



## Spotlight on Iran



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### Highlights of the week

- ✓ Iran marks International Jerusalem Day
- ✓ State institutions may lose public trust over earthquake in western Iran, government critics warn
- ✓ Shi'ite clerics once again disagree on Ramadan end date
- ✓ "Introduction to the overt and covert aspects of spreading homosexuality in the world" – a look from Tehran

Please note that the next issue of Spotlight on Iran will be released on September 16.

### Iran marks International Jerusalem Day

Last Friday, August 17, Iran marked International Jerusalem Day with dozens of processions across the country. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the Jerusalem Day events are held every year on the last Friday of the month of Ramadan. These events are intended as a show of support by Iran and the Muslim world for the Palestinian cause and for the "liberation of Jerusalem". As in previous years, they were exploited for blatant anti-Israeli incitement. The main procession, which took place in Tehran, was attended by top regime officials, including President Ahmadinejad.

In a speech given in Tehran on the occasion of Jerusalem Day, Ahmadinejad said that the "Zionist regime" is a means used by the West to control the Middle East and the world, and that its existence is an offense to all nations. Zionism, an organized and anti-human minority group that has taken a stance against divine values, is the main factor responsible for the decline of nations and mankind, the president said. The two world wars were planned by the Zionists to let the United States control the world, and once the Zionists took control of the United States government, they extended their dominion over the whole world—including the powerful governments, the media, and

the large banks—to wipe out civilizations and rule the world. The purpose of the fight against the “Zionist regime” is to protect human dignity, the president noted, and to clear the path for saving all of humanity from imperialism and poverty. He added that the “Zionist regime” is a malignant cancer, and that the presence of Zionists in as little as one inch of Palestinian land is dangerous. He expressed his opposition to the two-state solution, saying that it is a historical opportunity for the Zionists which may send one hundred years of resistance down the drain.



Ahmadinejad said that the Arab spring is the beginning of a Western spring and an American spring. He called on Western countries to act in accordance with their own interests, abandon the Zionists, recognize the rights of the nations, and stop offending the Iranian people. He announced that there will in fact be a new Middle East—one that will bear no trace of American and Zionist presence, God willing (Mehr, August 17).

The Friday sermon on Jerusalem Day was delivered by the top cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami. He said that a distinction should be drawn between the Jewish minority in Iran and the Zionists, whose crimes against the Muslims date back to the early days of Islam. According to Khatami, the only successful method of dealing with the Zionists throughout the 60-year occupation of Palestine has been the intifada rather than the negotiating table, because the only language that the Zionists understand is the language of force. He called on the media to expose the crimes committed by the Zionists in Palestine, Gaza, and Lebanon, and thanked Iran Broadcasting for its

decision to show the film *Saturday Hunter (Shekharchi-ye Shanbeh)* on the occasion of Jerusalem Day (Mehr, August 17). First screened at the international Fajr film festival held in Tehran in the beginning of 2010, the film follows the story of a Jewish boy in Israel who is mentally abused and brainwashed by his grandfather, a “Zionist rabbi”, to turn him into a merciless and bloodthirsty murderer willing to spill the blood of Palestinians and innocents to help realize the goals of Zionism.

This year, the concluding statement that was released once the Jerusalem Day processions were over not only expressed commitment to the Palestinian people and the struggle for the liberation of Jerusalem, but also addressed the developments in Syria and the Arab world. The statement said that the only solution to the problem of Palestine is to dismantle the “Zionist regime”, remove the Zionists from the occupied territories, bring back the Palestinian refugees to their country, and hold a free referendum to decide on the future of Palestine. The organizers of the Jerusalem Day processions referred to the events in Syria as a plan shared by imperialism and reactionary Arab countries, whose purpose is to hit the anti-Zionist front and the Islamic resistance. They issued a warning against foreign involvement in Syria’s internal affairs, expressed their support for the popular revolutions in the Arab world, and condemned the suppression of the uprising in Bahrain (Fars, August 17).

