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# Iran says 'ball is in the US court' on deal to end war

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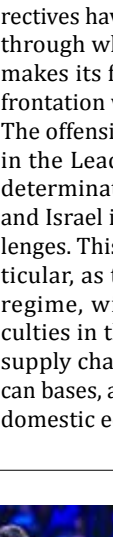
## Tehran, Ashgabat emphasize need to capitalize on capacities to expand cooperation

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Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) shakes hands with his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Meredov in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on November 2, 2026.
president.ir

## Leader signals shift toward punishment-based deterrence



By Mohsen Farkhani
*Middle East affairs analyst*

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The meeting between Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei and senior military commanders, along with his directives emphasizing an immediate, effective and geographically unrestricted response to any threat from the United States and Israel, points to the consolidation of an offensive deterrence strategy based on disproportionate punishment as the Islamic Republic's military and security doctrine. The strategy is primarily aimed at raising the cost of any enemy military action to a level that makes it unacceptable from a cost-benefit perspective.

The meeting and the issuance of firm and authoritative directives by the Leader took place as speculation mounted over the possibility of new US and Israeli attacks following the US midterm elections, while diplomatic channels remained active in Doha under Qatar's mediation. Coming at a time when the enemy is weighing the costs and benefits of its military and non-military options against Iran, the directives have targeted the very framework through which the enemy calculates and makes its final decision on military confrontation with Iran.

The offensive nature of the language used in the Leader's directives reflects Iran's determination to draw the United States and Israel into an escalating cycle of challenges. This would confront the US in particular, as the main backer of the Israeli regime, with serious difficulties in the energy sector, supply chains and the security of American bases, against the backdrop of ongoing domestic economic and social pressures.

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# Iran says 'ball is in the US court' on deal to end war

International Desk

Mediators continue pushing for a deal between Iran and the United States to end the eight-month war between the two countries, with Tehran saying that "the ball is in the US court."

Amid fears the conflict could reignite after Tuesday's midterm elections in the US, the mediators have stepped up their efforts to prevent renewed military conflict that has so far hit the global economy.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said on Monday that the next move in the standoff with the United States is for US President Donald Trump to make.

"The ball is in the US court, because our demands have been stated very clearly and transparently, and Iran's demands are reasonable and logical," Baqaei told journalists in Tehran.

He said that "everything depends" on the US side accepting the Iranian demands.

"Only then can we discuss the subsequent stages."

The Iranian spokesman said ongoing negotiations, which have been brokered by Qatar, Pakistan and other mediators, were centered around the a seven-day proposal that Iran originally presented to the US side in September, which calls for frozen Iranian assets to be released, the US naval blockade to be lifted and an end to fighting on all fronts, in exchange for the phased reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and further negotiations on other topics.

President Trump rejected the initial proposal, but both sides have since exchanged revisions, and Trump has said repeatedly in recent weeks that he just needs to make a decision on whether to launch new attacks on Iran, or to make a deal to end the war.

Baqaei also confirmed comments attributed to Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Saturday that the proposal could be shortened.

"The basis of dialogue and talks between Iran and the US via mediators is still Iran's seven-steps proposal, which is now condensed, making it possible to implement it within two days," he said.

Baqaei reiterated that condensing the plan would not change Iran's underlying stance that a return to talks on the country's nuclear program could only happen after it verified that all its conditions were met.



*An Iranian woman holds Iran's national flag on a street in Tehran, Iran, on November 1, 2026.*
*AFP*

### Highly enriched uranium

Asked whether the possibility of transferring Iran's highly enriched uranium stockpile to another country was raised in the talks, and whether Iran might agree to that, he said no.

An official briefed on the talks said Iran's negotiators had left on Sunday but not because of any problems in the talks, and added that a draft proposal was being circulated without elaborating.

The war, which the US and Israel launched suddenly on February 28, has led to Iran's closure of the key Strait of Hormuz waterway, a US blockade on Iranian ports and repeated bouts of Iranian drone and missile fire US bases in Persian Gulf Arab states.

## Tehran, Ashgabat emphasize need to capitalize on capacities to expand cooperation

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held talks with his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Meredov in Ashgabat, focusing on strengthening bilateral cooperation and reviewing regional and international developments.

Araghchi met with Meredov, who also serves as Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, on Monday, during a one-day visit to the Central Asian country.

The two officials reviewed the latest developments in Tehran-Ashgabat relations and emphasized the need to capitalize on existing capacities to expand cooperation across various political and economic fields.

Meredov highlighted the historical ties between the two neighboring countries, describing them as a solid foundation for further strengthening bilateral relations.

"I am very pleased that, over the past 35 years, since Turkmenistan's independence, we have maintained steadily expanding relations with Iran in all fields, including trade, politics and culture," he said.

The Turkmen foreign minister also expressed appreciation for Iran's support for his country in various international forums.

Araghchi arrived in Ashgabat earlier on Monday at the head of a diplomatic, economic and parliamentary delegation, receiving a welcome from Turkmen officials at the airport.



*Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (4th R) holds talks with his Turkmen counterpart Rashid Meredov (4th L) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, on September 2, 2026.*
*IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY*

The visit is aimed at advancing consultations on bilateral relations, regional and international developments, and ways to strengthen political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

In October, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian also visited Turkmenistan to attend and address two high-level meetings, including a summit of the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States as a special guest and a summit on the environment of the Caspian Sea littoral states. He said his visit, at the official invitation of Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov, will provide an opportunity to further deepen Iran's relations with its neighbors and reduce the impact of a maritime blockade.

Iran's Ambassador in Turkmenistan Ali Mojtaba Rouzbehani in an interview with IRNA said Iran and Turkmenistan are seeking to expand rail and road transit, activate a China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route and strengthen regional transport links as part of a broader push to develop independent trade corridors connecting Central Asia with Europe.

Increasing rail and road transit, operationalizing the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran route, developing the Ashgabat Agreement corridor and boosting multimodal transportation are among the priorities on the two countries' agenda, Rouzbehani said.

He described the signing of a trilateral protocol between Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to develop a corridor linking Central Asia to Europe as a significant step towards achieving these objectives.

Outlining various dimensions of bilateral relations, Rouzbehani said Ashgabat's adherence to the principle of "permanent neutrality" and its avoidance of membership in military blocs were key factors in safeguarding stability along Iran's northern borders.

Border and consular coordination over developments in Afghanistan, alongside the expansion of strategic initiatives such as gas and electricity swaps and the connection of Caspian Sea ports, have further strengthened the scope of cooperation between the two countries.

These initiatives have positioned Turkmenistan as a key partner in reinforcing the regional balance and developing independent trade routes amid competition among extra-regional powers.

## China says supports Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty, security

International Desk

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday that Beijing supports Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty and security amid threats of renewed US strikes on Iran.

Wang made the remarks during a meeting with Deputy Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Bagheri Kani in Beijing.

The Chinese official said all parties in the Middle East conflict should focus on political solutions rather than resorting to arms again, stressing that dialogue and negotiation are the way to resolve the conflicts.

As fighting in the Middle East drags on and its spillover effects spread, dialogue and negotiations offer the way forward, Wang said.

China stands ready to work with all parties to continue efforts to restore regional peace, guided by its initiatives and proposals for easing tensions in the Middle East, he said.

Bagheri Kani, for his part, said his country would firmly safeguard its security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and resist threats.

Iran is also willing to engage in talks and negotiations with all parties and work actively for regional peace and stability, he said.

He expressed appreciation for China's initiatives and proposals and its consistent commitment to multilateralism, saying Iran looks forward to China playing a greater role in international and regional peace.



