



## Persian Club Martial Arts Activities

*Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society*





### Executive Summary

The Imam Ali Society, an independent, non-political, and non-governmental organization, has established professional sports teams for children in the age groups of infants and teenagers. These children come from working and street backgrounds, residing in disadvantaged and marginalized areas all across the country. The primary objective of this initiative is to provide support to the children living in deprived and challenging neighborhoods. The sports teams are organized through Iranian Homes nationwide and operate under the name of the Persian Club, which are affiliated with the Society.

The technical staff and supervisors responsible for these teams are all volunteers associated with the Imam Ali Society, comprising both university students and graduates. Furthermore, the club's financial needs are met through generous contributions from benefactors, philanthropists, and sponsors dedicated to supporting the cause.

It is important to note that on May 22, 2022, the appeal court issued a ruling to dissolve the Imam Ali Society, an organization with a longstanding and impactful presence in deprived and marginalized areas throughout the country. Consequently, many activities have been restricted, and there are serious concerns about the well-being of the children and families, given the challenging economic and social circumstances they face.





### **Background of Imam Ali Society**

The origins of the Imam Ali Society can be traced back to the 1990s when it established its first official office as the pioneering student organization at Sharif University of Technology. Its primary focus was on initiatives to reduce social harm within Tehran. In 1999, the society gained recognition as an independent non-governmental organization after obtaining official registration with the Ministry of Interior. Since then, it has significantly expanded its outreach, extending its activities across the entire country.

In 2005, the society members took a momentous step by opening the first official office in the Molavi neighborhood of south Tehran, naming it "Iranian Home." This title symbolizes the substantial progress in Iran's social development achieved by Iranian students. Over the course of ten years of continuous social engagement, the Imam Ali Society achieved a significant milestone in 2010 by obtaining a consultative position within the Economic and Social Affairs Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

### **Iranian Homes of Imam Ali Society**

"Iranian Home" serves as the central hub for the majority of activities conducted by the Imam Ali Society. It fosters direct communication between the society's teams and the children, enabling substantial strides in resolving issues faced by disadvantaged children and women. Within Iranian Home, a diverse range of activities takes place, including individual and group therapy sessions, educational and cultural classes, artistic pursuits, sports classes for children, skill development training for female heads of households, and therapy sessions for families.

Throughout Iran, the Imam Ali Society has established over 30 Iranian Homes, with 12 of them situated in Tehran. These homes play a pivotal role in delivering support and assistance to communities in need across the nation.



### **Persian Club of Imam Ali Society**

In 2006, the Imam Ali Society, situated in Tehran's Farahzad neighborhood, established its first-ever football team, exclusively composed of children of underprivileged families. This team was named "Persian" and began participating in the Tehran Municipal League. Consistently practicing on designated days at the sports field in the Farahzad, the team soon gained recognition as a prominent contender in the northeast Tehran soccer league. Demonstrating their prowess, the Persian team secured the league championship and achieved the second rank in the Ramadan Cup futsal tournament. Membership in the team was conditional on players' commitment to education, motivating the children to pursue their studies diligently.

Over the years, the Persian cultural and sports club has gone on to form several sports teams, encompassing track and field, football, volleyball, handball, basketball, rugby, hockey, darts, chess, swimming, wrestling, karate, and more. These teams, aimed at both boys and girls, operate under the auspices of the Imam Ali Society in marginalized areas throughout the country. After several years of professional engagement, some of these teams, such as football, swimming, wrestling, volleyball, karate, gymnastics, and track and field, have successfully participated in official competitions.

### **Goals of Establishing Persian Sports Teams in the Suburbs**

After spending years working in marginalized and problematic neighborhoods, the Imam Ali Society recognized the pressing need to transform these areas from dangerous to safe, especially for the residents and children dwelling there. Consequently, the society devised a comprehensive program to revitalize these neighborhoods, encompassing education, culture, sports, health, and more. This multifaceted initiative aims to elevate the literacy and cultural levels of children and their families, ultimately improving their living conditions.

Acknowledging the vital role of sports in the lives of children and teenagers, particularly in marginalized areas grappling with a host of issues like lack of identity documents, addiction, poverty, victimization, violence, and forced labor, the Persian sports teams were formed. These teams strive to motivate and empower children, providing them with a sense of identity through their involvement in professional sports. By creating healthy alternatives to destructive patterns in these neighborhoods, the teams aim to positively impact the lives of the youth.



## Martial Arts Activities

Moreover, the establishment of the Persian teams acknowledges that access to sports facilities is an inherent right of children. Thus, they endeavor to help the children in these neighborhoods achieve this objective by organizing sports exercises and activities. The coaches play a pivotal role in this process, not just training sports skills but also instilling sports ethics and promoting teamwork principles. They aim to foster interest in sports among the children, enhance their social relationships, and even aid in the recovery process for those battling addiction.

Through these endeavors, the Persian sports teams under the Imam Ali Society are actively contributing to the transformation of marginalized neighborhoods, creating a brighter future for the children and communities they serve.





### Official Ranks Earned by Martial Art Athletes in Competitions

As part of our objectives, which include identity building, talent discovery, and motivating children, martial arts training classes were organized across the country for boys and girls in marginalized areas. The dedication and hard work of these young athletes have yielded remarkable achievements in national competitions, as listed below:

- The girls of Iranian Home in Ahmedabad won a gold medal, 2 silver medals, and 2 bronze medals in the Kyokushin Matsushima style karate championship for women in the country.
- The girls of Khaksefid Iranian Home secured the runner-up position in the karate championship of the country's clubs in the team kata category.
- One of the boys from Iranian Home in Kerman earned the second place and a silver medal in the national kickboxing competitions.
- The girls of "Labekhat" Iranian Home clinched a gold medal and a bronze medal in their debut appearance in the Karate Competition.
- A girl from Iranian Home in Ahmedabad Mostofi achieved the third place in the national karate.
- Two children from Imam Ali Society (members of the Shapur Persian team) attained the third place in the country's MMA Open Day Do Joko competition.





