

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran obtained 'guarantees' from US on unfrozen funds



The Iranian Foreign Ministry said the country had obtained "guarantees" from the United States on its unfrozen funds in Qatar banks.

The plan to block Iran's money needs the approval of the Senate and the signature of the US president. The US government must honor its commitments in an agreement with Iran. "We received the necessary guarantees in this regard as the US has shown that it is not reliable," Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said, according to Press TV.

He was responding to a question about a bipartisan measure passed by the US House of Representatives to block Iran from accessing its \$6 billion funds unfrozen in South Korea and transferred to Qatar banks a few months ago. Kanaani emphasized that the Iranian government has access to the funds, saying, "We can use them according to our needs."

The Thursday bill passed 307-119 as the voters sought to hold the Biden administration accountable for what they call their complicity in funding terrorism in the Middle East.

Back in August, Iran and the United States agreed to a Qatari-brokered deal to secure the release of some \$6 billion of Iranian funds that had remained blocked in two South Korean banks since 2018, under the pretext of US sanctions. The deal eventually saw the release of five detained Americans in Tehran and an unknown number of Iranians imprisoned in the US. The money was successfully transferred to accounts in Qatar's Ahlibank and Dukhan Bank.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Leader calls for coalition among nations opposed to US bullying

Iran, Cuba sign seven documents, cooperation agreements

National Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said great political and economic capacities of Iran and Cuba should be used to form a coalition against the bullying of the United States and its Western allies.

Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a Monday meeting with Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, who is heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was also present at the meeting. Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the remarkable potentialities of Iran and Cuba, and said, "These capacities should be used to set up an alliance and a coalition among those countries that share the same position against the US and Western bullying," Press TV reported.

"This coalition, with a focus on economic collaborations, can have a united and influential stance on global issues, such as the Palestinian cause," the leader added. The Palestinian issue is not only related to recent events in Gaza and bombardments, as the Palestinian people

have endured various forms of torture, suffering, and massacres over the past 75 years, the Leader emphasized. However, the current tragedy in Gaza is so significant that it has brought the reality to the world's public consciousness, making it impossible to conceal. Ayatollah Khamenei regarded the positions of the Cuban president on global issues, especially the Palestinian cause, in harmony with the Islamic Republic's stance, press.tir reported. Referring to the collaboration of the two countries in international forums, he added that relations between the two countries, including scientific cooperation, should be strengthened more than ever.

The Leader expressed hope that the memoranda of understanding and agreements between the two countries would progress to the implementation and action stage.

Agreements inked

In the presence of the Iranian and Cuban presidents, senior officials of the two countries signed seven documents and agreements on the improvement of bilateral cooperation.



Raisi and Díaz-Canel also issued a joint statement on strengthening strategic relations between Tehran and Havana. According to the documents, Iran and Cuba will strengthen cooperation in various sectors of science and technology, health, agriculture, energy and mines, communications and medicine.

'Unacceptable genocide'

The Cuban president em-

phasized that the two countries can complement each other in various fields, especially in countering interventionist actions and sanctions by the United States and its allies.

"What is happening in Gaza today is an unacceptable genocide, and international organizations close their eyes to the massacre of tens of thousands of people in Gaza, two-thirds of whom are children and women," he said.

Support of Palestine

The Iranian president had a separate meeting with the Cuban president, during which he said the two sides have a common stance on the need to form a coalition to support the oppressed Palestinian people in different continents, in cooperation with allied countries. Raisi slammed the deafening silence of the international community on the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Díaz-Canel said Cuba slams

Israel's killing of thousands of Palestinian people and calls for the immediate establishment of a ceasefire in Gaza, which would prepare the ground for the formation of an independent Palestinian state. The Cuban president also said that in his talks with Iranian authorities in Tehran, both sides focused all their efforts on ways to deepen mutual relations, especially in the economic and commercial spheres.

Israeli forces enter southern Gaza

Global concern growing over civilian casualties

International Desk

Israel moved ground forces into southern Gaza in its war on Hamas, witnesses said Monday, despite global concern over mounting civilian deaths and fears the conflict would spread in the Middle East.

Israel ordered people out of swathes of the main southern city in the besieged strip as it pressed its ground campaign deep into the south, sending desperate residents fleeing even as it dropped bombs on areas where it told them to go.

According to the Hamas-run Health Ministry on Sunday, 15,523 people had died in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war with Israel on October 7.

Seventy percent of the Palestinians killed in the war were women and children, ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said, adding that 41,316 people had been wounded.

Germany urged Israel on Monday to guarantee "realistic" protection to civilians with its Foreign Ministry spokesman saying, "Something we expect from Israel is that they not

only urge civilians to leave the danger zone, but that they are in a realistic position to find safe shelter elsewhere."

"Too many civilians have already been killed in this war," Sebastian Fischer said.

On Monday, dozens of Israeli tanks as well as armored personnel carriers and bulldozers entered the south of the territory near the city of Khan Yunis, which is crowded with internally displaced Palestinians, witnesses told AFP.

'Unconditional support to kill babies'

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that the Western nations supporting Israel were giving it "unconditional support to kill babies" and were complicit in its crimes.

In a speech to an Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) committee meeting in Istanbul, Erdogan said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would eventually be tried as a war criminal over the ongoing offensive in Gaza.

"Beyond being a war criminal, Netanyahu will be tried as the butcher of Gaza, just as Milosevic was tried," Erdogan said, in reference to Yugoslav ex-president Slobodan Milosevic, who was tried for

genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes at a tribunal in The Hague. "Those who try to skip over the deaths of all those innocent people by using the excuse of Hamas have nothing left to say to humanity," he added, referring to Western powers, which he said were "blind and deaf".

Commercial ships hit

Despite global fears that the conflict will spread elsewhere in the Middle East, Israel has widened its offensive in Gaza.

On Sunday, ballistic missiles fired by Yemen's Houthis struck three commercial ships in the Red Sea, while a US warship shot down three drones in self-defense during the hours-long assault, the US military said. The Houthis claimed two of the attacks. The strikes marked an escalation in a series of maritime attacks in the Mideast linked to the Gaza war, as multiple vessels found themselves in the crosshairs of a single Houthi assault for the first time in the conflict. The US vowed to "consider all appropriate responses" in the wake of the attack.

"These attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security," the US military's Central Command



said in a statement. "They have jeopardized the lives of international crews representing multiple countries around the world."

Intolerable suffering

Full-scale fighting in Gaza resumed Friday after the collapse of a week-long truce brokered by Qatar, the United States and Egypt, during which Israel and Hamas had exchanged scores of POWs and prisoners.

Air strikes have since intensified in Gaza's south, said James Elder, a spokesman for the United Nations children's agency UNICEF. "Despite what has been assured, attacks in the south of Gaza are every bit as vicious as what the north endured," he posted Monday on X. "Somehow, it's getting worse for children and mothers."

The Red Cross president, who arrived in war-torn Gaza on Monday, called for the protection of civilians in the Palestinian territory, where she warned that human suffering was "intolerable".

The International Committee of the Red Cross said ICRC president Mirjana Spoljaric's travel to the region would happen in several stages with "a visit to Israel expected over the coming weeks".

"I have arrived in Gaza, where people's suffering is intolerable," Spoljaric said on X, formerly Twitter. "It is unacceptable that civilians have no safe place to go in Gaza, and with a military siege in place there is also no adequate humanitarian response currently possible," she added in an ICRC statement.