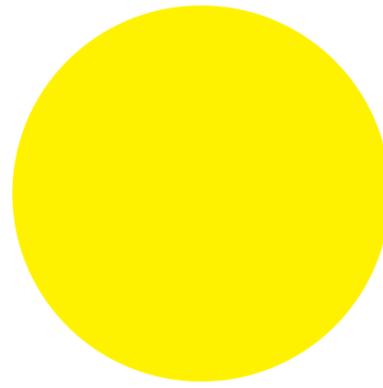


Israel does not want direct war with Iran, Hezbollah

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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE



# Iran Daily



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## Revenge for the defeat from civilians, children

The Minister of War of the Zionist regime announced: "We have issued the order for a complete siege of the Gaza Strip." The new war between the Zionist regime and Palestine started last Sunday.

While the initiators of the war were fighters from the Hamas movement, some Zionists also believe that Israel's aggressive policies and crimes were factors in Hamas's decision to go to war.

Hamas authorities also believe that their actions were a legitimate defense against the regime's crimes, especially against prisoners and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Zionist regime, caught off guard by Hamas's attacks, is launching heavy strikes against the Gaza Strip. The army of the Zionist regime declared: "We have poured more than a thousand tons of explosives onto the Gaza Strip."

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza, in the Zionist attacks and bombardments, 496 Palestinians, including 91 children and 61 women, have been killed. Additionally, 2,751 Palestinians, including 244 children and 151 women, have been injured.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also reported that 123,538 residents of the Gaza Strip have left their homes due to the bombings.

The Palestinian news agency reported: "The Zionist regime is systematically targeting shelters and designated camps for the people of Gaza."

Despite this, "Yoav Galant," the Minister of War of the Zionist regime, announced his order for a complete siege of the Gaza Strip and stated: "According to his orders, no water, electricity, or fuel should enter this area."

It is evident that some countries expressing concerns about the Zionist regime's situation since last Sunday either do not see or perhaps do see but do not address the massacre of civilians, especially women and children in Gaza within the framework of human rights.

Undoubtedly, if Western powers, claiming to uphold human rights, were to witness the crimes of the Zionist regime against Palestinians and take preventative action against this regime, such a war would not have occurred.



MPs Okay key bill on oil, gas production

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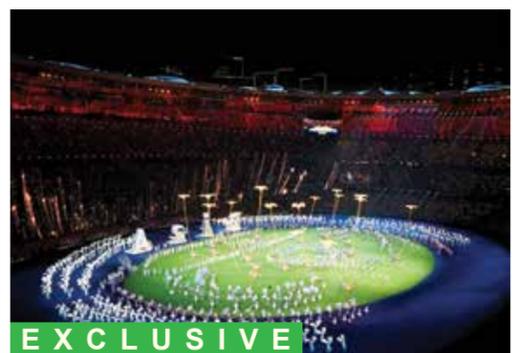
Iran begins rolling new phases at Bushehr nuclear plant

Iran on Sunday started the implementation of the second phase of the second and third units of the Bushehr nuclear plant.

The operation includes pouring concrete for the construction of a part of the second nuclear reactor.

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Highs and lows of Iran's run at Hangzhou Asian Games



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Iran's H1 textile products exports rise to 188k tons

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'Crushing response' vowed to any foolish move against Iran

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Resistance goes on offensive

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Ceramic works in Rishton: A tale of traditional artistry

The town of Rishton, Uzbekistan, stands out as a renowned center for pottery and ceramic craftsmanship. Located in the Fergana Valley, Rishton has earned a reputation for producing exquisite ceramics that blend ancient techniques with artistic innovation. Here, we explore the world of pottery and ceramic works in Rishton, delving into its history, techniques, and the enduring legacy of its artisans.

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## Target Israel

How Israel is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination and Secret Diplomacy to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East?

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

Oil prices  
jump as  
Mideast  
turmoil roils  
markets

Oil prices surged more than 3% on Monday as clashes between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas ignited fears that a wider conflict could impact oil supply from the Middle East.

Brent crude was up \$3.07, or 3.6%, to \$87.65 a barrel by 1341 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$86.15 a barrel, up \$3.36 or about 4.1%, according to Reuters.

Both benchmarks spiked by more than \$4 a barrel earlier in the session.

The surge reversed last week's downtrend — the largest weekly decline since March — in which Brent fell about 11% and WTI retreated more than 8% as a darkening macro-economic outlook intensified concerns about global demand.

"The attack on Israel has added some additional risk premium to oil prices as the market is already extremely tight as a result of the OPEC+ output restrictions, and this could in theory squeeze supply further," said Craig Erlam, who is a market analyst at OANDA.

Riyadh and Moscow have agreed to a combined 1.3 million barrels per day voluntary cut until the end of 2023.

China targets  
50% growth  
in computing  
power in race  
against US

REUTERS — China aims to boost the country's aggregate computing power by more than 50% by 2025, according to a plan released by authorities on Monday, as Beijing tightens its focus on supercomputing and artificial intelligence innovations. The plan comes amid rising competition between China and the US in many high-tech areas ranging from semiconductors and supercomputers to AI, including US export controls on chipmaking equipment.

Iran's H1 textile products exports  
rise to 188k tons

## Economy Desk

Iran exported 188,000 tons of textile products, clothing, leather bags, and shoes in the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–September 22), which shows an eight percent growth compared to the same period last year.

Director General of the Clothing and Textile Industry Department of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mohsen Gorji announced the above in a press conference Monday on the occasion of holding an exhibition of textile, clothing, shoes, bags, and leather industry scheduled for October 15–18 in Tehran, IRNA reported.

The official said the country exported 174,000 tons of textile products, clothing, leather bags, and shoes during the six months to September 22, 2022.

He put the value of the mentioned exported goods during the first six months of the current year at \$368 million, six percent more than the related figure of the preceding year, which was \$345 million.

The export share of this industry was \$368 million in the first 6 months of the current Iranian calendar year, which has recorded a



● IRNA

growth of 6% compared to the same period last year, which was \$345 million.

"Last year, a 17.3% growth was registered in the textile industry of Iran while a 7.5% growth was recorded in the clothing and bag industry, which is the result of the efforts of Iranian artisans and their related unions."

Gorji noted that his ministry makes every endeavor

to conduct regulation and coordination to facilitate further growth.

Stating that the textile and clothing industry is growing in Iran, he said it is prohibited to import finished products of the industry. However, he added, in the field of raw materials and intermediates, the needs of producers are partly met through imports.

Smuggle stands at  
\$3.5b

A member of the Board of Directors of Iran's Textile and Apparel Production and Export Union announced in the press conference that the value of smuggled clothing is close to \$3.5 billion per annum, which has created problems for the producers of the industry.

Majid Eftekhari said, "In the

past, clothing used to be smuggled into the country from Turkey in a traditional way. Later, it mostly came from Bangladesh. And now, there is smuggling from China and Pakistan." Maintaining that the clothing industry is the driving force of the entire textile chain, he said the industry has the highest added value with high employment generation for Iran.

