License Holder: Islamic Republic News Agency
Publisher: Iran Cultural & Press Institute
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Iran Daily

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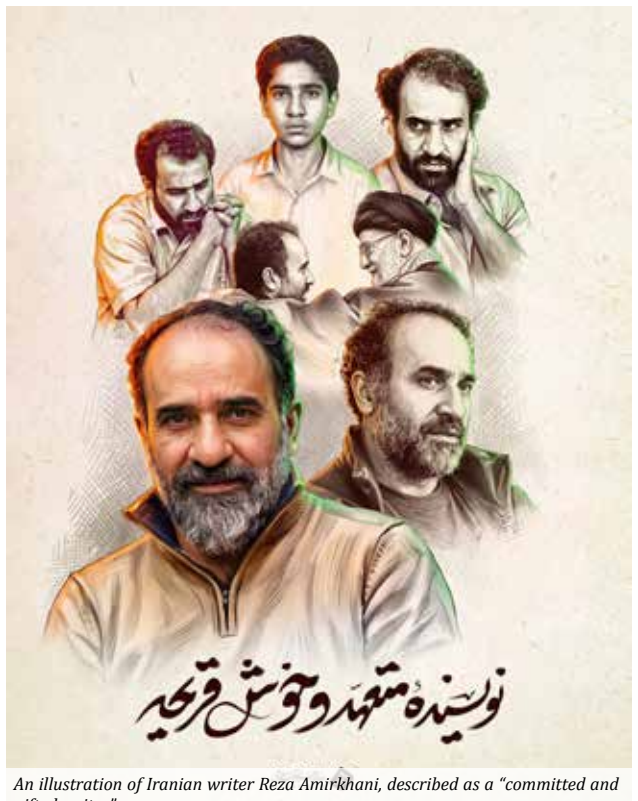
Vol. 8277 ● Sunday, November 29, 2026 ● 100,000 rials ● 8 pages

Leader offers condolences on death of Iranian writer Reza Amirkhani



An illustration of Iranian writer Reza Amirkhani, described as a "committed and gifted writer".

Arts & Culture Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei has offered condolences on the death of Iranian writer Reza Amirkhani, praising his in-depth research and literary creativity for producing lasting works.

In a message issued on Saturday, Ayatollah Khamenei described Amirkhani as a committed and gifted writer who had left behind a body of enduring work through his research and literary creativity.

He extended his condolences to the writer's family, relatives and admirers.

In the message dated November 28, the Leader also prayed for God's boundless mercy and forgiveness for the late writer.

Reza Amirkhani (1973-2026) was an Iranian novelist and essayist known for his distinctive prose style and exploration of Persian language and literature.

His notable works include 'Ermia', 'Man-e Ou' (The Self of Him), 'Beyoutan' (Homelandless), 'Qeydar' and 'Rahesh' (Salvation), which brought him Iran's Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Award in 2018.

Hamedan festival celebrates resilience, magic of children's theater

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's 31st International Children and Youth Theatre Festival opened in the western city of Hamedan on Saturday, highlighting the resilience of artists who continue to create despite economic hardship and the pressures of war and sanctions.

More than 450 theater groups from across the country have signaled their readiness to take part in the event.

In a message marking the festival, festival's director and prominent children artist Marzieh Boroumand described the event as a testament to the perseverance of children's theater artists despite mounting difficulties.

"Artists make the world more beautiful by creating theater," she wrote, saying art fills people, particularly children, with joy and enthusiasm for life. Children exposed to art, she added, develop a stronger inclination to reject destruction, violence and war.

Boroumand also urged officials with authority over decisions of war and peace to create conditions for peace and calm before people's ability to endure hardship was exhausted.

She said art could fill people, especially children, with joy and enthusiasm for life. Children exposed to art, she added, were more inclined to reject destruction, violence and war.

Her message also referred to the pressures of war and international sanctions, saying Iranians continued their lives despite economic hardship.

She urged officials with authority over decisions of war and peace to create conditions for peace and calm before people's ability to endure hardship was exhausted.

Iran has faced two wars waged by the United States and Israel, a 12-day war in June 2025 and a second, 40-day war that began in late February 2026.