*Deputy Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Bagheri Kani (L) shakes hands with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi before a meeting in Beijing, China, on November 2, 2026.*
*XINHUA*

Earlier on Monday, Chinese President Xi Jinping told Omani leader Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said that the Middle East and Persian Gulf region should not become a "wrestling ground for major-country rivalry and geopolitical conflicts".

In a China-Oman joint statement that followed, Muscat said it supports the Chinese peace proposals for the Middle East, and looks forward to a "greater role" by Beijing in achieving lasting stability in the region.

China also announced that its special envoy to the Middle East would visit Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia this month.

This month, China will send its Middle East envoy to Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia as a part of "shuttle diplomacy visits... aimed at promoting peace talks (and) easing tensions", a ministry spokesperson told a regular news briefing.

## *Baqaei:* Iran will not tolerate use of neighbors' territory for strikes

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said on Monday that Iran will never remain silent or refrain from a deterrent response if neighboring countries' territory is used to directly violate its national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the security of its citizens.

Speaking during his weekly press conference, Baqaei said some regional countries had not only failed to prevent the US war machine from using their territory, airspace and infrastructure to carry out aggression



*Esmaeil Baqaei*
*IRNA*

ity toward any country in the region. We firmly believe that achieving lasting security and stability will be possible only through intra-regional cooperation and collective confidence-building, without foreign interference," he emphasized.

However, he reiterated Iran's "fully reasonable, legitimate, and unwavering" demand and expectation that regional countries should never allow their territory, airspace or facilities to be used as a platform for aggression or conspiracies against their major and historic neighbor.

During the recent acts of aggression by the United States and Israel against Iran, some regional countries allowed the US to use their territories to launch attacks on Iran.

In response, Iran's Armed Forces targeted the US military bases in those countries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
*Cartoonist*

CARTOON



# Tehran calls for stronger agricultural diplomacy to improve food security

## *FAO:* Innovation, resource efficiency vital to strengthening Iran's agricultural sector




*Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi addresses the World Food Day conference in Tehran, Iran, on November 2, 2026.*
*MIZAN*

**Economy Desk**

Iran called for stronger agricultural diplomacy to help ensure sustainable food security, with Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi saying on Monday that Tehran was ready to expand scientific, trade and joint investment cooperation in agriculture with countries across the region and beyond.

Speaking at a World Food Day conference in Tehran attended by government officials, researchers, producers and representatives of international organizations, Gharibabadi said food security went beyond access to food and required ensuring that everyone had sustainable access to sufficient, safe and affordable food, IRNA reported.

He cited geopolitical crises, wars, climate change, drought, resource constraints, supply chain disruptions and economic inequalities as threats to the food security of millions of people.

Agriculture was no longer simply an economic sector but had become a pillar of national security, independence, development and stability, he said.

Gharibabadi said agricultural cooperation could help build trust, strengthen international relations, ease tensions and foster closer ties between nations.

He called for greater use of diplomatic channels to expand cooperation in agriculture, livestock farming, fisheries, food industries, modern technologies, agricultural trade and natural resource management.

### Opportunities for int'l cooperation

Gharibabadi identified technology transfer, joint research, investment in agricultural infrastructure, improved water efficiency and the development of sustainable supply chains as major areas for international cooperation.

He said Iran's diverse climate, skilled workforce, research institutions and strategic geographical position offered opportunities to expand international partnerships.

Iran had considerable capabilities in greenhouse technologies, seed and sapling production, food processing, irrigation technology, livestock farming and aquaculture, he said.

Tehran was ready to turn these capabilities into opportunities for joint development through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with neighboring countries, West Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and Africa among its priorities, Gharibabadi added.

He identified water shortages, drought and dust storms as major agricultural challenges facing Iran and the region, calling for cooperation on sustainable water management, water-efficient production methods, knowledge exchange and early-warning systems.

Gharibabadi also said the effects of wars and unilateral sanctions on production, trade and the supply of essential goods could not be overlooked. The war against Iran had damaged infrastructure, production activities and trade, in addition to causing humanitarian, security and economic consequences, he added.

Unilateral sanctions could also create serious obstacles to obtaining essential agricultural inputs through restrictions on banking, insurance, transportation and financial transactions, even when food and medicine were formally exempt, he said.

Gharibabadi voiced support for the role of international organizations, particularly the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in achieving sustainable food security.

Referring to decades of sanctions and damage to some agricultural infrastructure during two recent wars, including the 12-day Israeli war in June 2025 and the 40-day US-Israeli war that began in late February, he said Iran remained an important model for ensuring food security.

Meanwhile, Farrokh Tayrav, the FAO representative in Iran, said water shortages, climate change and soil degradation were among the main challenges facing the country's agricultural sector, stressing the need to combine modern technologies with traditional knowledge.

The future of food production and sustainable food security in Iran depended on innovative solutions, more efficient use of resources and stronger resilience in agricultural systems, he said.

Iran's agricultural output rose to 137 million tons over the past year, from 130 million tons, despite severe drought, water shortages, sanctions and energy imbalances, according to Deputy Agriculture Minister for Crop Production Majid Anjafi, who announced the figures in August.

Citing FAO data, Tayrav said global cereal production reached about 3.1 billion tons in 2024, up 27% from 2010.

But the main challenge was turning these gains into sustainable access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food for all households, he said.

Food security went beyond increasing agricultural production and rested on four dimensions: food availability, access, utilization and stability, Tayrav said. Achieving it required a focus on long-term sustainability and effective public participation, he added.

# Iran, Brazil seek to expand trade to $10b despite shipping challenges

**Economy Desk**

Iran and Brazil are seeking to increase bilateral trade to $10 billion, but disruptions to shipping routes and sharply higher transportation costs are posing challenges to expanding economic ties, an Iranian transport official said on Monday.

Abazar Barari, deputy head of international affairs at Iran's Federation of Transport and Logistics, said the two countries' trade had grown in recent years and Brazil's economic capacity, particularly in supplying essential goods and agricultural products, offered opportunities for further cooperation.

Speaking at an Iran-Brazil trade cooperation meeting, Barari said disruptions to traditional shipping routes following the recent war had complicated supply chains. Logistics had become a major challenge for global trade, particularly between Iran and Brazil because of the geographical distance and the large volumes of cargo involved, he said, according to IRNA.

A significant share of bilateral trade consists of bulk commodities such as sugar, corn and grains, which are more economically and operationally suited to large vessels than to land transport, Barari said. Replacing sea routes with road transport would impose substantial additional costs and complications, he added.

Traditional shipping routes have faced restrictions since the war, forcing some trade onto alternative routes using intermediary ports,


IRNA

including through Turkey, Barari said. These alternatives also involve security, time and cost considerations, he added.

The cost of shipping a 40-foot container, which previously stood at about $3,000, had risen to at least $8,000, Barari said. Land transport costs along alternative routes had also increased significantly.

He said other Iranian ports could help develop trade routes and reduce reliance on restricted maritime corridors. Even if the wartime situation ended, restoring normal shipping operations and lifting possible restrictions would take time, making advance planning for alternative capacity, particularly at Chabahar port, necessary, he added.

Iran has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, triggering a 40-day conflict that included strikes on civilian areas and infrastructure. The country, which has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program, was also facing a maritime blockade from the south, targeting its trade and oil exports.

### Trade heavily skewed toward Brazilian imports

At the same meeting, supply chain and business development expert Sina Alipour said Iran imported about $3 billion worth of goods from Brazil in 2025, while its exports to the South American country totaled only about $91 million, according to figures he cited.

Corn and soybeans accounted for about 87% of Iran's imports from Brazil, Alipour said. A substantial share of the corn and soybean meal used by Iran's livestock and poultry industries comes from Brazil, he added.