## MPs Okay key bill on oil, gas production



## Economy Desk

Iran's Parliament on Monday passed part of a comprehensive development bill that outlines a vision for the country's

oil and gas production for the next five years.

The government presented the 7th Development Plan to Parliament on June 18. Since then, lawmakers have held 15

sessions to discuss the bill whose Article 42 sets quantitative targets the oil and gas industries must achieve in a five-year timespan. According to the hefty

bill, Iran's crude output will see a 37% growth to reach from 3.1 million barrels per day (bpd) to 4.45 million bpd. For natural gas extraction, a 24% surge is expected to happen with daily production to exceed 1.2 billion cubic meters.

In order to overcome fuel shortages, the motion obliges the Oil Ministry to produce 129 million liters of gasoline per day, 11% up from the current daily output of 116 million liters.

The deputies also gave their approval to a sec-

tion of the bill's Article 44 which allows the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) to sign deals with neighboring countries to jointly develop shared oilfields.

Over the past two years, Iran has boosted its oil output and sales in an effort to regain its footing in the global oil market as a founding member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

Iran's crude exports topped 1.9 million bpd in August, a high not seen in more than five years, after US sanctions curtailed the country's oil flow under 1 million bpd.

## 1,000 EVs to join Iran transport fleet next month: Official

Iran plans to design and manufacture localized electric vehicles by 2025 in cooperation with new technology-based firms (NTBFs) and domestic auto manufacturing firms, announced the deputy minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade for the General Industries. Manufacturing electric cars is not a new idea as the issue was raised 10 years ago by the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, Manouchehr

Manteq said, Tasnim News Agency reported. He added that some 1,000 electric cars will enter the transportation fleet of the country as of the next month of the current Iranian calendar year (to start October 22). Turning to the infrastructures needed for electric cars, Manteqi pointed out that 15 stations equipped with 78 charging devices have thus far been launched across the country.

The deputy industry minister went on to say that designing and manufacturing domestic EVs have been put on the agenda of the ministry and will be carried out in cooperation with NTBFs as well as domestic and international auto manufacturing companies. In August, Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Abbas Aliabadi said that Iranian automotive companies have accelerated their plans to manufac-

ture electric cars. Aliabadi said, however, that the country would not wait for a scale-up in domestic manufacturing of EVs, adding that imports would also increase to respond to the growing demand for such vehicles in the country. He said that Iran's energy sector stands to benefit from the expansion of EV infrastructure, adding that using EVs would also be very economical for the Iranian motorists.



● IRNA

# Ceramic works in Rishton: A tale of traditional artistry



By Reza  
Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writer

The town of Rishton, Uzbekistan, stands out as a renowned center for pottery and ceramic craftsmanship. Located in the Fergana Valley, Rishton has earned a reputation for producing exquisite ceramics that blend ancient techniques with artistic innovation. Here, we explore the world of pottery and ceramic works in Rishton, delving into its history, techniques, and the enduring legacy of its artisans.

## Historical roots

The history of pottery in the Central Asian state dates back millennia, with archaeological findings indicating that ceramic production has been a fundamental part of the region's cultural heritage since at least the first millennium BCE. Rishton, situated in the Fergana Valley, has played a significant role in the legacy, owing its prominence to its unique clay deposits, skilled artisans, and strategic location on the Silk Road.

## Clay of Rishton

One of the key factors that set Rishton apart as a pottery hub is the exceptional quality of the clay found in the region. The clay is rich in iron and boasts a natural red hue. It is this distinctive clay that forms the foundation for Rishton's ceramic works, imparting a unique character to each piece. The clay is meticulously extracted, cleaned, and prepared for the pottery-making process.

## Ceramic process

Pottery-making in Rishton is a labor-intensive craft that involves several intricate steps, each executed with precision and artistry.

**Clay preparation:** The first step involves the extraction of clay from local deposits. The clay is then mixed with water, kneaded, and filtered to remove impurities, resulting in a smooth, workable material.

**Shaping:** Artisans shape the clay by hand, or using pottery wheels. They craft a wide variety of items, from intricate plates and bowls to decorative tiles and vessels. The artisans' skill and experience are evident in the precise and symmetrical shapes they create.

**Decorative techniques:** Rishton ceramics are celebrated for their elaborate decorative techniques. Artisans employ various methods, including carving, embossing, and painting, to adorn their creations. Floral motifs, geometric patterns, and calligraphy are common

themes, reflecting Uzbekistan's cultural heritage.

**Drying:** After shaping and decorating, the ceramic pieces are left to dry in the sun, allowing excess moisture to evaporate. This stage is crucial to prevent cracking during firing.

**Glazing:** Rishton ceramics are often coated with a distinctive turquoise glaze made from powdered glaze minerals and water. The glazing process requires great precision to achieve the desired color and finish.

**Firing:** The ceramics are fired in kilns at high temperatures, typically between 900°C and 1100°C. This process transforms the clay into durable, vibrant ceramics while fixing the glaze. The duration and temperature of firing vary depending on the size and type of the pottery.

**Cooling and inspection:** After firing, the ceramics are allowed to cool slowly. Artisans inspect each piece for any imperfections, ensuring that only the highest-quality items make their way to market.

## Traditional designs and motifs

Rishton ceramics are renowned for their traditional designs and motifs, which echo Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage. These designs often feature intricate floral patterns, geometric shapes, and Persian calligraphy. The use of blue and turquoise hues in the glaze, combined with these timeless motifs, creates a visually striking and culturally significant art form.

## Role of artisans

The skilled artisans of Rishton are the heart and soul of the town's ceramic industry. They inherit their craft through generations, with knowledge and techniques passed down from master to apprentice. These artisans possess an intimate understanding of the local clay, glaze materials, and firing processes, allowing them to create ceramics of



exceptional quality and beauty.

## Preservation of tradition

While Rishton's pottery and ceramic works are deeply rooted in tradition, they are not stagnant. Artisans in the region have shown a remarkable ability to adapt and innovate, blending ancient techniques with contemporary influences. This flexibility has enabled Rishton to remain a vibrant center for ceramic production in the modern world.

## Economic significance

Rishton's ceramic industry has not only preserved cultural traditions but also contributed significantly to the local economy. The production of ceramics provides employment opportunities for many in the region, supporting livelihoods and fostering a sense of community pride. Moreover, the sale of Rishton ceramics in domestic and international markets has become an essential source of income for artisans and traders alike.

## International recognition

Rishton's ceramics have gained international acclaim for their quality and artistry. These distinctive ceramics are sought after by collectors, art enthusiasts, and tourists alike. The town's pottery has been showcased at interna-

tional exhibitions and art fairs, further elevating its global profile.

## Challenges and opportunities

While Rishton's pottery tradition has thrived for centuries, it faces challenges in the modern era. Economic pressures, changing consumer preferences, and competition from mass-produced goods pose ongoing challenges to local artisans. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation, marketing, and collaboration, which can help preserve and promote the rich heritage of Rishton ceramics.

