to IRNA, former Iran international Mohammad Reza Rasoul Korbekandi said the outcome of Iran's opening match had been largely predictable, adding that the Football Federation and coaching staff also appeared to be aware of the difficulties surrounding the encounter. According to him, the absence of a preparation camp at the tournament venue and numerous travel-related challenges before the match were among the factors that may have affected the players' performance. "It was difficult to play against a team about which there was limited knowledge. In that match, perhaps two-thirds of Iran's players failed to perform at their true level. Conceding an early goal also had a psychological impact on the team and forced the players to continue under greater pressure." The football analyst added that opening matches at the World Cup always carry unique cir-



cumstances because teams do not possess complete knowledge of one another. He pointed to the performances of contenders such as Portugal and Spain in their opening fixtures, where neither side managed to deliver its usual standard of play. However, he said the most important task now is for the players and coaching staff to put the New Zealand match behind them and focus entirely on the upcoming contest. "I believe Iran's national team will perform better in its next match than it did in the opener, regardless of the result, because

we usually produce stronger displays against more powerful opponents." The former player stressed the importance of conducting a thorough technical review of the opening match, saying the coaching staff must carefully assess both Iran's strengths and weaknesses, as well as the characteristics of the next opponent. He cited the team's defensive shortcomings in the previous match and emphasized that appropriate measures must be taken ahead of the next two fixtures.

Page 3 >

# Iran shuts Hormuz again over Israel's unabated strikes on Lebanon

## International Desk

Iran said on Saturday it was once again closing the vital Strait of Hormuz shipping lane on Saturday over Israel's relentless attacks in Lebanon, calling them a violation of its deal with the United States to end the war. Iran's military command, the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, said in a statement that the closure was in response to "the explicit breach of the first clause of the post-war memorandum of understanding by the United States". It said the move was a response to the Israeli regime's continuous and persistent violation of a ceasefire it has agreed to with the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. The statement added that the Israeli attacks had led to "brutal killings and the

displacement of hundreds of thousands of oppressed people" in southern Lebanon, adding that the regime had also failed to withdraw its forces from those territories.

The military command said that the closure was the first step in response to the breach of commitments under the MoU by the US and its allies, warning that Iran would adopt further measures to compel the enemy to fulfill its obligations.

The strait, an important conduit for oil and gas shipments, was shut by Iran for much of the war, sending shockwaves through global energy markets.

Iran agreed to reopen the waterway after Tehran and Washington signed an agreement on Wednesday to end the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, which began in late February and was halted by a ceasefire in early April. The 14-article MoU requires Iran to



The photo shows an explosion of what appears to be white phosphorus fired by Israeli forces on a border area inside Lebanon on April 30, 2026.

● REUTERS

reopen the Strait of Hormuz provided that the US and its allies completely end their aggression against Iran and its regional allies, Lebanon in particular.

The Israeli regime not only did not stop the attacks on Lebanon but it has intensified its deadly strikes.

Earlier Saturday, Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon killed at least 16 people, including two children, hours after reports emerged of a ceasefire agreement there. Seven people remained trapped under the rubble after the strikes hit the southern city of Nabatiyeh and nearby villages, Leba-



non's National News Agency said. Israeli attacks on Lebanon began in March after Lebanon's resistance movement Hezbollah launched military operations against the regime in

response to the regime's aggression against Iran. According to Lebanon's Health Ministry, the death toll in the latest war between Israel and Hezbollah has surpassed 4,000.

## Pakistan: US-Iran technical talks due Sunday in Switzerland



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) greets Pakistan's Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi (R) before a meeting in Tehran on June 20, 2026.

● IRNA

US Vice President JD Vance also said Saturday that he expects to travel to Switzerland in the coming days for talks with Iran, saying negotiations were going well.

The developments followed a visit by Pakistan's Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi to Tehran where he met Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi for talks on the progress of negotiations, which has been brokered by Islamabad. On Wednesday, Iran and the US signed the 14-point memorandum of understanding which calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts, including Lebanon, oil export waivers, the removal of the US naval blockade on Iran within 30 days, and the restoration of commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

The two sides also agreed to hold talks on removal of Iran's sanctions and Iran's nuclear program during a 60-day period.

## International Desk

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said technical talks to implement the US-Iran deal to end the aggression against Iran would be held in Switzerland on Sunday as an Iranian negotiating team left Iran for Switzerland on Saturday.

"As a follow-up to the signing of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding, technical-level talks will be held in Burgenstock,

Switzerland, on 21 June," the ministry said in a statement on Saturday, adding that Pakistani and Qatari mediators would participate in the discussions with US and Iranian representatives.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei in a televised interview announced the departure of the Iranian negotiating team to Switzerland on Saturday for discussions on the implementation of the agreement.

## Iran raps French FM's remarks as 'height of hypocrisy, duplicity'

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman strongly condemned recent meddling remarks by the French foreign minister concerning the Islamic Republic, describing them as an example of "hypocrisy and duplicity" in France's political culture, as reported by Press TV.

In a French-language post on X on Friday, Esmail Baqaei wrote, "Mr. Minister, it appears that hypocrisy and duplicity have remained among the defining characteristics of the French political culture to this day." He went on to invoke the work of French playwright Molière, referring to the 1664 play Tartuffe or the Hypocrite.

"The same vice that Molière accurately described in the play Tartuffe or the Hypocrite in 1664: 'Hypocrisy has become a fashionable vice.'" Baqaei reminded how Paris remained silent, while Iranian cities were subjected to attacks, saying



French officials had effectively sided with the attackers during the latest unprovoked American-Israeli aggression targeting the Islamic Republic. "At a time when Iranian cities were being brutally bombarded and innocent Iranians were being savagely massacred in Minab, Tehran, Lamard, Isfahan, and elsewhere, you remained silent and in fact collaborated with the aggressors," the spokesperson wrote, referring to some of the targeted cities, where civilian casualties were rife.

According to the official, the French government would, therefore, selectively resort to so-called "human rights concerns" for political purposes.

"Today, in line with your regime's political interests, your conscience has suddenly and selectively awakened, and you brazenly preach about the human rights! What hypocrisy and duplicity!"

The remarks came after the French top diplomat Jean-Noel Barrot stated that his country would oppose the lifting of United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iran unless negotiations concerning the Islamic Republic met, what he called, Paris' desired expectations regarding the nation's peaceful nuclear energy program.

Barrot also made similar interfering comments regarding the Islamic Republic's defensive missile program and regional influence.

## VP announces phased release of \$25b frozen assets under US memo



## International Desk

An Iranian vice president said on Saturday that an estimated \$25 billion of the country's frozen assets would gradually be released under a recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached between Tehran and Washington.

Mohammad Jafar Qaempanah told IRNA that a recent visit by the Iranian negotiating team headed by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf to Qatar was aimed at finalizing the mechanisms and framework for the release of Iran's assets blocked in foreign banks. He noted that the financial resources will be directed toward expanding critical infrastructure — such as transport, highways, and airports — to improve public welfare.

Under the MoU signed between Iran and the United States on Monday, the two countries agreed that Iran's frozen assets in foreign countries should be released.

The 14-point deal, which includes a commitment from both sides to hold further talks on a final agreement in the next 60 days, was finalized following intensive mediation efforts by Pakistan and support from other regional countries.