On the eve of Jerusalem Day, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that the problem of Jerusalem is the main problem facing the Muslim world, and that the occupation of the Islamic land of Palestine and the Zionist settlement there are at the source of the problems experienced by the region’s nations for the past several decades. Speaking at a meeting with former Iran-Iraq War POWs, Khamenei said that the Zionists and their supporters are trying to have public opinion forget the question of Palestine, a conspiracy against which the Muslim world needs to fight.

Khamenei stressed the particular significance ascribed by Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic revolution, to the question of Palestine, saying that the victory of the Islamic revolution put an end to the efforts to have the occupation of Palestine forgotten. The question of Jerusalem is not a tactical issue for Iran, Khamenei said, but rather the result of the depth of Islamic faith. The Iranians consider saving the Muslim land from the claws of the Zionist occupiers and their supporters a religious duty, and that is a view that needs to be shared by the rest of the nations and governments of the Muslim world. Khamenei expressed his confidence that the “star of hope’s dawn” that shone on the victory of the Islamic revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, and the return of the

POWs will once again shine on the question of Palestine, that the Islamic land will return to the Palestinian people for good, and that the false, fabricated Zionist “outgrowth” will be wiped out from the geographic scene (Fars, August 15).



Photo :Amir hashem Dehghani

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Iran’s major newspapers, too, dedicated their editorials to the Jerusalem Day events. The daily Keyhan said that nothing can prevent Israel’s fall anymore. Thirty-three years ago, at the time when Jerusalem Day was first instituted by the leader of the Islamic revolution, Arab countries laid down their arms in their struggle against the “Zionist regime” and Egypt signed the Camp David Accords, which signified the fall of the last Arab wall of defense against Israel. The Palestinian intifada, the referral of the Palestine case from Palestinian groups and Arab countries affiliated with the United States to the region’s youth, Hezbollah’s resistance in Lebanon and its victories against Israel—all of these have shown that the young people of the Middle East have the ability to defeat the Zionists even without the support of their governments. The achievements of the Palestinian and Lebanese struggle have forced Israel to move from the offensive to the defensive.

The daily said that there is a relationship between, on the one hand, Ayatollah Khomeini’s establishment of Jerusalem Day and his call on Muslims to take part in the liberation of Palestine, and on the other hand, the developments that have taken place in the Arab world these past two years, being a reflection of Iran’s success in spreading the “thought of resistance”. Jerusalem Day has formed an association between, on the one hand, the fight against the Zionists and the United States, and on the other hand, the fight against the oppressive regimes of the Arab world and the fight to wrestle control of Muslim land from the West and the Zionists.

Now, thirty-three years after Ayatollah Khomeini instituted Jerusalem Day, the liberation of Palestine is possible and closer than ever. Muslims are more united than ever around the issue of Jerusalem; regimes formerly allied with the West have grown considerably weaker; Muslims have become more aware of the Western conspiracies; the influence of Western countries, particularly the United States, in Muslim countries has greatly diminished; and young Arab people have stepped into the battle for the defense of Palestine regardless of the views held by their governments. At the same time, the “Zionist regime” is facing serious domestic problems. According to Israeli figures, the Jewish population in Palestine is 4.5 million people; however, 1.5 million of them have double citizenship and another 1.5 million Israeli Jews live in Israel for just a short period of each year. Therefore, the actual population of Jews residing in Palestine is no more than 3 million people, Keyhan said, and with 5.5 million Palestinians, the identity of Palestine is Arab and Muslim (Keyhan, August 16).

The daily Resalat also noted that there is a relationship between Jerusalem Day and the “Islamic awakening” in the Arab world. This year’s Jerusalem Day processions are taking place in a special time for the Middle East and the Arab world, a time of “Islamic awakening”, and the discourse about the liberation of Jerusalem is gaining numerous supporters. There is a close link between the liberation of Jerusalem and the Islamic awakening, since Islamic awakening is meaningless without faith in the liberation of Jerusalem, and the meaning of the liberation of Jerusalem cannot be understood without faith in the Islamic awakening.

