



Wartime photos by six photographers to be released from national archive



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is set to publish photographs by six prominent Iranian photographers documenting the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, drawing on the National Library and Archives of Iran's digital collection as the country marks its annual Sacred Defense Week, ISNA reported on Wednesday.

The collection features images of battlefields, war-affected areas, funerals and burials of those killed, as well as grieving families.

The photographers are Reza Deghati, Manoochehr Deghati, Kaveh Golestan, Mohammad Farnood, Alfred Yaghoubzadeh and Kamran Jebreili. Some of the photographers documented events and everyday life in

war-affected areas at close range. Their work forms part of the visual record being released through the archive's digital resources.

Sacred Defense Week begins each year on Sept. 22, marking the start of the Iran-Iraq war, and runs through Sept. 28. In 2026, it falls from Sept. 22 to 28.

The war began on Sept. 22, 1980, when Iraq attacked Iran, and a ceasefire took effect on Aug. 20, 1988, after nearly eight years of fighting.

Iranian war photographers documented more than battlefield operations, helping preserve a visual record of combatants, civilians, damaged cities and the human consequences of the conflict.

Alongside photographers work-

ing for media organizations and official institutions, independent photographers also travelled to the front lines and produced their own accounts.

Their photographs became important visual documents of the war, with some published outside Iran. Deghati covered six years of the conflict and won first prize in the news category of World Press Photo in 1983 for a series of Iran-Iraq war images.

Yaghoubzadeh was present at the front from the early years of the war, documenting combatants, destruction and its human impact.

Golestan left an extensive body of work from the 1980-1988 conflict, continuing his documentary approach to social photography.

Minister urges rural students to pursue science, honor national identity

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture minister Abbas Salehi on Wednesday urged rural students to pursue academic success regardless of where they live, saying the country's 3.5 million rural pupils should know that "the future belongs to you". "The flag is not just paper or cloth; it is the identity card and identity of a nation," Salehi said while speaking at the start of the school year at Shahid Sadooghi School in Kashar Olya village near Tehran, Mehr News Agency reported.

He said the flag, like a national identity card, must be protected and called on students to "stand up for the country" when needed. Salehi highlighted Delaram village near Tafrash, a city in central Iran, saying 175 doctors emerged from the hamlet with nearly 200 households.

He said villages could also nurture doctors, engineers and scientists, and that birthplace should not limit academic achievement. The minister paid tribute to student and teacher casualties, saying 36,000 students and 5,000



A schoolgirl gives a bouquet to Culture Minister Abbas Salehi as he visits a school in village near Tehran, Iran on September 23, 2026.

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teachers sacrificed their lives for the country during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. He also cited 277 students and 67 teachers and education workers who fell after Israel launched a war on Iran in June 2025.

Shajarian; a voice that redefined Iranian singing

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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The first day of Mehr (September 23), the seventh month in the Persian calendar year when the school year begins in Iran, is not merely the birthday anniversary of a great singer. This day recalls the birth of an artist who, in the history of Iranian music, attained a position beyond that of a singer. Mohammad Reza Shajarian was among the few artists whose name cannot be explained merely through a few works, albums, or memorable performances. Shajarian became part of the musical memory of Iranians and, more importantly, throughout several decades of artistic activity, created a new image of "Iranian singing." Shajarian was born on September 23, 1940, in Mashhad, and from his childhood years was familiar with singing and music. But what later distinguished him from many of the singers of his generation was not merely possessing a beautiful-toned and powerful voice. A good voice can make a singer famous, but it is not enough to make him enduring. What transformed Shajarian into a different phenomenon was his ability to turn the voice into a language.

He did not merely sing poetry over a melody. Poetry lived in Shajarian's singing. The words acquired weight and character in his mouth, and each line, according to the meaning and atmosphere of the poem, took on its own musical form. That is why, in many of his performances, even before the listener pays attention to the musical complexities, they connect with the meaning and emotion of the poetry.

Shajarian drew upon the heritage of the great masters of Iranian singing and the radif, but he did not remain within that heritage. His profound familiarity with the radif, his knowledge of gushahs and dastgahs, and years of working with masters such as Abdollah



Davami and Nour-Ali Boroomand provided a foundation for the formation of his independent artistic identity.

In fact, perhaps one of the most important aspects of Shajarian's artistry is precisely this: that he established a balance between "loyalty to tradition" and "personal creation." He neither broke away from the past nor remained in the past.