Some food industry inputs, including glucose and fructose produced through corn processing, are also linked to this supply chain, he said.

Iran imported about $912 million worth of goods from Brazil in the first four months of 2026, with imports reaching about $346 million in April, Alipour said. He cited the two countries' membership in the BRICS group and their populations of more than 90 million in Iran and over 200 million in Brazil as factors supporting closer economic ties. But expanding trade would require more than increasing imports, Alipour said, calling for sustainable logistics, financial and commercial infrastructure, closer direct ties between private-sector companies and stable channels for cooperation. He also proposed exploring opportunities for Brazilian companies to operate in Iran and partner with domestic producers, particularly in food production and the livestock and poultry sectors.

# *TPO:* Exports to Turkey jump 59%, shipments to Oman rise 23%

**Economy Desk**

Iran's exports to Turkey rose 59% and shipments to Oman increased 23% in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, despite regional tensions and disruptions to trade routes, an Iranian trade official said.

Abdolamir Rabihavi, director general for West Asia and Africa at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran, said trade with some countries in the region had continued to grow, with export figures showing gains in both markets.

The United States imposed the naval blockade after the 40-day war that began in late February, as part of efforts to pressure Tehran into accepting Washington's terms for an agreement. The restrictions have targeted Iran's oil exports and maritime trade.

Regional developments had affected Iran's trade with some Persian Gulf countries, but Oman had been less affected despite its location in the Persian Gulf, Rabihavi said, according to IRNA.


IRNA

Iranian exports to Oman increased to $1.164 billion in the six months from March 21, from $948 million in the same period a year earlier, a rise of 23%, he said.

Exports to Turkey climbed to $4.373 billion from $2.756 billion over the same period, an increase of 59%, Rabihavi added.

He said some problems along the country's southern maritime routes had persisted in recent months, while some restrictions on land routes had eased, allowing greater use of the country's land border crossings.

Rabihavi expressed hope that the positive export trend would continue in the second half of the Iranian year, leading to further growth in trade with countries across the region.

# Leader signals shift ...

Such circumstances would place Washington in a position where it faces growing strate-

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gic uncertainty, potentially forcing it to back down from its positions and serving as a deterrent in its own right.

The Leader's directives can therefore be assessed through three analytical dimensions.

First is the emphasis on the immediacy of Iran's response, which signals the elimination of any time gap between an attack and retaliation. This would deprive the enemy of room for diplomatic maneuvering to contain Iran's response or consolidate tactical gains. It would also increase the psychological cost of decision-making and narrative management for the United States, forcing Washington to assume from the outset that any attack could trigger an all-out war.

Second is the reference to removing geographical restrictions on Iran's military response. This provision extends the scope of retaliation beyond a limited regional theater of conflict, maximizing uncertainty over the scale and location of any response. Such uncertainty would undermine the United States' ability to calculate potential gains and costs. Consequently, American enemy bases, assets and interests in other regions would also be exposed to danger, underscoring Iran's unlimited missile capabilities.

Third is the reference to expanding the target bank to include both tangible and intangible assets, as well as Iran's control over the timing of the conflict. This reflects the Islamic Republic's determination to turn war into a long-term war of attrition against US interests.

The timing of the military directives alongside diplomatic efforts in Doha points to Iran's adoption of the classic strategy of diplomacy from a position of strength. Accordingly, offensive deterrence will serve as an arm of and complement to diplomacy, sending a message to the United States that the door to dialogue remains open while making clear that any resort to force by Washington would invite severe and uncontrollable punishment. This combination would increase pressure on the other side's decision-makers while simultaneously signaling to mediators and regional actors that Iran is not entering negotiations from a position of weakness.

Under this strategy, US and Israeli decision-makers have understood the central message behind the Leader's calculated move: a shift in their cost-benefit calculations. They will therefore have to view any potential attack as likely to trigger not a proportionate response, but unlimited retaliation, with Iran determining the conditions under which the conflict ends.

For regional actors, these directives also demonstrate Iran's determination to maintain its central role in the Middle East's security equations.

At the domestic level, meanwhile, the meeting and the directives issued convey a message of unity of command, strategic combat readiness and reliance on popular support. They indicate that, in the event of enemy aggression, Iran's response will be offensive and punishment-driven.

The Leader's meeting with senior military commanders and the issuance of these directives can therefore be interpreted as a structured effort to prevent war through a credible threat of severe and unlimited punishment. Unlike purely defensive deterrence, this approach focuses on imposing unacceptable costs on an aggressor while maintaining diplomacy as a complementary instrument. The move reflects Iran's effort to bring the war to an end from a position of offensive deterrence; one that views military power not as a substitute for diplomacy, but as a necessary condition for its effectiveness, with implications for the regional balance of power.

## Enemies been warned, Armed Forces been mandated

# Commander-in-chief settles battlefield-politics debate: *Expert*



By Sadeq Dehqan
*Staff writer*

INTERVIEW

***The recent meeting between senior commanders of Iran's Armed Forces and Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei, the Commander-in-Chief and Leader of the Islamic Revolution, took place amid fast-changing regional military and security developments and the experience of recent wars, which have ushered the Islamic Republic's calculations regarding deterrence and defense into a new phase.***
***The Leader's emphasis on prudent combat readiness, an immediate and effective response to every level and type of threat without geographical restrictions, and the updating of the target database to encompass the tangible and intangible assets of the US and the Zionist regime constituted some of the most important themes of the meeting.***
***The Commander-in-Chief also stated explicitly that, should the enemies resume military or terrorist attacks, it would be Iran's Armed Forces and the Iranian nation that determine the time and conditions for their termination. This position, alongside the emphasis on strengthening indigenous defense doctrines and tactics, may indicate the consolidation of a new approach in the country's military strategy.***



Shadab Asgari

**IRAN DAILY: What significance does the recent meeting between senior commanders of Iran's Armed Forces and the Commander-in-Chief, and the message released following it, hold at the present juncture? The message appears to contain points that differ from previous positions.**

**ASGARI:** The message released following the meeting between Iran's Commander-in-Chief Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei and senior Armed Forces commanders, in my view, had two extremely important dimensions. The first was issuing a final warning to the hegemonic powers and Western powers. During the 12-Day War and the Ramadan War, they came to understand that when the Islamic Republic of Iran announces a position, it remains committed to it and possesses the capability to operationalize it as well.

For example, when the martyred Leader stated that this would be a regional war, we witnessed in practice that, only two hours after the war began, its scope expanded to the regional level. Therefore, the Islamic Republic's statements and warnings cannot be regarded as political positions and propaganda. The enemies know that they must take every single word and position expressed by Iran into account.

In my view, a significant part of the Commander-in-Chief's recent message conveys precisely this meaning: if the enemies undertake military or terrorist action, they must expect the consequences. This message is, in effect, a final warning.

**The message emphasizes an immediate response to threats without geographical restrictions. How does this differ from Iran's previous approach?**

In the past, the Islamic Republic of Iran took certain considerations into account in its military responses. For example, the primary focus was on the enemy's military bases and installations, while Iran largely refrained from targeting economic assets and infrastructure serving public welfare and services.

However, these considerations now appear to be changing. When a facility or infrastructure is used by the enemy to support military operations, it can no longer be regarded merely as a civilian installation outside the parameters of conflict. In fact, the Commander-in-Chief has made it clear through this message that the scope of Iran's response will not be confined exclusively to military targets and that any asset or capability serving as an instrument of threats against Iran may be incorporated into deterrence calculations.