The program included 'Theater Song', a piece specially composed for the festival and performed by children from Hamedan. The song was presented by young trainees alongside Hamed Torabi and Zahra Jalili.

It aims to promote theatergoing and encourage families to attend stage performances.

Other highlights included a performance by artist Ensafi, puppet shows accompanied by live music and a musical group's performance. Children's entertainers Ali Foroutan and Hamid Goli hosted the ceremony.

Organizers also planned to honor people who had followed the festival since childhood and attended previous editions.

Families of those killed in recent wars were due to receive commemorative plaques.

The director of opening ceremony Arash Sharifzadeh said this year's ceremony was designed to give families a more prominent role. He said Imam Khomeini Square was chosen for its size and architectural and historical features. Organizers positioned the stage to incorporate part of the square's architecture into the backdrop.



The official poster for the 31st International Children and Youth Theatre Festival opens in Hamedan on November 29.

Minab-themed cartoon wins top Istanbul prize



Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian cartoonist has won first prize at an international human rights competition in Istanbul with a work in memory of pupils killed at a school in Minab, southern Iran.

The Shajareh Tayyebeh school in Minab was hit by a US missile strike on February 28, the first day of the US-Israeli war against Iran, killing 168 people, most of them children.

Atefeh Yaryan, from Tabriz in northwestern Iran, won the general category of the third International Human Rights Cartoon Competition, organized by the Istanbul branch of Turkeye's Human Rights Association (IHD). This year's theme was children's rights.

The competition drew 520 cartoonists from 49 countries, who submitted 1,238 works. Organizers announced the results on November 25, 2026.

Gülfidan Özdilek of Turkey took second place in the general category, followed by Ukraine's Oleksiy Kustovsky in third.

In its statement, the association cited war, poverty, discrimination, violence, forced displacement and lack of access to education among the challenges facing children worldwide.

It said children's rights to life, education, health, safety, play and freedom of expression were fundamental and should not be postponed.

The association described cartoons as more than an art form, saying they can strengthen collective memory, expose less visible realities and draw public attention to social and human rights issues.

An awards ceremony and exhibition of selected works are scheduled for December 15, 2026, in Istanbul, Turkey.

Yaryan began her professional career in the early 2010s and works in conceptual, social and editorial cartooning, as well as visual arts.

Cinema Vérité brings nine global documentaries to Tehran

Arts & Culture Desk

Foreign documentaries from Europe, Asia and the Americas will compete at Iran's 20th Cinema Vérité International Documentary Film Festival in Tehran, covering themes ranging from Indigenous struggles and social barriers to personal experiences and human beliefs.

The mid-length international competition features nine films produced in 2025 and 2026, with entries from Northern Europe, South and East Asia, and Latin America.

The lineup includes 'Song of the Survival of the Sami: Indigenous Struggles in the Northern Lands', a film on the struggles of the Sami people, an Indigenous community in Northern Europe, produced by Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden.

India's entry 'he Desert Kick' follows girls who take up football despite social restrictions in a remote village in Rajasthan, in the country's west.

Other selections include a Taiwanese production, 'Beyond Two Kilograms', and 'Plastic Gods and the Mirror', a co-production involving Bosnia and Herzegovina, Japan, the United States, China, India and Greece.

Poland is represented by 'Forest Guardian: Stories from the Forest'. Argentina has two entries, including 'WhatsApp' and 'Don't Open Your Eyes; You'll Wear My Skin'.

Spain's contribution, 'Lady Everest', tells the story of Junko Tabei, the Japanese mountaineer who became the first woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest in 1975. The lineup also includes the U.S. documentary 'Invisible Presence'.

The festival will run from December 9 to 15, 2026, at Mellat Cineplex in northern Tehran. Mohammad Hamidi-Moghadam is directing the 20th edition.

Founded in 2007, Cinema Vérité is organized by Iran's Documentary and Experimental Film Center (DEFC). It has grown into one of the country's major events for documentary filmmaking, seeking to promote creative nonfiction cinema, highlight social realities and introduce international documentary trends to Iranian audiences.

Its program includes national and international competitions, the Shahid Avini Award, a student film competition, documentary photography, non-competitive screenings and educational events.