

This Day in History

(February 23)

Today is Monday; 4<sup>th</sup> of the Iranian month of Esfand 1393 solar hijri; corresponding to 4<sup>th</sup> of the Islamic month of Jamadi al-Awwal 1436 lunar hijri; and February 23, 2015, of the Christian Gregorian Calendar.

**1712 solar years ago**, on this day in 303 AD, Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered the destruction of the newly built Christian church in Nicomedia in what is now Turkey, and the burning of all scriptures. Although he resigned two years later and was no longer the Emperor, the persecution of Trinitarian Christians as well as the monotheistic followers of Prophet Jesus (AS), lasted a total of 8 years, ending in 311 with the death of his successor, Galerius, who was also an obstinate pagan. Diocletian, who ruled for 21 years, also ordered the persecution of Manicheans, as a political ploy, compounding religious dissent with international politics, since followers of this creed amongst the Romans were supported by the Sassanid Empire of Iran, which he had managed to defeat with great difficulty in 299 and imposed the humiliating Peace of Nisbis in northern Mesopotamia and Armenia, on Emperor Narseh. Diocletian ordered that the leading followers of Mani be burnt alive along with their scriptures, while low-status Manicheans must be executed by the blade, and high-status Manicheans must be sent to work in the quarries and mines.

**1483 solar years ago**, on this day in 532 AD, Emperor Justinian I of Byzantine or Eastern Roman Empire ordered the building of a new Christian basilica in Constantinople – the Hagia Sophia, which is Greek for “Holy Wisdom” – shortly after concluding the “Eternal Peace” with Khosrau Anushirvan of the Sassanid Empire of Iran at a cost of 11,000 pounds of gold, following Roman defeats in Syria and what is now Turkey by the Persians. From the date its construction finished in 537 until 1453, this majestic building served as seat of the Greek Orthodox Church, except between 1204 and 1261, when it was converted to a Roman Catholic cathedral under the usurper Latin Empire of the Crusaders. When Ottoman Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453 and renamed it Islambol (Istanbul), it was added with the mihrab, mimbar and four minarets to serve as an imperial mosque until 1931, when Kamal Ataturk changed it into a museum. The Hagia Sophia served as inspiration for many other Ottoman mosques, such as the Blue Mosque, the Shahzade Mosque, the Suleymaniye Mosque, the Rustam Pasha Mosque and the Ali Pasha Mosque. Today Turkish Muslims are calling for restoring this building into the mosque. Justinian I during his 38-year rule conquered the Western Roman Empire also, including North Africa and Spain. He was again involved in a war with Sassanid Persia in Syria and Turkey that lasted 22 years this time, before ending in the “Fifty-Year Peace” at the cost of 500 pounds of gold as annual tribute to the Iranians.

**881 lunar years ago**, on this day in 555 AH, the prominent historian and literary figure, Abu’l-Hassan Ali ibn Mohammad, better known as Izz od-Din Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari, was born in a Kurdish family in Jazirat Ibn Umar in Iraq, which was part of the Great Seljuq Empire, with its capital in Isfahan. He spent a scholarly life in Mosul, but often visited Baghdad, where he learned from the Iranian scholar Khateeb-e Tusi. With the disintegration of the Seljuqid Empire, he was with the army of Salah od-Din Ayyoubi in Syria, and has written eye-witness accounts of the battles with the Crusader invaders of Europe, who had usurped Palestine and set up the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. He was about 28 years old when Bayt al-Moqaddas and Palestine were liberated after 88 years of Crusader occupation by the joint Islamic army of Kurds, Turks, Arabs and Iranians. Ibn Athir later lived in Aleppo and Damascus and died in Mosul. His chief work is a general history of the world, titled *“al-Kamel fi’r-Tarikh”* (The Complete History), in which he has included reports of the destructive events taking place in the last years of his life in the Islamic east, particularly in Central Asia and Khorasan, where the barbaric Mongol onslaught was destroying centuries of flourishing civilized life. He has written a specialized history of the Atabek Dynasty of Mosul titled *“at-Tarikh al-Baher fi’l-Dowlat al-Atabekiyah bi’l-Mawasil”*. He also wrote the biographical encyclopedia on the companions of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA), titled: *“Osud al-Ghabah fi Ma’rifat as-Sahabah”*. Izz od-Din should not be confused with his elder brother, Majid od-Din Ibn Athir, the author of *“Jame’ al-Usoul”*, which is a compendium of the *“Sihah as-Sitta”* or the Six Authoritative Hadith Books of Sunni Muslims, compiled almost wholly by Iranian converts to Islam.

