



Farhadi lashes out at Hollywood's 'white savior' view of Iran

'Who asked you to come and save us?'

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi lambasted what he described as the perceived hegemony of American cinema, saying Hollywood films about countries such as Iran could present the world from a superior position and perpetuate the image of an American coming to save others.

Farhadi, a two-time Oscar-winning director, was speaking with American trade magazine Variety at the Rio Film Festival, where he is presenting his latest film, "Parallel Tales". The festival runs from Oct. 1 to Oct. 11.

Asked about Ben Affleck's "Argo", which won the Oscar for Best Picture a year after Farhadi's "A Separation" won the Academy Award for Best International Feature Film, he said he had watched it when it was released and felt it was a "Hollywood thing".

"Argo", loosely based on a true story, stars Affleck as a Latino exfiltration specialist who poses as a Hollywood producer to help rescue six Americans trapped in Tehran during the US embassy takeover in Iran in late 1970s and

early 1980s. The film's portrayal of Iran was described during the discussion as being "like you're in hell".

Farhadi said the problem with such films, and with some people in the United States, was that they "look at the world from up to down". He questioned why some Americans believed they occupied a higher position than others and blasted what he called the ego behind that view.

He also challenged claims about American democracy, saying: "You don't have democracy. It's a lie."

Farhadi referred to his own time in the United States several years ago, when he was working on a project and traveled to San Francisco as part of his research. He said he met incarcerated men, including Black people and people from other countries, and saw the "real America", while saying that part of the country was not visible to people around the world.

The filmmaker said he objected to the idea that other societies should become like the United States, even when such an attitude was presented as an act of kindness. He said he did not want that.

Returning to "Argo", Farhadi said films of this kind were not deep and were made as a business. He rapped the recurring figure of a white American man saving others and asked why an American should go to countries such as Iran or Cuba to rescue people. "Who asked you to come and save us?" he said.

Farhadi said politics was also present whenever filmmakers talked about society, family life, relationships and people's difficulties. But he said he tried not to address politics directly in his films because the cinema he believed in should give audiences space to discover something about themselves.

He said his next film would be made in his native Farsi. Asked whether it could address the current war in Iran and the conflict in Palestine, he said: "Not directly."

Farhadi also explained why "Parallel Tales" was moved from the United States to France. The film was originally planned to be shot in the US, where he spent three years writing, researching and casting American actors, including major names. But he said he increasingly felt unable to connect with



the project and eventually decided to change it.

Moving the story to France and production overseas was "not an easy decision", he said, but he concluded that "the DNA of this film is more European than American".

The film stars Isabelle Huppert, Vir-

ginie Efira and Vincent Cassel. Farhadi said he sent the script to selected actors after arriving in France and was "so lucky" that they all immediately agreed to join. On set, he said, he does not think about their status or fame but treats them all as his team, family and actors.

Iranian cultural program reaches final stop in Russia's Astrakhan



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Iran's cultural program in Russia reached its final stop in Astrakhan, showcasing traditional music, Iranian heritage, photography, literature and cinema as Tehran and Moscow seek to deepen cultural ties, IRNA reported on Sunday.

The "Days of Iran in Russia" program, running from Sept. 25 to Oct. 6, has brought 168 Iranian artists to Russia across 30 cultural and artistic fields. The number of participants commemorates 168 people killed, mostly schoolchildren, in a US missile strike on an elementary school in Minab, southern Iran, on Feb. 28.



Iranian artists perform during a 12-day cultural program in Russia which reached Astrakhan on October 4, 2026.

● IRNA

The program opened formally at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre on Sept. 28, with Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi and Russia's Culture Minister Olga Lyubimova attending. Iranian artists performed traditional music at the opening ceremony.

After Moscow and St Petersburg, the program moved to Kazan before reaching Astrakhan, its fourth and final host city.

In Astrakhan, Iranian musicians performed traditional pieces at the Astrakhan Philharmonia, drawing an audience that included Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, Astrakhan regional officials, Iran's consul general and local cultural figures. Astrakhan Vice-Governor Denis Afanasyev underscored the importance

of cultural cooperation with Iran, while Jalali said culture and the arts could bring the peoples of Iran and Russia closer together. He also described Astrakhan as an important meeting point for different cultures in Russia.

The program also featured an exhibition of photographs showing Iran's historical monuments, cultural heritage, natural landscapes, tourist attractions and diverse climate.

A separate exhibition at the Astrakhan Regional Scientific Library displayed Persian literature and Iranian culture, including works by classical and contemporary Iranian writers and poets, Russian translations of Persian works and Persian translations of Russian literature.

One of the exhibition's notable items was the "Catherine's Shahnameh", a Persian-language edition published in St Petersburg in 1793. Displayed alongside Persian and Russian books, it highlighted the long history of liter-

ary and cultural exchanges between Iran and Russia.

Ahmad Heydarian, Iran's consul general in Astrakhan, highlighted the city's longstanding historical and human links with Iran, pointing to centuries of travel and interaction between Iranians and residents of the region.

Astrakhan's culture minister highlighted cooperation in cultural exhibitions, cinema and filmmaking and pointed to the Caspian Seasons festival as another channel for cultural exchanges involving Iranian artists and cultural figures.

The wider program also includes 11 Iranian feature films and animations screened in Moscow, Kazan and Astrakhan, alongside music, traditional arts, creative industries and specialist meetings.

The events follow Russia's cultural week in Iran in June 2025, adding to an ongoing exchange between the cultural institutions of the two countries.

Iran, US: equations ...

A clear example of this was witnessed by the international community at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, when delegates left the hall during Netanyahu's speech.

More important, however, is Israel's parliamentary election on October 27. The election race has created considerable stress and uncertainty for Netanyahu and his Likud party. Against this backdrop, Netanyahu sees a resumption of the war with Iran as a way out

of the current situation.

It should also be noted that Israel has sought in recent months to take advantage of the situation by avoiding direct involvement in US attacks. It has attempted, first, to partially repair the damage caused by missile attacks and strengthen its defensive systems. At the same time, it has sought to have the United States bear the costs of the low-intensity war of recent months.

China's position also deserves attention. At the first level, Beijing is not seeking contin-

ued tensions in the region and prefers the main region from which China obtains its energy supplies to remain stable and peaceful.

At another level, however, China may not be unwilling to see a continuation of a low-intensity war in the Persian Gulf if this keeps the United States engaged in the region and prevents Washington from putting its full weight behind pressure on China.

In other words, such a situation could give Beijing an opportunity to advance its Taiwan

strategy and engage in stronger competition with its main global rival at a lower cost.

Russia's position also deserves attention. With the war in Ukraine becoming increasingly prolonged, tensions with Europe intensifying on the one hand, and extensive US sanctions on the other, Moscow is likely to closely follow developments in the region and assess how changes in the regional situation may affect its own strategic interests.

A continuation of tensions in the region could, from Mos-

cow's perspective, have the effect of drawing some of the international attention and pressure toward developments in the Middle East, while also influencing the broader strategic balance between Russia, the United States and Europe.

Given these considerations and the complexities governing the regional and international equations, Iran needs to carefully analyze the policies and considerations of each actor that has an interest or a role in the current situation.

Iran should design and pursue

its political and military actions and responses in a way that takes these calculations into account and allows it to achieve the greatest possible gains at the lowest possible cost.

The developments surrounding Iran and the United States are therefore not shaped solely by the direct confrontation between the two countries. The calculations of Israel, China and Russia, as well as their respective interests in the continuation or reduction of tensions, are also important elements of the broader regional equation.