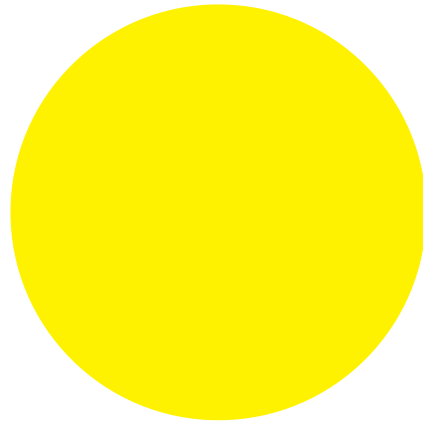




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The Israeli military continues its aggression with tanks near the Gaza Strip as demolished buildings are seen behind on December 29, 2023.
• ANADOLU

Record-breaking arms sales

A perspective on international (in)security



By **Abed Akbari**
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In 2023, Germany has set a new record in its arms exports. According to Germany's dpa news agency, Germany exported approximately €12.5 billion worth of weapons and military products to various countries. This figure indicates a 50% increase compared to 2022, when German arms exports amounted to €8.35 billion. The top recipients of German arms in 2023 were Ukraine (€2.24 billion), Israel (€303 million), Turkey (€297 million), Saudi Arabia (€265 million), and Egypt (€205 million). These countries are involved in some of the world's crisis and conflict zones, and it appears that German weapons play a significant role in the ongoing international crises, particularly in Ukraine and the occupied territories. This has led to severe criticism from civil organizations, political parties, media, and the general public in Germany. The German government typically defends its arms exports by citing reasons such as supporting allies, enhancing regional security, preserving defense industries, and creating employment. It often portrays itself as attempting to impose restrictions and transparency on arms exports through legislation, such as the Export Control Act, to prevent the misuse of German weapons for war crimes, human rights violations, escalating tensions, and the promotion of nuclear weapons.

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Raisi: CBI's transparency encourages investors



National Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi underlined that providing timely, quick, and clear information on foreign exchange issues by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) will give more confidence to investors and businessmen. He made the remarks during the 63rd annual session of the Central Bank's General and Extraordinary Assembly on Saturday after listening to the eight-month performance report by CBI Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin, according to president.ir.

Offering some recommendations for improving the performance of the Central Bank, the president added, "All decisions and actions in the foreign exchange sector should be aimed at disciplining the foreign exchange market and guiding it towards compliance with the policies of the Central Bank."

"Every decision of the central bank in the foreign exchange system is mandatory and all institutions and companies should be obliged to comply with these decisions," said the chief executive.

Emphasizing sustainable inflation control and liquidity control due to the direct impact of these two economic phenomena on the banking and monetary system of the country as well as the performance of entrepreneurs and investors, Raisi expressed appreciation for the central bank's measures in order to successfully control liquidity growth.

"Inflation control and liquidity control should be achieved not by creating stagnation but through production growth because recession is harmful to the country's economy as much as inflation and liquidity growth."

The president highlighted the need for serious monitoring and special sensitivity towards bank overdrafts and the planning to prevent this practice in the Central Bank, while stressing the necessity of obtaining appropriate guarantees from banks in exceptional cases.

"The central bank should be careful in reviewing overdrafts so that these evaluations are based on true and real information, not false and illusory information," he underlined.

Pointing out that bank balance sheets are a necessary but insufficient tool for monitoring the performance of banks, Raisi obliged the central bank to examine the effectiveness of the Iranian banks' extension of bank loans in production, and if the desired goals are not met, to reconsider and take action in this field.

Israel launched 'most devastating modern warfare': Report ICJ steps in at last

Defeating Hamas impossible: Former Israeli PMs

International Desk

South Africa has filed an application at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to begin proceedings over allegations of genocide against Israel for its war against Hamas in Gaza, the court said on Friday.

Pretoria accused Tel Aviv of being "in violation of its obligations under the Genocide Convention" in its application and argues that "acts and omissions by Israel ... are genocidal in character, as they are committed with the requisite specific intent ... to destroy Palestinians in Gaza," according to the ICJ.

Moreover, South Africa asked the court to issue provisional or short-term measures ordering Israel to stop its military campaign in Gaza, which it said were "necessary in this case to protect against further, severe, and irreparable harm to the rights of the Palestinian people".

Over 21,672 people have been killed in Gaza since October 7, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel's aerial bombardment and ground invasion of Gaza have caused widespread devastation in the densely-inhabited coastal strip, prompting outcry from aid groups and the international community, CNN reported.

Arabs and Jews rallied together in Tel Aviv in support of a ceasefire in Gaza as Israeli forces step up their bombardment of the besieged Palestinian territory, according to AFP.

More weapons for Israel

Israeli warplanes struck two urban refugee camps in central Gaza on Saturday, as the Biden administration approved a new emergency weapons sale to Israel despite persistent international cease-fire calls over mounting civilian deaths, hunger, and mass displacement in the enclave.

Residents in the urban refugee camps of Nuseirat and Bureij, two recent hot spots of combat, reported Israeli airstrikes overnight and into Saturday, AP wrote.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Congress he approved a \$147.5 million sale for equipment, including fuses, charges, and primers, that is needed for 155 mm shells Israel bought previously.

It marked the second time this month that the Biden administration is bypassing Congress to approve an emergency weapons sale to Israel.

Hamas says that with the US administration supplying artillery shells to Israeli forces, it is a participant in the war of extermination against children and civilians in Gaza.

The Wall Street Journal has reported that the war in Gaza "is generating destruction comparable in scale to the most devastating warfare in the modern record".

In a report published on Saturday, it confirmed that by mid-December Israel had dropped 29,000 bombs, munitions, and shells on the besieged enclave, destroying or dam-



aging nearly 70 percent of Gaza's homes.

Israeli systems humiliated, inefficient

Israel says it is determined to pursue its unprecedented air and ground offensive until it has dismantled Hamas, a goal viewed by some as unattainable because of the resistance group's deep roots in Palestinian society.

On Friday, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak published an opinion article, in which he said "Despite the clear American support and the openness of many countries in the region to study new ideas to solve the problem in Gaza at the be-

ginning of the war, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu systematically avoided any discussion about what will happen here in the end." Barak described October 7, 2023, as "the most dangerous event in the history of Israel", which led to the killing of 1,300 people and the kidnapping of 250 others, in addition to "humiliation, inefficiency, and dysfunction" in Israel's systems.

