



Weekly magazine



Sepidar
Woman Iranian Party



Friday, March 20, 2026

Nowruz and Chaharshanbe Suri: Rituals of Endurance

By: Leila Kharazi

At a time when the shadow of crisis, war, and grief weighs heavily on the lives of Iranians, what continues with remarkable قوه and resilience is the cultural endurance of a people who have not forgotten their roots. Nowruz and Chaharshanbe Suri are not merely traditional celebrations; they are expressions of historical memory and collective identity—rituals that have passed through centuries and remain alive, breathing, and meaningful.



Over the past four decades, various efforts have been made to marginalize these traditions or replace them with alternative cultural models. At times, this took the form of restrictions; at others, official reinterpretations; and sometimes, a gradual silence. Yet what unfolded in reality was not erasure, but reinvention. Without the need for declarations, people demonstrated through their presence in the streets, by lighting fires, setting the Haft-Seen table, and repeating traditions, that culture is not imposed—it is lived and internalized.

Chaharshanbe Suri, in all its simplicity, symbolizes a passage from darkness to light. Jumping over fire and reciting “my pallor to you, your redness to me” is more than a ritual;

it is a metaphor for renewal, purification, and hope. Nowruz, with its global recognition, carries the message of renewal—not only in nature, but within the human spirit.

This year, as the grief of lost youngers weighs heavily on hearts and concerns over regional tensions and war shape the public psyche, these rituals have taken on deeper meaning. They are no longer simply celebrations of joy; they are acts of resistance—quiet, unspoken, yet enduring. A resistance that affirms life goes on, hope does not fade, and the identity of a nation cannot be erased by pressure or time.

Perhaps the secret to the longevity of these traditions lies in their deep connection between past and present. Iranians have neither remained trapped in history nor abandoned it; rather, they have carried it forward, continuously redefining it under all circumstances. From this continuity emerges a living culture—one that is neither constructed by force nor diminished by restriction.

At this historical juncture, *Sepidar Weekly* honors this resilience. What unfolds today in the streets and homes of Iran is not merely a celebration, but a living narrative of a people who, despite all hardships, continue to stand, remember, and endure. Nowruz and Chaharshanbe Suri, more than ever, reflect this steadfastness.

And perhaps, in the glow of small fires lit in narrow alleys, in the faint smiles on weary faces, and in the hands that lay simple yet meaningful tables, one can glimpse a deeper truth: that this land, despite all its wounds, is still alive—still beating, still holding onto hope even in its most difficult days.

Here is a place where grief and hope coexist; where mourning does not halt life, but deepens and humanizes it. A people who may have lost much, yet still preserve something profoundly vital: the belief in continuation.

The flames of Chaharshanbe Suri may fade, but their warmth endures in hearts. As the year turns, it is not only the calendar that changes, but a renewed opportunity to rise, to remember, and to build the future. And it is this enduring hope that remains the light sustaining a nation.



Weekly magazine



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The World's Gaze on the Choice of the Iranian People

By: M.H. Labafbashi

Amid rapid regional upheaval and mounting international pressure on the Islamic Republic, remarks by Donald Trump addressed to the Iranian people—urging “all Iranian patriots to be brave and reclaim their country”—amount to far more than a passing political comment. The statement carries layered meaning that is best understood within the well-established framework of U.S. foreign policy strategy.

At one level, it signals political support for a shift in Iran's power structure. At another, it places the primary responsibility for such change squarely on the Iranian people, underscoring that any transformation must emerge from within society itself. At a third level, it suggests that Washington, at least outwardly, does not intend to pursue a scenario involving military occupation or direct ground intervention. In essence, the message is this: conditions for change may be cultivated from the outside, but the decisive force will ultimately be Iran's own society.

This perspective is rooted in costly experiences the United States has faced over the past two decades in the Middle East. Prolonged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated that even when a major military power can swiftly topple a government, governing and stabilizing a

large, populous nation can devolve into a protracted and expensive conflict. These lessons have led many Western policy circles to conclude that enduring political change in countries with



complex social and geographic structures is far more likely to arise internally than through military occupation.

Regional military developments have further reinforced this outlook. Recent conflicts involving Israel and groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah have illustrated the challenges of confronting forces that rely on asymmetric warfare. The use of underground tunnel networks, decentralized operations in urban environments, and positioning within civilian populations complicates conventional military campaigns and significantly heightens the risk of civilian casualties. Many analysts argue that if similar patterns were to exist on a large scale in a country like Iran, any extensive ground operation could quickly become a drawn-out and costly war one that would carry not only severe human consequences but also intense global political and media scrutiny.



