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Cinema pays tribute to martyred Leader in photo exhibition

Staged at the Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) in Tehran's Shahid Qandi Square, the exhibition runs from July 3 to July 6 under the banner Filmmakers' Gathering Place, welcoming filmmakers, media professionals and the public, IRNA reported. The exhibition features photographs document-

ing Ayatollah Khamenei's meetings with directors, actors and other cinema figures over the years, as well as handwritten and published memorial messages released by members of Iran's film industry following his martyrdom. A 90-minute video program is also screening throughout the event, bringing together

archival footage of the Leader's remarks on cinema, his assessments of selected Iranian films, and his reflections on the cultural significance of filmmaking. The program also includes rare archival images from the National Film Archive of Iran highlighting his interactions with filmmakers. The gathering forms part of



the broader cultural initiatives accompanying the official farewell ceremonies for the martyred Leader, whose funeral and burial events are scheduled to take place from July 4 through July 9 in Tehran, Qom, Najaf, Karbala

and Mashhad. The exhibition seeks to preserve a visual record of the Leader's longstanding engagement with Iranian cinema while reflecting the industry's tribute to his cultural legacy.

Arts & Culture Desk

The Cinema Organization of Iran opened a photo exhibition on Friday showcasing the late Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khome-

Golestan Palace opens damaged heritage site to international media

Arts & Culture Desk

More than 150 international journalists, photographers and television crews visited Tehran's UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace this week to document restoration work and assess damage sustained during recent attacks, according to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. The ministry organized the visit while foreign media delegations were in Iran to cover ceremonies marking allegiance, farewell and funeral observances for the martyred Leader, IRNA reported. Reporters toured the palace's Mirror Hall and other affected sections wearing protective helmets, a visi-



International journalists wearing protective hard hats tour the Mirror Hall of Tehran's UNESCO-listed Golestan Palace to document ongoing restoration work and assess damage following recent attacks. ● IRNA

ble sign that conservation work remains under way. Scaffolding stood alongside the palace's celebrated mirror mosaics, creating what officials described as a striking juxtaposition of Persian

architectural splendor and painstaking restoration efforts. Heritage experts and site guides briefed visiting media on the extent of the damage, the historical and artistic

significance of the complex, and ongoing stabilization and restoration plans. Journalists filmed damaged areas, documented conservation work in progress and interviewed specialists about preservation standards and the palace's global cultural importance. The visit turned the Qajar-era complex into a temporary hub of international cultural reporting, with live broadcasts and video reports transmitted directly to newsrooms around the world. Dozens of cameras and satellite transmission units filled the historic site as foreign correspondents sought to provide detailed, documented accounts of the palace's condition. Officials said the tour was intended not only to showcase restoration efforts but also to show the broader responsibility of safeguarding humanity's shared cultural heritage in times of conflict.

Iran launches public letter campaign honoring martyred Leader

Arts & Culture Desk



The photo shows a campaign poster for Iran's 'Letter to the Martyred Leader' initiative, featuring a commemorative stamp depicting the clenched fist of the late Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Iran's National Post Company, in partnership with the Government Information Council Secretariat, has launched the nationwide 'Letter to the Martyred Leader' campaign during the farewell and funeral ceremonies for the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, inviting the public to submit handwritten messages in tribute. Participants may mail their letters to Post Office Box 8811-15875 through post offices nationwide or designated postal collection points along the funeral route until July 16, 2026. The organizers said the handwritten tributes will be compiled into a deluxe commemorative volume, preserving personal reflections and expressions of loyalty as a lasting cultural record of the national tribute to the martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Preserving soul of mourning elegy through authentic melody