## Fostering cultural ties with Laljin

In a world where globalization has brought nations closer together than ever before, fostering cultural ties and international cooperation is essential for mutual understanding and growth. One way to achieve this is through sister city relationships, which encourage cities from different countries to form partnerships that promote cultural exchange, economic cooperation, and lasting friendships.

Now the time is ripe for establishing a sister city relationship between Rishton and Laljin of Iran, two towns renowned for their rich pottery and ceramic traditions. By connecting these two cultural

hubs, the two countries can create a bridge of friendship, creativity, and economic opportunity that benefits both communities and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

Laljin, a town located in the western Iranian province of Hamedan, boasts a similarly storied tradition of pottery and ceramics. The town's history is intertwined with the development of pottery craftsmanship in Iran. Laljin's artisans, like their counterparts in Rishton, have perfected the art of shaping clay, employing intricate decorative techniques, and achieving remarkable glazing effects.

While they draw inspiration from Iran's rich cultural heritage, Laljin's ceramicists also embrace contemporary expressions of artistry, creating a dynamic fusion of tradition and innovation. The economic significance of pottery in Laljin parallels that of Rishton, providing employment and economic sustainability to its local community.

## Sister city relationship

While Rishton and Laljin may be separated by distance and national borders, their shared love for pottery and ceramics provides a natural foundation upon which to build a meaningful sister city partnership.

## Cultural exchange

**1** Sister city relationships could promote cross-cultural exchange, allowing residents of Rishton and Laljin to learn about each other's traditions, art forms, and way of life. By sharing their respective pottery and ceramic traditions, both towns can deepen their cultural understanding and appreciation, transcending linguistic and geographical barriers.

## Economic opportunities

**2** The economic benefits of sister city relationships are significant. Collaborations in the arts and crafts industry, such as pottery and ceramics, can lead to increased trade, tourism, and investment opportunities. Laljin and Rishton can explore joint ventures, art exhibitions, and cultural festivals that showcase their ceramics, attracting art enthusiasts and collectors from around the world.

## Artistic collaboration

**3** Connecting artisans from Rishton and Laljin opens the door to artistic collaboration. Ceramicists and potters can engage in workshops, share techniques, and even co-create pieces that blend the distinct styles of both regions. This cross-pollination of ideas and skills can lead to the emergence of entirely new and exciting art forms.

## Tourism, cultural experiences

**4** A sister city relationship encourages tourism between the two towns. Travelers interested in pottery and ceramics will be drawn to explore both Rishton and Laljin, immersing themselves in the rich artistic traditions of each place. This influx of tourists can stimulate local economies and enhance cultural exchanges.

## Educational partnerships

**5** Educational institutions in Rishton and Laljin can benefit from collaboration in arts and crafts education. Exchange programs for students and teachers can provide valuable learning experiences and foster a sense of global citizenship. These partnerships can extend to art schools, museums, and cultural centers.

## Diplomacy and peacebuilding

**6** Sister city relationships are rooted in diplomacy and peacebuilding. By forging bonds of friendship and cooperation, Rishton and Laljin can contribute to regional stability and global harmony. These connections create a platform for open dialogue and the resolution of common challenges.



## Shared vision of artistic excellence

The establishment of a sister city relationship between Rishton and Laljin represents an exciting opportunity to forge lasting bonds of friendship, creativity, and economic growth. These two towns, each celebrated for its rich pottery and ceramic traditions, have the potential to create a bridge of understanding and appreciation that transcends borders.

By nurturing this cultural connection, Rishton and Laljin can not only enrich their own communities but also contribute to the broader global tapestry of artistic excellence and international cooperation. In an increasingly interconnected world, it is through such cultural exchanges that people celebrate shared humanity and the enduring power of art to unite nations.

A glimpse into the newly published book "Target Tehran"

# Target israel

How Israel is Using Sabotage, Cyberwarfare, Assassination and Secret Diplomacy to Stop a Nuclear Iran and Create a New Middle East?

Israeli authors confess that Israel has extensively used cyber warfare, targeted assassinations, and sabotage against Iran, with the cooperation of the United States, to counter the Islamic Republic of Iran's nuclear knowledge development. Another topic of discussion is the Abraham Accord and how Israel is trying to advance the "Change" project in the Middle East by engaging with the leaders of regional countries and inducing "Iranophobia". The current article provides a summary of key sections of the book.



The emergence of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman was also significant. He was accessible, energetic, and open to modernizing Saudi Arabia, including its relations with Israel. Cohen established a relationship with bin Salman, leading to secret meetings and discussions. Bin Salman's actions, such as the detention of hundreds of Saudi elites at the Ritz-Carlton hotel and the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, raised international concerns about cooperation with Saudi Arabia. In contrast, Israel continued its efforts to normalize relations with Gulf Arab countries, with the expectation that the UAE would be the first to do so, followed by Saudi Arabia.

## Israel's historical fear of Iran

■ Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister of Israel at the time, appointed Meir Dagan as the head of Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, in 2002. Sharon believed that Israel needed more aggressive actions to counter the nuclear threat from Iran and wanted a leader for Mossad who would use the agency for operations, not just for gathering information.

■ While Ephraim Halevy, the former head of Mossad, had taken actions to counter Iran's nuclear program, Sharon saw him more as a diplomat than a leader focused on operations. Dagan's approach was characterized by his inclination for bold actions, and he was known for his statements about his expertise in "separating Arab heads from their bodies." Despite his tough exterior, Dagan was an intellectual who had interests in arts such as painting and music. His leadership style was described as assertive, making him a powerful figure in Israel's intelligence.

■ Sharon, the Prime Minister of Israel, instructed Mossad to infiltrate Iran's nuclear program while simultaneously strengthening its relations with Gulf Arab countries, which shared concerns about Iran. This effort began in the early 2000s and was facilitated by David Meidan.

■ Sharon's goal as Prime Minister of Israel was to enhance relations with Gulf Arab countries that shared concerns about Iran. Under the leadership of David Meidan, Mossad initiated secret contacts with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and others. The initial relations were between intelligence agencies, but direct channels were later established.

■ Trade and defense relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, including the supply of Israeli security equipment, were cautiously developed. In the 1980s and 1990s, unofficial relations between Mossad and Saudi Arabian intelligence agencies began.

■ Meir Dagan, the Mossad director, had personal channels for communicating with Arab leaders, especially King Abdullah II of Jordan. Israel and Jordan had close relations between their intelligence agencies. Gulf Arab countries preferred that someone else take specific actions to disrupt Iran's nuclear program, and Israel was willing to do so.

■ Meir Dagan pursued a policy of pressure on Iran to create conditions for regime change. Financial sanctions such as UN Security Council Resolutions 1737 and 1747 in 2006-2007 were part of this strategy. Dagan believed that these sanctions, by cutting off European trade and imposing costs on Iran, would harm the country.

## American-Israeli intelligence cooperation

■ Trump and Netanyahu held their first official meeting in January 2017, where they discussed Iran as a top priority and emphasized the need for unparalleled intelligence sharing and coordinated operations against Iran between the United States and Israel.