The MoU calls for a permanent end to hostilities across all fronts, including Lebanon, the removal of the naval blockade on Iran within 30 days, and the restoration of commercial traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

The deal also includes a US-backed reconstruction and economic development plan for Iran worth at least \$300 billion, oil export waivers and the release of Iran's frozen assets. During the 60-day period, the two countries will negotiate on the removal of sanctions on Iran as well as Iran's nuclear program, especially its enriched uranium stockpile.

Despite arrangements envisaged in the agreement for releasing Iran's assets, American officials have recently hinted at using the resources to compensate for the damage inflicted on some regional countries by the US-Israeli war of aggression against the Islamic Republic.

On Thursday, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent claimed that any damage Iran causes to Washington's Persian Gulf allies would be paid for with funds extracted from Iranian accounts.

Iran's High Council for Human Rights on Saturday strongly condemned the statement, describing the comments as a violation of fundamental principles of international law and human rights.

"Such positions, which are in line with unilateral policies and illegal coercive measures against the Iranian nation, violate the principle of sovereign equality and the immunity of state property," the statement said.

The council emphasized that under international law, no government is permitted to unilaterally confiscate, seize, or transfer the assets of another state.

"This approach undermines the rule of law at the international level," it added.

According to Iran's High Council for Human Rights, Iran reserves the right to pursue the matter through all legal and international mechanisms.

The council also called on the international community, UN bodies, and defenders of the rule of law to take a responsible stance against US unilateral actions.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

CARTOON



# Iran's oil exports near 18m barrels after US blockade removal

## Economy Desk

Iran has exported nearly 18 million barrels of crude oil over five days after the United States lifted its naval blockade of the country's southern ports and coastal waters, tanker tracking firm TankerTrackers said on Friday.

"Iran has exported nearly 18 million barrels (or \$1.44 billion) of crude oil over the past five days."

TankerTrackers.com estimated the value of the crude exported during the past five days at about \$1.44 billion. The shipments mark a sharp rebound after Iran's crude exports were effectively suspended from mid-April through mid-June due to the naval embargo.

Iran had amassed more than 60 million barrels of crude oil stored on vessels anchored in its southern waters prior to the blockade, based on estimates from shipping intelligence companies.

Since the announcement of the US-Iran agreement on June 15, "Iranian-linked tankers and cargo ships

have become noticeably more active globally," according to advocacy and monitoring group United Against Nuclear Iran (UANI).

However, the US Navy formally ended its blockade of Iranian ports and coastal areas on June 18, Thursday, following a directive from President Donald Trump.

"All US military blockade enforcement efforts have ceased," US Central Command said in a statement posted on social media.

The decision came after Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed a memorandum of understanding. The memorandum extends the US-Iran ceasefire for 60 days and establishes a framework for future negotiations on Tehran's nuclear program and other key issues.

Iran also remains subject to long-standing US sanctions over its nuclear program. Under one provision of the agreement, the United States is to grant Iran a sanctions waiver during the 60-day negotiation period to allow it to export its oil.

The agreement also obliges Iran to al-

low commercial vessels to transit the Strait of Hormuz without paying tolls for 60 days.

Iran said on Friday that several Iranian oil tankers had transited the Gulf of Oman and entered international waters over the previous 24 hours, with more tankers expected to depart in the coming days.

About 14 million barrels per day of crude oil and 6 million barrels per day of refined petroleum products transited the Strait of Hormuz before the United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. As tensions escalated following the joint US-Israeli attack in late February, major shipping companies suspended operations in the region.

After the war began, Iran imposed new conditions on traffic through the strait, permitting only commercial vessels with prior authorization to pass and barring ships linked to the United States, Israel, and other "hostile states." Tankers linked to Iran, however, continued to pass through the strategic waterway.

Before the blockade, Tehran was ex-



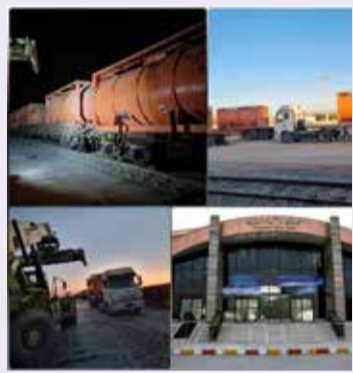
MARCOS MORENO/AP

porting between 2.4 million and 2.8 million barrels of crude oil per day. The US blockade, imposed on Iran's southern ports on April 13, cut the country's crude exports to 260,000 barrels per day in May, the lowest level in six years and less than one-fifth of the 2025 average of 1.67 million barrels per day, according to maritime

intelligence firm Kpler.

According to OPEC estimates, Iran earned \$46.7 billion from exports of crude oil and petroleum products last year. If sanctions are lifted and oil prices remain relatively high, that figure could increase substantially, although a rapid recovery is not expected.

## Iran debuts first Iraq-Afghanistan combined rail transit route



### Economy Desk

Iran launched its first combined rail transit shipment from Iraq to Afghanistan via the country's western railway corridor and the Kermanshah freight station, marking a step toward expanding international transport corridors and increasing the share of rail in regional transit.

Ahmad Toriki, director general of the Arak and Kermanshah Railway Region, told IRNA on Saturday that the shipment entered Iran through the country's western border crossings and was transferred to the national rail network after logistical procedures at the Kermanshah freight station.

"This shipment will be transported via Iran's rail lines to the eastern borders and its final destination of Afghanistan," he said.

According to ISNA, the cargo was the first transit shipment of fuel to enter Iran from Iraq under a combined transport scheme before being forwarded to Afghanistan after customs procedures at the inland customs office in Sanandaj.

The first diesel shipment arrived from Iraq through the Bashmaq border crossing and, under the combined transport method, was transferred from tanker trucks to rail before being transported to Afghanistan via the Sanandaj inland customs office, ISNA reported.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the transit method was being implemented for the first time as part of the Economy Ministry's policy of strengthening the customs authority's role in facilitating trade and transit.

The IRICA said it introduced the combined transport method for goods in transit after assuming responsibility for border management, adding that the initiative had been welcomed by the private sector because it reduced costs and made better use of rail transport capacity.

Torki told IRNA that the operation marked a milestone in activating the underutilized capacity of Iran's western railway corridor and expanding international rail transit.

## SADRA kicks off Persian Gulf sunken vessel recycling initiative

### Economy Desk

The chief executive of Iran Marine Industries Organization (SADRA) said the company had begun the process of recovering and recycling sunken vessels in the Persian Gulf as part of a broader initiative to develop the country's ship and offshore structure recycling industry.

Speaking at a ceremony on Saturday to sign a national contract for the removal of sunken vessels from the Persian Gulf, Manouchehr Alipour said SADRA's board approved a comprehensive plan last year to enter the ship and offshore structure recycling industry.

"In the recycling industry, obsolete structures will be recycled in accordance with established procedures, which will certainly bring benefits such as reducing the consumption of mineral resources and preventing foreign currency outflows from the country," ISNA quoted him as saying.

Alipour said ship recycling had become a well-developed industry in many countries but had not expanded in Iran because of environmental requirements and concerns raised by the Department of Environment. "The company intends to enter this field by using new technologies," he said, adding that the initiative was aimed at expanding the company's portfolio of products and services while creating a sustainable source of revenue.

He said the minimum benefit of the recycling industry would be reducing the use of mineral resources.