The daily argued that the “Zionist regime” is facing a severe domestic crisis, which can be clearly seen in the ongoing demonstrations against the Netanyahu government and the dissolution of his political coalition. Israel’s major allies—the United States, Britain, Germany, and France—are also struggling with the economic crisis, and their support for Israel has weakened. According to Resalat, the issue of Palestine is one of the main concerns of the world of Islam, and solving the problem of Palestine is only possible by achieving unity in the Muslim world, which must make it its first priority, as it has always been for Iran (Resalat, August 16).

The daily Ebtekar also discussed the weakening of Israel and its status on the eve of Jerusalem Day. This year’s Jerusalem Day is different from previous years in light of the developments in the region and the fall of the regimes that were once Israel’s allies and supported that country so that it could realize its objectives. Now, for the first time since 1979, the Israeli flag no longer flies in Cairo. The United States is dealing with a

severe economic and social crisis which affects its support for Israel, while the “Zionist regime” is facing the most serious popular protests in its fabricated history. No one in Israel is talking about turning into reality the vision of “from the Euphrates to the Nile” anymore since Israel is busy with its efforts to contend with its domestic crises and is concerned about the unity of the Muslims (Ebtekar, August 16).

Shortly prior to Jerusalem Day, the Alef website commented on the calls heard in Iran in recent years to give preference to solving the economic problems of Iranians over continuing to help Palestinians and Lebanese. As in previous years, such calls were heard from web surfers on social networks, who said that the occasion of Jerusalem Day should be used to protest against the ongoing support for the Palestinians and the Lebanese while many Iranians remain in distress. A Facebook group affiliated with regime opponents called on Iranian citizens to take to the streets on Jerusalem Day, using the slogan “No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, Iranian Azerbaijan” (the site of the devastating earthquake that occurred last week).



In a commentary article published by Alef, titled “Is Jerusalem Day the day of Islam or the day of the Palestinians?”, Dr. Yasser Sobhanifard discussed the question of Iran’s assistance to Palestine and challenged those in Iran who call into question the necessity of helping the Palestinians. According to the author of the article, aiding the poor in Iran is totally unrelated to the aid provided to Palestine and Lebanon. The question of Palestine and Lebanon has to do with oppression, not poverty. Even a hunger-stricken person cannot refrain from helping his neighbors as they are being murdered or robbed. It’s impossible to argue, therefore, that as long as there is poverty

in Iran, there is no room for helping the Palestinians or the Lebanese. What is more, helping a poor Palestinian is religiously and humanely the same as helping a poor Iranian. If the government of Iran completely neglected those Iranians suffering from poverty and sent huge sums to other countries, one would be quite right to wonder about the policy of aiding the Palestinians. However, the truth is that millions of Iranians are supported by the government and popular welfare institutions that operate in the country. Many of those who criticize the assistance extended to the Palestinians and the Lebanese are also arguing that the number of Iranian citizens supported by the government is too high, the article said.

The author of the article discussed the claim according to which some of the Palestinians themselves have reservations about the aid they get from Iran. In every society that faces oppression there are two groups: one that supports resistance against the oppression and one that does not resist out of fear or because of the high price involved in such resistance. Iran's commitment is to extend assistance to those who resist the oppression. Reservations about the Iranian aid are heard from Palestinians in the West Bank rather than those in the Gaza Strip, who resist the oppression, and Iran therefore has an obligation to continue helping them. Speaking about Hamas' opposition to the Iranian stance on the issue of Syria and that organization's support for the Syrian opposition, Dr. Sobhanifard said that such views expressed by Hamas are no reason to stop helping the Palestinians. Iran needs to stop helping the Palestinians only in case they ask Iran to do so and can advance their struggle on their own or with assistance from other countries, particularly Egypt. As long as that hasn't happened, Iran needs to continue helping Hamas solve the problem of Palestine despite its anti-Syrian views.