Weekly magazine



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For this reason, strategic discussions about Iran increasingly focus less on military intervention and more on a model often described in political science as “internal collapse.” In this framework, external pressures converge with domestic dynamics to gradually erode the foundations of power. Economic strain, deepening international isolation, fractures among political and security elites, and the expansion of social discontent are all factors that can push a political system toward a breaking point. In such a context, statements like Trump’s are often designed to address multiple audiences simultaneously—appealing to disaffected public opinion while also signaling to actors within the power structure that shifts in the balance of power may be possible under changing conditions.



Within Iran’s opposition, a similar view of change has gained traction in recent years. Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi has repeatedly emphasized in speeches and statements that any transformation in Iran must be rooted in the will of its people and driven from within society. He has also called on military and security forces to stand with the public at critical moments and to prevent the country from

descending into violence or civil conflict. In his view, a successful and sustainable transition away from the Islamic Republic can only be achieved through a national movement—not through foreign military intervention.

At the same time, Iran’s economic situation has reached a critical juncture. Severe liquidity constraints, stress within the banking system, restrictions on cash withdrawals, and disruptions in financial operations all point to deep structural pressures. These challenges are compounded by sweeping sanctions and sustained international pressure. Historical experience across many countries suggests that when economic crisis, external pressure, and widespread social dissatisfaction converge, political systems can enter a phase of accelerated erosion—one that may lead to rapid and unexpected change.

In such an environment, statements like Trump’s can be seen as part of a broader strategic framework: one in which external powers may seek to shape conditions for change, but where the decisive turning point ultimately lies within the country itself. This is why many analyses locate Iran’s political future not solely in the calculations of global powers, but in the internal dynamics of Iranian society and the choices of its various actors. Should externally pressures and internal crises continue along their current trajectory, Iran may reach a moment where political transformation unfolds not gradually, but as a sudden and historic shift—one whose outcome will ultimately be determined by the Iranian people themselves.



Weekly magazine

Sepidar
Woman Iranian Party



Friday, March 20, 2026

Chaharshanbe Suri in the Age of Israeli Drones

By: Azadeh Sharafi

This year's Chaharshanbe Suri in Iran was not merely an ancient celebration; it became a symbolic stage where tradition, resistance, and emerging narratives converged. A festival long constrained by the Islamic Republic was held this year in a markedly different atmosphere one that encompassed both the streets and the skies above.

In the days leading up to the event, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi announced that Iranians would take to the streets to celebrate and called on the international community to watch over them. Shortly thereafter, Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Iranian people, encouraging them to mark the occasion and expressing support.

As night fell, despite a heavy security presence, people poured into the streets. Fires were lit, and scenes of dance, joy, and excitement spread through neighborhoods. Yet what set this year apart was the emergence of a striking narrative one that drew attention upward, toward the sky.

According to these accounts, security forces deployed to suppress gatherings in some areas appeared disoriented. And for many, a powerful sentiment took shape: that "our brothers in the Israeli army were watching over our people from the sky."

For many observers, this symbolic image became intertwined with the flames of Chaharshanbe Suri on the ground fire not only as a sign of celebration, but as an emblem of resistance and perceived support.

The psychological and emotional significance of such support among segments of the Iranian public is difficult to dismiss. More than anything, the night reflected a shift in collective narrative one in which, amid smoke and flame, people felt seen, supported, and hopeful, even if that sense of protection existed primarily on a symbolic level.

In this sense, this year's Chaharshanbe Suri carried a dual meaning:

On the ground, people preserved tradition and joy; In the sky, an image of watchfulness and support took shape one that left a lasting imprint on memory.





Weekly magazine



Sepidar
Woman Iranian Party



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When Reality Burns, Football Negotiates

By: Ali Soltani

At a time when the sound of crisis can be heard from every corner of Iran, and daily life for many has become defined by anxiety and insecurity, reports of negotiations over relocating the Islamic Republic's national football team matches at the World Cup raise a simple yet weighty question: what truly counts as a priority?



According to reports, the Islamic Republic is in talks with FIFA to move its matches from the United States to Mexico, citing "security concerns." Yet this very justification, on its own, exposes a stark contradiction.

When security is invoked, one must ask: what exactly defines this concern? If security is a serious matter, is it limited to geographical borders? Or should it also be understood through the daily lives of people who have long been grappling with persistent social, political, and economic insecurity?

The issue is not that football is unimportant. On the contrary, it has often served as a refuge and a source of hope in pivotal historical moments. But when football is placed in a vacuum, detached from social realities, it ceases to be either refuge or hope—it becomes a symbol of a profound disconnect.