An investigation by the New York Times has found that the Israeli army was "undermanned" and "out of position" during the October 7 attack by Hamas. The Times added that the army was "so poorly organized that soldiers com-

municated in impromptu WhatsApp groups and relied on social media posts for targeting information". "Commandos rushed into battle armed only for brief combat. Helicopter pilots were ordered to look to news reports and Telegram channels to choose targets". Earlier on Thursday, Ehud Olmert, another former Israeli prime minister, wrote in an op-ed on Haaretz that "the odds of achieving the complete elimination of Hamas were nil from the moment that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared it the chief goal of the war." While Israel has repeatedly vowed to destroy

Hamas, Cairo has proposed a plan involving renewable cease-fires, a staggered release of hostages for Palestinian prisoners, and ultimately an end to the war, say sources close to Hamas.

Speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, a Hamas official said the group's delegation present in Cairo would "give the response of the Palestinian factions, including several observations" regarding the proposal Egypt recently submitted to Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Hamas would seek "guarantees for a complete Israeli military withdrawal" from Gaza, the official said.

Record-breaking arms sales

However, German arms exports remain a complex and challenging issue that requires increased attention and scrutiny from German po-

litical parties and the public. Key issues that should be further examined by the German public include the impact of arms exports on global peace and security, adherence to

ethical and human rights principles, alignment with foreign policies and international cooperation, and how the defense and security needs of client countries are addressed.

These issues are particularly challenging in the context of German arms exports to Ukraine and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Civil protests in Germany against arms exports to crisis regions began seriously in 2015 when the German government decided to sell 200 Leopard 2 tanks to Saudi Arabia, a country supporting the government of Mansour Hadi in the Yemeni war. This decision sparked widespread protests from peace activists, green and left-wing parties, media, and the general public, who considered it inconsistent with democratic and humane values.

Protesters in Germany have expressed their opposition to arms exports through various means, including organizing peace rallies and marches in various German cities, especially in Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, and

Munich. Symbolic and creative actions, such as painting military tanks and weapons with artificial blood, installing coffins and black flowers, conducting theatrical performances and music, laying coffins and shoes in front of the embassies of countries buying German weapons, legal actions such as filing complaints against the German government in local and international courts, presenting reports to parliamentary representatives and relevant commissions, establishing information networks, and supporting peace activists in client countries are all part of the broader movement against German arms sales.

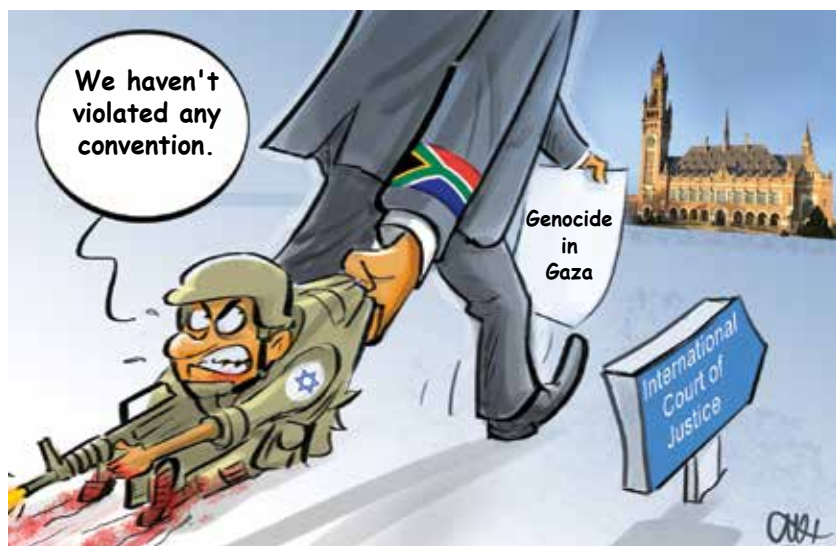
These German civil protests have contributed to an increase in public awareness and sensitivity regarding the issue of arms exports and their effects on global peace and

security, human rights, and sustainable development. As a result, the German government has faced growing pressure to reform and clarify laws and regulations related to arms exports and adhere to international standards, such as the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty.

The tensions and disagreements between the German government and client countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, dissatisfied with these protests, have been tangible outcomes of this civil opposition. Although these protests have also increased risks for peace activists, who, in some cases, have faced threats, detentions, harassment, sanctions, and even death, they have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and pushing the German government towards reforms in arms export policies.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Discover the natural beauty of Darakeh

Do you think Tehran is just a bustling, traffic-laden capital? Think again! A short distance from the city's hustle and bustle, you can discover areas that seem as though they've been meticulously plucked from the northern forests of Iran and gently nestled in Tehran's corners. Places like Darakeh stand lush and tall, filling the lungs of its residents with fresh air. Darakeh dates back 800 years. Throughout the centuries, it has consistently drawn attention due to its delightful climate. The Darakeh area was once a favored spot for nobility and princes, but it has also been a permanent home for ordinary people throughout the years, *surfiran.com* wrote. Darakeh still hosts houses with permanent residents. People who have embraced the challenges and tranquility of this area, away from Tehran's bustling urban life, add different hues to their daily lives. The residents of Darakeh are primarily involved in gardening, agriculture, and poultry farming.

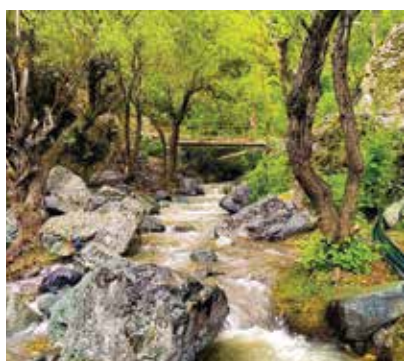
Situated in the northwest of Tehran, Darakeh borders Evin neighborhood to the south, Saadat Abad to the west, and Shahid Beheshti University campus to the east. Considered part of the Shemiranat area, Darakeh enjoys a more pleasant climate in spring and summer compared to other parts of Tehran, with temperatures rarely exceeding 25-27 degrees Celsius. As a mountainous retreat, Darakeh's colder seasons feel intensely chilly, even harsh at times.

On the hiking trails of Darakeh, you'll encounter a narrow strip of mountainous forests that double the pleasure of the journey. The valley spans approximately six kilometers, with altitudes ranging from 1,590 to 3,944 meters.

A metropolis with all its challenges, Tehran sometimes makes you, whether a resident or a traveler, yearn for a serene environment. What better place than the heart of nature?

Darakeh offers a verdant and tranquil haven – a neighborhood that beckons you for various reasons.

If you go to Darakeh for a hike, you'll find alley-gardens with tall trees offering their shades, old houses with ancient doors, and air that's fresh and free from the city's noise. Darakeh is a popular area for hiking, especially on weekends and holidays. It welcomes both professional and amateur hikers. If you're keen on hiking, Darakeh's heights could be an excellent choice for you. The delectable snacks of Darakeh, from fruit rolls and pickles, fresh corn, pomegranate juice, and walnuts to diverse restaurant dishes, are great excuses to head for Darakeh.