**454 lunar years ago**, on this day in 982 AH, The Ottoman Turks retook Tunis in North Africa from the Spanish occupiers following seizure of the heavily guarded fortress of Halq al-Wadi. In this battle, 5000 Spanish and Italian soldiers were killed and 3000 others captured. The Ottomans also captured 225 canons.

**216 solar years ago**, on this day in 1799 AD, the French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte who had occupied Egypt to prevent it from turning into a British colonial base, attacked the Ottoman province of Shaam (made up of present day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine including the illegal entity called Israel). In response, the Ottoman Sultan declared war on France, and though Napoleon had some initial success, the French forces were forced to withdraw from Shaam because of British and Russian support for the Ottoman Turks.

**129 solar years ago**, on this day in 1886 AD, American chemist, Charles Martin Hall, discovered aluminum. Aluminum is a white and light metal. It is very hard and is lighter than iron. It currently has numerous applications in industrial and non-industrial activities.

**71 solar years ago**, on this day in 1944 AD, Soviet dictator, Joseph Stalin, ordered the mass deportation of Caucasian Muslim nations. Chechens and Ingush were deported to Kazakhstan for resisting Soviet rule on the allegations of abetting the Germans. Around a million persons were evicted and loaded onto special railway cars. More than a third of the population died on the way. Also deported were the Karachays, Balkars, and Meskhetian Turks. Stalin an ethnic Georgian was an avowed enemy of Muslims despite being an atheist.

**65 lunar years ago**, on this day in 1371 AH, the Islamic scholar, Haydar Qoli Khan Afghani, known as Sardar Kabuli, passed away. He was an authority in logic, mathematics, astronomy, history, geography, and Arabic literature. A devotee of the Ahl al-Bayt, he wrote a valuable book on the virtues of Imam Ali (AS), the 1st Infallible Heir of Prophet Mohammad (SAWA). He also translated into Persian, the famous book *“al-Muraja’at”*, on exchange of letters on principles of faith between Allamah Seyyed Abdul-Hussain Sharaf od-Din of Lebanon and Dean of Egypt’s al-Azhar Academy, Shaikh Saleem al-Bishri. Sardar Kabuli’s Persian translation is titled *“Monazeraat”*.

**45 solar years ago**, on this day in 1970 AD, Guyana declared itself a republic, following independence from British rule, four years earlier. Guyana was occupied by the Spanish in late 15<sup>th</sup> century and seized by Britain in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Situated in South America with a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean, Guyana has a population of 10 percent Muslims, while a slight majority of the national population is made up of Guyanese of Indian origin.

**35 solar years ago**, on this day in 1980 AD, following drafting of the Islamic Republic constitution and setting up of the Majlis (or parliament), as per the decree of the Father of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini (RA), Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Hussein Beheshti was elected as the first Chief Justice of Islamic Iran. Ayatollah Beheshti was martyred in a terrorist bomb blast in Tehran by the notorious US-backed MKO terrorist outfit in July 1981 along with 72 senior Iranian officials, including cabinet ministers and parliament members.

**19 solar years ago**, on this day in 1996 AD, Ba’thist dictator Saddam had his two defecting sons-in-law killed by their own clansmen after luring them back to Iraq on promises of pardon. Minister of Military Industries Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel al-Majid and his brother former head of the Republican Guards, Saddam Kamel al-Majid, along with their wives – Raghad and Rana – had fled on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1995 to Jordan, where they disclosed to the CIA and the British MI6, military and chemical weapons secrets. Saddam gave false promises of pardon, but on their return to Iraq on February 20 he ordered them to divorce his daughters, and three days later killed them on charges of treason. The two brothers, as senior members of the repressive Ba’th minority regime, were partners in Saddam’s crimes against the Iraqi people as well as against Iran during the 8-year imposed war. Hussein Kamel al-Majid was in charge of the brutal attack on Karbala in 1991 and the massacre of its people. He openly desecrated the holy shrine of Prophet Mohammad’s (SAWA) grandson, Imam Husain (AS), in which he gruesomely hanged countless Iraqi Muslims, boasting all the time that today he was the person in power and the Immortal Martyr of Karbala can do nothing.

**5 solar years ago**, on this day in 2010 AD, Abdul-Malek Rigi, ringleader of an anti-Iranian US-backed terrorist outfit, was captured by Iranian security personnel in a well-planned operation. Rigi, whose satanic outfit which wrongly styles itself as Jundullah or soldiers of God, was based in Pakistani Balouchistan and had committed several acts of terrorism, killing scores of innocent men women, and children, including Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims. On learning that he had boarded a plane in Dubai for Kyrgyzstan in order to meet senior American officials for planning more acts of terrorism against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iranian air force waited till the airplane carrying him was in Iranian airspace, before sending its jet fighters to intercept the commercial flight and force it to land at Bandar Abbas airport. Rigi was nabbed, jailed, and tried in a court where he admitted his murderous acts of terrorism that in addition to bomb blasts including kidnapping and cold-blooded killing of his victims. He also confessed to his connections with the US, the illegal Zionist entity Israel, and certain Arab and western regimes, thus belying Washington’s claim to fight terrorism. Rigi was executed by hanging on June 20, 2010.