*Iranian missiles are displayed next to a banner with a picture of Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei (C) and assassinated senior military commanders and security figures, in Tehran, Iran, on September 27, 2026.*
*MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA*

**What has prompted Iran to extend the geographical scope of its response beyond the region? Does this mean an expansion of the conflict to encompass more countries?**

We must take into account the realities of recent wars. Neither during the 12-Day War nor during the Ramadan War were we confronting only the United States and the Zionist regime. Other countries also participated in these operations, either directly or indirectly.

For instance, American aircraft flying from various bases toward the operational theater required aerial refueling. Tanker aircraft took off from countries such as Bulgaria and refueled them along their routes. Had such cooperation not existed, some of these operations would not have been feasible.

Countries such as Britain, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Italy also played various roles in supporting these operations. Even the presence of military personnel from certain European countries and their participation in logistical support and the transportation of equipment and wounded personnel demonstrated the broader dimensions of this cooperation.

Therefore, when a country participates in facilitating the preparations for an attack against Iran, its role cannot be disregarded. Of course, this does not mean that every country hosting an American military base will necessarily become an Iranian target. For example, Turkey or Pakistan may host an American military presence, but this alone does not signify their participation in operations against Iran. The principal criterion is the nature of the cooperation and the role each country plays in threatening the Islamic Republic of Iran.



*Iranian women carry rifles as they stand during a massive civilian-military march called "The 313,000-Member Exercise of Iran's Jan-Fadayan" (lit. Life-Sacrificers of Iran), in Tehran on September 18, 2026.*
*VAHID SALEMI/AP*

> During the 12-Day War and the Ramadan War, the enemies came to understand that when the Islamic Republic of Iran announces a position, it remains committed to it and possesses the capability to operationalize it as well. For example, when the martyred Leader stated that this would be a regional war, we witnessed in practice that, only two hours after the war began, its scope expanded to the regional level. Therefore, the Islamic Republic's statements and warnings cannot be regarded as political positions and propaganda.

**But does extending the scope of the response to these countries not increase the risk of Iran confronting several fronts simultaneously? Is such an approach manageable from a military and strategic standpoint?**

In my view, we must distinguish between direct military confrontation with a country and the endangerment of that country's interests. When Iran speaks of responding to those participating in aggression, this does not necessarily imply entering into a conventional, direct war with all of them.

Sometimes, a limited action can impose extremely substantial economic and security costs on a country. For example, suppose a missile strikes a prominent building in a regional country. Only one building may appear to have sustained damage, but the repercussions for investment, tourism, and economic confidence could be extensive.

Following such an incident, would investors still visit that country with the same degree of confidence? Would tourists still regard it as a safe recreational destination? Thus, a limited action can sometimes inflict extremely substantial economic and reputational damage.

Consequently, threatening the interests of countries participating in aggression does not necessarily mean directly attacking their territory. Rather, it may also entail disrupting their economic, commercial, and security interests. This, in itself, can serve as a deterrent and discourage countries with limited involvement in operations from continuing their cooperation with the United States.

**The Leader's recent statement emphasized the inclusion of all types of the enemy's tangible and intangible assets in the target database. What significance does this hold, given Iran's changing approach toward infrastructure?**

Western countries, and the United States in particular, generally design their wars around several principal tenets. First, the war must be as short and swift as possible. Second, primary reliance is placed on air power and missiles. Third, by inflicting devastating strikes, they seek to create conditions in which, even if the target country's military is not entirely destroyed, its population is subjected to pressure and desperation and ultimately

compelled to accede to the aggressor's demands.
To achieve the third objective, they target the country's essential infrastructure. In other words, they seek to intensify pressure on the population by damaging economic, service-related, and vital structures.
However, compared with many regional countries, Iran possesses a different degree of strategic depth and a distinct range of capabilities. For example, small countries such as Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait are not comparable to Iran in terms of territorial expanse and strategic depth.
During the recent war, reports also emerged that certain regional countries had proposed temporarily shutting down specific facilities and even paying Iran compensation, provided that Iran refrained from attacking those installations.
In my view, the changes observed in the trajectory of Iran's attacks against certain countries may be associated with such considerations. For example, at certain junctures, attacks against some countries continued, whereas those against others diminished or ceased. If these reports are accurate, they indicate that the opposing side has concluded that the security of its vital infrastructure depends on its own conduct and decisions.
This issue is also important from another perspective: when a country proposes shutting down its facilities to avoid being attacked, it is effectively acknowledging its own strategic vulnerability.

**The Commander-in-Chief's statement emphasizes the transformation and deepening of Iran's defense doctrine and the enhancement of military capabilities. Can this be regarded as an indication that the country is moving beyond a purely defensive strategy toward active deterrence and an offensive approach?**
Yes. One of the first statements made by Martyr Abdolrahim Mousavi, the then-Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, following his appointment, was that the country's military doctrine and strategy had changed. This transformation was consolidated during the tenure of the martyred Leader, but not all its dimensions had been implemented before then.
We have now reached a stage of capability and operational conditions in which the full implementation of this strategy has become feasible. This means that we will no longer simply wait for the enemy to attack before responding.

**For example, if indications emerge that an operation against Iran is being prepared, the possibility must exist for the Armed Forces to act preemptively to neutralize the threat before an attack occurs. If tanker aircraft are stationed in a particular country and this deployment constitutes an indication that an operation against Iran is being prepared, why should we wait for the attack to take place before responding?**
This is precisely the transformation that has taken place in the country's military doctrine: a shift from an exclusively reactive approach toward active deterrence and confronting threats before they materialize into an operational attack.

**Overall, what mandate does the Commander-in-Chief's recent message establish for the Armed Forces, political officials, and hostile countries?**
If I were to summarize the entirety of the Commander-in-Chief's statements in a single sentence, to the extent of my own knowledge and understanding, I would say that he has clarified all possible courses of action and ambiguities and determined the responsibilities of all parties.
This message has clarified the mandate not only for the Armed Forces but also for political officials and hostile countries. The enemies must understand that they can no longer enter the arena with their previous calculations and expect Iran to respond solely within a restricted and predictable framework.
Another point that must be considered is the position of the Leader as an elected representative of the people and an articulator of the public will. In my view, through this message, he expressed some of the people's demands and aspirations that had been voiced during public gatherings and nightly demonstrations.

# How to stop US-Israel war on Iran



By Jeffrey D Sachs
*Advisor to three UN Secretaries-General*



By Sybil Fares
*Advisor on the Middle East to the United Nations' SDSN*

OPINION



*The illustration shows Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (top) and US President Donald Trump.* ● *MATTHEW ABSALOM-WONG/SMH*