And what does Iran need to do in case of a Palestinian-Israeli political settlement? According to the author of the article, if the Palestinians ask Iran to stop helping them, it can do so provided they do not yield on the issue of Jerusalem. The issue of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque involves not just the Palestinians but all Muslims. Just as Saudi Arabia has no right to sell the holy sites in Mecca and Medina to the United States, and just as Iraq has no right to cede the Shi'ite holy sites in Najaf and Karbala to Turkey, for instance, and have them turned into a tourist center, the Palestinians have no right to give up Jerusalem even in case of negotiations with Israel.

The author of the article suggested that, since some Iranians are against the ongoing assistance provided to the Palestinians, the government should perhaps establish a foundation to raise money for the Palestinians. This way, people will be free to donate as they see fit and there will be no need to use the national budget, which comes from taxes paid by all Iranian citizens. The author concluded the article by saying that, just as the European Union helps the less wealthy countries, the Muslims are required to help people in need across the Muslim world. The assistance to Palestine and Lebanon can only stop once the oppression ends and Jerusalem is liberated, not when compromise supporters, cowards, or traitors demand it (Alef, August 16).

### **State institutions may lose public trust over earthquake in western Iran, government critics warn**

In recent days, more than a week after the earthquake that hit northwestern Iran, government critics from the conservative camp warned that the public may have lost its trust in state institutions. Alef, a website affiliated with Majles member Ahmad Tavakoli, reported that the citizens of Iran continue to gather and provide aid to the earthquake victims despite the efforts made by local authorities in the disaster area to prevent Iranians from getting to the area and helping those hit by the earthquake through private efforts. Posters put up in Tehran's mosques are calling on the people to gather aid for the victims and send it to the disaster area, and an Iranian football star is collecting donations for those in need at the bazaar in the city of Tabriz.

According to the website, the roots of this social phenomenon lie in the public's loss of trust in government apparatuses and their ability to perform. Faced with such a phenomenon, the country's decision-makers need to reevaluate their policy and conduct. Baseless promises made by government officials, the lack of administrative transparency, the release of false data—all of these are contributing factors to the lack of public trust that has become manifest after the earthquake. The government regulatory apparatuses, too, are not working properly. The aid sent by government bodies to the disaster area is not registered anywhere, and its destination is anyone's guess. In this state of affairs, there is no way to be sure that the aid does reach those who need it.

The government organizations should have built up trust with society by adopting a culture of transparency, and those in charge should have taken action to prevent a situation where the aid provided by civilians and social groups outweighs that provided



by the government. The government needs to make sure that the organizations that work under it do their jobs properly, and to let civilians become active participants to strengthen their sense of responsibility, Alef concluded (Alef, August 17).

The Asr-e Iran website also warned about a possible loss of public trust in state institutions. A commentary article published by the website said that the earthquake in northwestern Tehran should be a clear warning sign to the country's top officials, and that there will be extremely severe consequences if they don't take the warning sign seriously. Even though many Iranians wanted to help their fellow countrymen who had been hit by the earthquake, they did not trust the state institutions. In recent days many people have been asking themselves whether they can be certain that the aid they send through the government institutions does reach the disaster area. Accordingly, many of them have preferred to deliver the aid on their own, using their own cars, and distribute it to the victims.

The website argued that the government and public institutions apparently do work extensively in the disaster area, and that a major portion of the aid gathered from Iranian citizens is indeed distributed to the victims. Even though most of the efforts exerted by these institutions have in fact been effective, the people—or at least many of them—still have doubts regarding the state institutions, preferring to drive long distances to deliver the aid themselves instead of relying on the official institutions.



According to Asr-e Iran, this phenomenon stems not from the performance of the rescue organizations, including the Red Crescent, but from the conduct of Iran's top government officials. When they give Iranians promises that remain unfulfilled, when

they offend and lash out at each other in the media, when they get away with corruption, when people look around and see poverty even as the government of Iran helps the poor in Tajikistan, equips schools in the Comoro Islands, and builds houses in Venezuela, when reports of multi-billion corruption scandals in banks and government institutions are published every day—it is no wonder that the public is gradually losing its trust in the government institutions, and they do not trust these institutions when an earthquake strikes.