Darakeh River

The Darakeh River, originating in the Tochal heights, fed by natural springs, becomes more water-abundant, continuing its journey down the heights. The unique combination of the river and trees plays a significant role in making this part of Tehran so delightful.

Kara Forest

Kara Forest is one of the most captivating areas in Darakeh. To reach this forest, travel about two kilometers from Darakeh Square, following the river. You'll come to a fork in the road. The straight path leads to Palangchal, and the left path takes you to Kara Forest. Kara hut is at the beginning of this path – use it as a landmark to guide your way. Once on the road leading to Kara Forest, expect a steep slope at the beginning, a 40-minute walk ahead, and cornelian cherry trees waiting amidst the forest.

Chin Kalagh Peak

Chin Kalagh Peak, the southernmost peak of the Alborz Mountains, stands at an elevation of 2,820 meters. Reaching it involves traversing a forested path. After reaching the forest, continue ascending. To conquer Chin Kalagh Peak, you need to be physically prepared, properly equipped, and preferably in a group, especially since the path isn't entirely smooth. Chin Kalagh Peak is not only a beautiful and invigorating destination but also features an attractive route.

Palangchal Refuge

Palangchal Refuge is a popular destination for mountaineers and hikers, located on the path to Palangchal Peak at an elevation of 2,450 meters. To reach the refuge, visitors must travel a 10-km distance from the main square of Darakeh, which takes approximately 2 ½ to three hours. The two-story building offers several amenities, including sanitary services, a dormitory with a capacity of 70 people, a café and restaurant, and a rescue center. Visitors should note that there is a fee to access the refuge and should carry cash due to possible disruptions in Internet and banking services at high altitudes.

Another must-see attraction in Darakeh is the Haft-Howz waterfall, named after the seven natural stone basins that adorn the Darakeh hiking trail. The waterfall is an ideal spot to rest and rejuvenate, with a café nearby bearing the same name.

Poetic network from Isfahan to Tehran

The network among the early 'literary return' poets in some cases cut across professional lines. Mirza Muhammad Nasir 'Tabib' Isfahani (died in 1771), who accompanied Karim Khan Zand from Isfahan to Shiraz to become the ruler's special physician, instructed Seyyed Ahmad 'Hatif' Isfahani in medicine and philosophy in Isfahan. Azar Bigdeli (died in 1781) displayed his admiration for Mirza Muhammad Nasir 'Tabib' Isfahani (died in 1771), in several poems, praising his exceptional knowledge of poetry, philosophy and medicine. One of the poems is written in the same metre and rhyme scheme as Rudaki's famous poem in praise of Bukhara, pointing to an early example of an Isfahani Circle poet modelling his verse

according to the specific form and style of a classical master. One modern critic even credits 'Tabib' with being one of the crucial founders of the early 'return' movement, alongside Mushtaq. The presence of another 'Tabib' among this early grouping of 'literary return' poets demonstrates how the greater network incorporated familial connections as well. Mirza 'Abd al-Baqi 'Tabib' Isfahani (died in 1758-9), a onetime mayor of Isfahan and Nadir's Shah physician, became affiliated to the Isfahani Circle. He was also the elder brother of Mirza 'Abd al-Vahhab, who played a crucial role in the 'return' movement after Mushtaq's literary society disbanded, and a relation of Nashat

Isfahani (died in 1828-9), the major figure in the later 'literary return' movement at the Qajar court in Tehran. The role of this particular family was indeed central to nurturing the activity of the 'return' movement during its early stages in Isfahan. Nashat Isfahani, for example, first came to prominence by convening a literary society in Isfahan dedicated to imitating the style of the ancients in early Qajar times. Having attracted the notice of Fat'h-Ali Shah, he followed the future monarch to Tehran and rose to the position of chief letter writer and served the court in a variety of other functional roles. At the Qajar court he continued to be an avid supporter of the

Qajar ruler's promotion of 'literary return' poets.

In his own poetry he imitated the style of Hafez and wrote the introduction to Fat'h-Ali Khan 'Saba' Kashani's (died in 1822-3) famous Book of Kings (Shahnameh Saba).

Relational threads connecting members of the early 'literary return' poets in Isfahan to like-minded poets in Qajar Tehran extend beyond the above case of family connection. While the nature of the 'literary return' movement at the Qajar court falls outside the scope of this study, it bears mention that instructor-student relationships developed between several poets active in late eighteenth-century Isfahan and in early nineteenth-century Tehran.



↑ Azar Bigdeli

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter, 'Reformation and Reconstruction of Poetic Networks: Isfahan 1722–1801', from a book entitled, 'Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900', written by Kevin L. Schwartz, published by Edinburgh University Press.

When in exile, occupy and massacre

Founding Israel 'rebellion against God': Orthodox Rabbi

By Reza Raadfar
Political analyst

**PERSPECTIVE
EXCLUSIVE**

Ever since its unholy inception in 1948, Israel has refused to be called theocratic, and that turned out to be for a good reason. There's a lot of baggage that comes with being theocratic. The founders of Israel were well aware of that because if they hadn't been, they wouldn't have to jump through hoops to claim that they are not. In other words, claiming that it represents Jehovah (God) would have been a logical deduction that, at least in the beginning, wouldn't have needed further explanation. Instead, Israel was repeatedly claimed to be only a "Jewish state," or a "state for Jews." To be fair, Zionists have time and again proved that they don't want their hands to be tied down by the Hebrew Bible and Jewish teachings. It seems that, at the beginning, there really was no motive for the creation of Israel and occupation of Palestine other than designating a land where Jews from around the world could gather and, for one thing, be "safe" from persecution, and for another, rule themselves. Certainly, we know now that the goal wasn't to be able to enact the orders of Jehovah on Earth.

The fact that Zionists, who proposed and spearheaded Israel's creation, chose the land of Palestine to occupy was an afterthought. Essentially, Zionists first identified the two aforementioned needs, then addressed those needs by proposing to grab a land where they can rule, and finally, looked to their holy book to find a place. Knowing that they would have more of an uphill battle if they were to choose just any old place, they chose the "Holy Land," which was called "Palestine" even under the British Mandate at the time. This choice of land was entirely justified for some Jews, while for others, not even the Holy Land could be where the Jews were destined for. You see, in the Hebrew Bible and the Holy Qur'an, it is rather explicitly said that the very early Jews broke too many of God's instructions, and, as a result, He destined them to wander the world as perpetual exiles, never being allowed to settle somewhere for too long. These times of national displacement are known in Hebrew as "galut" (exile). The four primary periods of exile are known as "arba galuyot" (the four exiles). Jews, who hailed from Egypt, found themselves in Babylon, Persia/Media, Greece, and finally, Rome. The fourth exile period is said to be ongoing since the Mashiakh (Messiah) has not arrived, many Jews live outside of Israel, and the Temple has not been rebuilt. Those living in Israel are considered to be a small fraction of the total People who will be reunited as a nation by the Messiah, who is from the Davidic line and will be the future king of Israel.