■ Mike Pompeo, the Director of the CIA, and Yossi Cohen, the head of Mossad, established a close and personal pro-

fessional relationship with strong cooperation between their agencies. They visited each other's agencies and established direct communication for operational collaboration. This relationship was so close that Pompeo participated in a secret farewell ceremony for Cohen upon his retirement from Mossad, even though Pompeo was no longer in the government at that time.

## Intervention and Sabotage in Iran for Destabilization

■ Dagan supported student democracy movements and ethnic minorities in Iran, believing that Iran's economy was weakening and causing a crisis among its leadership. He doubted the existence of a moderate faction within Iran's leadership and believed that both hardliners and reformists sought Israel's destruction.

■ The Green Movement protests in Iran in 2009 created an opportunity for change but were not fully capitalized upon. Western intelligence agencies could not effectively exploit the vulnerable regime during the protests. Israel and Gulf Arab countries intensified their intelligence contacts due to the Iranian threat. Reports suggest that Saudi Arabia allowed Israeli jets to use its airspace for potential strikes on Iran. Opposition within the security establishments of Israel and the United States prevented immediate military action, at least temporarily.

■ Cohen was recruited by Mossad during his studies in England. His Jewish upbringing influenced his strong commitment to Israel and its security. He was considered an intelligent officer and was proficient in multiple languages. Under Cohen's leadership, Iran became Mossad's top priority. He secured a larger budget for the agency, primarily to acquire technology and development related to countering Iran's nuclear program. Cohen also focused on creating common ground with Saudi Arabia, laying the groundwork for future cooperation.

■ The decision to target Iran's nuclear archive was made in January 2016, two years before the operation itself. Netanyahu and Cohen believed that gaining access to the nuclear archive would weaken the nuclear deal and provide grounds for resuming covert actions. The former head of Mossad, Tamir Pardo, was

aware of the existence of these archives but did not know their location. Netanyahu's controversial speech in Congress further strained relations between Israel and the United States.

■ For this operation, Mossad decided to send Israeli commandos due to the high risk of arrest and execution in public. Mossad had established relationships with various Iranian opposition groups and minority ethnic groups, including the People's Mujahedin, a Marxist-Islamic group.

■ Despite months of surveillance, Mossad lacked critical information about the operational details and decided to infiltrate an Israeli agent into Tehran. A female Mossad officer with proficiency in Persian and an engineering degree was chosen for this mission, accompanied by a male partner to avoid suspicion. The agent visited the vicinity of the archive several times, collecting valuable information that allowed Mossad to proceed with the project.

■ The operation to steal Iran's nuclear archive was the result of over two years of planning and preparation, involving hundreds of Mossad personnel, including intelligence officers, cryptanalysts, hackers, linguists, and technology experts. The decision to execute this operation was made after Netanyahu informed President Trump during a meeting at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

■ The Natanz attack was a strategic move that occurred before negotiations to revive the nuclear deal. Mossad's actions, orchestrated by Cohen, aimed to target Iran's facilities, weaken Iran's negotiating position, and disrupt its nuclear program. However, despite Israel's sophisticated sabotage campaigns, Iran has consistently improved its nuclear facilities following these attacks.





## Engagement with Regional Leaders and Efforts for 'Normalization'

■ Sunni Arab countries in the region, who saw Iran as a rival, welcomed Trump's strong positions on Iran.

■ Tamir Hayman, the head of Israeli military intelligence, emphasized the deep sectarian competition between Iran (Shi'a) and Sunni Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, which was perceived as even deeper than the rivalry between Israel and Iran.

■ The emergence of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman was also significant. He was accessible, energetic, and open to modernizing Saudi Arabia, including its relations with Israel. Cohen established a relationship with bin Salman, leading to secret meetings and discussions. Bin Salman's actions, such as the detention of hundreds of Saudi elites at the Ritz-Carlton hotel and the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, raised international concerns about cooperation with Saudi Arabia. In contrast, Israel continued its efforts to normalize relations with Gulf Arab countries, with the expectation that the UAE would be the first to do so, followed by Saudi Arabia.

■ The theft of Iran's nuclear archive in 2018 raised Israel's profile among Arabs in the Persian Gulf, especially with Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman and Mohammad bin Zayed. Efforts were made to advance Israel's relations with the Gulf, including the "Deal of the Century" peace plan. However, the Palestinian issue remained an obstacle.

■ The Palestinian issue hindered progress, as the Palestinians rejected Trump's plan. Yossi Cohen had contacts with Gulf Arab leaders, including a meeting with Mohammad bin Zayed in the UAE. Mohammad bin Zayed emerged as a key figure, viewing Israel as a balance against Iran and an economic partner.

■ An agreement with Saudi Arabia, given its regional influence and religious importance, was vital for further developments. Bahrain, with its close ties to the United States, played a crucial role in pressuring for normalization with Israel. Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, the Foreign Minister, openly supported Israel's right to strike Iranian targets and indicated that Israel should "stay here" and that normalization could occur even without an Israel-Palestine agreement. Bahrain, especially due to its reliance on the US Fifth Fleet for security, sought to strengthen its security through relations with Israel. This cooperation also included facilitating Israeli military communication at the Fifth Fleet's headquarters.

■ Personal relationships between Israeli leaders and officials and Gulf Arab countries have become friendly. The countries cooperate in defense and Israel's annual arms sales have reached their highest levels, especially to the UAE and Bahrain.

## The Abraham Accords for Advancing the 'Change' Project in the Middle East

■ In August 2020, the United Arab Emirates and Israel reached a preliminary agreement to normalize their relations. The negotiations were centered around a joint statement and were named the Abraham Accords to reflect their significance for Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. These agreements included various aspects of cooperation, signaling a historic shift in Israel's relations with the Arab world. Simultaneously, the United States approved the sale of F-35 fighter jets to the UAE, indirectly impacting Israel's support for normalization.

■ The Abraham Accords marked the culmination of decades of efforts by Mossad, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others. They aimed to reshape the balance of power in the region by bringing Israel into full-fledged relations with Arab countries.

■ The agreements required the cooperation of several sensitive national leaders, including Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman, the UAE's Mohammed bin Zayed, Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu, and U.S. President Trump. Each of them could have derailed the agreements. Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, played a behind-the-scenes role in building trust and relationships with Gulf countries, especially with bin Salman and bin Zayed, which ultimately helped in the success of these efforts.

■ The agreement with Sudan faced challenges due to political developments in the country. Normalization with Sudan was symbolically significant as it marked a departure from a policy established after the 1967 Six-Day War. Despite challenges, efforts were made to maintain peaceful relations and keep the doors open for further

normalization, especially with Sudan.

■ The Abraham Accords, signed between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain in September 2020, strengthened unprecedented cooperation. Israel immediately began selling advanced military equipment to the UAE and Bahrain after signing the agreement. The focus was on cooperation and coordination in missile defense systems between Israel and Gulf countries. Personal relationships formed during secret negotiations became visible and friendly. The annual sale of Israeli weaponry, especially to the UAE and Bahrain, reached its peak.

