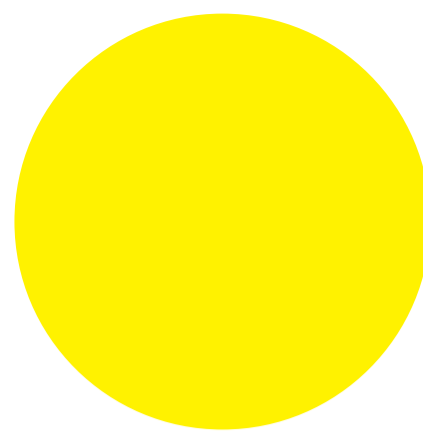


Iran's nine-month trade up 7%: Minister

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Not all deaths count

Ultimately, Palestinians are outsiders to West

Betrayed at crossroads of history, forced to compare

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Palestinians mourn their relatives, killed in an overnight Israeli strike on the Al-Maghazi refugee camp, during a mass funeral at the Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, on December 25, 2023. • Mahmud HAMS/AFP



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Hunger crisis in Gaza to worsen: Report

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Fiber-optic line proposed to link Russia, Kazakhstan, Iran



Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev proposed that a fiber-optic communication line be laid between Russia, Kazakhstan and Iran.

"I propose that a fiber-optic communication line along the Russia-Kazakhstan-Iran route be considered in order to connect to existing international lines running along the coast of the Indian Ocean," Tokayev said at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in St. Petersburg, Interfax reported on Tuesday.

"This will not only create an alternative route for transit traffic in the Eurasian space, but also significantly strengthen the position of our Union in data logistics at the global level," he said.

Iran to open key SE rail link in year to March 2025



Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehرداد Bazrpash said that the important Chabahar-Zahedan railway will be inaugurated in the year to March 2025.

Speaking to IRNA on Tuesday, Bazrpash said that Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters, Ministry of Road and Urban Development, and Sistan and Baluchestan governorate will do their best to make the project operational by the end of the next Iranian year.

The project is about 830 kilometers from the North-South Corridor in Sistan and Baluchistan, he said. The Chabahar to Zahedan section is about 630km, and the Zahedan to Khash section has been put into operation, while the entire capacity of Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters has been used to complete the Khash to Chabahar section, the minister noted.

After the end of the lining operation of some tunnels, the rail laying operation of 200km length will begin, he stated.

Iran's nine-month trade up 7%: **Minister**

Iran's foreign trade registered a seven percent growth in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2023), announced the minister of economic affairs and finance.

The country's foreign trade value, from March 21 to December 22, 2023, hit \$112 billion, showing a seven percent increase compared to the corresponding period last year, Ehsan Khandouzi said, according to IRNA.

He added that the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) calculated the monthly foreign trade report with the inclusion of the exports of oil, electricity,

technical and engineering services for the first time, ecc.news reported. The report indicates that Iran's exports value exceeded that of imports by as much as \$15 billion, Khandouzi said, adding, "This means that more than \$63 billion worth of oil- and non-oil products were exported from the country while more than \$48 billion worth of products were imported into the country in this period."

Accordingly, the total value of Iran's foreign trade hit \$112 billion from March 21 to December 22, 2023, indicating a seven percent hike compared to the same period last year, the economy minister added.

FTA with EAEU to open new horizon for SCO, ECO, BRICS: **Iran's official**

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari said that the free trade agreement (FTA) between the Islamic Republic and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will open a new horizon for expanding ties with Shanghai Cooperation

Organization (SCO), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and BRICS.

Safari stated in an interview with IRNA in Moscow that the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

is significant.

This is because it will result in new trade connections with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, ECO and BRICS. This is due to three of the five Eurasian Union member countries being part of SCO, two being members of ECO, and

one of them also being a member of BRICS.

The Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran emphasized that the agreement signing will lead to increased exports and imports between Iran and the EAEU members.

He noted the significant potential for Iranian exports in joint automobile production, transit, reactors, construction materials, medical equipment, and medicine. Iran and the EAEU signed an important agreement to initiate free trade, six years after Iran joined the bloc to expand its trade partners in response to Western sanctions.

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Abbas Ali-Abadi and Chairman of the Board of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) Mikhail Myasnikov signed the agreement.

Iran's gas exports more than double in seven months: **TPO**

Iran's exports of gas more than doubled in the first seven months of the current Iranian year (March 21-October 22).

The country exported more than \$2 billion worth of gas from March 21 to October 22, 2023, according to the statistics of the Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), IRNA reported.

This is while Iran had exported more than \$1 billion worth of gas overseas from March 21 to October 22, 2022, the TPO added.

The TPO noted that Iran exported 7.55 million tons of gas in the first seven months of the current Iranian year, registering a 115-percent hike in weight compared to the same period last year.

The value of each ton of Iranian gas, which stood at \$304 in 2022, increased to \$336 in 2023, showing an 11 percent growth.



Middle East's geothermal power plant to be launched in Iran

The first geothermal power plant in the Middle East, with the generation capacity of five megawatts, will be put into operation in Meshginshahr, Iran's northwestern province of Ardebil, in the near future, the project commissioner of the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) said.

This power plant is under construction as a pilot project installed

on a reservoir of geothermal energy with a generation capacity of about 250 megawatts of electricity, Behnam Khaefinejad stated, according to Tasnim news agency.

The construction operation of the geothermal power plant is ongoing, with 93 percent physical progress, he said, adding that several wells, as deep as about 3,000 meters, have been drilled



with the generation capacity of 30 megawatts of electricity.

Five megawatts of that will be put into operation in the first phase, Khaefinejad added. He said the implementation of this project has enabled the country to acquire the technical know-how of exploration, design, implementation and operation of geothermal resources. Located 25km south of

Meshginshahr, the first geothermal power plant of the country is under construction by the Thermal Power Plants Holding Company. Geothermal power refers to the use of underground hot steam to drive turbines, which in turn generate electricity. It is cheaper and more reliable than other renewable energy sources, such as thermal or hydropower.