An Emirati ship is seen sinking 30 miles from Assaluyeh in the Persian Gulf, Iran, March 17, 2022. Reuters

"This industry is aligned with the realization of the maritime-oriented economy, and establishing it is one of the key pillars of achieving that goal," Alipour said.

He said the project would also help prevent foreign currency outflows, create jobs and support the development of the Makoran coasts.

"The preliminary site for this industry has been selected on the Makoran coasts, and its implementation can contribute to the region's development, improve the welfare of local residents and enhance the country's economy," he said.

Alipour said the company was seeking to move from a linear economy to a circular economy.

"In a linear economy, raw materials are turned into products, used and ultimately discarded. In a circular economy, the goal is for every marine product to enter the recycling cycle once it reaches the end of its operational life," he said.

## Assaluyeh power plant reaches 1,500 MW capacity as final steam unit comes online



MEHR

### Economy Desk

Iran has connected the final steam unit of the Assaluyeh power plant in southern Bushehr Province to the national grid, boosting the facility's total generation capacity to 1,500 megawatts (MW), a deputy energy minister said on Saturday. Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi, who also serves as head of Iran's Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution Management Company (Tavanir), said that the 160-megawatt steam unit was synchronized with the grid on Friday night. "The power plant, which previously operated with six gas units and two steam units with a capacity of 1,330 MW, has reached a production capacity of 1,500 MW with the completion of the third steam unit," Rajabi Mashhadi said, as per Mehr News Agency.

According to the official, the new unit alone will result in annual fuel savings of 280 million cubic meters. With all three steam units now fully operational, the plant's efficiency has improved to by around 50%, generating total annual fuel savings of 840 million cubic meters. The Assaluyeh combined-cycle power plant plays a key role in providing stable electricity supply to Iran's southern regions.

## Football Word Cup ...

Discussing Iran's qualification prospects, Korbekandi said a victory in the opening match would have made the path to the knockout stage easier. Now, however, the situation has become more complicated, and the second round of matches could go a long way toward determining the teams that advance. "If our direct rivals pick up the points they need, the task will become even more difficult. That is why Iran must take points from the upcoming match

against Belgium," he said, adding that while the challenge would be extremely tough, the team still has a chance of success.

In his view, the coaching staff's most important responsibility before the second match is to prepare the players mentally and psychologically for various scenarios.

Issues such as travel, logistical concerns and certain restrictions were foreseeable in the previous match, but not everything can be attributed to those

factors, especially when a team fails to perform at the required technical level. Another football analyst and former player, Hassan Haj-Rasouliha, also told IRNA that Iran lacked the necessary focus in the opening match and failed to execute its plans as expected. Given the nature of the opposition and New Zealand's standing in world football, he said there had been a genuine opportunity for Iran to claim all three points, but that objective was not achieved. He also criticized the individual per-

formances of most players, saying few deserved passing marks.

"With the exception of a handful of players, including Ramin Rezaeian, the rest failed to meet expectations, although the circumstances surrounding the match were unusual."

Turning to the upcoming clash with Belgium, he said that an impartial assessment shows Belgium holding the upper hand in both technical quality and overall cohesion. In such a match, if Iran lacks a clear game plan and the

players are not fully prepared mentally, the challenge will be extremely difficult. Haj-Rasouliha predicted that the match against Belgium would be significantly tougher than the opening fixture and would also be of a higher technical standard. For that reason, he said the national team must take to the field with a precise plan and the necessary adjustments.

"Under the current circumstances, even taking a single point from this match would be a valuable result for Iran."

# Why Germany failed to gain admission into UN Security Council?



MEDIUM



By Mohammad  
Kazem Sajjadpour  
Former Iranian  
diplomat

## OPINION

On June 3, 2026, the General Assembly of the United Nations was an intriguing arena for the actions and reactions pertaining to contemporary international relations. During that session, a ballot was conducted for the admission of five new non-permanent members to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), and, interestingly, despite Germany's extensive diplomatic exertions to secure acceptance as a non-permanent member, it failed to obtain the requisite votes. This was not a mundane piece of news. Germany, having calculated the expenditures it had incurred for this candidacy, confronted a diplomatic debacle. The political reverberations of this failure within Germany were substantial, and opposition parties proceeded to criticize the chancellor's international policies.

That Austria and Portugal, from Europe, succeeded in attaining non-permanent membership in the Security Council, whereas Germany did not, likewise elicited reactions at the European echelon. Beyond Germany's lack of success, however, and the admission of countries such as Kyrgyzstan — which, in a strenuous competition with the Philippines, gained entry into the Security Council for the first time — a serious and noteworthy question presents itself to the mind: namely, what fundamental relationship does the Security Council bear to contemporary international relations? To respond to this inquiry, one must examine strategic

expectations of the UNSC and its internal dynamics, the role and weight of non-permanent members, and the prevailing trends within the Council. Undoubtedly, the Security Council has not enjoyed success or efficacy in fulfilling global expectations in the strategic domain — that is, the establishment of international peace and security; on the contrary, its inability to resolve contemporary bloody crises has confronted it with structural challenges to its prestige and credibility. Of course, the reason for this phenomenon resides in the very nature of the global distribution of power. The Security Council consti-

tutes a reflection of the victorious powers of the Second World War from 80 years ago. The club-like character of this Council, particularly the veto rights of the five permanent members — namely, the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom — and the divergence of their interests, pose a formidable impediment to achieving consensus in domains pertaining to international peace and security. Nevertheless, reducing the UNSC solely to the veto power of the five permanent members lacks analytical and scholarly precision and accuracy. The Security Council possesses its own internal dynamics, among which

one must attend to the deliberations, the agenda items, and the flow of things within the Council.

The United Nations Security Council, notwithstanding all its deficiencies, remains an important and consequential institution in international relations. Despite the severe criticisms voiced by nearly all members of the United Nations, despite the turn of Trump's United States



The German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul (L) casts his vote during the election of the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council at a meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, US, on June 3, 2026.

● KENA BETANCUR/AFP



Despite the severe criticisms voiced by nearly all members of the United Nations, despite the turn of Trump's United States toward a unilateral, illegitimate, immoral, and inhumane modus operandi in international relations, and despite the sustained erosion of international institutions including the United Nations, no member state has withdrawn from the UNSC; on the contrary, intense competition and strife persist for the attainment of a more advantageous position within it.

toward a unilateral, illegitimate, immoral, and inhumane modus operandi in international relations, and despite the sustained erosion of international institutions including the United Nations, no member state has withdrawn from this Organization; on the contrary, intense competition and strife persist for the attainment of a more advantageous position within it, as exemplified by the very ballot for non-permanent membership on June 3. The rationale lies in the fact that the Security Council still constitutes a component of the global power system and the actions and decisions — including the imposition of sanctions and even military action — that reside within the purview of this Council.

Hence, membership in the Council is important for international actors, from Germany to Trinidad and Tobago, which secured non-permanent membership from the Caribbean. Admittedly, the weight of each permanent and non-permanent country differs from another. This does not signify, however, that non-permanent members are inconsequential. For non-permanent members, ranging from small states to middle and great powers, non-permanent membership in the Security Council serves multiple functions, although the first consideration that springs to mind is the acquisition of prestige. Through non-permanent membership, small and medium states acquire international capacity, participate in diverse deliberations, and, not only become acquainted with modalities of global influence, but also endeavor to exert influence themselves. A statistical overview can, to a certain extent, illuminate this phenomenon.

