


Skip to: [Content](#)
Skip to: [Site Navigation](#)
Skip to: [Search](#)

Follow 218K

Search

- [World](#)
- [USA](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Environment](#)
- [Innovation](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Books](#)

In the news:




- [Egyptian lawmakers intervene to allow expelled Christians to return home](#)
- [Payroll tax vote exposes divisions within each party](#)
- [Mardi Gras: a guide to five of the biggest New Orleans parades](#)
- [Where's my Refund? glitch: When will it be fixed?](#)
- [Foiled suicide bombing of US Capitol: plot is both familiar and strange](#)
- [Gas prices begin climb toward \\$4.50 a gallon, experts say](#)
- [Forget about preventing default in Greece, control it, says Europe](#)
-  [Christian Science Monitor](#)
- Advertisements

Subscribe and **save 75%** 

In Ahmadinejad's Iran, Jews still find a space

Some 25,000 Jews still live in Iran and many say that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's fiery anti-Israeli rhetoric is about politics, not religion.

(Page 2 of 3)

-  [Print](#)
-  [E-mail](#)
-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Twitter](#)
-  [Yahoo! Buzz](#)

-  [Digg](#)
-  [Add This](#)
-  [Permissions](#)

But some episodes have shaken those who remain. In 1999, charges of spying for Israel were brought against 13 Jews in Shiraz and Isfahan, sparking a new exodus and widespread fear.

[Skip to next paragraph](#)

Related Stories

- [Opinion: Iran's Holocaust-denial conference: a community of hate](#)
- [Iran color-coded religious badges story 'untrue'](#)
- [behind the story](#)

Amid a welter of international criticism, 10 of those charged were handed sentences – later shortened – that ranged from four to 13 years in prison.

Jews in Tehran at the time told the Monitor of their fears that "Zionist groups connected with the US" were hurting their cause by using the issue against Iran. Today, all 13 are free, and remain living in Iran.

"The effect [of the Shiraz cases] was very bad," recalls Mohaber. "But they have rectified it. I think it was a political case between Iran and Israel."

Fine line between faith and politics

The saga underscored the delicate line Iranian Jews draw daily between their religion and politics. Outside Iran, "they think our condition is very bad, living as a minority in a religious country, with law based on Islamic law," says Mr. Moresadegh, of the Jewish Committee.

He notes "some difficulties," including restrictions on government employment, but says that Mr. Ahmadinejad's questioning of the Holocaust, while very unwelcome, "has no effect on our daily life." The president's fierce anti-Zionist speeches culminated with Iran hosting a controversial Holocaust conference last December.

"It is quite clear that a bunch of Zionist racists are the problem the modern world is facing today," the president said in his Iranian New Year message on March 21. They aim "to keep the world in a state of hardship, poverty, and grudge and strengthen their rule. The great nation of Iran is opposed to this inhuman trend."

The Iranian Foreign Ministry recently facilitated a day-long visit to significant Jewish sites in Tehran for the diplomatic corps. Privately, Iranian officials said the event was designed to reassure Iranian Jews, after unease over the December conference.

Jewish leaders portrayed themselves as ordinary Iranians, facing the same problems and with the same aspirations for their nation.

"The Jewish community was probably one of the first [minority groups] to join in with the revolution, and in this way gave many martyrs," Maurice Motamed, holder of the one seat set aside for Jews in Iran's 290-seat parliament, told the diplomats. "And after that, during the eight years of the imposed [Iran-Iraq] war, there were many martyrs and disabled given to Iranian society."

"Every revolution is followed by some issues, problems, and restrictions [on minorities]," said Mr. Motamed. "Fortunately, all these effects have been completely removed in the last ten years."

The diplomatic tour – with a number of Foreign Affairs Ministry officials – visited a Jewish school, a home for the elderly, a community center, and one of 100 synagogues left from Iran, during Friday Sabbath prayers.

"We have obviously had migration out of Iran," says Afshin Seleh, a teacher of Jewish heritage with a white yarmulke skullcap, who says he loses two to three students per year in classes of up to 30. Upon the walls of the Jewish school are portraits of revolution leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and Iran's current supreme religious leader.

Page:  [Previous Page 1](#) | 2 | 3  [Next Page](#)

For one Iranian Olympian, national pride trumped medal dreams

TEHRAN, Iran – Pausing during a workout, Iran's judo ace Arash Miresmaeli speaks of past broken dreams, and his future ones.

"All the hopes and wishes of an athlete are for an Olympic medal," says the lithe double world champion. "Every athlete would withstand the hardest practice, to the point of death, for Olympic gold."

Mr. Miresmaeli paid one price, training hard enough to put himself in medal contention at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. But one round required competing against an athlete from Israel – a sworn enemy of Iran.