The war that Israel and the United States launched against Iran on February 28 is in a lull, not at an end. Major combat has paused, diplomacy has stalled and both sides are preparing for the next round. To understand why the fighting will soon resume, we need to understand the motivations of the two cabinets that started it. Neither of them wants peace. Israel's leadership seeks domination over the Middle East, and the United States seeks to preserve its domination over the world. Simply to state these aims is to underscore that both cabinets are operating in a world of delusion.
Israel's political leadership is consumed by the belief that Israel's survival depends on its military supremacy over the Arab world and on the permanent subjugation or elimination of the Palestinian people. This belief is a form of collective madness, yet it is the doctrine that governs Israeli policy. Israel's leaders cannot accept that peace is within reach. In the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, the Arab states offered Israel full normalisation in return for a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, and that offer still stands. Peace cannot be built on genocide in Gaza or on hatred of the Palestinian people and the drive to remove them from their land. Yet that is the path Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has chosen, and he now campaigns on it openly, with his "national religious" allies, including Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, who twist religion in the service of hatred and killing.
The United States is consumed by its declining power. Iran has been a target for more than 70 years. In 1953, the CIA and British intelligence overthrew Iran's elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, after he nationalised Iran's oil. The United States then installed the shah and backed his police state until the Iranian people overthrew it in 1979. The US has never forgiven Iran for escaping from US domination. The US backed Saddam Hussein's deadly war against Iran in the 1980s, and followed with four decades of economic warfare, covert operations, cyberattacks and assassinations. Trump tore up the 2015 nuclear agreement in 2018, bombed Iran's nuclear sites in June 2025, and then, in February of this year, joined Israel in open war, killing Iran's leader in the opening strikes.
Washington's fixation on Iran is in the service of American hegemony. In The Grand Chessboard (1997), Zbigniew Brzezinski named Iran one of five "geopolitical pivots," states that matter less for their own power than for where they sit. Iran commands the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Brzezinski wrote that an "antihegemonic" coalition of China, Russia and Iran could emerge "only if the United States is shortsighted enough to antagonize China and Iran simultaneously." Well, yes, Washington has been that shortsighted and reckless.
The signs that the war will restart are not hidden. Last week, War Secretary Pete Hegseth visited Israel to discuss renewed joint strikes, and Israeli sources report that the plans target Iran's petrochemical facilities and nuclear sites. The White House has promised that the United States will not attack Iran before the November 3 midterm elections, which is another way of announcing a timetable for war. The US naval blockade of Iran's ports has passed its 100th day. Trump rejected Iran's proposal for a seven-day ceasefire in September, even though Tehran says the offer remains on the table.
Israel's October 27 election adds fuel to the fire. On October 18, Trump endorsed Netanyahu, saying the United States would "finish the job" against Iran only with Netanyahu in charge. On October 21, at a rally in Dimona (home to the reactor where Israel secretly built its own nuclear arsenal), Netanyahu declared that the only way to end the Iranian threat is to overthrow the regime and said he had issued that directive to the army, Mossad and the security services.
Iran has understandably drawn its own conclusions. Its commanders have announced a new offensive doctrine that includes preemptive strikes and attacks on bases in neighbouring countries used for operations against Iran, and they warn that renewed attacks would bring a global energy crisis. Attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz reached a new peak this month.
This is the reality that the Arab world, especially the Persian Gulf countries, now faces. The US bases across the Persian Gulf did not bring security in this war. They turned their host nations into targets. The US-Israeli strategy of divide and conquer, which cast Iran as the region's permanent enemy and invited the Arab states to shelter under American power while accepting Israeli hegemony, has brought war to the region, economic loss to the Persian Gulf, and mass killings in Palestine and Lebanon.
The only way to stop this madness is for the Arab world to tell the United States that enough is enough. The Arab states should declare that they will never accept Israeli hegemony, that there must be a sovereign State of Palestine and that the region's security will come from regional cooperation rather than from Washington. The solution could be two states, as in the Arab Peace Initiative, or one binational democratic state, or a confederation. What matters is that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, each about eight million people, live in peace, safety and self-determination. What is not possible is the perpetuation of Israel's brutal apartheid state.
The beginnings are visible. Qatar has called for a regional dialogue among the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council states, Turkey and Pakistan, and Qatar, Pakistan and Oman have kept the channels of mediation with Tehran open throughout the war. These efforts should grow into a standing regional security framework that includes Iran, the Persian Gulf states, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq and Pakistan, built on mutual non-aggression, freedom of navigation, and a zone free of nuclear weapons that must eventually include Israel.
The Arab states have far more leverage than they recognise. If Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and their neighbours announced that their territory and airspace will not be used for another war on Iran, and that normalisation with Israel is off the table until a Palestinian state exists, the calculations in Washington and Tel Aviv would have to change quickly. And the American people, who hate the war on Iran and side with Palestine, would cheer.
The era of US-led divide and conquer, with Iran cast as the permanent enemy of the Arab world, is over, even if Washington and Tel Aviv refuse to admit it. The Arab states should say so openly now before the next round of war begins, and in doing so, open the way to a region that provides for its own security and peace.

*The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.*

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*The leaked image reveals the extent of damage US forces suffered from Iranian retaliatory missiles at this airbase hosted by an Arab country in the region during the war on Iran.* ● *MEIDASTOUCH*

Sports Desk

## Wrestling World Championships

# Nokhodi settles for silver as Iran finishes third in freestyle

The final day of the freestyle competition at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, saw Iran's Mohammad Nokhodi settle for a silver medal, while Amir-Mohammad Yazdani secured a bronze.

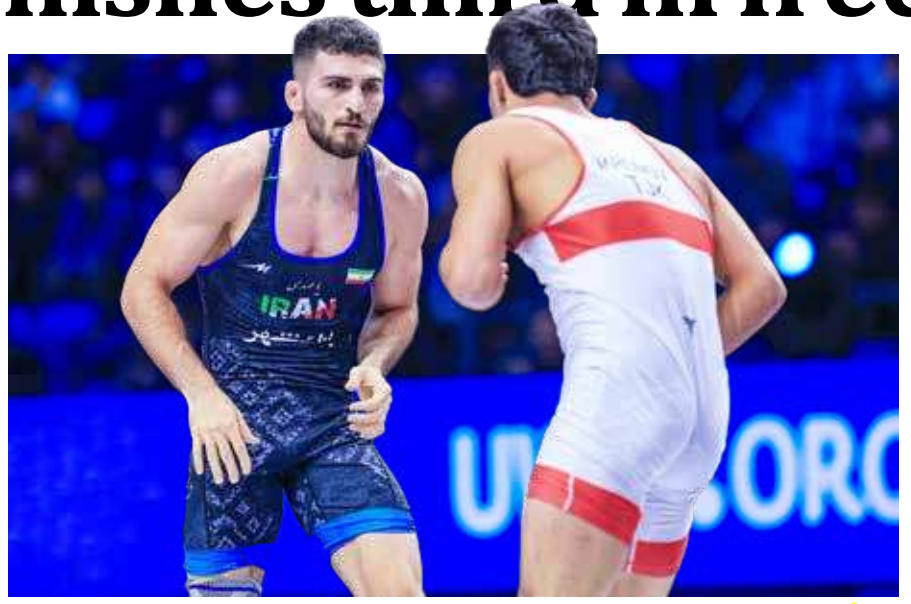
Sunday's medals took Iran's tally to six, including two golds, across the 10 weight categories. The Iranian freestyle team, which entered the competition as the defending champion, finished third in the team standings with 133 points.

Team USA dominated the freestyle competition, winning an impressive nine medals, including five golds, to top the team standings with 194 points. Russia, which was eligible to earn team points for the first time since 2021, finished runner-up with 185 points, courtesy of three golds, two silvers, and four bronze medals.

Arriving in Astana on the back of five consecutive medals at the World Championships, Nokhodi maintained his streak but once again missed out on the top prize after suffering a final defeat to American Levi Haines in the 79kg category.

Haines scored the decisive takedown in the second period to secure a 4-3 victory and improve on the silver medal he won in Zagreb last year.

"I thought I fought the game plan well, wish I would have got more attacks in there," Haines said. "Just a real grippy guy, kind of hard to break from and create action. Just got to get better in there."


IWF

Nokhodi, who had won gold in the 86kg category at the recent Asian Games, opened the match with a stepout. Haines responded with a takedown, but as he attempted a gut wrench, Nokhodi stepped over to score two points and take a 3-2 lead into the break.

In the second period, Haines scored a single-leg takedown before stopping an arm-drag attempt and holding on for the victory, leaving Nokhodi with the third world silver medal of his career.

Meanwhile, Yazdani wrapped up Iran's campaign with a bronze medal in the 74kg category.

A two-time silver medalist at the 2021 and 2023 editions, Yazdani denied Slovakia's Tajmuraz Salkazanov a second consecutive bronze medal and fifth world medal overall, surviving a late rally to secure a 5-4 victory.