The lack of public trust in government institutions came into play in the earthquake in Azerbaijan, and this indicates that there is a severe illness that requires treatment. Ignoring it, the website concluded, is treason, and is the same as ignoring the symptoms of a physical disease (Asr-e Iran, August 18).

Meanwhile, the journalist and cartoonist Nikahang Kowsar took issue with the fact that medical aid and food are being shipped from Iran to Syria and Myanmar (Burma) while those hit by the earthquake are still suffering from severe shortage of supplies. Kowsar posted photos on his website ([www.khodnevis.org](http://www.khodnevis.org)) showing aid sent from Iran to Syria and to Muslims in Myanmar who were hit in the recent clashes between Muslims and Buddhists that took place in that country.



**Aid packages shipped from Iran to Syria and Myanmar**

The exiled journalist criticized the Iranian authorities, saying that, while the victims of the earthquake in northwestern Iran are still suffering from food and medicine shortage, the government is sending food and medicines to Syria and the Foreign Ministry

spokesman is announcing that the Iranian Red Crescent intends to send aid packages to Muslims in Myanmar (Khodnevis, August 18).

### Shi'ite clerics once again disagree on Ramadan end date

As in previous years, top Shi'ite clerics in Iran and Iraq were once again in disagreement over the end date of Ramadan and the beginning of Eid al-Fitr. The beginning and end of the month of fasting are determined according to the appearance of the new moon at the beginning of the month of Ramadan and its appearance in the next month—the month of Shawal. The first day of Shawal can come after either the 29th or 30th day of Ramadan, based on moon-sighting reports.

Earlier this week, the Shi'a Online website reported differences of opinion between top clerics over the sighting of the new moon. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei ruled that Sunday, August 19, was the first day of the month of Shawal and of Eid al-Fitr—and as the “ruling religious jurisprudent” (*vali faqih*), his ruling has binding force. This ruling was joined by the top clerics Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani, Ayatollah Nasser Makarem Shirazi, Ayatollah Asadollah Bayat Zanjani, Ayatollah Hossein Nouri Hamadani, and Ayatollah Bashir Najafi, one of the top clerics in Iraq. In contrast, the top clerics Ayatollah Ali Sistani (the top religious authority of Iraq's Shi'ites), Ayatollah Hossein-Vahid Khorasani, Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Modarresi, and Ayatollah Sadeq Shirazi ruled that the month of Ramadan would end on Sunday, August 19, and that Eid al-Fitr would begin on Monday, August 20 (Shi'a Online, August 18).

In light of the differences of opinion among the top Shi'ite clerics, the Baztab website reported that, peculiarly, a number of websites affiliated with those clerics whose rulings contradicted that of the Supreme Leader had experienced technical issues earlier this week. Among other malfunctions, technical access to Ayatollah Khorasani's official website was down, while Ayatollah Sistani's official website was attacked by hackers who identified themselves as members of the Syrian opposition (Baztab, August 19).



This is not the first time that differences of opinion have emerged over the end date of the month of Ramadan. A similar debate about Khamenei's ruling on the end of Ramadan took place in September 2009. After Khamenei ruled that Saturday, September 19, was the last day of Ramadan, many of Iran's top Shi'ite clerics released a contradictory ruling, saying that the last day of Ramadan was Sunday, September 20. In light of the political crisis that broke out in Iran after the presidential elections, which was then at its peak, the religious disagreement turned into a politically charged issue. It was viewed as a challenge by some of the senior clerics to Khamenei's political leadership, and their attempt to demonstrate the religious establishment's independence from the Supreme Leader. Reformist opposition websites even reported that, in spite of Khamenei's ruling, most Iranians continued to fast on Sunday since they accepted the ruling given by the majority of the top Shi'ite clerics.