Notice of tender for export sale
No. Z/1402/14 (renewed)

Golgohar Mining and Industrial Company

Hereby Golgohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 70.000 metric tons of Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at Golgohar website: www.geg.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 8. Jan.2024 to Golgohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road).

Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 9. Jan.2024 at the office of the Seller.

GOLGOHAR MINING & INDUSTRIAL CO.

Rich heritage of Chaleshtar Castle in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province

Iranica Desk

Chaleshtar Castle, also known as "Khodarahm Khan Castle," is situated in the city of Chaleshtar in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. Historically, Chaleshtar served as the administrative center for Chaharmahal during the Safavid era.

In honor of this significance, a castle was erected as the seat of governance for the ruler of Chaharmahal, overseeing the entire region. While the original castle vanished, Chaleshtar Castle was constructed during the Qajar period, serving as the residence of the ruler and featuring four gates, which were once shut for the castle's protection. Notably, the architecture of Chaleshtar Castle reflects a fusion of Iranian and European styles.

Some historical and archaeological sources attribute the construction of Chaleshtar Castle to the year 1905, a date inscribed on one of the castle's keystones. During the Safavid era, the ruler resided in Chaleshtar and managed the surrounding areas through appointed village leaders. However, in the Qajar period, with the appointment of Hosseinqoli Khan as the Ilkhan of Bakhtiari, the rulers of Chaleshtar were stripped of their positions, assuming roles as landowners and peasants.

The Chaleshtar Castle comprises several sections, including the Shahneshin, interior, stone porch, warehouse, bathhouse, and stable. The structure features a porch with 10 stone columns, connected to the Shahneshin by the interior. The castle complex encompasses five porches, five interior rooms, and 40 columns. Intricate mythical designs adorning the walls depict flowers, angels, and scenes of daily life, captivating visitors with their beauty and artistry. The building spans a northern



● qudsoline.ir



● IRNA



● IRNA



● IRNA

and southern part, covering an area of approximately 12,000 square meters. Reflecting Qajar-era architecture, the castle building's northern section re-

mains intact, while the southern part, which was about 90% destroyed, has been reconstructed. Khodarahm Khan Chaleshtari, the son of Mohammad Reza

Khan, the ruler of Chaharmahal, is credited as the builder of the Chaleshtar Castle. The castle's construction signifies its historical role as the ruler's residence,

where administrative affairs and political meetings for the governance of Chaharmahal took place. It is believed that during World

War I, Allameh Dehkhoda, a prominent Iranian literary writer, philologist, and lexicographer, traveled to Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and resided in Chaleshtar Castle for two years, where he utilized the castle's library to write his dictionary. The architecture of Chaleshtar Castle closely resembles other buildings built during the Qajar period, but also showcases a blend of Iranian and European art.

The standing stone columns and embossed designs of Chaleshtar Castle offer a captivating view. The rooms within the Chaleshtar Castle complex are adorned with a combination of Persian and Western art paintings, which reached their peak during the Qajar period. Depictions of Leili and Majnun, Yusuf and Zuleikha, along with verses from the Qur'an, can be found on the walls of the castle.

Triangular symmetrical architecture can also be observed in some parts of the castle's corridors. Through the reconstruction of the castle, which began in the year 2000 and was completed in 2003, and the generous donation of 640 ethnographic items by a cultural heritage enthusiast and scholar of the province, the ground floor was converted into a museum named "Work and Life" (Anthropology Museum) to showcase some of the donated items.

The museum displays various aspects of the lives of the indigenous people of the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari region and the tribes of that area, including tools, furniture, and dairy equipment used by the people of the region up to a hundred years ago. Sculptures of people wearing local Bakhtiari and Qashqai clothing can also be found in the museum. The architecture of the underground area of the museum is also noteworthy, as it was built without the use of metal or wood.

Enchanting attractions of Aghasht village in Alborz Province

Iranica Desk

Aghasht village is situated 75 kilometers from Tehran, in Chendar District of Savojbolagh in Karaj, Alborz Province. If you have visited Barghan village, Aghasht is located in the same area, boasting unspoiled natural beauty and villas that have not been excessively developed, preserving the charm and simplicity of the village.

To reach Aghasht village, head east of Karaj. This close proximity to the capital offers Tehranites the advantage of experiencing a peaceful weekend around the area. Some 800 people call this village home, and a river along with Iran's Hogwarts Castle are its main tourist attractions. Nestled in the heart of Aghasht's mountains, Hogwarts Castle awaits you, accompanied by a river and a waterfall.

If you search online, you will discover that the main Hogwarts Castle is the primary location for the Harry Potter franchise. However, it is important to note that the one in Karaj is a villa built in the style of European castles, the facade of which is inspired by European Renaissance architecture, Greek, and Roman styles. It is said that its construction took 10 years. Due to its location in a mountainous area, Aghasht enjoys a very pleasant climate, and even in the hot seasons its cool breeze rejuvenates your spirit. The lowest recorded temperature for this area in the summer has been 11 degrees Celsius.

Aghasht is a recreational area with stunning landscapes for the residents of the two large cities of Karaj and Tehran, attracting many people for weekend getaways.

This village boasts an ancient bathhouse that remained active until 1991, adorned with beautifully decorated walls. Additionally, the village features a spacious sports field and two picturesque mosques.

Notably, the Shorshorband waterfall stands as a highlight of this village, situated in a mountainous region. Accessing it requires appropriate hiking attire and footwear. The path to the waterfall includes numerous slopes, offering stunning views of the surrounding nature, along with chamomile flowers, butterflies, and the melodic sounds of singing birds, creating an enchanting experience for nature enthusiasts and tourists.

Aghasht River, with its three primary branches, infuses the village with freshness, vitality, and a positive ambiance, allowing most visitors to revel in its beauty. For accommodation, one can utilize the neighboring villages and settle in areas offering villa rentals.