■ Mohammed bin Salman may consider normalization with Israel in the future, but it depends on various factors. Recent developments, such as the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, can influence the pace of nor-

malization. There are debates and controversies within Israel regarding judicial reforms and their impact on foreign relations. The role of Saudi Arabia in potentially expanding the Abraham Accords to other Muslim countries is crucial. While Saudi Arabia is not part of the agreement, it has played an important role in supporting the normalization process. However, complete normalization with Saudi Arabia may depend on various factors, including the situation in Palestine.

■ The agreements signed between Israel and Gulf countries have initiated a new era of unofficial military cooperation and alliances among former adversaries. The sale of advanced military hardware by Israel to the UAE and Bahrain, along with discussions on missile defense cooperation, is conclude of these agreements.

## From Israeli Terrorism to Pressuring the IAEA

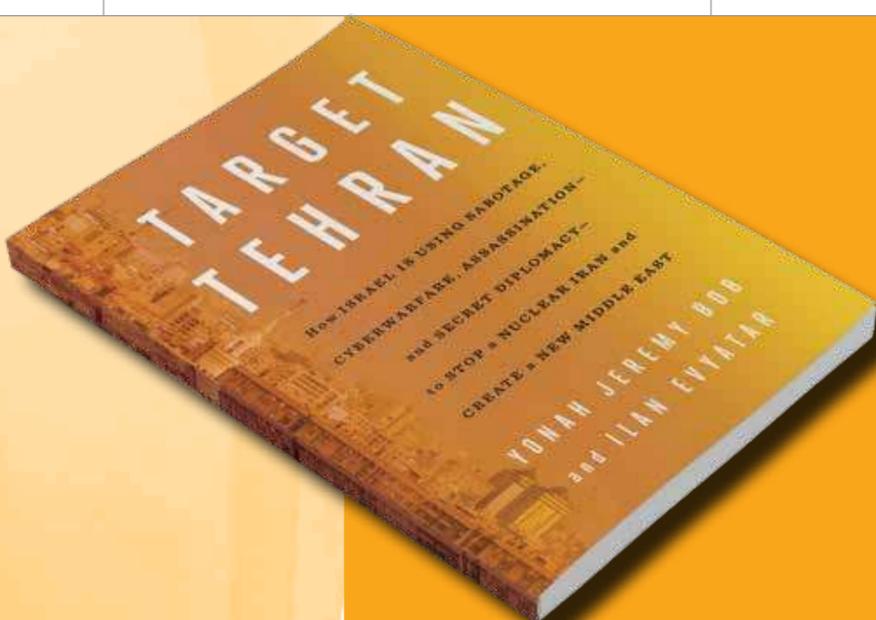
■ Two and a half years after gaining access to Iran's nuclear archive, Israel achieved a significant goal when the United States withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal and forced the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to investigate Iran. This led to a change in the leadership of the International Atomic Energy Agency from Yukiya Amano to Rafael Grossi, resulting in a more active stance against Iran. Grossi pressed Iran for transparency in its nuclear activities, including uranium enrichment and nuclear efforts under

pressure. He publicly acknowledged Mossad's claims about Iran's hidden uranium enrichment facilities, causing concern. Israel was pleased with Grossi's tough approach and condemnation of Iran. Israel refrained from direct action, even though International Atomic Energy Agency member states and the JCPOA believed Iran was in compliance.

■ The assassination of Fakhrizadeh was a complex operation. It involved a remote-controlled machine gun hidden in a disguised van, which had been secretly assembled in

Iran over eight months by a team of operatives closely monitoring Fakhrizadeh's movements. The weapon was associated with facial recognition technology, ensuring that the scientist was the target and not someone else.

■ Yossi Cohen, the head of Mossad, couldn't publicly declare his role in Fakhrizadeh's assassination, but he was confident that Israel was safer after removing both Soleimani and Fakhrizadeh, who were perceived as threats, reduced concerns about threats against Israel.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



YONAH JEREMY BOB is the senior military and intelligence analyst as well as the book review editor for The Jerusalem Post. Hailing originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Bob has close connections with many Israeli intelligence figures and previously worked in the Israeli military international law division at the Israeli Embassy to the UN and in the Israeli Justice Ministry. He is the author of *Justice in the West Bank?* and the editor and translator of *A Raid on the Red Sea*, an intelligence thriller whose principal author, Amos Gilboa, is a former IDF deputy chief of intelligence.



ILAN EVYATAR is a former editor-in-chief of the award-winning magazine *The Jerusalem Report* and a former news director, columnist, and senior contributor at *The Jerusalem Post*. He has edited and translated several books and has worked as a speechwriter and ghostwriter. Born in Israel and raised in London, England, he has interviewed a wide variety of top intelligence officials, as well as leading political, business, and cultural personalities.

## Brilliant Biles wins two more world golds on final day



● YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

REUTERS – American Simone Biles won the balance beam and floor events on the final day of the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships on Sunday as she wrapped up her first international competition in two years with a haul of five medals – four golds and a silver.

The 26-year-old increased her record world and Olympics medals tally to 37, including 23 world golds.

Biles posted a total of 14.800 in the balance beam final for her impeccable routine ahead of China's Zhou Yaqin with 14.700.

Brazilian Rebeca Andrade, who beat Biles on Saturday to gold in the women's vault, posted 14.300 for bronze.

The American claimed her second gold of the day in the floor final with 14.633, 0.133 points ahead of second-placed Andrade.

Brazilian Flavia Saraiva completed the podium with a score of 13.966 for her first individual medal at the worlds.

"I wasn't too worried about medal count or medal colour," Biles said. "I just wanted to go out there and do my routines again. It doesn't matter if I'm going to get up on the podium or not, that wasn't something I cared about. I just wanted to compete confidently again."

"I had to prove to myself that I could still get out here and twist. I could prove all the haters wrong, that I'm not a quitter. As long as I'm out there twisting again and finding the joy for gymnastics again, who cares?"

Biles led the U.S. women's team to gold before taking a milestone sixth all-around title. She also won gold on balance beam and floor exercise after clinching silver on vault.

Elsewhere, Jake Jarman earned Britain's first gold of the competition by winning the men's vault final earlier on Sunday to become world champion for the first time in his career.

"I was super nervous going into this competition. I don't know why. I kept telling myself, 'just enjoy it, just enjoy it, anything can happen', but I still got nervous," Jarman said.

The 21-year-old finished ahead of American Khoi Young who took silver to add to his second place in the pommel horse and bronze in the team event. Germany's Lukas Dauser won the men's parallel bars final while Japan's Daiki Hashimoto took gold in the horizontal bar.

# Highs and lows of Iran's run at Hangzhou Asian Games



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour  
Staff writer

Sunday's closing ceremony in Hangzhou brought the curtain down on a campaign of mixed results for the Iranians at the 19th Asian Games. When Iran's Ministry of Sport and the National Olympic Committee decided to send full-strength wrestling and volleyball squads to the Games the message was clear: Go all out for the top prizes.

Eight members of the Iranian freestyle and Greco-Roman teams stepped onto the mat only two weeks after the World Championships in Belgrade, with the volleyball national team leaving Hangzhou right after the final showpiece to embark on a 57-hour journey to Rio de Janeiro to take part in the qualification tournament for next year's Paris Olympics.