### Background of Judo Martial Arts

The Judo martial sports of the Imam Ali Persian Club commenced in the summer of 2017 at Shahr-e-rey Iranian Home. Initially consisting of nine Baloch children from the suburban areas of Shahr-e-rey, this team faced unique challenges due to their distinctive behavioral characteristics and mental states. Traditional team sports like football were less effective in engaging these children. Therefore, individual martial arts, specifically judo, provided a platform for them to express their identities and positively impacted their lives. The number of children and teenagers in the team steadily grew to 20 within three months. Throughout the years, the team was supported by five to six coaches and assistant coaches, conducting one training session per week in two sessions. Economic constraints and the participants' work commitments limited the training hours.





### Martial Arts Activities

In late 2019, the outbreak of the coronavirus led to restrictions and the closure of sports clubs, weakening the connection with children through sports. To address this, we introduced mixed martial arts with a neighborhood-based sports activity approach in Tehran's 12th district, Sangelaj neighborhood in Bostan Laleh. These activities aimed to steer children away from addiction and drug trafficking, which had plagued the park and neighborhood. Over time, the activities gained popularity, attracting around 20 children and teenagers, most of whom were in the high-risk age range of 15 to 19 years. Younger children, aged 7 and 8, soon joined as well.

Significant achievements resulting from these activities include children and teenagers embracing sports, breaking free from drug addiction, and embracing a positive path for their lives. Some participants have made considerable progress in their studies and personal growth, attributing their success to their engagement in these sports activities. Moreover, they have learned that they can contribute to the development of athletic culture in their neighborhoods.







Currently, some of the youth who have recently engaged in these sports activities have shown significant progress in their education and careers, thanks to the identity they have gained from this sport. Moreover, they have learned that they can contribute to the development of athletic culture in their neighborhoods. Since the autumn of 1401 (2022), training sessions has been held in the Judo hall of Harandi Stadium (Darvazeh Ghar) with the presence of 30 children and some of the youth also has participated as assistant coaches, working alongside the children and teenagers. The continuous training over these years has instilled self-confidence in them, leading them to participate in official national competitions and achieve notable rankings. They have become role models for the newcomers, inspiring the young boys and girls who join this sport.





# Cultural Activities



## Martial Arts Activities

In addition to sports, we have focused on providing platforms for expression and dialogue among our members through cultural and recreational events, fostering friendship and unity. Some notable events include:

### The second-anniversary celebration of neighborhood-based martial arts activities in Shapour Park in 2021

This celebration was held with some volunteer members at Shapour Neighborhood Park. Among the programs of this celebration, we can mention the dramatic fights of several children, the fiddle performance by one of the children from Darvazeh Ghar Iranian Home, and motivational talks encouraging continued involvement in sports and staying away from addiction. Over these two years, this sports activity has had a positive effect on the culture of the Shapour neighborhood, leading to a reduction in addiction problems in the area.



### The third-anniversary celebration of neighborhood-based martial arts activities in 2022

This celebration was held in the presence of Mr. Kayhan, one of the judo professors, and several supporters at Harandi Stadium (Darvazeh Ghar). During the event, the progress of children and teenagers in this field was assessed, inspiring and motivating them to continue on their path.





### The ritual of "Koucheh Gardan-e Ashegh" held in 2021

The project of "Koucheh Gardan-e Ashegh" took on a different atmosphere with the presence of the youths from Iranian Home of Darvazeh Ghar and the youths from the Shapour neighborhood. This meaningful project was held in a park that has served as a shelter for the neighborhood's children and youths for several months, providing them a gathering place for exercise and helping them steer clear of the darkness of addiction. All stages of this project were executed by the youth from these neighborhoods, promoting a culture of reciprocity and kindness within the community.



### A desert camp in 2021

The camp took place in the presence of a group of boys from the Iranian Homes of Darvazeh Ghar, Shahr-Rey, and Shapour. The destination of this one-day camp, accompanied by volunteer members, was the desert area of Abu Zeidabad near Kashan city. Following the camp activities, the boys had the opportunity to engage in discussions and play at an inn. The camp left a profound impact, fostering motivation and enthusiasm among the boys, and strengthening intimacy and solidarity among them.





### **A celebration for the arrival of the New Year (Nowruz) in 2023**

On the last Thursday of the Iranian year, a celebration was held at the Harandi Stadium to mark the occasion of the arrival of the New Year (Nowruz), with the presence of one of the Judo supporters. The ceremony saw the participation of 25 children who showcased their martial arts skills, and at the end, they were presented with sports gifts. The event also significantly boosted the children's energy and motivation to continue their training in the new year.





### Contact Us

For any inquiries or further information, please don't hesitate to reach out to us through the following contact details:

Public Relations Office Address: Unit 4, 2nd Floor, No. 135, Shahid Sepahbad Qorani St., Ferdowsi Square, Tehran, Iran.

Public Relations Contact Numbers:

Phone: +98 21 88834567

Phone: +98 21 88930816

Imam Ali Society Website: Visit our website at <http://www.sosapoverty.org> for more about our organization and activities.

Persian League Website: Explore our Persian League initiatives at <http://www.persian.sosapoverty.org> for updates and events related to our sports teams.

Feel free to get in touch with us for any questions, partnership opportunities, or to learn more about how we work to support marginalized communities and combat poverty.