The optimal time to visit Aghasht Castle is during the spring and summer, owing to its mountainous climate. However, some tourists prefer the autumn season for its vibrant, colorful nature. In the winter, the village is blanketed in snow, offering its own unique attractions for tourists.



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Not all deaths count

Ultimately, Palestinians are outsiders to West

Betrayed at crossroads of history, forced to compare



Palestinians in Rafah mourn their loved ones killed in the Israeli bombardment.
● HATEM ALI/AP

By Reza Raadfar
Political analyst

PERSPECTIVE EXCLUSIVE

War casualties are usually reported using prepositions such as “about,” “around,” “some,” “near,” and “over” that approximate numbers. This is especially true for printed publications, where, by the time the reader stumbles upon that sentence, the number has definitely risen.

I’m personally of the opinion that we should do away with these prepositions and let the readers become comfortable with reading “as of writing this piece”. The reason is simple: people cannot be reduced to numbers, more so if they are civilians who have just been denied of the right to live and give meaning to somebody’s life.

So, as of writing this piece, 20,915 people have lost their lives in the Gaza Strip at the hands of Israel, directly or indirectly, in a bid to avenge the deaths of 1,139 in Israel, killed during Hamas’s surprise attack on October 7, 2023. Even though they were killed by dumb bombs that may well have had “to whom it may concern” written on them, these people had names and

families, learned valuable lessons, harbored hopes and dreams, and demonstrated a partially realized potential to change the lives of others for the better.

This is not the only war in the 21st century — a relatively peaceful century — that left a lot of casualties in its wake. What this war had in common with its contemporary wars is that the United States was heavily involved in all of them in one capacity or another. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Ukraine, and Palestine have seen devastating wars. These countries will never be the same; how can they be when their innocent civilians and brilliant minds were either killed, scarred for life, or displaced? This recklessness in starting new wars comes from a country that, domestically, believes in the sanctity of life. Much internal strife in the US stems from the collective significance that Americans place on

minimizing American casualties. But in practice, we clearly see that the US is as war-hungry as a country can be. Cries of war can still be heard the loudest in Republican debates. In the 21st century, the Democratic Party inherited some wars and provoked some others. So, overall, they have been just as eager to fulfill their country’s role as a self-appointed sheriff of the world.

Americans are quick to take personal offense to small-scale conflicts and the loss of lives elsewhere. So far, so good. However, when they take action, they lose sight of what was once their justification for entering a conflict — the loss of lives and violation of human rights — and commit the same abominations, only multiple times worse. The disproportionate force they bring to any war turns them from heroes to villains in no time.

As much as it probably hurts an American to hear this, this is not a strange sentiment to have for the people whose lives were seemingly “saved” by the US.

Gaza ultimate test of human rights

War is plain terrible in nature. It’s understandable but still unforgivable for a shell-shocked soldier to commit war crimes. War crimes get less and less understandable and more and more unforgivable the higher up we go in the chain of command because officers, commanders, and commanders-in-chief are supposed to be further and further removed from the horrors of war and focused on pre-determined goals and rules of engagement.

It’s becoming more and more apparent that American commanders-in-chief are able to claim a moral high ground only when they are the opposite party to ultimate evils like the Nazis or Daesh (ISIS). But hey, who can’t? That’s why, before going to every war since the Second World War, American media heavily propagate the idea that the leader of the other side is “the next Adolph Hitler”. No war in recent history has questioned the true intent behind propagating exclusive ownership of humanitarian “Western” values as much as the ongoing Gaza war has. The world is getting wise to the fact that all the American and European talk about defending human rights is merely a façade just by looking at this war. The US hammered the final nail in that coffin by vetoing a watered-down UNSC resolution that called for a humanitarian cease-fire in the Gaza war on December 8, 2023, and pushed to drop all talk of a cease-fire in the next UNSC resolution on Gaza, which is essentially a different tactic that achieves the same result. More, however, can be gained from comparing similarities and differences between the Israeli war

on the Gaza Strip and other wars of the 21st century.

To make the comparison more feasible, one need not look further than the Ukraine War to find the most similarities. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza are still ongoing. Both began during the presidency of Joe Biden in the US. The US purportedly took the side of the defenders — even though it provoked the Ukraine War by persuading Russia’s neighboring country to join NATO, and Israel’s subsequent disproportionate response to Hamas’s October 7 attack dwarfed Israeli casualties to the point that it’s now called “the Gaza War”. Washington has sent both Ukraine and Israel massive arm shipments and stood in the way of achieving cease-fires, prolonging the wars and killing more people.

While the US barely managed to evade the responsibilities of the Ukraine War — which allowed it to gradually abandon the Ukrainians scot-free to do what they should have done in the first place: talk it out with the Russians — it is being repeatedly slammed around the world for its inexcusable support of Israeli brutalities in Gaza.