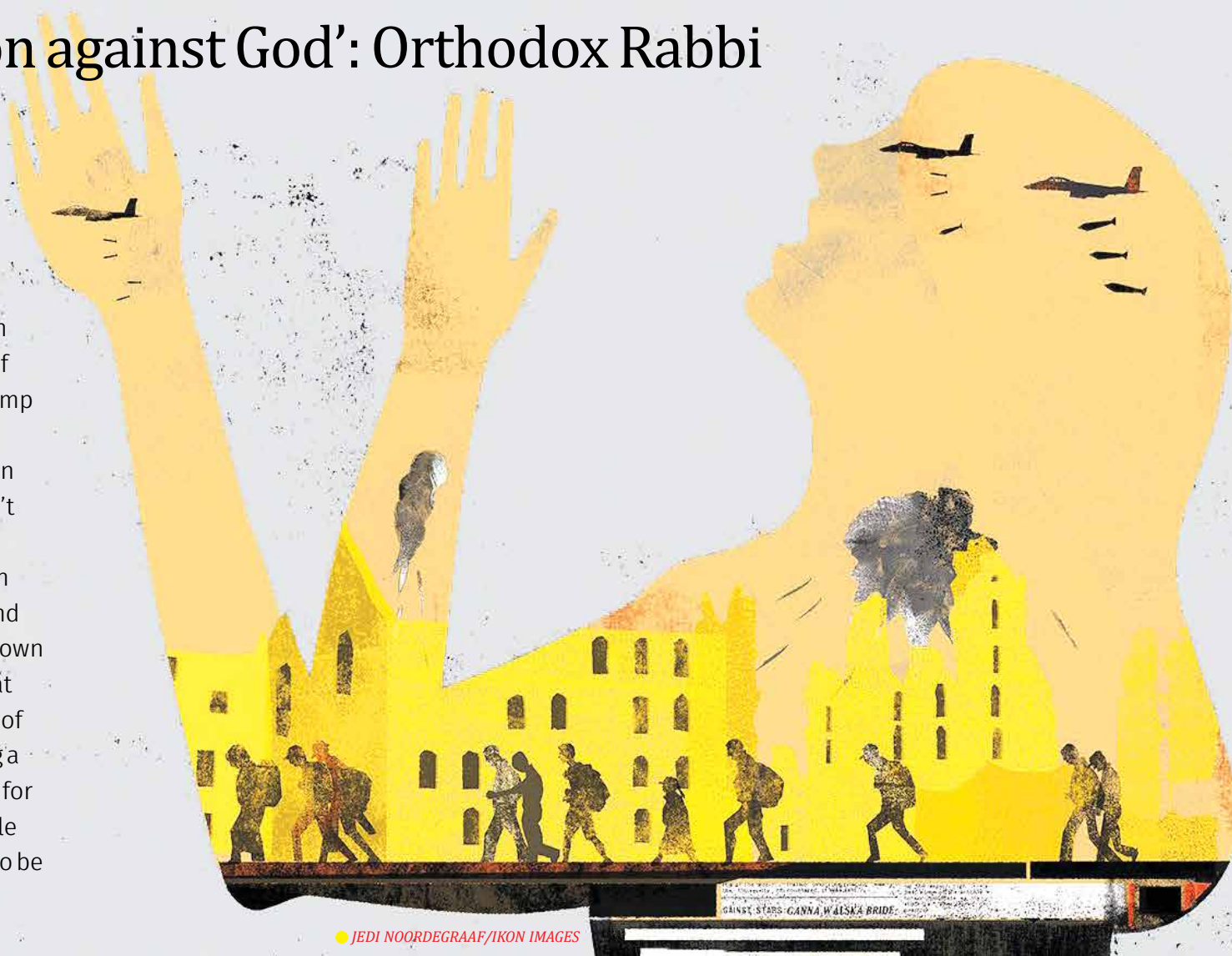
But is it up to the Jewish "Messiah" to unite the Jewish people in Israel, or should the Jews take matters into their own hands and "prepare" Israel for their Messiah? Zionism has been the biggest proponent of the second idea and has acted most strongly to make it happen, but they are criticized harshly for this specific interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. This is where Zionists deviate strongly from Jews of other sects, including Orthodox Jews. Orthodox Rabbi Elhanan Beck described Zionism not only as non-religious but also a "rebellion against God," as it sought to create a land for the Jewish people despite Jews' belief that they are "in exile" by God. To be sure, choosing a land to settle goes against the definition of the word "exile." If the land of Palestine was chosen as a "temporary home," the definition could have been stretched enough to imply that Israelis will move to wherever their Messiah will reunite them, but Zionists have not stopped at just choosing a land. They have allied themselves with the most powerful states in the world to ensure their survival against all odds and despite everything they do. This doesn't seem to be a home they are willing to leave behind to gather under the banner of the future king of Israel. One may even wonder how many Zionists will deny their Messiah once he perches claims that Israel was always going to be founded elsewhere. Rabbi Beck noted as well that "Zionism is basically built upon mistrusting God." Almost all religions vow that you can't go far by disobeying the orders of their respective god(s).

Seeing that Zionism was from the onset in "total opposition" with the Jewish faith, Orthodox Jews were against the foundation of Israel and believe that it "will come to an end sooner or later." This eventual decline seems to have started a long time ago since the main aforementioned goal of Zionists seem to have always been challenged. Israelis have unsurprisingly never been safe in the land they occupied against the order of the God. "Israel is the most dangerous

place for Jewish people," underlined the Rabbi. "I've lived in England for 36 years. I don't know what an English soldier looks like. I never saw them. I don't know the uniform, what it looks like ... This means a safe country." Beck said that Jewish people live in peace in Muslim countries as well, contrary to "completely false" claims Zionists have made to justify the occupation of Palestine. "We were persecuted in many places in the world, and the Muslims saved

us. They gave us a golden place to live, there," he added. "Seventy five years of killing. Still, Jews live in the Muslim world peacefully. Take the examples in Morocco, in Tunisia, in Algeria, in Iran, in Türkiye, in Yemen," noted Beck, a leading Rabbi of the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta movement. Granted, Israel is not a theocratic country as not only its founders had no interest in representing Jehovah; such a commitment would have made it harder for

Zionists to achieve their unholy plans. However, it is hard to imagine what their subjects, the Jewish people of Israel, will get out of this deal. If moving to Israel was for religious reasons, Jewish scholars think that founding Israel was an act of rebellion against God. If moving to Israel was to be safe, they would have been much safer anywhere else in the world. What is more, they are committing genocide in Gaza as we speak. Was this what Israeli Jews signed up for?