By Alireza Sepahvand
Journalist

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

In recent years, the growing use of melodies borrowed from popular music and well-known songs in mourning elegies has sparked widespread debate over the authenticity of this ritual art. While the mourning elegy remains one of the most important vehicles for conveying the message of Ashura in Shiite culture, some scholars argue that moving away from its traditional melodic structures could weaken both its spiritual function and cultural identity. In Iranian-Shia culture, the recitation of mourning elegies is far more than a musical form. It is a medium for conveying the meaning, emotion and history of Ashura. Over centuries, it has forged a profound bond between society and the tragedy of Karbala, becoming an integral part of the people's religious identity. In recent decades, however, social change, media expansion and growing competition for audiences have

reshaped both the structure and content of mourning elegies. The adoption of melodies borrowed from popular entertainment music, changing audience tastes and the influence of social media have, according to some experts, distanced mourning elegies from their authentic roots. Others, however, stress the need for innovation and adaptation to contemporary realities. The real challenge is finding the balance between artistic creativity and preserving authenticity, a balance that will determine the future of this ritual tradition. To explore these issues, Iran Daily spoke with Hooshang Javid, a senior researcher of Iranian regional music and ritual chants and founder of several festivals dedicated to ritual and ethnic music.

IRAN DAILY: Why have today's mourning elegies drifted away from authenticity?
HOOSHANG JAVID: This trend began in the late 1990s and gathered momentum in the mid-2000s. Several factors contributed to it, including changes in government approaches and cultural policies introduced with successive leadership changes in cultural institutions. During that period, many



Hooshang Javid

religious elegy reciters began using melodies from popular street songs and media productions, while some even borrowed tunes from singers based abroad. In my view, this caused serious harm to the composition and recitation of mourning elegies. At the time, I published some of the earliest critiques of this trend in Maqam magazine, warning that reciting a mourning elegy is fundamentally different from singing. Those who chose this path generally lacked a proper understanding of the roots of ritual melodies and the authentic vocal traditions of religious music, resulting in undesirable changes to the structure of mourning elegies.

What damage does using song melodies cause?

The book Kitab al-Aghani, written by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani, recounts that the great musician Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Mawṣili, on his deathbed, advised his son, "Do not set a mourning elegy to the melody of a song; instead, compose the song for the mourning elegy." His reasoning was that using unsuitable melodies distracts listeners from the message of the mourning elegy while diminishing its dignity and spiritual purpose. When one of the greatest musicians of his era offered such advice, it shows that this concern has existed for centuries. In my view, using entertainment-based melodies for mourning elegies is inappropriate, although some continue to do so today in an effort to retain audiences.

Where is the line between innovation and harming tradition?
Innovation is valuable only when it grows from a deep understanding of tradition, not through imitation of non-ritual music. Anyone who truly understands the foundations of ritual melody, vocal styles and the structure of religious music can compose a new mourning elegy without compromising its identity. But once mourning elegies begin following the patterns of commercial or entertainment music, they have already moved beyond the framework of ritual music.

What role have the media and social media played?
Traditional media and social media have both played a significant role in spreading this trend. Competition for audiences has led some religious elegy reciters to adopt familiar, popular melodies in order to attract more listeners. Over time, however, this approach gradually weakens the authenticity of religious ritual music.

What should be done to restore authentic traditions?
In my opinion, the primary responsibility lies with the country's cultural institutions, particularly the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, the Ministry of Culture

and Islamic Guidance, and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. It is regrettable that after decades, Iranian universities still lack specialized academic programs devoted to ritual arts, religious music or Iran's traditional ceremonial practices. Although the country has distinguished researchers, professors and composers capable of teaching this heritage through rigorous academic study, higher education continues to focus primarily on Western music, while Iran's regional musical traditions receive only limited attention in university curricula. These three institutions should work together to establish specialized academic programs dedicated to ritual arts so this heritage can be passed on to future generations in a scholarly, documented and authentic manner. Otherwise, if the current trend continues, this heritage will undergo even greater cultural transformation over the next decade. Today, even the styles of chain-beating rituals and ceremonial movements have gradually changed over the past two decades, yet no serious effort has been made to study or guide these developments. Unless cultural institutions address the issue, the drift away from authentic traditions will continue.