Not even consistent in words

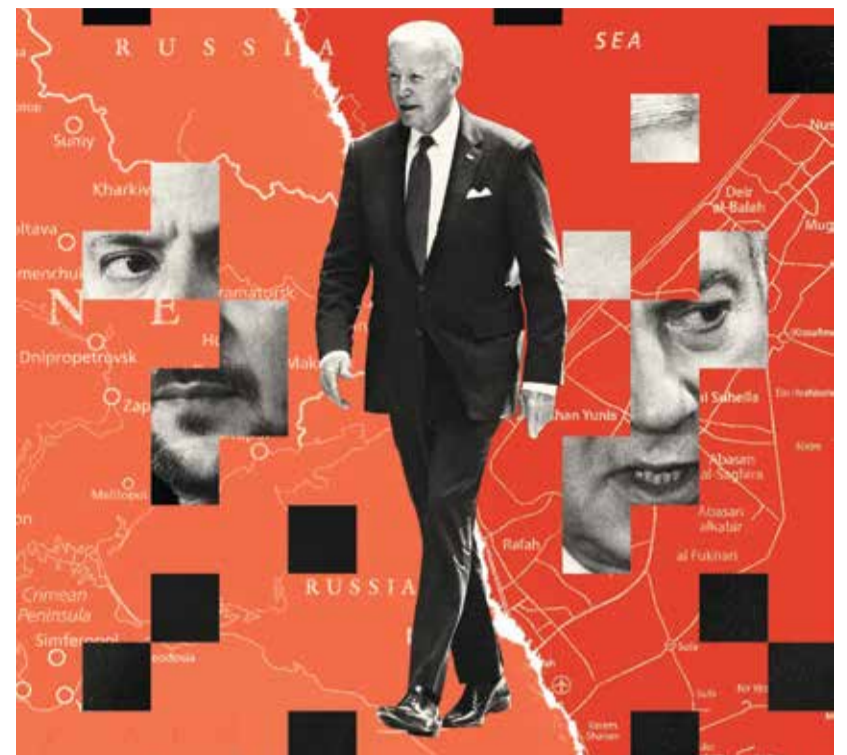
It’s already known around the world that when push comes to shove, whether it be in domestic politics or foreign policies, the United States will only think about its own national interests, not about righting any wrongs or rectifying its mistakes of the past. However, the fact that the same US administration can’t react the same way to the loss of lives in Ukraine and Palestine is not doing Washington’s reputation any favors.

An Israeli soldier rests his head on an artillery gun barrel of a tank as troops take position near the Gaza barrier on October 9, 2023.
● AFP

Commenting on the targeting of a hospital in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, President Biden was quick to describe the attack as “injustice” and a “disgrace to the entire world,” but failed to show the same level of urgency and care for the continuous bombardment of patients in numerous hospitals throughout Gaza. In a speech at a rally on April 12, 2022, Biden called mass graves found in the Bucha region of Ukraine “genocide,” but one year later, he deferred to reporters when asked about the Israeli war. Biden was not alone in showing double standards. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that he agrees with Biden that “war crimes are being committed in Ukraine.” However, in a news conference on October 20, 2023, Blinken did not address the issue of “war crimes” regarding civilians who died in Gaza and only held Hamas responsible for the deaths of civilians killed in Israeli attacks. Blinken also once understood that hitting heat, water, and electricity facilities in Ukraine is wrong but simply forgot the fact when it came to Israeli moves to deprive Gaza’s two million residents of food, electricity, drinking water, and fuel. Progressive thinkers of the American left, such as Noam Chomsky, applauded Putin for waging war in a more “humane” way than the Pentagon. Overall, I’d say there’s nothing completely humane about a war. However, there are indeed better and worse ways of engaging in a battle. The United States has been involved in all the major wars of this cen-

tury, but none has been as inhumane as the war in Gaza. **Ukrainians insiders, Palestinians outsiders** Washington’s inability to see and befittingly respond to Israel’s clear and very serious transgressions of international law, human rights, and common decency begs the question: What happened to those lofty ideals in over a year? How are Gazan lives different from Ukrainian lives? The Western world has taken more practical, sincere steps for Ukrainians in almost two years since their war began on February 24, 2022, than it has ever taken for Palestinians in almost a century since at least 1948, when an entity called Israel came into existence. It’s not like the West did not have enough time to exhaust all humanitarian and politically sound options. Many US presidents, UK prime ministers, and officials throughout the world ran specifically on the platform of solving the issue of Palestine. Even the isolationist, arguably cold-hearted Donald Trump repeatedly claimed that his business-minded approach would be the be-all and end-all solution, only to fail miserably by ignoring every principal demand and right of Palestinians in his plan, making it dead on arrival. Circling back to explore what difference between Ukrainians and Palestinians justifies this disparity in reactions, it’s worth employing Occam’s razor. Occam’s

razor is a principle that says that if you have two (or more) competing ideas to explain the same phenomenon, you should prefer the simpler one. Essentially, the first simple answer that comes to mind is probably the correct one. The simplest answer to our question is that Ukrainians are predominantly white-skinned European Christians, while Palestinians are considered brown-skinned West Asian Muslims. As unrefined as that seems to be — which is the point if we are to adhere to Occam’s razor — many Western officials have had slips of the tongue and said something along the same line. The refined version of that answer is that Ukrainians and Israelis are insiders — that is, “one of us” — to most Western administrations, while Palestinians are outsiders. In the end, if the West has to choose between the two, it will go with what it considers to be its kin. If the language of race seems crass to you, you should put yourself in the shoes of Middle Easterners who have felt and experienced this racial discrimination at the crossroads of history. Even African-Americans and other minorities in the US, UK, France, and other countries of Europe have been fighting a similar ingrained racism for decades now. Compared to Christian African-Americans, for example, Palestinians naturally have a higher hill to climb. Just look at how often the Palestinian death toll since October 7 gets eclipsed by the Israeli death toll in statements



The illustration shows US President Joe Biden (C) torn between the double standards of supporting both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (L) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. **JOAN WONG/GETTY IMAGES**

from US and EU officials, even though it is nearly 20 times higher. I hope we will see a day when the violent loss of one life will demand immediate explanation, but until that day, it will always be bitterly

amusing how the magnitude of casualties from one group gets spotlighted by a government even though the magnitude of casualties from the other side is multiple times higher.

Hunger crisis in Gaza to worsen: Report

Burn solid waste or eat raw meat; That is the question



WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME



Hungry Palestinians rush with their pots to get some food provided by aid agencies in Rafah, the Gaza Strip. **FATIMA SHBAIR/AP**

Weeks of restricted access to food in the Gaza Strip have culminated in severe hunger and growing risks of famine in the besieged enclave. Since early October, Israeli attacks across Gaza have damaged local bakeries and food warehouses, along with roads that are used to transport humanitarian aid. Israel’s total blockade on the enclave has also restricted food, water, and fuel from entering in the first place. How bad is the starvation in Gaza, and what is the food supply like since the war? Here is Al Jazeera’s investigation of the situation.