If we want to look more precisely at his singing, we should begin with his tahrirs. Tahrir in Shajarian's singing is not a display of vocal power. Even in the most complex tahrirs, there is a musical logic. He uses tahrir as a musician uses a phrase, shaping it. Speed, duration, pauses, cadences, and returns all follow the structure of the singing and the meaning of the poetry.

This can also be seen in his phrasing. Shajarian gives silence as much importance as sound. Sometimes a brief pause in his singing is as powerful as a long tahrir. Sometimes he produces a note so simply and unpretentiously that the listener may not, at first glance, notice its technical difficulty. Yet this "seemingly simple simplicity" is the result of years of knowledge, practice, and control.

His vocal timbre was another distinctive feature. Shajarian's voice did not lose its character across different vocal ranges. In the low register, it had dignity, and in the high register, power. But more important than these two qualities was his ability to change his expression. A singer may have a powerful voice, but may be unable to express sorrow, grandeur, love, protest, or longing in different forms with that same voice. Shajarian possessed a broad range in this regard.

That is why his position cannot be measured merely by the number of his works or his public fame. Shajarian's importance lies in the influence he had on our conception of singing. After him, a singer who wanted to be serious and possess an identity inevitably had to define his relationship with the heritage Shajarian had created.

But alongside all these technical and artistic qualities, another aspect of his personality was also important to the people, and that was his humility and closeness to them. Despite his very lofty position, Shajarian did not distance himself from the people. His relationship with audiences, students, colleagues, and members of the music community was not merely a professional relationship.

This human quality, alongside his artistic character, created a more complete image of him.

Nevertheless, perhaps it is better on Shajarian's birthday anniversary to speak less about his fame and more about his "singing." To speak about how a voice can become a language. How tahrir can move beyond a display of technique and reach the expression of emotion. How one can remain faithful to the radif without becoming absorbed into it. And how one can sing the poetry of Hafez, Saadi, Rumi, or other poets in such a way that the listener feels as though the poem is being heard for the first time.

Shajarian has left us, but that is not the main issue. Artists of this kind are mortal, but their language remains. Future generations may hear his voice through different means, their musical tastes may change, and even the form of singing may change, but it is unlikely that the history of Iranian singing will be able to remove the name of Mohammad Reza Shajarian from its narrative. He was not merely one of Iran's greatest singers. Shajarian was one of those who gave Iranian singing identity, distinction, and a new language.

And perhaps that is why the first of Mehr remains not an ordinary day for Iranian music.

Iran to stage cultural week in four Russian cities to cement ties

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Iran will hold a cultural week in four Russian cities from Sept. 24 to Oct. 6, featuring 13 cultural, artistic, scientific and professional programs aimed at presenting the country's historical, cultural and contemporary identity. The event will take place in Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan and Astrakhan as part of efforts to deepen cultural ties between Iran and Russia, said Hossein Divsalaar, deputy head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization for scientific and cultural cooperation in an interview with ISNA published on Wednesday. "The program will go beyond cultural showcases by bringing together artists, academics, cultural institutions and professional groups from both countries," Divsalaar added. A key new focus is the creative

industries, including cinema and animation, video games, toys, and fashion and clothing. Business-to-business (B2B) meetings and specialized talks will allow Iranian participants to discuss the Russian market, joint projects and exports of cultural products and services. One of the main events will be a performance by Iran's National Orchestra at Moscow's historic Bolshoi Theatre, one of Russia's leading opera and ballet venues. The orchestra will also perform in Kazan and St Petersburg. Kazan will host programs centered on the Qur'an and the life and character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), coinciding with the city's designation as the 2026 Islamic Culture Capital.

The cultural week will also include a major cultural and artistic exhibition showing capacities from more than 30 cul-

tural and artistic fields, as well as a film and animation week, programmes for children and teenagers, academic and scientific meetings, and initiatives to promote cultural exports and creative industries. The event is being held on an unprecedented scale across four Russian cities, organizers said. Divsalaar said the initiative's success would not be measured solely by visitor numbers. The continuation of professional cooperation, negotiations, agreements and contacts after the event would also be important, he said. He added that discussions launched during the cultural week should be followed up after its conclusion to turn them into joint projects involving artists, universities, cultural institutions and economic and cultural professionals in both countries.