Yazdani scored a stepout and a takedown in the first period, before the two wrestlers exchanged stepouts early in the second. Salkazanov then stepped up the pressure, scoring three consecutive stepouts in the final minute to tie the score, but remained behind on criteria.

The Slovak corner challenged the final stepout, which was awarded with just one second remaining, arguing that it should have been ruled a takedown. However, the challenge was unsuccessful, giving Yazdani his final point.

Having suffered a fall defeat to eventual gold medalist Inalbek Sheriev of Russia in the quarterfinals, Yazdani bounced back with an 8-2 victory over American James Green in the repechage before defeating Salkazanov to claim his third world medal in a third different weight category.

Amirhossein Firouzpour was the other Iranian wrestler chasing a bronze medal on the final day but finished empty-handed after suffering a 6-0 defeat to Azerbaijan's Ali Tcokaev in the 92kg third-place bout.

A European champion in April, Tcokaev scored a takedown in each period and added a lace-lock roll after the second to deny the Iranian a second consecutive world bronze medal.

The highlight of Iran's freestyle campaign came on the penultimate day of the competition, when Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan and Amirhossein Zare' won gold medals in their respective categories.

A silver medalist last year, Javan stunned Zavur Uguev, a three-time world champion and Tokyo Olympic gold medalist, in the 61kg final, securing a 9-2 victory to avenge his defeat to the Russian star in last year's final in Zagreb.

Zare', meanwhile, claimed his fourth superheavyweight title in emphatic fashion, defeating Russia's Abdulla Kurbanov 11-0 with 56 seconds remaining in the second period of the 125kg final. It was the Iranian's fourth consecutive victory by technical superiority in Astana, during which he did not concede a single point.

The triumph extended Zare's unbeaten run since his defeat to Georgian Geno Petriashvili in the final of the Paris Olympics. The Iranian, who also won the world bronze medal in 2022, added the title to his Asian Championships and Asian Games gold medals earlier this year.

### Yazdani eager for more

Hassan Yazdani and Rahman Amouzad had opened Iran's freestyle campaign by winning two bronze medals.

Yazdani bounced back from a last-gasp quarterfinal defeat to Japan's Arash Yoshida to beat reigning Olympic champion Akhmed Tazhudinov of Bahrain 5-0 in the 97kg bronze-medal bout, taking his personal tally to 11 world and Olympic medals.

"This medal is not the end of the road for me," Yazdani wrote on social media. "I still have the dream of [winning] the championship on my mind, and I will try with all my might to make the flag of Iran fly high in the world once again."

The 31-year-old underwent two surgeries following the 2024 Paris Olympics but made his return at the Zagreb Ranking Series this year, where he won silver on his international debut in the 97kg category. He then claimed his eighth world medal in his first appearance at the World Championships in three years.

"In this comeback I was able to bag another medal for Iran," he wrote. "I know this position [third] is not what I have strived for and my fans deserve a greater honor."

"Returning after two years off the mat was not easy for me," Yazdani wrote. "I went through hard days to have the opportunity to wear the Iran's singlet and wrestle for Iran and its people. All this time, your encouragement has been one of my biggest motivations to keep going."

Amouzad, meanwhile, missed out on defending his 65kg title but still managed to beat familiar rival Shamil Mamedov 5-4 in the bronze-medal bout to claim his third world medal.

## AFC Women's Champions League:

# Khatoon hammered by Kobe in group opener

Sports Desk

Iranian club Bam Khatoon got off to losing start in its AFC Women's Champions League Group A opener, suffering a 4-1 defeat against Japan's INAC Kobe Leonessa in Yangon, Vietnam, on Sunday.


AFC

Yui Narumiya's first half strike set the tone for Kobe, who extended their lead through Mao Kubota, only for Zahra Sarbali to pull one back from the spot, with Maya Yamamoto and Ai Tsujisawa adding further goals to seal the win.

Maryam Dini tested Kobe goalkeeper Momoko Tanaka in the ninth minute from distance before the Japanese side took control, with Ayaka Michigami and Fukina Mizuno both threatening Raha Yazdani at the other end.

Kobe continued to press, with Tamaki Okuma heading wide from Ai Kuwahara's corner in the 14th minute, Mizuno and Okuma then seeing efforts blocked moments later, before Yui Narumiya's close range effort was foiled by Yazdani.

Khatoon thought they had taken the lead in the 29th minute when Mona Hamoudi sent Dini through on goal, with the forward looping her effort over Tanaka with the ball bouncing off the underside of the bar and over the line, only for the goal to be ruled offside.

The Japanese side finally made their pressure count in the 35th minute when Mizuno and Narumiya combined nicely at the edge of the area before the latter converted Mizuno's cut-back with a composed finish.

Kobe came out strongly after the break, with Yazdani saving Maya Yamamoto's long-range effort in the 46th minute before denying Okuma four minutes later but the Iranian shot-stopper could do nothing to stop the Japanese side in the 50th minute.

Fukina Mizuno guided her headed pass off Yazdani's goal kick, to Michigami, who set up Kubota to split through the Khatoon defence and slot home.

Khatoon, however, clawed their way back in the 53rd minute after Yamamoto conceded a penalty for handling the ball, with Sarbali converting from the spot.

Unfortunately, Khatoon were reduced to 10 players in the 66th minute after Sara Didar's overhead clearance inside the box resulted in a foul on Okuma, with the referee awarding a penalty.

Yazdani, however, went the right way to deny Okuma from the spot, before foiling Natsume Kingetsu on the follow-up.

Play was interrupted by bad weather in the 74th minute but upon resumption, Kobe added the third in the 87th minute after Yamamoto received Kubota's pass inside the box before beating her marker and slotting past Yazdani.

Tsujisawa furthered Kobe's advantage in the first minute of stoppage time after capitalsiing on a poor clearance from Melika Motevalli to slot home from close range.

# New Iran U23 coach Golmohammadi eager to end Olympic drought

Sports Desk

Iran's new U23 head coach Yahya Golmohammadi says he is determined to end the country's decades-long absence from the Olympic Games, but insists his top priority is to "develop a new generation of young talents for Iranian football."


FFIRI

Golmohammadi, 56, left his position at Iraqi top-flight side Duhok SC to succeed Hossein Abdi, who stepped down after his team suffered a group-stage exit at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games in Japan in October.

The former Iranian international centre-back, who took charge of Duhok in June, guided the club to two wins and six draws in 10 matches in the new Iraq Stars League season.

Speaking at a press conference after signing a three-year contract on Sunday, Golmohammadi said accepting the Iranian Football Federation's offer had been an easy decision for him.

"My biggest motivation is to be able to help the young footballers in my country. I embraced this offer wholeheartedly, without the slightest hesitation.

"I am thrilled to be here, but I also fully understand the significance of this position and the responsibility that comes with it. That is why I am proud to have taken on this responsibility," said Golmohammadi, who will be tasked with securing Iran's first Olympic qualification in football since 1976.

His team will compete at the 2028 AFC U23 Asian Cup in Japan, where the two finalists will secure qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics later that year.

"Our primary goal is to qualify for the Olympics, but I believe the bigger objective is to develop a new generation of young talents for Iranian football. Achieving this requires effective cooperation and coordination between clubs, coaches, the U23 team, the senior national team, the National Olympic Committee, and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

"Everyone must work together to shape the future of our football. This is our foremost priority, and I am confident that with hard work and the implementation of sound structural plans, we can achieve it.

"Our country is blessed with an abundance of exceptional talent. Many of these young and promising players have yet to be discovered or given the opportunity to showcase their abilities. This is a great opportunity for us to provide them with a platform to make themselves known.