Members of Neturei Karta, an anti-Zionist Jewish group, protest in London, UK, against ongoing Israeli violence in Gaza on December 9, 2023.
GETTY IMAGES

Apartheid South Africa never wiped hospitals out

Textbook genocide in Gaza



By Zane Dangor
Director-general of
South Africa's DIRCO

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The horrors that have been visited on the people of Gaza and increasingly the West Bank by the Israeli forces and by illegal settlers have been playing out in international media outlets. More than 20,000 people in Gaza, mostly non-combatants, have been killed. This includes more than 8,000 children and 6,200 women. The war crimes and crimes against humanity are obvious. They are not disputable.

More ominous, a textbook case of genocide is unfolding before us all. The response by the "West"? "Israel has a right to defend itself".

It's a settled fact of international law that an occupying power cannot use military force to attack a civilian population that it generally has complete control over. Gaza, like the West Bank, remains occupied as Israel has had effective control over the territory. By actively supporting Israel's military response in Gaza and increasingly in the West Bank, many European countries and the US may themselves be liable to aiding and abetting these breaches of international criminal law.

Recently, I was asked why South Africa is so clear in its support for the people of Palestine and not for the people of Ukraine. While we could have been clearer in many aspects of our response to the war in Ukraine, and this could be the subject of another article, there are a few areas that we were very clear on.

We called for an immediate cease-fire so that negotiations for a just and lasting peace could begin. We stated very clearly that the use of force is never wise, but if there is war, that the laws of war need to be respected, especially the principle of distinction, which prohibits the targeting of civilians, non-combatants, and civilian infrastructure. This approach was premised on the importance of a just international legal order to stem impunity and to fulfil the promise of a more peaceful world. In New Delhi, India, in September 2023, the leaders of the G20 agreed by consensus on a declaration. That declaration included the principles alluded to earlier. It included respect for the UN Charter and specifically also that the acquisition of land through the use of force is prohibited and should be condemned.

A few months later, it appears that for many in the G20, the just legal order does not apply to Palestinians. The support for the clear violations of international legal norms by Israel was in stark contrast to their invoking it — and correctly so — with regard to the war in Ukraine.

Many in the developing world were not shocked by this, as Israel has been exempted from accountability for their transgressions of international law for decades. Nevertheless, we were most definitely disappointed as we

had hoped that given that these principles were debated and discussed over a number of months, that they would, this time around, be respected and that Israel would be held accountable for transgressions of these principles.

The attacks on civilians by Hamas on October 7, 2023, may constitute war crimes and need to be condemned and investigated. These attacks cannot, however, be a blank cheque for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide by Israel.

The question many South Africans ask is that, given the role that the West played in contributing to the fall of apartheid in South Africa, why is there such differential treatment of apartheid and related crimes against Palestinians?

While former colonial powers did support the South African apartheid state, many did eventually follow the lead of former colonised countries to use the "fundamental values" pillars of global governance to isolate and pressure the apartheid government.

Former colonised countries from the Global South brought the values and characteristics of their anti-colonial struggles into the United Nations' system, and this system was generally responsive. The combination of international law that sought to isolate apartheid South Africa — with an expectation by the UN that the various resolutions would be respected — together with broad anti-apartheid coalitions of states from all regions of the world and civil society movements, served as a veritable global boycott, disinvestment, and sanctions movement against the apartheid South African government.

The ending of apartheid and the subsequent constitutional state that was being built were epoch-making events and served to elevate "fundamental values"-based diplomacy globally, with the democratic South African government seen as a flag bearer for values-based diplomacy.

This approach by the global community is in stark contrast to the oppression of Palestinians. Many South Africans who experienced the horrors of apartheid in South Africa have visited Palestine and expressed views that the oppression of the Palestinians is worse than what we experienced.

While Palestinians share the experience of oppression that fits in with the description of the crime of apartheid, the global power dynamics with regard to the Palestinian struggle and the struggle of South Africans are very different.

There are hundreds of UN resolutions against Israel, including binding UN Security Council resolutions over the past seven decades. All of these have been violated by Israel over the years. Despite these violations and the ongoing unlawful occupation and related violence, there has never been a call for binding sanctions on Israel, including arms embargoes. Instead, unilateral arms embargoes were levelled against the Palestinians. International action in relation



In October 2023, people gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa to express their solidarity with Palestinians and protest Israel's military aggression on in Gaza.

to Israel has taken the form of mild admonishment, as opposed to effective countermeasures by the UN and the global community.

Contrast this to the situation with apartheid South Africa where binding UN resolutions with countermeasures were in place, and where these were supported by various countries passing comprehensive anti-apartheid legislation that also made trade, sport, and cultural exchanges illegal and/or difficult.

With the situation in Palestine, some European countries are, in fact, passing legislation that makes criticisms of Israel illegal. Again, it seems that countries that profess to support fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, the right to protest, and the right of association are

willing to sacrifice these values in defending the Israeli cabinet. Due to the lack of real global political solidarity with the people of Palestine and the lack of real effective restraint-oriented international law instruments against the actions of the cabinet of Israel, their oppressive machinery is arguably much more ruthless than was the case under apartheid. We see this in the attack on Gaza!

We were never subjected to air strikes that wiped out hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. There is a robust international campaign, led by the most powerful states in the world, to support the status quo that favours the cabinet of Israel.

Unlike apartheid South Africa that had to fund its propaganda clandestinely, the occupation is openly supported by organisa-

tions and governments across the world. The global narrative is to reduce the occupation to one of a "conflict" that seeks to apportion equal responsibility to "both" sides in what is otherwise a very asymmetrical power dynamic.

This explains the differing approaches, but not the why. The why requires a longer paper, but in short, it can in part be attributed to the context and manner in which Israel was founded.

Violence in what is euphemistically and erroneously referred to as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been ongoing since the end of World War I. This started with the colonisation of Palestine by Britain following the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, with the express intention of providing a state for the Jewish people in that territory

instead of working towards providing independence to the Palestinian people at that time.

The impetus for these actions was driven by anti-Jewish sentiment in Europe and was led by, among others, Lord Balfour who had also passed an anti-migration act in Britain aimed at limiting Jewish migration to Britain following anti-Jewish pogroms in the Soviet Union.