In 2025, the Security Council issued 44 resolutions, convened 225 official meetings, held 115 informal sessions, and organized approximately 14 high-level meetings, namely at the ministerial level. These meetings are instigated largely at the initiative of non-permanent members for the purpose of raising international issues. The function of these meetings is to generate global sensitization concerning various country-specific and concept-oriented topics. The significance of these actions lies in the engagement, particularly of non-permanent members, in international actions and reactions, the augmentation of capacity, awareness, and methods of dispute-resolution management, and the shaping of their preferred agendas.

What merits particular attention is the ongoing trends within the UNSC. Notwithstanding its diminished capacity for peace-making, one trend we observe is the securitization of nearly all non-security phenomena, from the environment to the situation of women and children, especially by the Western permanent members of the Security Council. Another trend is the expansion of the Council's agendas. At present, approximately 46 items have been placed on the Council's agenda. A further notable trend, however, is the augmented global role of small states as non-permanent members of the Council.

In any case, the Security Council is a component of the global power system, which is becoming increasingly pluralistic and colorful with each passing day.

The article first appeared in Persian on Iranian Diplomacy.

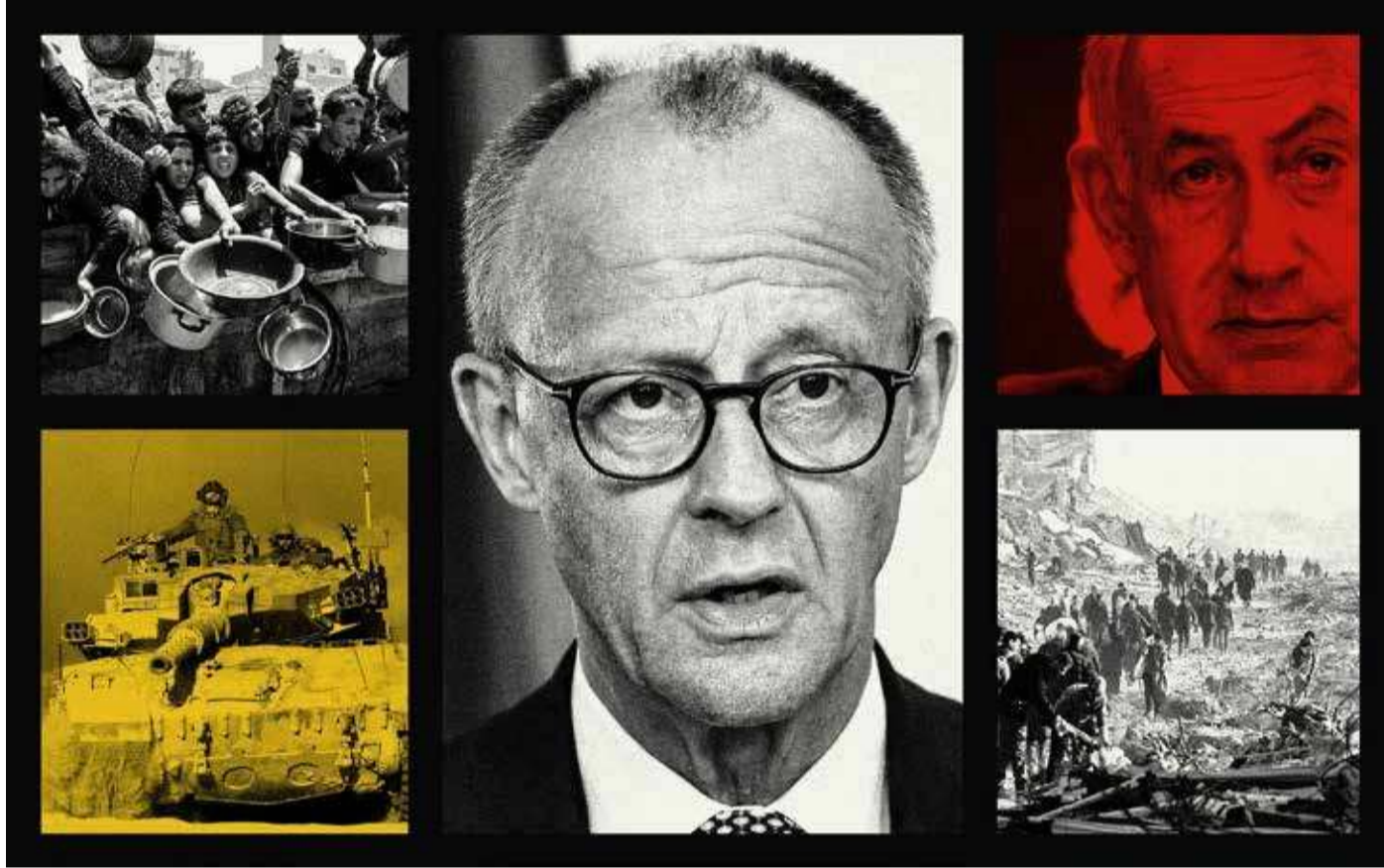
# Germany's UNSC setback, limits of selective multilateralism

**By Shairee Malhotra**  
Deputy director of Strategic Studies Programme at ORF  
**OPINION**

On June 3, 2026, an unprecedented event took place at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York. Portugal and Austria defeated Germany by winning the two non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) allocated to the Western European and Others Group (WEOG). Besides the UNSC's P5 members, which have veto power, the UNGA elects 10 non-permanent members from different world regions for staggered two-year terms. In a secret ballot, Germany received 104 votes, but needed 127 (a two-thirds majority) out of the total 193. Meanwhile, Portugal and Austria received 134 and 131 votes respectively, defeating Germany by a large margin and breaking its winning streak. For a country that is Europe's economic powerhouse, has served six previous terms as a non-permanent member on the UNSC, and is amongst the UN's top financial contributors, the loss was a crushing blow dubbed "the most severe foreign policy defeat yet" for Chancellor Friedrich Merz's coalition government. The defeat carries implications beyond the actual seat; it signals a fundamental shift in how the world currently perceives Germany.

## The long shadow of Berlin's foreign policy choices

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl alluded to Germany's firm support for Ukraine and its "special historical responsibility" toward Israel as key factors behind the loss. However, analysts have dismissed the Ukraine argument, highlighting Austria and Portugal's equally strong solidarity with Kyiv. Yet, there is broad agreement that Germany's posture on the Israel-Palestine issue was a decisive factor. On the one hand, Germany demanded accountability with regard to Russian attack on Ukraine. On the other hand, Berlin broadly abstained from UN resolutions on Israel since October 2023, including on a vote to support Palestine's bid for enhanced UN membership. Domestically, Germany's crack-down on pro-Palestine protests and activists drew international criticism from rights groups. Despite the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrant against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Merz visited Israel just weeks after Germany lifted a suspension on arms export approvals to Israel, and stated that Germany did not intend to recognise a Palestinian state "in the foreseeable future". The foreign policy double standards, against which Berlin's multilateral rhetoric and economic clout proved inadequate, extended beyond Gaza. Germany lacked a clear position on the American intervention in Venezuela and capture of President Nicolas Maduro, with Merz referring to the matter as "com-



The illustration shows German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (C), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and pictures of Israeli tanks and the cruel conditions that Israel imposed upon Gaza, Palestine.  
● THE TELEGRAPH

plex" despite the clear breach of international law. The German restraint in calling out US and Israeli attacks on Iran as violations of the rules-based order further compounded this loss of international credibility. This is despite Berlin's consistent support for two permanent seats for the African Union on the UNSC. The sharp irony of the previous German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock, who is currently UNGA president, announcing the verdict was not lost on anyone. Merz's government was quick to attribute fault to the previous German coalition government that spearheaded the campaign since Berlin announced its bid in 2019 — a government whose foreign policy, under Baerbock's Greens party, was driven by morality and values, mostly when conven-

## Additional contributing factors

Although Wadepuhl lobbied extensively in New York for the German candidacy, highlighting Berlin's role in global peace missions and multilateralism, Germany only entered the race for a non-permanent UNSC seat in 2019. Austria and Portugal, on the other hand, launched their bids in 2011 and 2013, respectively, with much more time to campaign and cultivate global support. The two countries also had their own structural advantages. Lisbon's strong diplomatic ties across the Lusophone world, as well as its growing global clout with Portuguese figures such as Antonio Costa and Antonio Guterres holding international leadership roles, likely played a role in its win. Meanwhile, Austria's longstanding military

neutrality may have appealed to non-aligned countries in the Global South.