"I hope that we, as football coaches, along with everyone who has a say in decision-making in this field, can contribute to identifying and discovering talent and work together to build the future of Iranian football," Golmohammadi added.

Golmohammadi enjoyed the most successful spell of his coaching career at Persepolis, guiding the Tehran Reds to three Persian Gulf Pro League titles and a domestic cup trophy, as well as the AFC Champions League final, during his four-year tenure.

He parted ways with the capital club midway through the 2023-24 season following a falling-out with the club hierarchy.

He subsequently took charge of Foolad Khuzestan ahead of the 2024-25 campaign and guided the southern Iranian side to an impressive fourth-place finish. However, a poor run of results led to his departure by mutual consent midway through the following season.

# Saryazd Castle reveals ingenuity of ancient Persian architecture

Iranica Desk

Rising from the heart of Iran's central desert, near the village of Saryazd in Mehriz, Yazd Province, Saryazd Castle is a 1,400-year-old mud-brick fortress that stands as a testament to the ingenuity of ancient Persian architecture. Dating back to the Sassanid era, the historic structure is widely described as one of the world's oldest known secure storage facilities, where people once safeguarded their most valuable possessions against invasion and looting.

Passing through the castle's entrance is like stepping back in time. Its towering mud-brick walls, defensive moats and labyrinthine corridors reveal a carefully designed system intended to protect both lives and property. Centuries ago, individual chambers served as private vaults where local residents stored their belongings during times of danger, according to IRNA.

At Saryazd Castle, security was built into the architecture itself. Narrow passageways, uneven staircases and interconnected rooms created a maze that would have been difficult for unfamiliar visitors to navigate. These features helped deter raiders and protect the valuables hidden within the fortress.

The castle's entrance once marked the boundary between the dangers of the outside world and the relative safety within its walls. Beyond it lay a network of chambers where families entrusted their possessions to a structure designed to withstand the uncertainties of the age.





hamshahrionline.ir

Each mud brick formed part of a centuries-old system of protection, reflecting the community's need for security in an unpredictable world. Inside, winding corridors and interconnected rooms formed the heart of the fortress. Around 1,400 years ago, these small spaces functioned much like individual safe-deposit boxes. Residents stored everything from essential grain supplies to gold and jewelry, protecting their belongings from raiders and the instability of the period.

The castle's multi-level layout reflects a sophisticated understanding of defensive design. Staircases leading to upper floors and secluded chambers made access more difficult, while the complex arrangement of passageways helped confuse intruders. Today, the quiet corridors offer a glimpse into the lives of people who relied on the fortress to protect the fruits of their labor and provide reassurance for the future.

Water was another essential element of the castle's self-sufficiency. A well in the central courtyard provided a vital source of water, enabling guards and those seeking refuge to endure prolonged periods of siege without relying on the outside world. The combination of storage chambers, defensive features and an internal water supply made Saryazd more than a fortress: it was a refuge designed to sustain life under difficult conditions. Food preservation was central to the castle's purpose. In an era marked by raids and insecurity, grain and other provisions could be as valuable as gold and silver. Residents stored their annual harvests, seeds and other essential supplies in sheltered chambers, protecting them against theft and the threat of famine.

Arched ceilings and ventilation openings helped create conditions suitable for storing provisions over extended periods. The design reflects a practical understanding of how to preserve food and maintain supplies in an arid environment, where survival often depended on careful planning and resource management.

Rows of small, orderly niches remain visible along the castle's walls. These recesses once held residents' possessions, including wheat, barley, jars of honey and oil, as well as other household necessities. Separate storage spaces helped keep each family's belongings apart, supporting an organized system of safekeeping and trust between residents and those responsible for the fortress.

The castle's vaulted mud-brick ceilings and overhead openings, originally designed to provide light and ventilation, further illustrate the thought that went into its storage areas. Although centuries of weathering and neglect have left many niches empty, they remain reminders of the goods and provisions once entrusted to these walls.

As the afternoon sun falls across the weathered structure, the full complexity of its architecture becomes apparent. Staircases wind through the building like interconnected veins, linking its different levels and leading deeper into the fortress. The arrangement was not merely aesthetic: its maze-like design was intended to make navigation difficult for outsiders and strengthen the castle's defenses.

Every narrow corridor and hidden turn contributed to a system in which familiarity with the layout offered a significant advantage. For those who knew the way, the passageways led to protected chambers; for potential intruders, they presented a confusing network of routes and obstacles.

Today, the Iranian tricolor flies above one of the castle's mud-brick towers, connecting the historic monument with the country's present. The crenellated parapets and geometric patterns on the tower walls reflect the craftsmanship of the people who built and maintained the fortress, while the flag serves as a symbol of continuity across generations.

## Reading Room

# New book explores untold stories of Takht-e Foulad

Iranica Desk

The book "Forty Unfinished Narratives of an Unfinished Place", compiled by Mostafa Heydari, offers a fresh perspective on Takht-e Foulad in Isfahan, exploring the historic site through human experience, art, architecture and spirituality. More than a historic cemetery, Takht-e Foulad preserves a significant part of Isfahan's cultural memory and urban identity.

Some places cannot be understood solely through the age of their buildings, the number of prominent figures buried there or a catalogue of their historical monuments. Their identity is shaped by layers of life, memory, art, belief and human experience. Takht-e Foulad is one such place. Behind its appearance as a historic cemetery lies a rich world of personal stories, spiritual experiences, architectural beauty and collective memory — a world whose full potential remains largely unknown to younger generations, according to Mehr News Agency.

Among the many historical and research publications devoted to Takht-e Foulad, "Forty Unfinished Narratives of an Unfinished Place", compiled by Mostafa Heydari, takes a distinctive approach. Rather than repeating encyclopaedic information or simply introducing notable figures and monuments, the book invites readers to explore people's lived experiences of the site. Forty writers, researchers and Isfahan scholars have contributed to the collection, accompanied by 21 architectural sketches created by 21 artists, in an effort to rediscover the site's cultural and artistic dimensions.



Heydari acknowledges the important contribution of historical and encyclopaedic publications, including the four-volume Encyclopaedia of Isfahan, to understanding Takht-e Foulad. However, he believes that another approach is needed alongside conventional research: one that conveys how people experience the site's spaces, architecture and atmosphere. Personal narratives, he argues, can complement documented history and offer new ways for audiences to connect with cultural heritage. The book is therefore intended not to compete with academic research, but to provide an alternative perspective on this historic landmark.

The title emphasizes the unfinished nature of Takht-e Foulad's many stories. This does not imply incompleteness in the sense of deficiency, but rather the inexhaustible potential of the site's meanings and narratives. According to Heydari, everyone who has encountered the place and developed a personal connection with it may have a different story to tell. Its physical, historical, spiritual and human dimensions offer continual opportunities for discovery, making the book a starting point for further publications and explorations.

Takht-e Foulad contains around 50 Takyehs — distinctive Iranian religious and funerary complexes — some of which are particularly well known for their distinguished occupants, architectural features or historical significance. These include the Mir Fendereski, Seyyed al-Iraq, Madar Shahzadeh, Khansari and Khatounabadi complexes.

In selecting subjects for the book, the contributors also sought to explore less familiar locations. Even demolished sites, such as the Halabian Takyeh, are included in an effort to preserve the historical memory of places that no longer exist. The diversity of subjects and perspectives helps prevent repetition and reveals the many different dimensions of Takht-e Foulad.

One of the book's defining features is its combination of personal experience and literary storytelling with historical and scholarly information. The contributions approach the site from a variety of perspectives. One examines Takht-e Foulad through the lens of sociology and product design, while another, entitled The Passageway of Takht-e Foulad, explores visitors' experiences from the perspective of tourism. Other narratives focus on the site's artistic heritage, including architecture, calligraphy and stone carving. In this approach, research provides a foundation for storytelling, while narrative brings historical findings to readers in a different and more accessible form.