Focusing on match venues at a time when public life is saturated with concern, pressure, and collective grief reinforces the sense that two entirely different narratives are taking shape: an official narrative still concerned with the details of sporting arrangements, and a lived reality that people experience every day.

In such a context, even a football-related story cannot remain purely about football. Every decision, every negotiation, and every priority inevitably becomes a mirror, reflecting how deeply the gap between decision-makers and the realities of people's lives has widened.

Perhaps the central issue is not whether the national team plays in the United States or in Mexico. The issue is what meaning such discussions carry at a time when harsh realities relentlessly impose themselves.

Football can bring people together—but not when it appears detached from their real suffering; not when a repressive and violent government seeks to preserve a hollow image before the international community, and remains so focused on its own survival that, under the shadow of bombardment, economic pressure, executions, and arrests within Iran, it still looks toward participation on the World Cup stage.



Weekly magazine



Sepidar
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From Ankara to Tehran, A Critique of Hakan Fidan's Position

By: M.H. Labafbashi

In recent days, remarks by Hakan Fidan on regional developments have once again underscored that elements of Ankara's official view of Iran remain shaped more by short-term political considerations than by the deeper realities of Iranian society. Though framed in the language of regional stability and the prevention of humanitarian crises, these statements ultimately fall short of addressing the core of the Iranian question—one that extends beyond geopolitics into a historical confrontation between a nation and a repressive political system.

It is essential, first, to recognize that today's concerns over the "expansion of conflict" and a potential "refugee crisis" cannot be separated from the telling silences of the past. When Iranians took to the streets during the violent events of January 8 and 9 and faced harsh repression, no meaningful response emerged from Turkish officials. When members of the Iranian diaspora sought to amplify the realities on the ground, that silence largely persisted. Such restraint was not neutrality, but rather a form of overlooking an unfolding reality.

Nor did the matter end with silence. On multiple occasions, Iranians who had sought refuge in Turkey many

of whom had merely voiced opposition to the Islamic Republic—faced detention and, in some cases, forced return to Iran. These actions stand in clear contradiction to fundamental human rights principles. On the international stage, too, when efforts were made in forums such as the United Nations to censure the Islamic Republic, Turkey often aligned itself with a regime whose record is marked by systemic human rights violations, repression, and regional destabilization.



The consequences of such policies are now increasingly evident. Direct or indirect support for an ideological and interventionist regime has not contributed to regional stability; rather, it has exacerbated insecurity. Indeed, the repercussions of the Islamic Republic's actions are no longer confined beyond Turkey's borders but have begun to reverberate within them. This reality should serve as a warning—one that calls for a reassessment of policies long shaped by short-term expediency.

In this context, a point repeatedly emphasized by Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi merits serious consideration: the solution to the Iranian issue lies not in managing crises, but in addressing their source. As long as the Islamic Republic remains intact as a political structure, instability



Sepidar
Woman Iranian Party



Friday, March 20, 2026

will continue to affect not only the Iranian people but the wider region. The demand of the Iranian people is both clear and unequivocal: an end to the current system and the beginning of an order grounded in freedom, the rule of law, and human dignity. This is not merely a domestic aspiration that can be overlooked, but a regional imperative that commands broader recognition.



A further misconception in current analyses concerns the nature of modern warfare. Contemporary conflict no longer conforms to the traditional, large-scale models still assumed by some policymakers. Military operations today—particularly those conducted by countries such as the United States and Israel—are increasingly precise, targeted, and shaped by advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence. Unlike conventional wars, these operations are often designed to minimize civilian casualties. Targeted eliminations of key figures illustrate that such actions are not carried out impulsively, but are carefully timed and calibrated to specific operational conditions.

Finally, any serious analysis must take into account the nature of Iran itself and the resilience of its people. Iran is

not merely a state in crisis; it is one of the world's oldest civilisations, with a history spanning millennia, a rich cultural heritage, and a deeply rooted identity. Its people have endured wars and upheavals throughout history without losing that identity. Even in recent developments, despite mounting pressures and insecurity, many Iranians have chosen to remain in their homeland rather than abandon it.

This reality should be clear to any observer: if circumstances were ever to compel large-scale migration, the choices of Iranians would not be dictated solely by geographic proximity, but by considerations such as security, respect for human rights, and alignment with the aspirations of the Iranian people.

Ultimately, what is required today is not the continuation of short-term, expedient thinking, but a fundamental reassessment of approach. The Iranian question cannot be resolved through temporary calculations. It demands a clear understanding of the will of the Iranian people—and alignment with it. That will can be distilled into a single, unequivocal demand: the end of the Islamic Republic and the beginning of a free future for Iran.