The overall outcome of the Games, however, was not quite what the Iranian sport apparatus had hope for as the country's 285-athlete delegation managed to cap-

ture only 13 gold medals across the two weeks – seven short of the figure the Iranians tallied in Jakarta-Palembang 2018 and the lowest haul since 2006, when Iran grabbed 11 golds in Doha.

In fact, Iran had to wait till the penultimate day of the competitions to reach the double figures in gold count – courtesy of title-winning performances by freestyle wrestlers Younes Emami, Hassan Yazdani and Amirhossein Zare' as well as a men's chess team gold.

The Iranians also collected 21 silvers and 20 bronzes, meaning the total number of the medals was also down by eight from five years ago, though the country was represented by 93 more athletes in Indonesia.

A seventh-place finish in the medals table saw Iran drop by one spot compared to the previous edition.

While it was business as usual for the Iranian participants in several sports – including wrestling, volleyball, and wushu – the performances in certain competitions will fairly go down as a failure.

"I personally expected more from our athletes in five or six competitions. We had a dozen contestants in some events but they failed to win a medal," said Manaf Hashemi, Iran's chef de mission in Hangzhou.

The Iranian under-23 side was knocked out of the football event after a 1-0 shock defeat against Hong Kong, with basketball team – silver medalist in 2018 – finishing fifth.

Iran was represented by 16 shooters in the Games but only grabbed a single medal – a 10m air pistol mixed team bronze for Haniyeh Rostamian and Amir Joharikhoh – and it was even worse in the archery contests, where all 10 Iranians left Hangzhou empty-handed.

The Iranian 10-member weightlifting squad had to settle for Ali Davoudi's silver in the men's superheavyweight class, while in taekwondo and karate, in which the country is regarded as a continental force, the results were relatively average.

The country's female athletes and teams took credit for 18 of the 54 medals in

the Games, though none of the 77 Iranian girls walked away with the ultimate prize of their respective competitions, indicating there is room for more work in women's sport.

Despite all the lack of success and below-par performances during the 15 days, there were still reasons for joy and optimism for the Iranian sport after some significant achievements in the Games.

The five-man team of Parham Maqsoudloo, Bardia Daneshvar, Mohammad-Amin Tabatabaei, Amir-Reza Pouraqabala, and Pouya Idani notched up a first-ever chess gold for the country, while Mahdi Olfati's men's vault silver was Iran's maiden medal in artistic gymnastics.

Faranak Parto-Azar also had a historic run as her cross country bronze was the first won by any Iranian female biker over the 19 editions of the Asian Games.

Parto-Azar was joined in the history books by roller skater Taraneh Ahmadi, who grabbed a precious silver in the women's inline freestyle

skating speed slalom, while her teammate Romina Salek set a world record of 4.254 seconds in the preliminary round, though she was unlucky to miss out on the podium.

In table tennis, meanwhile, Alamian brothers, Nima and Noshad, enjoyed a memorable campaign as they teamed up with Amirhossein Hodaei to win the men's team bronze – Iran's first medal of the sport in the Asian Games in 65 years – before finishing third in the doubles contest. Ehsan Haddai's 16-year discus throw domination at the Asian Games came to an end with a silver medal, though he was thrilled to see his Iranian heir Hossein Rasouli stand on the top podium.

"We'll be looking to see the Iranians still deliver in taekwondo, karate, wrestling, weightlifting, archery, and shooting in the future, though more work needs to be done," Hashemi said, adding: "However, the Games showed that we could also fancy our chances of more glory in other events such as gymnastics, table tennis, and roller skating."



The closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games takes place in Hangzhou, China, on October 8, 2023. ● GETTY IMAGES

## Iran coach Qalenoey names squad for Jordan tournament

### Sports Desk

Iran head coach Amir Qalenoey announced Iran's 23-man squad for the upcoming friendly tournament in Jordan.

The Asian powerhouse will play the host at Amman International Stadium on Friday with the winner taking on Qatar or Iraq in the final.

Should Iran be pitted against Qatar, there will be a reunion with former Portuguese manager Carlos Queiroz, who left the Iran job after last year's World Cup to take over at the reigning Asian Cup champion ahead of its title defense on home soil in January.

AS Roma striker Sardar Azmoun, who was absent for September's friendlies against Bulgaria and Angola to recover from an injury, will make a return to the team. Persepolis center-back Hossein

Kan'anizadegan is also back in the squad after missing the previous two matches for disciplinary reasons.

Sepahan strikers Shahriyar Moghanlou and Morteza Asadi, who have been in flying form in the Iranian top flight this season, are not in the list, making way for Karim Ansarifard as the veteran striker receives a first international call-up since the cameo appearance against USA in the World Cup.

Three-time champion Iran will begin the quest for a first Asian trophy since 1976 when facing Palestine in Group C of the continent's flagship international event – also featuring the United Arab Emirates and Hong Kong – in Al Rayyan's Education City Stadium on January 14.

The following is Iran's full squad for the visit to Jordan:  
**Goalkeepers:** Alireza Beiran-

vand (Persepolis), Payam Nia-zmand (Sepahan), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal)

**Defenders:** Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Hossein Kan'anizadegan (Persepolis), Morteza Pouraliganji (Persepolis), Mohammad Daneshgar (Sepahan), Amin Hazbavi (Al Sadd), Ehsan Hajsafi (AEK Athens), Milad Mohammadi (AEK Athens), Sadeq Moharami (Dinamo Zagreb), Ramin Rezaei (Sepahan)

**Midfielders:** Saeed Ezzatollahi (Vejle BK), Rouzbeh Cheshmi (Esteghlal), Ahmad Nourollahi (Al Wahda), Mohammad Mohebbi (FC Rostov), Mohammad-Javad Hosseinejad (Sepahan)

**Strikers:** Sardar Azmoun (AS Roma), Mahdi Taremi (FC Porto), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (Feyenoord), Saman Qoddous (Brentford), Mehrdad Mohammadi (Esteghlal), Karim Ansarifard (Omonia FC).





# Iran begins rolling new phases at Bushehr nuclear plant

**National Desk**

Iran on Sunday started the implementation of the second phase of the second and third units of the Bushehr nuclear plant. The operation includes pouring concrete for the construction of a part of the second nuclear reactor. Overseeing the process, Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami expressed hope that the second unit will be completed and inaugurated in less than 5 years and the third unit 1.5 years after that. He also expressed hope that the concrete pouring operation will begin at the third nuclear reactor soon. "The construction works in the sites of two Bushehr nuclear reactors have increased ten-fold compared to the previous years.

Those involved in the project have been working round the clock in three shifts," he added. Masoud Nasouri, the engineer in charge of the project for the construction of the second and third Bushehr reactors, said that the two units will save the country 10 million barrels of oil and 1,600 billion cubic meters of gas per year and prevent the emission of 7 million tons of toxic gasses. During the ceremony, Iran's nuclear chief noted that the Bushehr nuclear plant has so far produced more than 60 billion kilowatt hours (kw/h) of electricity, including 7 billion kw/h last year. According to the 20-year vision, it is necessary to produce 20,000 megawatts of electricity, which will be realized with an investment of \$50 billion, he said.