The book also seeks to challenge the conventional perception of Takht-e Foulad as a place associated exclusively with death and mourning. Beyond commemorating the dead, the historic complex serves as a place for solitude, prayer, contemplation, tranquillity and engagement with history and art. On Thursdays and Fridays in particular, visitors come to pray, reflect or find respite from the pressures of urban life, demonstrating the site's continuing connection with the everyday lives of Isfahan's residents.

The Isfahani scholar Jalaleddin Homai also highlighted the site's contrasting qualities, describing a place that can evoke sorrow while also offering enjoyment and recreation, alongside asceticism and worship. The combination of distinguished figures buried there, valuable architecture, artistic works and social beliefs creates an experience that extends beyond a conventional visit to a cemetery. For many visitors, Takht-e Foulad becomes a place of personal meaning and spiritual connection.

Despite these qualities, Takht-e Foulad has yet to receive the prominence it deserves in the presentation of Isfahan's tourist attractions, and it remains unfamiliar even to some local residents. In addition to its historic Takyehs, the complex contains Chelleh Khanes (traditional places of spiritual retreat), mosques, cisterns, inscriptions, gravestones, calligraphic works and religious traditions, each reflecting aspects of the city's social and cultural history.



Features dating from different historical periods, from the Ilkhanid and Safavid eras to the Qajar period and the contemporary age, make the site a valuable resource for understanding Isfahan's historical and cultural development.

Initiatives such as Takht-e Foulad tours, research programs and guided visits to its Takyehs have helped raise awareness of this heritage in recent years. Nevertheless, much of its cultural, artistic and tourism potential remains to be fully explored. Historic cemeteries can be understood as open-air museums of social history and anthropology, preserving evidence of a community's past, beliefs and ways of life while helping sustain its collective identity.

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# Iran seeks to tap regional tourism potential, minister says

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's tourism minister has called for smarter use of regional assets to drive tourism and create jobs, describing a major nature-based project in the country's northwest as a national opportunity for sustainable development.
Reza Salehi-Amiri made the remarks during a visit to the Aladaghlar tourism complex in Miyaneh, East Azerbaijan province, where he reviewed construction progress and the project's development plans.
"Aladaghlar" meaning "Colorful Mountains" in Azari, refers to a natural attraction near the city of Miyaneh in East Azarbaijan province, northwestern Iran. The area is known for its colorful hills and mountains and is considered one of the region's notable destinations for nature-based tourism.
"The area's historical, natural and cultural attractions could help make it a leading tourism destination," he said.
The first phase covers 30 hectares, with more than 11,010 square meters of built-up space. The project is designed to accommodate 800 to 2,000 visitors a day.
It is expected to create 83 direct and 200 indirect jobs. A second phase covering 150 hectares is also planned.
Facilities are set to include accommodation, cafes, restaurants, parking, portable suites, a garage, eco-tourism sites, a second camp, an observatory, astronomy education facilities, an open-air amphitheater and viewing areas.
The minister's itinerary also included visits to the historic city of Khonaj, Jamalabad Caravanserai and Miyaneh's 23-span railway bridge, a groundbreaking ceremony for the Pardisan complex, and visits to Tark Stone Mosque, the Gozdareh tourism complex in Nesheq village and a historic fortification in Turkmanchai.
Amiri Salehi also in a letter to the Fars Province Governor Hossein-Ali, praised the province in southern Iran for its efforts to attract investment and expand tourism.
He cited Shiraz Expo, an investment conference held in October, as examples of efforts to draw on the province's historical, cultural and economic resources.
He described event tourism as a key strategy for the sector and said he hoped Fars would become a major hub for international tourism, with local communities benefiting from its growth.



*Iran's tourism minister Reza Salehi-Amiri*
*IRNA*

## Royan marks World Fertility Day with free consultations



Social Desk

Iran's Royan Institute provided free reproductive health advice in Tehran on Monday, offering consultations on embryology, pregnancy and infertility to mark World Fertility Day.
The public service desk aimed to raise awareness, provide scientific information and correct misconceptions about reproductive health, the institute's public relations office said.
Individuals and couples can put questions to specialists and learn about recent advances in infertility treatment. The initiative also seeks to improve access to reliable information, organizers said.
Royan Institute, affiliated with the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (ACECR), is one of Iran's established centers for infertility treatment and assisted reproductive technologies.
It has stressed the importance of making scientific information widely available and responding to public needs in reproductive health.
The free service is part of the institute's social responsibility efforts and aims to strengthen direct contact with the public.
It will give people a chance to raise questions that may otherwise go unanswered because of limited access to specialist advice or widespread misconceptions about fertility and infertility.
World Fertility Day is observed annually on November 2 to raise awareness of fertility issues and challenge misconceptions about infertility.

## Iran official says arts can bolster social cohesion and hope

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran needs to make greater use of the arts to strengthen social cohesion, improve public morale and restore hope for the future, a senior Interior Ministry official said, urging provincial authorities to support cultural events.
Mohammad Bathaei, deputy interior minister and head of the Social Affairs Organization, said art was not simply entertainment or a way to fill leisure time, but a social necessity and even a form of therapy.
Speaking at a meeting of organizers of artistic events in Tehran, he said arts and cultural programs could help reduce social problems, build solidarity and strengthen social capital.
He also cited what he described as efforts by Iran's adversaries to undermine national unity.
"Sociologists assess societies through three main indicators: social problems, public welfare and social health, including people's confidence in the future," Bathaei said.
Iranian surveys, he said, showed that social health and optimism needed more attention and timely intervention than the other two areas.
He said indicators of social problems in 2025 had either declined or stopped rising. A separate survey conducted about a month ago measured four social emotions: anger, fear, hope and concern.
Its findings, he said, pointed to the need for more efforts to promote public morale and optimism.
Bathaei urged artists and cultural officials to show patience, persistence and mutual understanding in addressing the country's social challenges.
He called on provincial governors and local officials to support national and international arts events, including the Fajr festivals, and make regional resources available to organizers.
Businesses, nonprofit organizations and arts associations could also support the events through social responsibility programs, he said.



*Mohammad Bathaei, deputy interior minister addresses at a meeting of organizers of artistic events in Tehran on October 1,2016.*
*IRNA*

## Iranian conductor Rahbari to lead two more Mariinsky concerts

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian conductor Ali Rahbari will lead two more concerts at St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre this month, bringing his total performances at the historic Russian venue to 34.
Rahbari, a permanent guest conductor of the Mariinsky Opera, will lead the orchestra on November 6 and 13.
The concerts follow a recent tour of Russian cities with conductor Valery Gergiev, with performances ranging from St. Petersburg in the northwest to Sochi in the southwest.
Rahbari has conducted 32 programs at the Mariinsky so far. The upcoming concerts will feature works by Mozart, Khachaturian, Dvorak and Gershwin, with Russian violinist Maxim Fedotov and pianist Zarina Shimanskaya appearing as soloists.
The November 6 program includes Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Divertimento No. 136, Aram Khachaturian's Violin Concerto, featuring Fedotov, and Antonin Dvorak's Symphony No. 8.
The November 13 concert will feature Mozart's Divertimento No. 138, George Gershwin's Piano Concerto, with Shimanskaya as soloist, and Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, known as "From the New World".
The performances extend Rahbari's ongoing collaboration with the Mariinsky, one of Russia's leading opera and classical music institutions.
The programs span works from the classical period to the 20th century, combining orchestral pieces and concertos.