The history of anti-Jewish criticism by the "West" and its horrific consequences for Jewish people in Europe may in part explain the acceptance of the transgressions of the norms and fundamental values that underpin global governance systems and international law by Israeli cabinets since 1948. The resultant impunity has contributed to the latest atrocities.

Perhaps for the first time in history, people around the world are witnessing a textbook case of genocide unfolding in Gaza. The misguided acceptance of the actions of the Israeli cabinet has to end for a just and lasting peace to be realised.

Continuing to embolden the actions of the Israeli cabinet creates an environment in which hatred and militancy grow, making talks towards a just and lasting peace in which the human rights, dignity, and aspirations of Israelis and Palestinians are upheld, very difficult.

The continued disregard for the norms of international law at this time may further undermine the global governance system to the extent that international law and its institutions are rendered meaningless.

This can only lead to a worsening of an already volatile global order and the spectre of more wars and more loss of life at scales last seen in World War II.

This article by the director-general of South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation first appeared on Daily Maverick.



A Palestinian child sitting on a roadblock at Al-Shuhada Street within the Old City of Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Palestinians have nicknamed the street "Apartheid Street" because it is closed to Palestinian traffic and open only to Israeli settlers and tourists.

JOHN AUSTIN/LABOUR2PALESTINE

Nuggets suffer heaviest defeat of NBA season



Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives to the basket during an NBA victory over the Nuggets in Denver, CO, US, on December 29, 2023.
● USA TODAY SPORTS

BBC – Reigning NBA champions Denver Nuggets suffered their heaviest defeat of the season as they were beaten 119-93 by Oklahoma City Thunder. It is the Nuggets' second defeat by Thunder in the space of two weeks and ends their six-match winning streak.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points for Thunder and Chet Holmgren added 24 points.

Nikola Jokic had 19 points, 10 rebounds, seven assists and seven turnovers for the Nuggets, but they were without forward Aaron Gordon for the second consecutive game because of hand and facial injuries sustained from dog bites.

Also on Friday, Boston Celtics' winning run at home continued as they beat Toronto Raptors 120-118.

Jaylen Brown had 31 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in the Celtics' fifth consecutive victory.

Elsewhere, Washington Wizards beat Brooklyn Nets 110-104 to earn their first win in four games.

Kyle Kuzma scored 26 points and Deni Avdija added 21 points and 13 rebounds for the Wizards.

Devin Booker, with 35, was one of four Phoenix Suns players to score at least 21 points in their 133-119 victory over Charlotte Hornets.

Kevin Durant, Jusuf Nurkic and Eric Gordon were the other contributors as the Suns secured back-to-back wins for the first time in more than a month.

Terry Rozier was the Hornets' standout performer with 42 points, one shy of his career-best, and added eight assists.

Portland Trail Blazers avenged Thursday's defeat by San Antonio Spurs to beat the same opponents 134-128 with Jerami Grant and Malcolm Brogdon scoring 27 points each.

LA Clippers played their fourth consecutive match without injured star Kawhi Leonard but still earned a 117-106 win over Memphis Grizzlies.

Clippers' Paul George scored 23 points and Ivica Zubac added 15 points with 20 rebounds.

Franz Wagner's season-high 32 points and nine rebounds helped Orlando Magic beat the New York Knicks 117-108.

Greco-Roman Wrestling National Championships:

Mohmedi draws first blood against Alizadeh; Hedayati outmuscles Yousefi

Sports Desk

Iranian wrestler Alireza Mohmedi will be looking to go all the way to represent the country at next year's Paris Olympics after coming out on top against Nasser Alizadeh in the Greco-Roman Wrestling National Championships.

All eyes were on the 87kg final at the event in Qom – serving as the first round of the national team trials – as to who would take advantage in the race to be the Iranian contender for an Olympic berth.

It was Mohmedi who built on a world 82kg silver-winning run in September to walk away with a thrilling 5-4 victory over his opponent – the Asian 87kg champion for the past three years and runner-up in October's Asian Games. The fate of the weight class is far from settled as both will still have to take part in several Olympic qualification tournaments in the coming months but Thursday's victory surely gave Mohmedi a slight edge over Alizadeh, who was part of the Iranian squad at the World Championships in Belgrade – knocked out in the quarterfinals.

The other highly-anticipated showdown came in the 130kg contests, where superheavyweight prodigy and reigning world under-20 champion Fardin Hedayati outpowered the 2021 world senior champion Ali-Akbar Yousefi 4-1 for the ultimate prize. Friday's triumph means Hedayati will likely be given a shot at the Asian glory in April, though Amin Mirzazadeh is all but guaranteed a superheavyweight place in Paris after his world gold in the Serbian capital sealed the Olympic slot for the country.

Meanwhile, with veteran Mohammad-Ali Geraei serving a one-year ban over the bottle-throwing incident in Belgrade, questions remain over the Iranian 77kg slot for the upcoming Olympic qualifiers.

Amir Abdi defeated Ali Oskou 3-2 in Thursday's final to throw down the gauntlet to Amin Kavi-



Alireza Mohmedi lifts fellow-Iranian Nasser Alizadeh in the 87kg final at the Greco-Roman Wrestling National Championships in Qom, Iran, on December 28, 2023.
● IWF

aninejad, who was absent in the National Championships due to his runner-up finish at the Asian Games.

Elsewhere, Mohammad-Mahdi Gholampour dominated the 60kg contests, cruising to a technical-fall victory over Mahdi Javaheri in the final, and will join Mahdi Mohsennejad in the national team training camp ahead of the Olympic qualifiers.

In the absence of the world 67kg sensation Mohammadreza Geraei, local boy Mohammad-Javad Rezaei made the most of the opportunity to make a quick work of Armin Moheb-Sabet in less than two minutes for the gold.

Still, the younger of the Geraei brothers, who had to settle for a consolation bronze in Belgrade,

will be leading the charge for Iran in the weight division as he will be chasing a second successive Olympic gold next August.

In the 97kg event, Asian champion Mahdi Bali came out victorious (3-1) against Amir-Reza Akbari in the final, though he will likely stand second in the pecking order behind Mohammad-Hadi Saravi – a winner of a world gold and double bronzes, who will be eager to add a second Olympic medal to his Tokyo bronze.

In the non-Olympic competitions, Mohammad-Mahdi Sha'bani marched to a 9-0 triumph over Mohammad Hosseinvand in the 55kg final, while Meysam Dalkhani – world champion in 2021 – defeated Erfan Jarkani 8-5 for the 63kg gold.

Mohammadreza Rostami eased past Mohammad Elyasi (11-3) for the 72kg crown, with Rasoul Garmsiri grabbing the 82kg gold at the expense of Abbas Mahdizadeh.