Eslami noted that the government's support had accelerated the construction of the two reactors under deals worth €1.8 billion. According to the facility's authorities, the nuclear plant has produced 3.5 million megawatt hours of electricity since the beginning of the Iranian year, which begins on March 21. The nuclear plant was built by Russia after years of delay and officially handed over in September 2013. Over the past years, Iran's peaceful nuclear energy program has recorded many achievements in defiance of US sanctions as well as hurdles created by the West. The country has also been closely cooperating with the International Atomic Energy Agency as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

## Tehran denies involvement in Hamas attacks

# 'Crushing response' vowed to any foolish move against Iran

**National Desk**

Iran has rejected the accusations that Tehran was involved in the Palestinian surprise attack against Israel, adding that the large-scale operation was carried out "solely" by Palestine. Iran's mission to the United Nations said on Sunday that Tehran was not involved in the Saturday attacks launched by members of Hamas and other Gaza-based resistance fighters against Israel, which resulted in the death of at least 800 Israelis and the capture of dozens more until Monday. "Iran unwaveringly stands in solidarity with Palestine; however, it is important to note that Iran is not involved in Palestine's response as these actions are solely determined by the Palestinians themselves," Iran's UN mission said in a statement.

**'Legitimate defense'**  
The mission also called the attack a wholly legitimate defense, saying the resolute measures taken by Palestine constitute "a completely legitimate response to seven decades

of oppressive occupation and the numerous atrocities committed by the Israeli regime". Meanwhile, dismissing the threats against Iran, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani warned that any "foolish move" would draw Iran's devastating response. In the aftermath of the attack, senior US officials maintained that it was too early to determine whether Iran had any direct role in planning and supporting Hamas' attack. "It is early" and a matter of direct interest to determine, one senior official said, CNN reported. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Sunday that he had "not yet seen evidence that Iran directed or was behind this particular attack, but there's certainly a long relationship". However, US Republican Senator Lindsey Graham on X accused Tehran of being behind the attack, writing that "Iran should pay dearly for any escalation directed at Israel". The American lawmaker added that an attack by Hezbollah "would be



IRNA

devastating to Israeli defense systems". "If such an attack occurs, Israel and the United States should go after the Iranian oil refineries and oil infrastructure — which is the lifeblood of the Iranian economy." Kanaani said accusations of Iran's involvement come in the wake of Israel's humiliating defeat and are meant to justify Washington's and its Western

allies' support for the misadventures of the Tel Aviv regime. He underscored that the hostile claims against Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement will not reduce the accountability of the UK and the US for the 75-year-old-long crimes that Israel has been perpetrating against Palestinians and other nations in the West Asia region. He warned of attempts by Israel's supporters, chief among them the US, to

swap the oppressor and the oppressed through their propaganda war. They are turning a blind eye to the crimes of the occupying regime while leveling accusations against the innocent people of Palestine, he said. The Hamas assault on Saturday, the biggest in decades, coincided with US-backed moves to push Saudi Arabia towards normalizing ties with Israel in return for a defence deal between Washington and Riyadh.

Hamas fighters' attack on Israeli towns on Saturday was the deadliest such incursion since Egypt and Syria's attacks on Israel in the Yom Kippur War 50 years ago and has threatened to ignite another conflagration in the long-running conflict. Israel stepped up its ferocious pounding of the besieged Gaza Strip as its troops struggled to clear out Hamas fighters more than two days after they burst across the fence from Gaza and overran Israeli bases. Pentagon Chief Lloyd Austin said he has ordered the Ford carrier strike group to sail to the Eastern Mediterranean to be ready to assist Israel. Israeli warplanes bombed a densely populated neighborhood at the Jabalia refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. In Gaza, more than 73,000 are sheltering in schools, some of which have been designated emergency shelters. The Health Ministry in the Palestinian enclave said the death toll in the Gaza Strip rose to 560 on Monday, as Israel pounded Hamas targets for the third consecutive day. The ministry also urged the international commu-

nity to exert pressure on Israel to resume electricity supply to the besieged strip as a power outage has left hospitals and medical facilities in a tight spot, amid a shortage of medicines and medical equipment. **Prisoner swap**  
Qatar is leading the talks to swap Hamas-held prisoners in exchange for the release of 36 Palestinian women and children from Israel's prisons, a source told Reuters. The negotiations, which Qatar has been conducting in coordination with the United States since Saturday night, are "moving positively" said the source, who has been briefed on the talks. But there are no signs of breakthroughs as both sides dig in. A Hamas member said that the group is not open to negotiating a prisoner exchange with Israel during hostilities, AFP reported. The military wing of the Hamas resistance movement said late Sunday that its fighters have managed to capture a new group of Israeli forces, as "Operation Al-Aqsa Storm" continues against the occupying regime.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



**First Announcement**

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# Resistance goes on offensive



By **Arafat Abu Zaid**  
Lecturer in international relations

**PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE**

Operation Al-Aqsa Storm took place at a time when the Zionist occupation believed it had succeeded in subduing the resistance in Gaza and eliminating it. Zionist research centers and military generals in the entity even affirmed on more than one occasion that the resistance in Gaza was crippled. This was despite the fact that the resistance had confirmed during the Battle of the Revenge of the Free in May 2023 and subsequent exercises of the Joint Operations Room, especially the Extreme Corner 4 maneuver on September 12 last year, that it was ready to confront aggression and defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the prisoners.

The Zionist arrogance continued through daily violations and incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and attacks on Jerusalem residents, whether Muslims or Christians, by settlers. As a result of this, the resistance faced a real test to defend its land, sanctities, and the dignity of its people. In a first for the Palestinian resistance, it managed to use the element of surprise and deception by concealing its field and military plan from the occupation until the military operation was hours away from starting. It proved the weakness and ineffectiveness of the occupation's capabilities and military abilities that it had purportedly honed through repeated the Chariots of Fire and Decisive Strike maneuvers.

Operation Al-Aqsa Storm constitutes a moral, security, and military blow to the Zionist occupation. The battle came after the occupation executed several strategic maneuvers, most notably the Chariots of Fire and Decisive Strike maneuvers, which it claimed were aimed at training to confront Iran and strike the Iranian nuclear program. Despite these major maneuvers, the Zionist occupation, which had planned for a battle against Iran, was unable to face a group of young resistance fighters armed with only primitive weapons in an area that has been geographically besieged by land, sea, and air for 17 years. The most prominent question is how the state of the occupation army would be if it engaged in a battle with Iran or Hezbollah, given its current capabilities.

The heroic scenes made by the Palestinian resistance in this battle resonated with the Arab and Islamic world, which supported it by celebrating and demonstrating in the streets. One of the most notable official reactions was made by the Iranian Parliament in Iran, which expressed its support for the resistance operation as its members chanted slogans such as "Death to Israel," "Death to America," "Death to Britain," "Israel will be annihilated," and "Palestine is victorious."

