

Leader: Zionists will receive 'heavier slap'



International Desk

Iran's Leader on Tuesday praised the Palestinian youth and masterminds of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against Israel for achieving a remarkable victory, rejecting as "miscalculations" the claims that the "epic" act was not a "Palestinian job".

"The usurping Zionist regime suffered an irreparable defeat both in terms of military and intelligence," Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei told a graduation ceremony of military cadets in Tehran.

Some US and Israeli officials had accused Tehran of being behind the attack. However, 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".

Ayatollah Khamenei said the Israelis should blame themselves for the defeat but instead, they have opted to play the victim. The Leader said no Muslim nation in contemporary history has ever faced a regime as hostile and cruel as Israel. Neither has any nation been under as much pressure, siege, and shortage as the Palestinian nation.

"In addition, the US and the UK have not supported any cruel government as much they supported the fake regime" of Israel, he added. However, now that the evil and cruel enemy has received the slap, it has adopted a policy of playing the victim, he said, adding, "Others including the media of the global arrogance help it."

"The Zionists should know that after massacring the people of Gaza, they will receive a heavier slap."

War crime

The Palestinian Health Ministry said Tuesday the Israeli airstrikes have killed at least 704 people and injured more than 3,900 people since the unprecedented operation by Hamas.

Israeli energy minister Israel Katz said on Monday that he had instructed authorities to cut the water supply to the Gaza Strip. Secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights Kazem Gharibabadi denounced the move as a "war crime," Press TV reported.

Nearly 200K displaced

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian office said on Tuesday that nearly 200,000 people or nearly a tenth of the Gaza population have fled their homes since the start of hostilities, adding that it

is poised for shortages of water and electricity due to a possible blockade, Reuters reported.

"Displacement has escalated dramatically across the Gaza Strip, reaching more than 187,500 people since Saturday. Most are taking shelter in schools," Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told a Geneva briefing, stating further displacement was expected as clashes continue. The World Health Organization said that it had reported 13 attacks on health facilities in the Gaza Strip since the weekend and that its medical supplies stored there had already been used up. The organization on Tuesday called for a humanitarian corridor into the Gaza Strip as Israel imposes a siege on the blockaded Palestinian enclave.

Also, an AFP photographer and a non-governmental organization said Gaza's Rafah border crossing with Egypt — its only one not controlled by Israel — was hit by an Israeli airstrike Tuesday for the third time in 24 hours. The regime's embassy in the US said on Tuesday that the death toll from Hamas's attack on Israel has now exceeded 1,000, AFP reported.

The EU and [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council called for sustained aid to the Palestinian Territories on Tuesday. "They stressed the importance of sustained financial support for UNRWA (the UN relief agency for Palestinians) and to continue humanitarian and development support for Palestinians in the occupied territories," said a joint declaration read out by EU foreign policy chief Jo-

sep Borrell. This was while the first wave of US security assistance was on its way to Israel, announced White House national security spokesman John Kirby on Tuesday, adding that more US assistance is to come.

Prisoner swap

Qatar said Tuesday it was too soon to start brokering talks on a potential prisoner exchange between Israel and Hamas after the resistance group captured around 150 Israelis in the wide-scale surprise attack. An American mayor has been slammed for promoting violence and Islamophobia, over his "abhorrent" remarks referring to pro-Palestine protesters as "extremists" who support "terrorism".

As fighting is underway between Palestinian resistance fighters and the Israeli regime, many have expressed their support for Palestine. Hundreds of people marched in Manhattan's New York City on Sunday to express their support for Palestine. Another pro-Palestine rally took place outside the Israeli consulate in New York City on Monday. It was organized by Within Our Lifetime, a Palestinian-led advocacy organization.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that in separate phone calls with a number of his counterparts from Muslim countries, he called for an immediate emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss the Palestinian issue. In a telephone conversation with OIC Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha on Monday, he expressed Iran's readiness to play host to the emergency meeting.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran, Sudan to resume diplomatic relations