Khamenei's religious-legal authority stems from his political authority as "religious jurispudent" rather than his theological skills, since Khamenei is not recognized as a "source of emulation" (*marja'-e taghlid*).

### **"Introduction to the overt and covert aspects of spreading homosexuality in the world" – a look from Tehran**

This week the conservative website Mashregh published a special commentary article titled "Introduction to the overt and covert aspects of spreading homosexuality in the world". The article seeks to answer the question of why Western regimes put such efforts into spreading homosexuality in the world. According to the article, support for

homosexuals, who suffer from a mental illness that requires treatment and psychiatric drugs, cannot be explained simply in terms of defense of human rights, since the extent of financial, political, and social support for homosexuals in the West is wholly incongruent with their percentage in the population. For example, just 1.5 percent of Britain's population are homosexuals, but the support they receive and the demand to have this small minority recognized are completely out of proportion to their numbers or their ability to influence politics and society.

The question that needs to be asked, therefore, is why the West goes to such trouble to spread "the inhuman phenomenon of homosexuality". Why do regimes in the West dedicate so many programs in the political, social, and cultural spheres to support the worldwide spread of homosexuality? What do these regimes have to gain from the growth of homosexuality that makes them support homosexual organizations and portray this unnatural phenomenon as normal? If support for homosexuals stemmed from humane considerations or defense of human rights, it would be in the form of providing individual assistance to these people, who need care and medical treatment to rescue them from the immoral actions that undermine the family institution. It appears, therefore, that support for homosexuals stems from political motives and has to be seen as a "cultural strategy" pursued by regimes in the West. This strategy can be clearly seen in the policy of Britain's conservatives and in that of the Democratic administration in the United States.

The article went into detail about the considerable efforts made by Western governments to "spread homosexuality" this past decade. Such efforts include recognizing same-sex marriage; characterizing homosexuality (which is a "sexual aberration, scientifically") as a phenomenon that stems from genetic factors; changing the definition of the family institution and recognizing same-sex couples as a "family" in official documents; financially supporting the advancement of homosexual activity and passing laws that promote homosexuals' rights; promoting homosexuality on the internet, social networks, and video games; spreading homosexual content in culture, arts, and cinema; promoting homosexuals in the army; and introducing homosexual content into the education system.

The article stressed the major role played by the Jews in spreading homosexuality. Wealthy Jews help spread homosexuality in culture, propaganda, and politics. Jewish involvement is evident in many spheres, from the establishment of literary foundations that offer awards to authors whose work touches on homosexuality, to the "Zionist

regime's" support for homosexuals in various countries. According to public opinion polls, Tel-Aviv is the favorite city for homosexuals across the globe. The "Zionist regime" is one of the main propagators of homosexuality in the world, and it employs many propaganda methods, which include organizing "pride parades" in various countries. Michael Oren, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, even said that organizing such parades is one of the things Israel prides itself on in recent years. For Israel, the significance of supporting homosexuals is so great that conservative religious circles in Israel have gone as far as to recognize homosexuals' right to become rabbis.

Spreading homosexuality, the website said, is intended to allow the West to change human nature and tendencies to build a new kind of tame person who will put up no resistance to the demands of the political and cultural order. Psychologically, the homosexual is an obedient person willing to agree with all demands and orders. A look at famous homosexuals who were active in the arts and politics shows that these people served the anti-human political and cultural order of the West. The West wants to raise among the world's nations a human force that will not seek to oppose it. The support offered by wealthy Jews to various organizations that serve the world order, as well as their support for homosexuals, are indicative of a long-term, carefully elaborated plan to prepare the ground for crafting an obedient, timid society that will serve their next objectives.

Homosexuality is an act of corruption that leads to the decline of the family institution, extinction, and social corruption, the website concluded. The "Satanic regime" of the West seeks to undermine the family institution by changing the definition of family, encouraging homosexuality, and facilitating the spread of this ugly phenomenon, as it has already done with feminism and pornography (Mashregh, August 17).

Pictures of the week: Khamenei leads Eid al-Fitr prayer