Having already secured seven Greco-Roman and freestyle spots for the Olympics, Iran hopes to make a clean sweep of 12 berths before heading to Paris.

Freestyle wrestlers Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) and Hassan Yazdani (86kg) finished on the podium in Belgrade, while Rahman Amouzad, despite the failure in defending his world 65kg title, managed to finish fifth to book a third freestyle spot for the country.

Kamran Qasempour missed out on the National Championships in mid-December with an injury, but

has been given a second chance by the coaching staff at the Zagreb Open, where he will represent the country – alongside reigning Iranian champion Amir-Ali Azarpira – in the 97kg event, as he will be looking to add the Olympic glory to his double world 92kg golds in 2021 and 2022.

A gold winner in the National Championships, Hossein Abouzari and world 79kg silver winner Mohammad Nokhodi will be the frontrunners in chasing the 74kg quota for Iran, while Ahmad Mohammadnejad Javan will be keen to build on a dominant 57kg campaign in the national event – featuring a final victory over former world silver medalist Alireza Sarlak – to punch a ticket for Paris.

Turkey Super Cup final in Riyadh called off amid Ataturk T-shirt row



Fans are seen in the stands ahead of the Turkish Super Cup final, which was eventually called off, at Al-Awwal Park, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on December 29, 2023.
● AP

AL JAZEERA – The Turkish Super Cup final between Galatasaray and Fenerbahce scheduled to be played in Saudi Arabia's capital Riyadh was called off over an apparent disagreement about the players' jerseys.

The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) and the two teams – who returned to Istanbul on Saturday after Friday's postponed match – said the decision was made because of "some problems" in the event's organisation. Haberturk television and other Turkish media said players from both Istanbul football teams wanted to wear T-shirts that featured an image of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the revered founder of the modern Turkish republic, during a prematch warm-up, but were not authorised to do so by Saudi organisers.

Turkish media also reported that Saudi authorities did not allow

banners featuring political slogans and Ataturk T-shirts to be displayed ahead of the match, including those with Ataturk's "peace at home, peace in the world" slogan.

The clubs refused to play in the final at the King Saud University venue, which is also known as Al-Awwal Park stadium.

Saudi state TV cited a statement by organisers saying that the cancellation was the result of the teams not adhering to match regulations.

"We were looking forward to holding the match on time in accordance with the international soccer rules and regulations that require the sport to be presented without any slogans outside its scope, especially since this was discussed with the Turkish [Football] Federation in the framework of the preparatory meetings for the match," the

statement said.

"Despite this agreement, it was unfortunate that the two teams did not adhere to what had been agreed upon, which led to the match not being held," it added.

A joint statement by the TFF and the clubs posted on X said: "The 2023 Super Cup ... has been postponed to a later date as a result of a joint decision we made with our clubs, due to some problems in its organisation."

It also expressed "gratitude to the football federation of the host country and the relevant institutions for their efforts in organising" the event.

On Saturday, photographs and video footage showed hundreds of Galatasaray and Fenerbahce fans cheering, waving Turkish flags and carrying pictures of Ataturk at the Istanbul and Sabiha Gokcen airports.

A call for change

New strategies are needed to address the plight of Tehran's working children



One crucial aspect is the role of citizens, who must be educated not to contribute to the street economy that thrives on child labor.
● MILAD MASOUMI

Social Desk

Tehran, a bustling city with millions of inhabitants, is plagued by the presence of young children who can be seen standing at intersections and even in the middle of highways. With their heads bowed down, these children persistently approach car windows, offering to clean them or sell flowers and handkerchiefs. These innocent children are victims of exploitation, brought to the smoky streets of Tehran by gangs who employ tactics such as beatings, coercion, and deception. Growing up on the streets, these boys and girls are deprived of a normal childhood and the opportunity to lead a normal life.

Child labor on the streets of Tehran has become a critical and fundamental issue. These children engage in street businesses, either supported by criminal gangs or driven by family poverty. Despite the efforts of various institutions, 32 plans aimed at addressing the

organization of street children have failed. Consequently, the number of these children continues to rise, resulting in new forms of labor.

However, a new model has emerged, focusing on involving children's families with the support of the police and the judicial system. The aim is to dismantle the exploitative networks that profit from child labor while simultaneously improving the economic situation of these families.

According to the CEO of Tehran Municipality's Social Services Organization, the implementation of this project requires a holistic approach, considering all aspects in parallel. One crucial aspect is the role of citizens, who must be educated not to contribute to the street economy that thrives on child labor. Ahmad Ahmadi Sadr stresses the importance of culture and public persuasion for the success of the plan. By incorporating expert opinions and reviewing successful initiatives

proposed by activists and dedicated groups, Tehran Municipality aims to create a well-coordinated and comprehensive short-term, medium-term, and long-term plan of action.

In the short-term planning phase, the focus will be on organizing working children to bring about tangible changes in the city's landscape. Collaboration with other institutions will be key as the project progresses from one phase to the next. Ahmadi Sadr emphasizes the need to avoid repeating past failures, stating that the approach to organizing working children must be multidimensional and distinct from previous attempts. The new plan prioritizes a family-centered and morally guided approach. Recognizing that some children have families, it aims to reunite them with their kin, away from the perils of the streets. However, it also acknowledges that many families, driven by economic hardships, need to understand that the streets are not the place for

their children. The young ones on the streets face numerous dangers and challenges, hindering their personal growth and endangering their well-being. Ahmadi Sadr further emphasizes that assisting working children, though well-intentioned, perpetuates their predicament. People's discomfort with children approaching their cars at intersections and tapping on windows stems from a larger issue – child labor. To truly help these children, a comprehensive strategy must address those who exploit them.

"Dealing with the root causes and dissuading individuals from taking advantage of these vulnerable children is crucial," he said.

Regarding Tehran Municipality's plans, Ahmadi Sadr highlights that the chosen approach is not aggressive. Rather, it aims to create an organized structure in the streets and alleys. The objective is not to simply collect children off the streets but to foster a cultural shift within

society. By discouraging citizens from providing economic support to those at intersections, where working children are backed by powerful networks, the plan seeks to prevent the allure of street income from drawing more children, both from other cities and within Tehran.

"Public cooperation will be vital in ensuring that these children are not left exposed to further harm," he said.

The plight of working children in Tehran demands urgent attention and action. By implementing a well-rounded plan that addresses the root causes and involves various stakeholders, Tehran Municipality aims to bring about lasting change.

"It is time to transform the streets of Tehran into safe spaces, where children can grow, learn, and thrive, free from exploitation and the burdens of an adult world."