## The road ahead for German diplomacy

A seat on the UNSC remains a coveted symbol of global influence despite the Council's limitations in ensuring peace and security. As Germany intends to mount another bid for a non-permanent UNSC seat for the 2035–2036 period, while continuing to pursue its long-standing ambition of securing a permanent seat on the Council, the current setback warrants serious soul-searching in Berlin, particularly given that the country's post-war identity has been built on multilateral credibility and moral authority. While the more tactical issues regarding campaign timing may

be easily resolvable, a more substantive recalibration of its foreign policy posture may be necessary if Berlin wishes to restore its standing as a credible multilateral actor, particularly in the Global South. A good starting point may be to reconcile its special relationship with Israel with a principled commitment to international law and consistency, rather than the selective application of those principles. As Berlin seeks to deliver on the broader *Zeitenwende* it proclaimed in 2022 and restore German influence and leadership in Europe and beyond, a more credible commitment to multilateral diplomacy could facilitate closer engagement with non-Western partners in the wake of US retrenchment.

The article was first published by the Observer Research Foundation.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl alluded to Germany's firm support for Ukraine and its "special historical responsibility" toward Israel as key factors behind the loss. However, analysts have dismissed the Ukraine argument, highlighting Austria and Portugal's equally strong solidarity with Kyiv. Yet, there is broad agreement that Germany's posture on the Israel-Palestine issue was a decisive factor.



Amnesty International stage a protest against German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's upcoming visit to Israel at Pariser Platz in Berlin, Germany, on December 5, 2025.  
● HALIL SAĞIRKAYA/ANADOLU AGENCY

# Yazdani survives Azarpira test, secures bid for fourth gold at Wrestling Worlds

## Sports Desk

Iranian wrestling sensation Hassan Yazdani will be chasing the eighth World Championships medal of his career after overcoming Amirali Azarpira in the national team trials on Friday to secure the freestyle 97kg spot for October's showpiece in Astana. According to selection criteria set by the Iranian Wrestling Federation, Azarpira – a world silver medalist last year – needed a single victory in the best-of-three series in Kerman to punch his ticket to Astana. However, Yazdani pulled off back-to-back wins, 4-2 and 5-3, to claim the berth.

Still, the three-time world champion, who has moved up two weight classes since recovering from an 18-month shoulder injury last December, was barely convincing, managing only a single takedown across 12 minutes of action.

In the first bout, Yazdani scored three stepouts and a point for passivity, while Azarpira scored a takedown to cut the deficit but could not find either another takedown or the two one-point scoring actions needed to win.

An hour later, Olympic bronze medalist Azarpira fought back from three points down to lead 3-3 on criteria in the second period.

In the final minute, Azarpira pressured Yazdani toward the



Freestyle wrestler Hassan Yazdani (red) has his hand raised as the winner against Amirali Azarpira in the Iranian national team trials in Kerman, Iran, on June 19, 2026.

● ADIB MOHMADI/IAWFIR

booked their places in the freestyle squad as Iran confirmed its 10-man freestyle roster for the world event.

A winner of world silver medals at both 65kg and 70kg, Yazdani came out on top in consecutive bouts against Younes Emami in the 74kg class, avenging last year's trials defeat to the former world bronze medalist.

In two high-scoring contests, Yazdani won 10-6 and 11-7, relying largely on his counterattacks in the zone to secure his place on the team.

At 92kg, world bronze medalist Amirhossein Firouzpour, who also needed only one win in the series, secured a hard-fought 2-1 victory over world U23 champion Mobin Azimi in the second matchup to join the national team.

Azimi won the opening bout 2-2 on criteria, scoring a late stepout after three points had been awarded for passivity. However, there was no such comeback in the second contest, as Firouzpour protected his lead to clinch the series.

The winners of Friday's deciders will join reigning world

champions Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg), alongside Milad Valizadeh (57kg), Ahmad Mohamadnejad Javan (61kg), Sina Khalili (70kg), Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), and two-time world champion Kamran Qasempour (86kg), as Iran looks to defend its freestyle team title in the Kazakh capital.

The country also completed its Greco-Roman roster last week after Fardin Hedayati pulled off a major upset on Tuesday, defeating reigning world super-heavyweight champion Amin Mirzazadeh to book the 130kg berth.

The 22-year-old, who owns five world gold medals across various age groups, claimed a commanding 5-1 victory in the opening bout before being awarded the second after Mirzazadeh withdrew through injury.

Reigning world and Olympic champions Saeid Esmaili (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) will spearhead Iran's Greco-Roman title defense.

They will be joined by world silver medalist Payam Ahmadi (55kg), Ali Ahmadi-Vafa (60kg), Mohammad-Mahdi Keshtkar (63kg), Danial Sohrabi (72kg), Ali Oskou (77kg), world champion Gholamreza Farrokhi (82kg), and Alireza Mohmadi (87kg), who has claimed back-to-back world silver medals on either side of his Olympic silver at Paris 2024.

zone, and just when it seemed he had scored a stepout, Yazdani circled back and secured a takedown to take a 5-3 lead. A stunned Azarpira protested the decision, but he had no challenge left after unsuccessfully using one in the first period.

Yazdani held on to his two-point cushion to confirm his return to the World Championships for the first time since his 86kg final loss to familiar American foe David Taylor in 2023.

The defeat means Azarpira will represent Iran at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in September. Yazdani, meanwhile, will need

significant improvement if he is to add to his tally of 10 major medals in four months' time.

The 97kg division is expected to feature a star-studded cast in Astana, with American Kyle Snyder defending his title, while former world and Olympic champion Abdurashid Sadulaev will also be in the mix if he earns a place on the Russian team.

Reigning Olympic champion Akhmed Tazhudinov of Bahrain and Japanese world bronze medalist Arash Yoshida, who defeated Azarpira for the Asian title in April, will also fancy their chances in Astana.

Georgian Olympic silver medalist Givi Matcharashvili and former world 92kg champion Rizabek Aitmukhan of Kazakhstan will also pose a threat to the 31-year-old Iranian, who was unimpressive by his own standards on his 97kg international debut in February, suffering the first superpriority loss of his career against unheralded American Stephen Buchanan in the Zagreb Open final.