(Courtesy: IRIB English Radio – <http://english.irib.ir>)

Ahvaz Named Iran’s Book Capital

TEHRAN (ALEF) - The southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz has been designated Iran’s Book Capital

from among ten nominations competing for the position.

The city was selected by a jury of

seven experts during a meeting in Tehran on Saturday. The cities of Gonbad-e Kavus and Neyshabur

were honored.

Two other final nominations were Bushehr and Yazd.

Iran’s Basij Force Returns Stolen Torah Manuscripts to Jewish Community



An ancient hand-written Torah

TEHRAN (FNA) - An ancient hand-written Torah that was stolen from a synagogue in Southern Iran

was found by Iran’s Basij (volunteer) force and returned to the Jewish community.

After a number of ancient Torah manuscripts were lost in a synagogue in Shiraz, the capital city of Iran’s Southern Fars province, a few days ago, Iran’s Basij units could find one of the holy books, which has been described as invaluable, and returned it to the Jewish community on the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution (February 11).

During the ceremony, the representative of the Iranian Jewish community at the parliament, Siamak Mareh Sedq, in a letter to Basij Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi appreciated the efforts of the Basij forces, saying the move displayed the respect and value that the Islamic

establishment attaches to the divine religions.

“I am bound to extend my deepest appreciation to your colleagues in Fars province’s Basij Force for their efforts to discover the hand-written holy Torah that was lost from a synagogue in the city of Shiraz,” he said in the letter.

Iranian officials have always underscored the necessity for respecting all religions and their followers in Iran.

Iranian President’s Special Adviser for Religious and Ethnic Minorities’ Affairs Ali Younesi said earlier this month that Islam (which is the official religion in Iran) has not allowed its followers to insult any religion and instead has urged them to respect all believers.

Iran, Serbia Call for More Academic Cooperation

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Science, Research and Technology Mohammad Farhadi in a meeting with his visiting counterpart from Serbia on Sunday called for expansion of cooperation between Iranian and Serbian universities.

Farhadi made the remarks in a meeting with Srdjan Verbic, who is on a visit to Tehran to attend the first Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministers of Science and Technology.

‘Iran is completely prepared to cooperate with Serbia in the fields of education, technology, science-based companies, exchange of students and university professors,’ he added.

Verbic, for his part, said his presence in the summit is aimed at reinforcing relations with NAM member countries.

First Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Ministers of Science and Technology is attended by representatives from 60 countries and several international scientific institutes will work until February 24.

Rasht Preparing Bid to Join UNESCO Creative Cities Network

TEHRAN (UN.org.ir) - On 20-21 February Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche, Director and Representative of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, visited the city of Rasht to discuss UNESCO’s Creative Cities Network with the municipal authorities.

The Creative Cities Network is a network of cities, working together towards a common mission for cultural diversity and sustainable urban development. There are currently 69 member cities around the world in seven creative industry fields: Literature; Cinema; Music; Craft and Folk Arts; Design; Media Arts; and Gastronomy.

The city of Rasht is currently preparing its application in the hope to become Iran’s first Creative City in the field of gastronomy.

In a meeting which took place in the historic city hall building of Rasht, the UNESCO Representative was briefed by the mayor and members of the Islamic Council of Rasht on their efforts to prepare their proposal, which was handed over to the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

“We want the world to know about our gastronomy and our rich intangible cultural heritage” said Ms. Qadimi, Head of Sustainable Development at Rasht Municipality.

In an effort to showcase the culinary variety of the city and the province of Gilan, the municipality organized a Food Festival on 21 February, which was attended by the UNESCO representative and the Secretary General of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO.

Dozens of women and men in traditional clothing presented their



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local delicacies and provided explanations about the preparation of the food.

Asked whether or not she thought Rasht had a chance of becoming a Creative City, Ms. Kuisch Laroche responded “You have now submitted your proposal to the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO for review, which is a first step. The process ahead is still long, but with your hard work and determination, I have no doubt you will be successful.”

Picture of the Day



Gonbad-e Kavus, in the province of Golestān in the northeast of Iran, hosted a winter horse racing course on Friday.

Courtesy: MNA