IPC: Food insecurity acute

More than 90 percent of Gaza’s 2.3 million population is facing high levels of acute food insecurity, according to an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on December 18, 2023. The IPC, which measures hunger risks, also reported on December 21 that 2.08 million people in Gaza are facing “acute food insecurity” that can be classified in the organization’s phase three of risk or above.

The IPC has five phases of acute food insecurity, ranging from none (phase one) to catastrophe or famine (phase five). Phases three and five are consid-

ered crisis and emergency. “Acute” food insecurity is a short-term phenomenon and tends to stem from unusual or man-made shocks, compared with “chronic” food insecurity, which is long-term and a result of insufficient means for living. Between December and February, Gaza’s entire population is projected to fall under phase three or above, according to the United Nations-backed report. If current hostilities and limited aid continue, Gaza is also at risk of experiencing a famine by early February. The IPC definition of famine is when at least 20 percent of the population in an area falls under phase five of acute food insecurity.

Food access in Gaza

Families in Gaza have had to cope with deteriorating quality and declining quantities of food, along with an inability to cook meals due to fuel shortages. Spending a day without eating any food has become usual. In early December, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that nine out of 10 people across the enclave skip meals for long periods of time. Nutritionally vulnerable groups such as pregnant women are at heightened risk, while baby formula and milk have been in severely short supply for toddlers

who rely on them. Even preparing meals requires finding alternatives to cooking gas, and aside from using firewood or cardboard, at least 13 percent of displaced people have been forced to burn solid waste, says the WFP. Hunger has also quickly escalated since a brief truce ended in early December: Just 12 days after it ended, the WFP found that at least half of the internally displaced people surveyed knew someone who had resorted to consuming raw meat. Access to water is also scarce, with less than two liters (0.5 gallons) available for each person per day — far short of the 15 liters needed to survive, according to the WFP.

Food aid level

Since October 7, the number of trucks carrying food that entered Gaza in a month has fallen by more than half, compared with at least 10,000 trucks before the war. Over the course of two months of war, only 1,249 trucks carrying food assistance reached Gaza, the WFP reported on December 6. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs also reported that over the first 70 days of the war, only 10 percent of the food needed

for Gaza’s entire population entered the enclave. The WFP has recommended that at least 100 trucks carrying just food and water enter Gaza a day, but on most days since the war, even the total amount of trucks entering has been less than that. The agency also noted that damaged roads near Rafah at the border with Egypt — where most aid is now dispersed from — cannot accommodate this increase. At the height of aid supply during the truce lasting from November 24 to December 1, some 200 trucks entered daily, while the WFP was only able to reach about 10 percent of Gaza’s population with in-kind and cash-based food assistance. Even once food aid is supplied, access to a sufficient share has not been possible. A report from the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and Al Mezan, a human rights organization based in Gaza’s Jabalia refugee camp, on December 14 found that people near Rafah’s food distribution centers would often have to wait in line for 10 hours and sometimes still returned home empty-handed. “I have to walk three kilometers to get one gallon [of water],” Marwan, a 30-year-old Palestinian who fled south with his pregnant wife and two children on November 9, told Human Rights

Watch. “And there is no food. If we are able to find food, it is canned food. Not all of us are eating well.” Still, Gaza’s population primarily relies on humanitarian assistance for food, followed by local markets and assistance from friends or relatives. With rising shortages across all of these, support from relatives is also dwindling, according to the WFP. As more of Gaza’s population is pushed into shelters in southern governorates, which are also under intense bombardment, competition for food is expected to increase, said the IPC.

Can Gazans access food locally?

Fighting across the Gaza Strip, and especially in the northern governorates, has made it particularly difficult to access food and aid. Local farmlands, flour mills, bakeries and warehouses have also been directly damaged by Israeli bombardments. Only a month after fighting broke out, all of northern Gaza’s bakeries closed due to a lack of supplies such as flour and fuel, the UN reported on November 8. The risk of being hit by Israeli strikes also resulted in movement restrictions for those seeking to leave their homes for food.

Iranian climbers keen on Paris heights despite World Cup boycott

Sports Desk

Three Iranians will be looking to secure a sport climbing quota in next summer's Paris Olympics despite the boycott of the World Cup in the United States hampering their preparations for the qualifiers.

"Iranian athletes missed out on the world events in the United States over the past two years after being denied entry visas by the Americans," Reza Zarei, the head of the sport's governing body in the country, said last week, adding: "That is why we decided not to apply for next year's World Cup as I believe it will be a waste of time and money."

The three-day IFSC Climbing World Cup will kick off in Salt Lake City, Utah, on May 3.

The International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) recently announced the list of eligible athletes for the Olympic qualification series.

Iranian speed duo Reza Alipour and Mahya Darabian as well as women's boulder & lead climber Elnaz Rekabi have been given the green light to take a shot at a place in Paris, starting with the Olympic Qualifier in Shanghai, China, Series on May 16.

The trio will then head to Budapest, Hungary, for the second series of the qualifiers from June 20-23.

A former world record holder in the

men's speed, for which he was nicknamed 'The Persian Cheetah' and the 'Usain Bolt of climbing', Alipour bagged a second Asian Games gold in October, with the Olympic glory remaining the only prize missing in his already illustrious trophy cabinet - featuring a gold (2018), silver (2016), and bronze (2014) at the World Championships, plus the ultimate prize of the 2017 World Games and six top-spot finishes in the IFSC World Cup.

His latest triumph came in mid-December's IFSC Asian Cup in Riyadh, where he clocked 5.33 seconds in the final to stand on the top podium.