## FS lineup confirmed

Elsewhere in Friday's trials, Airmohammad Yazdani and Amirhossein Firouzpour also

## Asian Karate Championships: Iran storms into men's, women's team kumite finals

### Sports Desk

Iran advanced to the men's and women's team kumite finals at the AKF Asian Karate Championships in Bali, Indonesia, securing places at the Team World Cup in Hangzhou, China, in November.

meh-Zahra Saeidabadi, and Hannaneh Salehi, the Iranian women's team, meanwhile, began its campaign with a 2-1 (17-4) victory over Chinese Taipei. Bahmanyar fell short against her opponent, but Saeidabadi and Heidari posted 11-1 and 5-0 victories, respectively,

team gold since 2019 in today's showdown is Japan – last year's joint bronze medalist alongside Iran – which defeated South Korea, Indonesia, and Thailand en route to the final. Brothers Morteza and Mahmoud Nemati will also be chasing gold medals in

Japan's Kentaro Yamauchi. The Iranian will also face a reigning Asian champion in today's final, taking on Saudi Arabia's Sanad Sufyani.

Former world bronze medalist Asiabari, meanwhile, fell short of advancing to the -84kg final after suffering a 13-9 defeat to defending champion Mohammad Al-Jafari of Jordan. He bounced back from the semifinal setback to beat India's Chetan Bhatt 16-7 for a bronze medal on Friday, taking Iran's haul to five bronze medals by the end of the second day of action in Bali.

Mehrnegar Ahmadi also claimed a kumite bronze medal thanks to a 6-1 victory over Vietnam's Nguyen Thi Man in the women's -61kg division, while the Iranian trio of Fatemeh Sadeqi, Sepideh Amini, and Zeinab Hosseini defeated Hong Kong 5-2 in the bronze-medal playoff of the women's team kata event.

It was Sadeqi's second bronze medal in Bali after she had defeated China's Tao Yiwei 6-1 to secure a third-place finish in individual kata on the opening day – the Iranian's fifth bronze medal in the history of the competition. Ali Zand had opened Iran's account with a bronze medal in the men's individual kata on Thursday, courtesy of a 7-0 victory over China's Zheng Qianqu in the third-place match.



● IKF

The Iranian men's team of Saleh Abazari, Esmail Motamedi, Mahdi Ashouri, Mahdi Shagol, Bahman Asgari, and Aliasghar Asiabari overcame Nepal and Vietnam before defeating Japan in the semifinals.

Abazari, Motamedi, and Asiabari won their bouts, while Ashouri suffered a defeat in the semifinal clash. Iran will look to avenge last year's final loss to Jordan in today's gold-medal contest.

Featuring Sara Bahmanyar, Mobina Heidari, Fate-

to send Iran through. Saeidabadi and Heidari again emerged victorious as Iran defeated Uzbekistan 2-0 (7-0) to set up a semifinal showdown with Vietnam.

Salehi gave Iran a flying start against the three-time defending champion, winning 7-4, before a third victory of the day for Saeidabadi, a commanding 10-0 result, sealed a 2-0 triumph for head coach Pegah Zangeneh's team.

Standing between the Iranian women and a first Asian

their respective men's kumite events today. A silver medalist in Tashkent last year, Morteza Nemati outclassed Japan's Sakiyama Yusei 9-2 to progress to the -75kg final, where he will look to make amends for last year's title-match defeat to Kazakhstan's Nurkanat Azhikanov, who is targeting a third title in four continental championships.

Mahmoud Nemati then capped an emphatic semifinal performance in the +84kg class with an impressive 12-2 victory over

## Sayyadmanesh joins Polish champion Lech Poznań



Iranian winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh poses with the Lech Poznań kit after signing for the Polish club in Poznań, Poland, on June 19, 2026.

● LECHPOZNA.NL

### Sports Desk

Iranian winger Allahyar Sayyadmanesh has joined Lech Poznań on a three-year contract, the Polish top-flight champion announced on Friday.

Sayyadmanesh, 24, arrives as a free agent from KVC Westerlo, where he spent the previous two seasons, registering 14 goals and 13 assists in 84 appearances for the Belgian outfit.

He found the net on seven occasions and provided five assists in 31 outings as Westerlo reached the Jupiler Pro League Europe playoffs in the recently concluded season, but ultimately missed out on a

place in continental club competitions.

His impressive campaign still did little to convince national team head coach Amir Qalenoee to include the versatile attacker, who has scored one goal in nine international appearances, in Iran's squad for the ongoing FIFA World Cup.

"Despite his young age, he already has extensive experience in both the Turkish and Belgian leagues. The 24-year-old will strengthen the competition in virtually every offensive position, as he can play on the right or left wing, as well as in attack," Lech sporting director Tomasz Rząsa said after seal-

ing the deal for the Iranian. Sayyadmanesh has also played for Turkish clubs Fenerbahçe and Istanbulspor, Ukraine's Zorya Luhansk, and English second-tier outfit Hull City since being introduced to European club football at the start of the 2019/20 season.

At the record 10-time Polish champion, Sayyadmanesh will link up with fellow Iranian winger Ali Qolizadeh.

However, it may take some time before the two Iranians play alongside each other, as Qolizadeh suffered a torn ligament injury in May and is expected to face a lengthy spell on the sidelines.

## Iranica Desk

The head of an archaeological survey team studying the Ahar Qanat in East Azarbaijan Province has announced the discovery of a historic structure named "Qirkh Ayakh" (meaning Forty Steps) and valuable sections of the city's traditional water supply system, saying the findings could pave the way for its national registration and potentially support efforts for future World Heritage recognition.

Mehdi Kazempour, an associate professor at the Islamic Art University of Tabriz, said field studies show that the qanat's source was located north of the city and that the underground water system extended approximately four kilometers from north to south, according to chn.ir. He added that researchers identified and documented 50 qanat shafts arranged

# Ahar Qanat discovery opens path to heritage recognition

in a row along the route during the recent studies. Kazempour highlighted the challenges of conducting archaeological work in a densely built urban area, saying that selecting suitable locations for excavation was difficult due to the presence of qanat channels and related structures within the city. The first test excavation was carried out near the historic Ahar Bazaar and adjacent to the Bazarbash Mosque (currently known as Imam Hassan Askari (PBUH) Mosque). The excavation provided researchers with valuable information about soil layers and the

geological characteristics of the area. Describing the architectural features of the discovered structure, Kazempour said the structure was built using stone and brick materials with lime-and-sand mortar and was connected to the water channel through a stepped passage. He emphasized that the evidence uncovered during recent excavations could strengthen the documentation required to register the Ahar Qanat on Iran's National Heritage List. According to Kazempour, the qanat meets important criteria for protection and

national registration due to its distinctive architectural elements, structural authenticity, continued operation, and historical role in supplying water to the city. Referring to the registration of Iran's qanat system on the UNESCO World Heritage List, he added that the Ahar Qanat, given its unique characteristics, historical significance, extensive water network, and role in the development of the historic city of Ahar, could become a valuable candidate in the future for World Heritage dossiers related to traditional water management and engineering in Iran.

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chn.ir

## Fars to revive historical sites through partnerships

## Iranica Desk

In April 2026, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts delegated authority to Fars Province to transfer the operation and management rights of heritage buildings and cultural projects to the private sector under Article 27 of the regulations governing the organization and transfer of state-owned development projects.