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# Israel does not want direct war with Iran, Hezbollah



By **Ebrahim Beheshti**  
Staff writer

*In light of Hamas's unprecedented operation against the Israeli regime, resulting in heavy casualties in Tel Aviv, several questions have been raised regarding the future of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis: Will Hezbollah engage in a direct war? How will the tensions between Iran and Israel unfold? What ripples will the operation make in Saudi Arabia? To gain insights into these inquiries, Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Rahman Qahramanpour, a strategic affairs expert.*

**IRAN DAILY:** Prior to Operation "Al-Aqsa Storm", there were discussions about the level of military power attained by resistance groups in Palestine and their ability to deter Israel. In light of this recent operation, how do you assess the military strength of these groups, particularly Hamas — the largest among them?

**QAHRAMANPOUR:** Contrary to Israeli assessments, Hamas has significantly increased its military power compared to previous years. Their recent operation involved a coordinated



deployment of ground, air, and sea forces in the occupied territories. However, it is important to acknowledge that Hamas is not a state actor and cannot establish military balance with Israel. This expectation is unrealistic for a non-state actor like Hamas, especially considering that they are based in Gaza, which has been under Israeli siege for a long time. So, the Saturday operation caught the Israelis off guard. Following previous conflicts, Israel acknowledged Qatar's supervision of the situation in Gaza. Consequently, with Qatar's control and oversight, essential goods were imported to Gaza. Therefore, Israel assumed that Hamas' military capabilities were limited. Many Israeli experts and analysts have emphasized that Tel Aviv's primary concern is Hezbollah in Lebanon. Accordingly, they said, Israel should focus on Hezbollah and prevent the transfer of advanced weaponry to southern Lebanon. Moreover, after the events of the so-called Arab Spring, Hamas distanced itself from Iran due to the Syrian crisis and established closer ties with Qatar. Many believed that the Islamic Jihad group then gained the upper hand in the armed conflict against Israel. In fact, the Israelis seemed comfortable with Hamas until Saturday, when Hamas surprised them. Israel's internal crisis also played a part in them being taken unawares.

Many have been wondering whether Lebanon's Hezbollah will engage in direct conflict with Israel, potentially

escalating the scope of the war.

Since 2006, Hezbollah in Lebanon has primarily focused on increasing its deterrence capabilities and acquiring more advanced military equipment, significantly strengthening its military power. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that Lebanon has been dealing with severe political and economic crises for several years, which has made it fragile. So, I believe that Hezbollah is unlikely to engage in a direct conflict with Israel. Such a move could invite criticism from other groups and political factions within Lebanon.

Hezbollah is not inclined to initiate an all-out confrontation with Israel as it would result in severe damage to Lebanon's infrastructure. Despite scattered clashes in southern Lebanon over the past few days, neither Hezbollah nor Israel currently wants a full-scale war. Even though Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that his country has entered a war, he emphasized his intention to prevent third parties from becoming involved. However, not all war events unfold according to the plans and desires of the parties involved, and circumstances may arise that force Hezbollah's hand in entering the conflict.

Iran and Israel are each other's open enemies, and so far it seems that there has been a proxy war between them, not a direct one. What effect do you think Saturday's operation will have on the hostile relationship between the two?



THE GUARDIAN

As you correctly pointed out, Iran and Israel have been engaged in a proxy war rather than a direct conflict. Following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, it is anticipated that the tensions between the two sides will escalate, but it is unlikely to surpass the level of a proxy war. However, the intensity of this proxy war is indeed increasing. The future trajectory of the war will significantly impact the relationship between Iran and Israel. Will a truce be established within a few days or will the war be prolonged? Will the Israeli army venture into Gaza? Are the Israelis also targeting the Islamic Jihad movement? Will Hezbollah become involved in the war? These factors will shape the course of their hostile relationship.

Some, mostly in cyberspace, have reported about Russia's behind-the-scenes role in Saturday's operation. How close can

this analysis be to reality?

In my view, this analysis lacks credibility since Europe and the United States have so far not entered the war in fear of inciting Russia's counteraction. Moreover, Russia strives to keep a balance between regional powers like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. So, it maintains positive relations with all of them. There is no evidence to suggest that Russia has any hostile positions against Israel, either. Even under pressure from European and American authorities, Israel did not send military equipment, particularly the Iron Dome system, to Ukraine. Furthermore, given Russia's involvement in the Ukraine war, it is unlikely that they would have any interest in starting yet another conflict. Plus, Russia lacks the capacity to carry out such operations.

And finally, how do you evaluate the situation in

Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, in response to this operation?

The key part of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Israel is currently the normalization process, which is being pushed by the United States. However, Operation Al-Aqsa Storm will undoubtedly delay the progress of normalization. US President Joe Biden had initially anticipated the implementation of the plan by early 2024, but now it appears highly unlikely. Nevertheless, the normalization agenda remains viable for both sides. If a ceasefire is established in the coming days, the normalization plan may not be completely abandoned, although it will certainly be postponed. Saudi Arabia may face challenges in dealing with public opinion within its country and the Islamic world, which could complicate the situation.

By **Yasser Al-Khawaja**

Palestinian journalist

**PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE**

## Operation Al-Aqsa Storm's success broken down

### 1 Timing

The operation was strategically timed to take place after the dawn of Saturday, a day that the Israeli entity considers a holiday. During this day, the Israeli occupation tends to be in a state of security laxity and slowness, creating an opportune moment for such an operation.

### 4

#### Element of surprise

Perhaps the most critical element was the element of surprise. The enemy lost its ability to absorb the shock and deal with it. The enemy might not have fully realized the impact of the strike for several hours, which gave the resistance ample opportunity to carry out the operation without significant hindrances. This was despite the technological and cyber superiority, constant aerial surveillance, and spy drones filling the skies, all of which failed to find any significant preemptive opportunities to counter or uncover the operation. Additionally, the resistance used rocket barrages of varying ranges as an aerial cover to confuse the enemy and thwart its use of airpower to target the fighters. All these factors combined led to the success of an operation that was the boldest and most potent in the history of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict.

### 2

#### Lack of intelligence

This major security event, with all its implications, revealed the extent of the Israeli security apparatus's blindness. It demonstrated that the Zionist system couldn't even acquire half a piece of information to anticipate a security event. The operation marked a clear failure and security breakdown for that institution. It resulted in a successful incursion, allowing the resistance to kill and capture a significant number of soldiers affiliated with the Israeli military brigade and its special forces. The absence of security information and the resistance's ability to retain it seem to be a fundamental pillar and basis for the success of this special operation.

### 3 Resistance planning

The operation was well-planned and executed by the resistance. They chose the appropriate timing and favorable security circumstances. The idea of the bold infiltration operation appears to have been in planning for a considerable period, involving operations of deception and diversion carried out by the Gaza-based resistance. Additionally, the means used in the operation, such as off-road vehicles, motorcycles, and aerial approaches via parachutes and gliders, allowed for entry into the settlements adjacent to the Gaza Strip and military sites like Zikim, Duqit, and the 61 communication system.