Rekabi, meanwhile, is eager to prove there is more to her career than the off-the-wall controversy in last year's Asian Championships in Seoul - regarding her hijab removal in the boulder & lead final. The Iranian girl was unlucky to leave the Hangzhou Asian Games empty-handed after the final showdown was called off due to severe weather conditions but managed to claim the Asian Cup boulder bronze in the Saudi capital, while finishing fifth in the lead final.

For Darabian, an Olympic berth in August might be a daunting task, given her mediocre results in international outings over the past couple of years, but the 21-year-old girl will still be looking to build on her promising age-group performances - which saw her win an Asian youth gold in 2019 before grabbing the world junior bronze two years later - when chasing a surprise spot in the Iranian delegation heading to the French capital.



MSFI



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XINHUA

Doncic lights up Suns for 50 on historic night

REUTERS - Luka Doncic recorded 50 points, 15 assists, six rebounds, four steals and three blocked shots and also went over 10,000 career points while leading the Dallas Mavericks to a 128-114 victory over the host Phoenix Suns on Monday night. Doncic reached 50 for the sixth time in the regular season and made eight 3-pointers as Dallas won its second straight after losing four of its previous five contests. Derrick Jones Jr. added 23 points, Dereck Lively II had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 18 points for the Mavericks.

"I'm feeling good," Doncic said postgame on ESPN. Then referencing the fact that Lively was just back in the lineup after an injury absence, he added, "We missed Lively for (four) games, we missed (Irving) I don't know how many games, so we are far away from our potential. ... But 'next-man-up' mentality, and I can't wait until (Irving) comes back."



Mavericks' Luka Doncic (77) shoots during an NBA victory over the Suns at Footprint Center, Phoenix, AZ, US, on December 25, 2023.

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES

Phoenix's Grayson Allen scored a season-high 32 points and matched his career best of eight 3-pointers. Chimezie Metu had career bests of 23 points and 19 rebounds for the Suns, who have lost nine of their past 12 games. Devin Booker contributed 20 points and 10 assists, Kevin Durant scored 16 points and Eric Gordon had 14 for the Suns.

Doncic topped 10,000 points by draining a 34-foot, straightaway 3-pointer with 4:52 left in the first quarter. He reached 10,000 points in 358 games, matching Hall of Famer Bob McAdoo for seventh fastest in NBA history. Wilt Chamberlain holds the record of 236 games.

The Mavericks were without Kyrie Irving (heel) for the ninth straight game.

Dallas connected on 53.6 percent of its field-goal attempts and was 16 of 44 (36.4 percent) from behind the arc.

Phoenix shot 44.4 percent from the field, including 14 of 41 (34.1

percent) from 3-point range.

The Suns trailed by 13 early in the third quarter but moved ahead behind Allen, who exploded with 19 points on 7-of-9 shooting in the period. He made five 3-pointers in the quarter. One of Allen's treys gave Phoenix its first lead of the night at 84-82 with 3:38 left in the third. Allen knocked down another one exactly one minute later and the Suns eventually took a 92-91 edge into the final quarter.

Phoenix led by six early in the fourth quarter before Doncic made two 3-pointers in 68 seconds during a 15-5 burst to help the Mavericks lead 106-102 with 8:08 remaining.

Hardaway's steal and dunk made it 124-112 with 1:32 remaining. Doncic hit a short jumper with 29.5 seconds left to reach 50 as the Mavericks closed it out.

Doncic had more points (24) in the first half than the combined output of Booker (11) and Durant (nine) as Dallas led 64-54 at the break.

Chelsea's league-high 56 bookings not down to indiscipline, claims Pochettino

THE GURDIAN - Mauricio Pochettino has denied Chelsea have a discipline problem despite racking up the most yellow cards in the Premier League and having Raheem Sterling and Cole Palmer suspended for tonight's match at home to Crystal Palace.

The pair were among six Chelsea players cautioned at Wolves on Christmas Eve as the team lost a fourth successive away game in the Premier League and were beaten for the 19th time in

2023, the most defeats in the English top flight.

Chelsea have had 56 yellow cards in the league this season, not including two to members of the coaching staff. At Wolves Sterling was cautioned for allegedly diving, and Palmer, Malo Gusto and Nicolas Jackson were booked for dissent in the space of six minutes shortly after Mario Lemina put them 1-0 down.

Pochettino does not believe this is representative of a lack of discipline. "No - it's

representative of the fact that we play for Chelsea, we are a big club and you feel the pressure," he said. "When you are frustrated and lack a bit of experience, it's [something on] we can improve."

"It's Palmer's first season in the Premier League and it is normal. He is playing for Chelsea. Of course, it's frustrating. But the players care, the players want to win. It's not about a lack of discipline, it's about having the ability to read the situation of the game."

Palmer was given his Premier League debut by Manchester City in August 2021 and made 19 appearances for them in the league, albeit only three from the start, before joining Chelsea. Pochettino has highlighted the youthfulness of his squad, on which more than £420m was spent last summer, and believes he will have the right blend of youth and experience once he is over an injury crisis that means Chelsea have had at least eight players missing for

each match.

Pochettino hopes to have Moisés Caicedo back tonight from the fever that ruled him out on Sunday but Enzo Fernández is still due to be missing with a hernia problem.

"To have all of the players fit is the moment when we will find the right balance," the manager said. "At the moment we are trying to compensate as we always have eight, 10, 12 players out, so we have to adapt to find the balance and find solutions."



Chelsea's Nicolas Jackson is booked during a Premier League defeat at Wolves on Dec. 24, 2023.

ANDREW BOYERS/REUTERS

Israeli forces bombard refugee camps in central Gaza

International Desk

Israeli forces bombarded Palestinian refugee camps in central Gaza and issued orders telling residents to evacuate the area Tuesday, signs that the military plans to expand its ground offensive into a third section of the besieged territory. The opening of a potential new battle zone threatens to bring a new wave of destruction and displacement in a war that Israel has said will last for months as it vows to crush Hamas after its Oct. 7 attack. Israeli forces have been engaged in heavy urban fighting in northern Gaza and in the southern

city of Khan Younis, driving Palestinians into ever-smaller parts of the territory in search of refuge. A UN humanitarian team leader said on Monday that many Palestinians in the strip have followed the evacuation orders and sought safety in designated areas only to find there is little space left in the densely populated enclave. Gemma Connell, deployed in Gaza for several weeks now, described what she called a "human chess board" in which thousands of people, displaced many times already, are on the run again and there is no guarantee a destination will be safe.