The decision, which was made exclusively for Fars Province, places the region in a strategic position to reorganize its historical assets and bring stalled heritage projects to completion, IRNA wrote. Selected heritage buildings and projects can be handed over to private investors, who are required to restore, revive and manage the sites in line with approved regulations. In



chn.ir

return, investors may benefit from operating the properties for a specified period under officially approved uses. Fars authorities began a more active implementation of Article 27, identifying a list of unfinished projects and historical properties for transfer to non-governmental investors.

Sadeq Zar'e, Deputy Head of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, told IRNA that the first list of priority projects includes five museums. He explained that the southeastern section of the Garden Museum of Celebrities, in-

cluding its parking area and handicrafts market, has been selected for completion and operation. Other museum projects include parts of the Fars Regional Museum, Bavand Museum, Abadeh Museum, and the Pasargadae Museum, which are planned to be completed through private-sector participation. Authorities stressed that any new uses assigned to these heritage sites must be appropriate and compatible with their historical character.

Zar'e said that facilities such as art galleries, handicraft stalls and cafés could be developed alongside museums to create financial returns for investors while preserving the identity of the historic buildings. He added that the Pasargadae Museum project requires further expert reviews due to its location within the boundaries

and protected zone of a World Heritage Site. Zar'e said some properties owned by the Fars Cultural Heritage Department would be restored and revived by private investors, who would then receive operating permits under approved conditions. Among the properties prioritized for transfer are Bagh-e Now (New Garden) and several historic houses. He explained that the transfer process begins with a review and approval by the provincial Article 27 working group. The project must then receive approval from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage's Committee for Valuable Works. If a building is classified as a significant historical monument, the committee may reject its transfer. After these stages, techni-

cal and economic feasibility studies are prepared for each building or project, with studies for the listed sites currently underway. Zar'e also announced that Article 27 could be used to develop tourism infrastructure and improve facilities in areas such as Margoon Waterfall, Behesht-e Gomshodeh (Lost Paradise), and Tang-e Baraq. He said multi-party agreements between the Cultural Heritage Department, private investors and other institutions could also be signed. Expressing optimism about investor interest, Zar'e said that improved conditions and a possible revival of tourism in Fars Province could increase participation in these projects and contribute to the preservation and sustainable use of the province's historic heritage.

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## Cultural continuity, economic potential in Izeh kilim weaving

## Iranica Desk

Kilim weaving, one of Iran's traditional flat-woven crafts, is a long-standing indigenous art industry of Izeh, Khuzestan Province.

In a note published on chn.ir, handicrafts researcher Abbas Rahimi wrote that the abundance of green pastures in Izeh's climate and access to livestock resources have created the necessary conditions for a supply chain of raw materials, including traditional spinning and natural dyeing, as well as the production of woven handicrafts.

The deep connection between Izeh kilims and Bakhtiari nomadic culture has helped preserve the authenticity of their designs and motifs. Despite changes in the form and use of this tradition — from traditional local applications to decorative and practical uses in contemporary life — the art has maintained its cultural identity. Local motifs serve not only decorative purposes but also convey symbolic meanings rooted in religious beliefs, mythology, and indigenous worldviews. These designs often originate from the natural environment and everyday experiences, gradually evolving toward abstraction and simplification. The use of local natural and

plant-based resources in the dyeing process further preserves the authenticity of this practice and highlights the inseparable bond between Izeh kilims and their ecological setting. Local access to raw materials such as wool, natural dyes, and mordants, along with specialized tools, has created a sustainable competitive advantage for this tradition. This has contributed to strengthening the local economy, supporting employment, and enriching the cultural identity of the region. The designation of Izeh as Iran's National City of Kilim Weaving in 2025 marks a strategic achievement aligned with the objectives of the Khuzestan Handicrafts Department. The recognition aims to highlight the cultural importance and economic potential of this traditional craft. From an academic perspective, the national registration of handicraft cities serves as an effective mechanism for branding, strengthening visual identity, and improving the competitiveness of products in domestic and international markets. This achievement represents not only a major step toward introducing the regional brand but also creates opportunities for sustainable employment, preservation and transfer of indigenous knowledge, and the long-term develop-

ment of handicrafts in the area. To achieve this status, the Khuzestan Handicrafts Department has spent recent years identifying, strengthening, and developing the necessary infrastructure for Izeh kilim weaving in production, marketing, promotion, training, and advertising. In the production sector, Izeh has become a major hub for kilim weaving, with more than 800 weavers working across

more than 20 national quality marks for handicrafts, preparing national standards, registering a geographical indication, and designing and producing product prototypes. The transfer of kilim weaving skills in Izeh is based on a combination of indigenous traditions and modern educational systems. Many weavers continue to pass technical knowledge through the traditional master-apprentice system in home workshops, demonstrating the continuation of intergenerational learning. Alongside this approach, institutions such as the Technical and Vocational Training Organization and the Khuzestan Handicrafts Department provide free formal training programs from basic to advanced levels to standardize skills and improve quality. The region's educational infrastructure currently includes seven active workshops at the Izeh Cultural Heritage Department, six official training centers, and large production workshops that combine commercial activity with the training of new artisans. The Khuzestan Handicrafts Department has also used modern tools, including specialized workshops and educational films, to support standardization and expand technical knowledge among Izeh kilim weavers. Promotional activities for Izeh

kilim weaving are based on urban management strategies and cultural diplomacy. The Municipality of Izeh has played a significant role in raising the social status and strengthening the identity of this craft through environmental advertising, including promotional billboards, the installation of a kilim monument at the city entrance, themed murals, and naming a street after kilim weavers. Meanwhile, the Handicrafts Department has adopted an active display strategy by showcasing locally produced kilims in administrative buildings, public spaces, restaurants, cafés, and eco-lodges. These measures have helped introduce the product to local audiences and tourists, while transforming kilim weaving from a workshop-based activity into a visible and dynamic part of the city's cultural landscape. The designation of Izeh as the National City of Kilim Weaving goes beyond an honorary title; it provides a strategic opportunity to strengthen the county's position on Iran's handicrafts map and support national and international branding. However, maintaining this achievement and fully benefiting from its economic and cultural potential requires updated policy-making and greater attention from relevant authorities to move from traditional production toward modern market management.

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# Minab's silent farewell crowned News Photo of the Year

An aerial photograph capturing the funeral and burial of 168 students martyred during a US missile attack against an elementary school in Minab won the top prize in the News Photography category at the prestigious Golden Shot Photography Awards 2026. Morteza Akhondi, a photographer from Hormozgan Province, secured first place in the international competition with the powerful and compositionally striking image, which captivated the global jury, Press TV reported. The festival described the image as "the resting place of children whose only 'fault' was being children... Innocent, they were

silenced, and history will never forget the crime."

In the final rankings, Akhondi from Iran took the gold, followed by Bartosz Matenko of Poland in second place and Mohammad Mohtaseb of Saudi Arabia in third

The achievement highlights the growing presence and high potential of Iranian visual artists on the international stage.

The US-Israeli coalition bombed Minab's Shajareh Tayyebeh elementary school on February 28, the opening day of the aggression against Iran.

The school was triple-tapped by three distinct strikes using Tomahawk missiles, produced



An aerial photograph capturing the funeral and burial of 168 students martyred during a US missile attack in southern city of Minab, Hormozgan Province, on February 28, 2026.

gspawards.com

by Raytheon in Tucson, Arizona. The roof of the two-story building, decorated with pink flowers and green leaves, collapsed onto students inside.