REUTERS - Iran and Sudan agreed on Monday to restore diplomatic relations, both said in a joint statement, seven years after they were severed and three months after a meeting between their foreign ministers. "Iran and Sudan decided to resume their diplomatic relations...the two sides also agreed to take the necessary measures to open their embassies in the near future and to exchange official delegations," the statement said. The decision "came after a number of high-level communications between the two countries and will serve their mutual interests", the Sudanese foreign ministry said. Sudan, currently in the midst of a devastating war, joined seven other states in cutting ties with Tehran in support of Saudi Arabia in 2016, following demonstrations in Tehran and Mashhad protesting the killing of Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, which led to tensions between Tehran and Riyadh. Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume ties in March under a deal negotiated by China, raising expectations that Tehran and other Arab countries would fully re-establish diplomatic relations.

Iran's work for refugees sets 'global example'

Iran is doing great work in terms of refugees and should be introduced as a model, announced the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Also, a plan should be prepared, and we should ask for more funding according to the needs of refugees in Kerman," said Yumiko Takashima, IRNA reported. In a meeting with the new representative of the UNHCR, Takashima said, "Only one percent of the aid provided for refugees comes from international organizations, and the other 99 percent comes from the Iranian government."

"My duty is to inform donor countries about the good work the Iranian government has been doing for refugees so that we can attract more funding," she added.

In another part of the meeting, the director general of foreign nationals and immigrant affairs of Kerman Province also mentioned the establishment of Bardsir City refugee camp's treatment plant, equipment of 35 schools with new facilities, distribution of 4,336 educational packages for refugee students, and the set up of solar panels in camp.

"But these measures do not meet the existing needs and the United Nations is expected to play a more active role regarding Afghan refugees in Iran," Rouhollah Khezripour added.

Uncertainty in oil market after Israel-Hamas conflict

International Desk

PERSPECTIVE

Fear of the expansion of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas to a regional war has jolted the global oil market in recent days and caused uncertainty in its future price. Israel and Palestine are not oil producers, but the Middle East region accounts for almost a third of the global supply. It is home to some of the world's major oil producers, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as key

transit routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, which is known as the world's most important oil chokepoint. Energy analyst Saul Kavonic told the BBC that global oil prices have risen "due to the prospect of a wider conflagration that could spread to nearby major oil-producing nations such as Iran and Saudi Arabia".

On Tuesday, oil prices eased after rallying more than 4% in the previous session, with traders cautious as they watched for potential supply disruptions.

Analysts believe that the conflict itself has no direct effect on the oil market. The main concern, however, is about the growing tensions between Israel and Iran. Iran is one of the main supporters of the Palestinian resistance groups and also a major oil producer in the region. Even though Iran has repeatedly announced its support for the Palestinian resistance groups, it has denied involvement in the ongoing conflict. Both the US and Israel have confirmed this, saying that

they have seen no evidence to support Iranian involvement. Caroline Bain, chief commodities economist at Capital Economics, says that Iran has been increasing oil production over the course of this year despite US sanctions. "The US seems to have turned a blind eye to a steady increase in Iranian production, that... is going to be more difficult for the US to ignore going forward from here," she said. Overall, Bain said, Capital Economics expected

demand for oil to exceed supply in the final three months of the year, and "that should support higher prices". Vivek Dhar, an energy analyst, believes that Brent oil will ultimately stabilize between \$90-\$100 a barrel in Q4 2023, adding that the Palestine-Israel conflict raises the risk of Brent futures tracking at \$100 a barrel and above. This may have forced the US to hold talks with Venezuela in a bid to control global oil prices. Sources

have told Reuters that Venezuela and the US have progressed in talks that could provide sanctions relief to Caracas by allowing at least one additional foreign oil firm to take Venezuelan crude oil under some conditions. Conflicts in the world usually have a direct impact on the oil market. Last year, oil prices experienced a sharp rise, hitting more than \$120 a barrel in June following Russia's military operation in Ukraine.



REUTERS