"People were heading up south with mattresses and all of their belongings in vans and in trucks and in cars in order to try and find somewhere safe," said Connell, who on Monday visited the Deir al-Balah neighborhood in central Gaza.

Despite international pressure for a cease-fire and US calls for a reduction in civilian casualties, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday warned that the fight "isn't close to finished." Israel's offensive has been one of the most devastating military campaigns in recent history. More than 20,915 Palestinians, two-

thirds of them women and children, have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza, whose count doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants. Meanwhile, there were new signs of the Israel-Hamas war enflaming tensions around the region.

Residents of central Gaza on Tuesday described a night of shelling and airstrikes shaking the Nuseirat, Maghazi and Bureij camps. The camps are built-up towns, housing Palestinians driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war and their descendants – and now are also crowded with people who fled the

north.

In the afternoon, the Israeli military issued an order calling on residents to evacuate a belt of territory the width of central Gaza, including Bureij, urging them to move to the nearby town of Deir al-Balah.

The UN Security Council last week called for immediately speeding up aid deliveries to Gaza. But so far there has been little concrete sign of a change in entry of aid, which the UN has said it struggles to distribute because many areas are cut off by fighting.

AP and REUTERS contributed to this report.



✓ A smoke plume erupts over Khan Younis from Rafah in the southern Gaza strip during Israeli bombardment on December 26, 2023.
● SAID KHATIB/AFP

Israel will see its retribution, Raisi warns after IRGC adviser's assassination

Resistance vows tough response



National Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said the Israel will definitely pay the price for its criminal act of killing a senior military adviser of the Islamic Revolution

Guards Corps (IRGC) in Syria.

In a message on Monday, Raisi said the vicious act of assassinating the IRGC military adviser in a missile attack in Syria was yet another sign of the usurping

Zionist regime's desperation, Press TV reported.

Seyyed Razi Mousavi, who was serving as a military adviser in Syria, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Sayyeda Zeinab neighborhood of the Syrian capital

of Damascus earlier on Monday.

He added that the brave military adviser, who was one of the companions of Iran's top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, was killed while "safeguarding lofty Islamic values."

Iran maintains an advisory mission in Syria at the request of Damascus, with the aim of helping the war-torn Arab country get rid of the foreign-backed militants who have been fighting the democratically-elected Syrian government since 2011.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kannaani strongly condemned the Israeli regime's terrorist measure to assassinate the IRGC adviser in Damascus.

He said the vicious and cowardly act was another

indication of the terrorist nature of the Israeli regime.

The spokesman emphasized that Iran reserves the right to adopt necessary strategies and give a response to the move in due time and place.

Addressing an open session of Parliament in Tehran, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf also blasted the US and the West for the support they extended to Israel, stressing that nothing can rescue the Zionists from the quagmire they have been stuck in.

"Continuation of this inhumane behavior will lead to a major scandal across the world and will defame them even in the eyes of their own people," the speaker added.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian

also expressed his condolences to Mousavi's family as well as the Iranian and Syrian nations on the occasion of his martyrdom.

In a post on X social media platform, Iran's top diplomat said, "This honorable martyr fought bravely against terrorists for many years alongside Martyr Hajj Qassem Soleimani to ensure security of Iran and the region."

"Tel Aviv must await a hard countdown," he added.

Tough response

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movements have strongly condemned Israel's move, vowing tough response.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad said the occupying regime should await a decisive response to its cowardly act.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Islamic Jihad said the IRGC commander played a pivotal role in supporting regional resistance forces as well as the Palestinian nation, resistance and cause.

"We reiterate that the crimes of the occupying Zionist regime and its encroachment on regional stability and security will lead to its defeat at the hands of resistance forces." Lebanon's Hezbollah also condemned in the strongest terms the regime's assassination of the senior military adviser, describing it as a blatant violation.

"We consider the assassination of Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi in Syria to be a flagrant and shameless violation, which is off limits," Hezbollah said in a statement on Monday.

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company—Tender for Oven Online Graph

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company intends to purchase an oven online graph. Interested companies are requested to offer their quote based on the specifications mentioned in the attached file on our website. Please receive the tender form and send your PI to commercial2@kswco.com by January 02 2024.

For further information please contact Mr. Zanganeh: +989123162409

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company—Tender for Forklift Trucks

Saipa Wheel Manufacturing Company intends to purchase 10 forklift trucks. Interested companies are requested to offer their quote based on the specifications mentioned in the attached file on our website. Please receive the tender form and send your PI to commercial2@kswco.com by January 02 2024.

For further information please contact Mr. Zanganeh: +989123162409

Iran's defense industry witnesses 31% surge in production

National Desk

Iran's defense industry production has surged by 31% during the past nine months compared to last year, the spokesperson for Iran's Defense Ministry said. Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Brigadier General Reza Talaee Nik provided insights into the ministry's activities over the past nine months, stating that over 1,000 research projects, as well as emerging research and enhancement of

defense technology capabilities are underway.

The spokesman highlighted monthly unveilings of several developments in various fields, adding, however, that only a portion of them is covered by the media, Tasnim news agency reported.

He noted that dozens of core technologies and hundreds of subsystem technologies are involved in acquiring innovative defense capabilities for the ministry.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Silent suffering of online 'labor children'



● ISNA

Social Desk

A child psychologist criticized the profit-seeking and exploitation of children in cyberspace by some parents.

"The psychological consequences inflicted on these children will have lasting effects," warns Parisa Yaseminejad, according to ISNA.