At least 168 people were killed, including 26 female teachers, with over 95 injured. Many victims were girls and boys between seven and twelve years old.



## Iran draws crowds at Mexico City's global cultural festival

### Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's pavilion has emerged as one of the busiest attractions at INTER 2026 Global Village in Mexico City, drawing large crowds of visitors, cultural figures and media representatives with displays of traditional arts, handicrafts, cultural heritage and Persian cuisine, according to organizers and reports from the event.

From the opening days of the international festival, visitors gathered around the Iranian stand to explore the country's history, civilization and artistic traditions. Handwoven Persian carpets, intricate handicrafts and examples of traditional Iranian artistry became focal points of attention, with many attendees spending extended periods examining the craftsmanship and fine details of the exhibits. The event, staged as part of Mexico's cultural programming ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, has brought together delegations from 48 countries, underscoring the growing intersection of cultural diplomacy and global sporting momentum in the host nation.

"The artistic sophistication and cultural depth on display are remarkable," several visitors were quoted as saying while engaging with exhibitors and learning about Iran's heritage and tourism attractions. The pavilion also served as a venue for cultural dialogue. Mexican visitors ex-

pressed interest in gaining a deeper understanding of Iranian culture, art and everyday life, while discussing the country's long civilizational legacy. Cultural content creators, photographers and journalists documented the exhibits, highlighting them as reflections of Iran's historical identity and artistic traditions.

Iranian cuisine proved another major draw. Traditional offerings including Sholezard (saffron rice pudding), samosa, saffron and flixweed drinks, cardamom beverages and traditional fruit snacks attracted strong demand. Organizers said all available supplies were sold out before the end of the festival's first day, underscoring the growing appeal of Persian culinary culture among international audiences.

The pavilion also featured a humanitarian and cultural initiative linked to the children of Minab. Badges inspired by the "Minab backpack" project drew attention from visitors and opened conversations about the program's cultural message. The festival, which began on June 12 and runs through June 21 in Mexico City's Chapultepec area, is part of a broader wave of World Cup-linked cultural programming aimed at positioning the capital as a global hub of exchange. It will also host workshops on Iranian history and civilization, traditional Persian music and cultural heritage, further expanding Iran's cultural outreach in Latin America.

## Vienna initiative recasts Iranian studies through books, new scholarship

### Arts & Culture Desk

Austria's first specialized exhibition dedicated to Iranian studies opened in Vienna June 17, bringing together nearly 200 scholarly titles and leading academics in a bid to deepen research ties and stimulate fresh debate on the intellectual foundations of the field, organizers said.

Hosted by Iran's Cultural Center in Austria at the House of Iranian Wisdom, the three-day event features a curated collection of major Iranian studies works, largely in German and bilingual German-Persian editions, spanning nine thematic categories, ILNA reported.

The exhibition offers more than a survey of publications. It also serves as a forum for reassessing how Iran is studied in Europe, as scholars highlighted the need for stronger theoretical frameworks, wider interdisciplinary engagement and greater preservation of research resources.

Nosratollah Rastegar, the renowned German translator of Ferdowsi's 'Shahnameh' and a prominent figure in Austrian Iranian studies, traced



the development of the discipline in Austria and recalled efforts with the late Austrian scholar Bert Fragner to establish and expand the Institute of Iranian Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Rastegar described Austria's scholarly investment in Iranian studies as "remarkable," noting the field's long-standing place within the University of Vienna's Oriental Studies tradition. He also praised recent efforts that, in his words, have helped "light the lamp of Iranian studies once again."

The event also marked the release of 'Fifty Outstanding Books on Iranian Studies,' a new reference volume compiled by Hassan Javaher that in-

troduces influential works in the discipline.

Among the keynote speakers was Sibylle Wentker, a senior official at the Austrian Academy of Sciences and a noted Iranologist, who underscored the interdisciplinary nature of Iranian studies and stressed the urgent need to digitize scholarly resources.

"Only a small portion of Iranian studies materials has been digitized so far," she said, calling for greater investment to preserve and broaden access to the field's intellectual heritage. The exhibition concluded with the unveiling of 'Iranian Studies: Foundations, Coordinates, Approaches, and Challenges' by Reza Gholami, an Iranian scholar and cultural researcher. Presenting the work, Gholami said the book seeks to answer a fundamental question: "What exactly is Iranian studies, and what gives it intellectual coherence?"

He argued that Iran is best understood not as a collection of isolated subjects but as an integrated civilization whose political, cultural, religious and historical dimensions form a connected whole.

## Iran displays 250 titles at Beijing book fair to expand publishing ties

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Iran has brought 250 titles spanning literature, cultural studies, children's books and Iranology to the 32nd Beijing International Book Fair, seeking to deepen publishing partnerships and expand the global reach of Persian-language works, according to Iran's Book House and Literature organization.

The five-day event, running from June 17 to 21 at the China National Convention Center, has drawn more than 2,600 publishers and publishing institutions from over 100 countries and regions, making it one of Asia's largest gatherings for the global publishing industry.

Iran's national pavilion serves as a platform to introduce Persian language, literature and cultural heritage while facilitating professional exchanges between Iranian and international publishers. Organizers said the country's participation is aimed at broadening translation opportunities, strengthening copyright



cooperation and increasing the presence of Iranian books in international markets.

The Iranian collection on display includes children's and young adult literature, classical and contemporary Persian works, cultural and artistic studies, Iranology publications and titles related to the Sacred Defense. Published works and intellectual heritage associated with the martyred Leader of the Revolution are also featured among the selected volumes. Designed to reflect Iran's cultural identity and literary civilization, the pavilion carries the slogan "Iran, the Land of Unity and Solidarity." A spe-

cial visual section commemorates the child martyrs of Minab, while other displays highlight the country's literary and intellectual achievements. This year's Beijing fair places a strong focus on emerging publishing technologies, including artificial intelligence and digital publishing. A dedicated pavilion for online publishing and AI-driven technologies has been established alongside traditional exhibition halls.

Among the event's notable additions is a new intellectual property licensing section that brings together more than 120 rights professionals, creating fresh opportunities for cooperation between publishers and cultural industries. Nearly 1,000 professional forums, cultural programs and copyright-related events are being held throughout the exhibition. Founded in 1986, the Beijing International Book Fair occupies 60,000 square meters this year and showcases more than 220,000 titles. The United Arab Emirates is the guest of honor for the 2026 edition.

## 'The Girl from Gaza' heads to three int'l film festivals



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film "The Girl from Gaza," written and directed by Hossein Babaiean and produced by Alireza Pishahvar, has secured spots at three international film festivals in Italy, Spain and Nigeria, expanding its global festival run following the completion of pro-

duction.

The film is set to compete at the 15th Tracce Cinematografiche Film Fest in Nettuno, Italy, from June 11-14, and at the sixth FICIMAD (Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente de Madrid) on June 19 in the Spanish capital. It has also been selected for a Nigerian festival event, according to the film's producers.

"The Girl from Gaza" delivers a powerful anti-war message while exploring themes of compassion, sacrifice and human dignity. Set against the backdrop of conflict, the film portrays how humanity can endure even when people are thrust onto opposing sides of war. "Humanity, self-sacrifice and compassion remain alive," the filmmakers said in a project statement, emphasizing the value of every human life amid violence and upheaval. The cast includes Alireza Pishahvar, Mehrsa Moqim Bigli and Raha Moghaddam.