So the Iranian felt he had no choice but to pay another heartbreaking and controversial price: He pulled out of the games, and reset his medal dreams to Beijing in 2008.

That decision cast a stark light on the standoff between Iran and Israel, and how it can color every aspect of potential contact. Even as it was officially lauded in Iran, the decision was decried in Israel and the West as an unsavory mixing of politics and sport.

"When I am sent to another country [to compete], I am a symbol of my people and my nation," says Miresmaeli, his cauliflower ears testament to years in the sport. "When this decision is made, it should be for a nation, not a person ... for the principles of my country."

"Muslims of the world are all brothers. When one brother is oppressed, all Muslims unite to support that person," says Miresmaeli. "This was a good move to show the world there is an oppressed people in Palestine being killed, innocently."

The judo champion returned home a hero, feted by the regime as if he had won gold. Today, a banner over the mats of the national judo team heralds Miresmaeli as an "envoy of the revolution," and shows him receiving an embrace from Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei.

It reads: "This kiss and hundreds of others we offer to you."

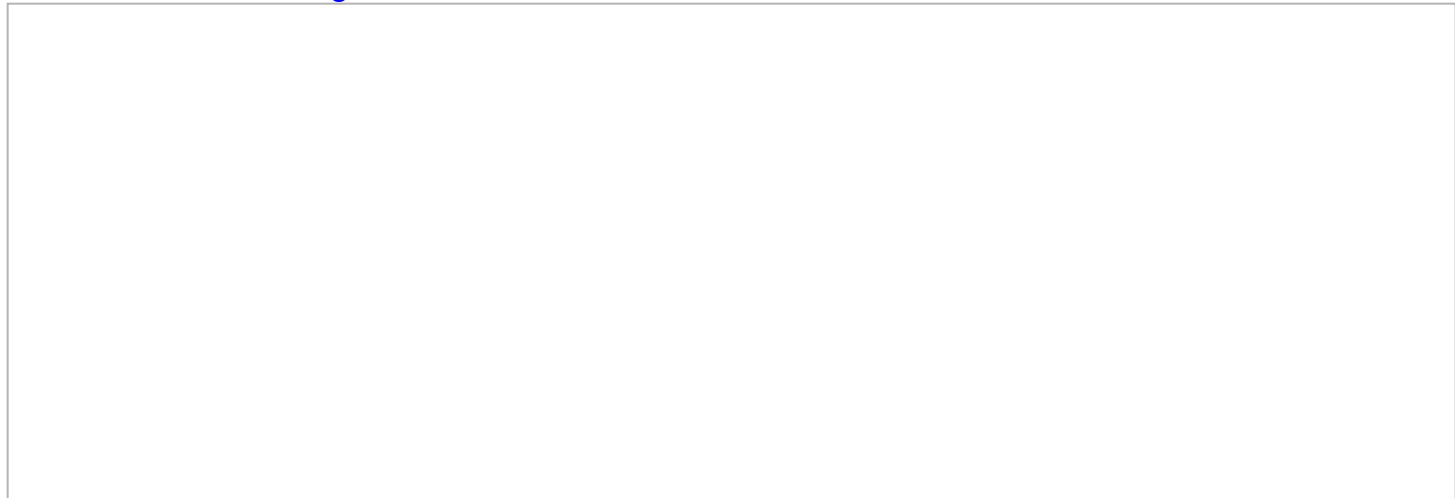
-  [Print](#)
-  [E-mail](#)
-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Twitter](#)
-  [Yahoo! Buzz](#)
-  [Digg](#)
-  [Add This](#)
-  [Permissions](#)

[About these ads](#)

[About these ads](#)

Sponsored Links

- **Booking Agency**
 - [Grabow Entertainment Agency](#)
- **Business Resources**
 - [Business Cards](#)
-
- **Finance**
 - [Tax Debt Service](#)
- **Legal Services**
 - [Whistleblower](#)
-
- **Speakers Bureau**
 - [Christian Speakers](#)
 - [Celebrity Speakers Bureau](#)
 - [Motivational Speakers Bureau](#)
 - [Sports Speakers Bureaus](#)
- **Web Services**
 - Best [Dedicated Server](#)
 - [Hosting](#)



[About these ads](#)

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Content Map](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

- [E-Readers](#)
- [Text](#)
- [Specials](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Make Us Your Home Page](#)

- [Careers](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [Find us online](#)
- [Advertise With Us](#)
- [Monitor Mall](#)
- [Today's Article on Christian Science](#)

© The Christian Science Monitor. All Rights Reserved. **Terms** under which this service is provided to you.
[Privacy Policy](#).