She argues that the term "child labor" typically refers to children who are forced to work under the legal age in order to contribute to their family's income. She states that engaging children in activities solely for the purpose of generating income, which ultimately benefits the family or parents, is a clear example of child abuse.

She also highlights the troubling impact on the minds of children involved in labor, and criticizes the recent trend of parents seeking profit from their children in cyberspace, noting that the psychological consequences will persist throughout these children's lives. She points out that there is no conceptual difference between a child working online with a polished appearance and a disorderly-looking child engaging in work activities on the streets.

"Both cases can be classified as child labor."

Yaseminejad argues that children's activities in cyberspace, aimed at earning money, will inevitably cause psychological harm.

"The psychological traumas experienced by these children will not only affect their future mental health but also transcend their age."

She then underlines that virtual child labor represents a new form of exploitation and abuse, defining child abuse as any parental behavior that inflicts physical or psychological damage upon the child.

She asserts that the primary motivation behind children's engagement in virtual spaces is income generation.

"Unfortunately, these children become mere tools for their families to generate income."

She further notes that some families exploit their children for fame and visibility, using them as vehicles to satisfy their own desires, even if they suffer from mental illnesses.

The psychologist cautions that the psychological damage inflicted on working children is not easily remedied.

"It requires years of time and energy from a psychologist to reduce this damage, and cannot be resolved through a few counseling sessions."

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Path of kindness from Seoul to Kahrizak

Social Desk

According to a report by our Iran Daily correspondent, a ceremony was held at the Kahrizak Charity Foundation, with the presence of the South Korean ambassador to Iran, members of the board of directors, beneficiaries of the center, and a group of philanthropists.

After visiting the rehabilitation workshops and disabled residential facilities at Kahrizak and presenting flowers by the children of the center's staff at the grave of Dr. Mohammadreza Hekmatzadeh, the founder of Kahrizak Charity Foundation, the ceremony commenced.

During the event, following the hoisting of the flags of both countries by two disabled individuals from the center, a significant donation was made by the government to support humanitarian efforts at the center. The donated Iranian-made items, valued at approximately half a million dollars, included regular and electric wheelchairs, electroshock devices, dental kits, laboratory equipment, televisions, and refrigerators.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Ambassador Yun Kang Hyun explained the humanitarian gesture, stating, "I did not expect such a warm reception at the center today. The embassy's assistance was much smaller than this ceremony."



● IRAN DAILY

Yun Kang Hyun emphasized that South Korea will strive to share its knowledge and products with other countries, acknowledging the cultural similarities between Iran and Korea. He highlighted the charitable institutions in both Seoul and Tehran, expressing the Korean government's encouragement for public participation in charitable activities.

Regarding the Iranian people, the ambassador praised their kindness and hospitality, noting that during his time in Iran, he witnessed nothing but warmth and hospitality from the Iranian people. He acknowledged the high level of education and culture among Iranians, stating,

"Even the average Iranian can recite verses from the works of the most famous Iranian poets, demonstrating the intellectual and cultural capabilities of Iranians."

The South Korean ambassador also mentioned the assistance provided by the South Korean Embassy during the COVID-19

pandemic, such as the donation of masks and vaccines to a hospital and aid to earthquake-stricken areas. He emphasized that his presence at Kahrizak signifies South Korea's commitment to continuing these benevolent initiatives and that sustaining such assistance remains a priority in his country's agenda.

Humanitarian assistance as an opportunity for improving South Korea's image in Iran



By Abed Akbari
 International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Taking a close look at the diplomatic relations between Iran and South Korea, it becomes apparent that there are untapped potentials in the intergovernmental and national dynamics, as

well as in the relations between the two nations. If properly realized, these potentials could bring these two complementary countries closer economically, culturally, and identity-wise, securing a more stable position for both in the evolving international order. Iran, despite its geographical captivity at the crossroads of the future global dynamics in the Pacific and Asia-Pacific, can strategically leverage its connection with South Korea to become a pivotal player in addressing oth-

er international equations. Historically, the relationship between Iran and South Korea dates back to as early as 1600 years ago, preceding the designation of the Silk Road. Archaeological evidence suggests that, even before the Silk Road, Korean residents had access to the artistic and industrial goods of Iranian artisans. Formal trade with "Persia" is documented in Korean history, and Korean mythology proudly recounts marriages between prominent Iranian and

Korean families. Today, we witness the growing importance of Iran-South Korea relations in the outlook of bilateral ties, reaching its peak in 2017. However, the capacities for closer relations between the two countries, particularly in public policy, art, culture, and people-to-people communications, have not been fully explored and liberated.

South Korea has extensive gateways and connections, maintaining close relations with Asian countries such as Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. It has also established extensive relationships with Australia, Canada, and Central American countries such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama. Iran's proximity to South Korea, as a strategic partner in the Oceania and Asia-Pacific region, can enhance Iran's role in the equations of this region, contributing to the improvement of Iran's international image.

It is crucial for Iran to consider its unique weight in the Middle East region. Iran has one of the largest economies in the Middle East, with approximately \$86

billion. Culturally, Iran possesses one of the oldest, richest and most influential artistic and cultural heritages globally, spanning various fields such as literature, music, architecture, painting, ceramics, calligraphy, weaving, metalworking, and stone carving. On the other hand, South Korea has been recognized since the early 21st century as an influential representative of pop culture globally, encompassing music, television series, and cinema, often referred to as the "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu." In terms of technology, Korean giants like Samsung and Hyundai, among other notable Korean brands, have made significant strides. Amidst all these cultural, economic, and political dimensions, one of the most impactful initiatives in bilateral relations is the collaboration in support programs between the two countries. The event held on Tuesday, in the realm of cooperation between the South Korean Embassy and the Kahrizak Charity Foundation, is an example of such events that will significantly contribute to the improvement and elevation of South Korea's image among the Iranian people.