Ahmadi Sadr further highlights the importance of providing attractive platforms for these

children. Free cultural, sports and recreational services are being implemented to occupy their time and divert them from the streets. Additionally, talent identification centers have been established to recognize the potential of these children.

Ahmadi Sadr emphasizes that the success of this plan depends on the collective effort of Tehran's residents. If people cooperate by refraining from buying flowers or sympathizing with working children at intersections, the presence of these children on the streets will decrease. However, if any aspect of the plan falters, there is a risk of a resurgence in the number of working children.

He acknowledges that solving social problems cannot be achieved overnight. The implementation of the plan is just the first step towards reducing the presence of working children on the streets. Over time, the goal is to create a public culture where child labor on the streets becomes obsolete.

Feeding stray dogs kiss of death for environment

Social Desk

Numerous videos circulating on the internet went viral last week, depicting the herding of stray dogs in Iran's capital city of Tehran and Karaj in Alborz Province. While some confirmed the authenticity of these videos, others denied them, stating that they have been circulating for the past six months and are not new. However, the focus should not solely be on the age of the videos; rather, the significant increase in the number of stray dogs is the main concern.

Various opinions have emerged

regarding how to address the issue. Some suggest sterilizing stray dogs as a solution. There is also a group of users who argue that these dogs should be treated similarly to owned pets. However, regardless of the differing narratives, it is clear that extremes exist. On one hand, there is an exaggeration caused by individuals who excessively feed stray dogs, seemingly out of love for the environment. On the other hand, there is an issue of mismanagement and a lack of planning, leading to mistreatment of these animals. So, what is the solution?

In recent times, some individu-

als, driven by a strong love for the environment but lacking knowledge about wildlife cycles, have taken actions that have adverse effects. These actions not only fail to preserve the environment and wildlife but also cause harm. Exploitation by fraudsters targeting environmentalists has also come to light. These individuals take advantage of the empathy of wildlife enthusiasts, requesting help by sharing bank account numbers and even providing false evidence of their actions through purchases and videos of feeding stray dogs. It is worth noting that only a

fraction of the received funds is spent. In one example, a gang member intentionally injured an animal, claiming that it needed treatment and soliciting assistance from citizens.

While dogs have been domesticated by humans over time, the uncontrolled roaming of stray dogs, often carrying dangerous diseases, is not accepted anywhere in the world and poses its risks. Even international organizations have been seeking assistance from the public to find a logical and permanent solution to this problem. Dogs, like any other living creatures, require food, but how feeding is carried out is crucial. Some individuals feed stray dogs at any time and place, which increases the risk of dogs being present everywhere.

The crisis of the increasing population of stray dogs is becoming more problematic for humans, animals, and the environment. Unfortunately, there is a lack of organized laws to address this crisis, and the absence of relevant and practical training to deal with stray dogs is acutely felt. Managing stray dogs requires the coordination and cooperation of all public and social organizations and institutions.

Feeding stray dogs, and even cats, has become a means of providing them with suste-



● MEHR

nance. Consequently, these animals approach anyone holding a plastic shopping bag, assuming they are potential feeders. However, animals, following their instincts, should search for food and hunt, and the act of human feeding significantly reduces their mobility.

The problems arising from the increase of stray dogs are numerous. The interbreeding of stray dogs with wolves in the wild results in the creation of wolfdogs. These animals often possess characteristics of both dogs and wolves, inheriting the ferocity of wolves and lacking the fear of humans typically seen in dogs. In recent years, the interbreeding of stray dogs with wolves has caused a rise in these animals. Unlike wolves, they live in proximity to cities and humans, frequently attacking humans and other environmental animals such as sheep, causing significant harm.

While dogs are known for their ability to consume almost anything placed in front of them, wolfdogs are primarily carni-

vores. Driven by hunger, they are drawn to human habitats, displaying their feral nature. Their high birth rate has led to a rapid increase in their population in Iran since wolfdogs can give birth to up to 16 cubs per pregnancy.

Apart from the economic losses inflicted on humans, wolfdogs compete with other carnivores such as cheetahs, caracals, and leopards, disrupting the ecological balance at the top of the food pyramid.

It is evident that illegal groups, utilizing false arguments, hinder the implementation of measures to manage the population of stray dogs. Taking steps to regulate these dogs without considering their actions can lead to a vicious cycle. Therefore, the initial step should involve increasing awareness among all citizens to aid wildlife rather than exacerbating the crisis. A well-thought-out solution should be devised, and relevant authorities should learn from successful international approaches in this field.





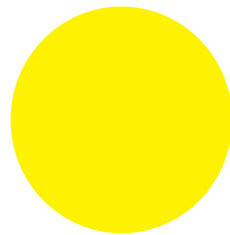
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Weapons used by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), security cabinet leaks, and stories about people held captives by Hamas — these are some of the eight subjects the media are forbidden from reporting on in Israel, according to a document obtained by The Intercept.

The document, a censorship order issued by the Israeli military to the media as part of its war on Hamas, has not been previously reported. The memo, written in English, was an unusual move for the IDF's censor, which has been part of the Israel military for more than seven decades. "I haven't ever seen instructions like this sent from the censor aside from general notices broadly telling outlets to comply, and even then it was only sent to certain people," said Michael Omer-Man, a former editor-in-chief of the Israel's +972 Magazine and today the director of research for Israel-Palestine at Democracy in the Arab World Now, or DAWN, a US advocacy group. Titled "Operation 'Swords of Iron' Israeli Chief Censor Directive to the Media," the order is not dated, but its reference to Operation Swords of Iron — the name of Israel's current military operation in Gaza — makes clear that it was issued sometime after Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. The order is signed by the chief censor of the Israel Defense Forces, Brig. Gen. Kobi Mandelblit. (The Israeli Military Censor did not respond to a request for comment on the memo.)

The document was provided to The Intercept by a source who himself was given a copy by the Israeli military. An identical document appears on the Israeli government's website. "In light of the current security situation and the intensive media coverage, we wish to encourage you to submit to the Censorship all materials dealing with the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F.) and the Israeli security forces prior to their broadcast," the order says. "Please update your staff of the content of this letter, with an emphasis on the news desk and field reporters."

The order enumerates eight topics the media are forbidden from reporting on without prior approval from the Israeli Military Censor. Some of the topics touch on hot-button political issues in Israel and internationally, such as potentially embarrassing revelations about weapons used by Israel or captured by Hamas, discussions of security cabinet meetings, and the Israeli captives in Gaza — an issue that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been widely criticized for mishandling. The memo also bans reporting on details of military operations, Israeli



Israeli army self-propelled artillery howitzers fire rounds from a position near the Gaza Strip in on December 28, 2023 amid ongoing. ● AFP

intelligence, rocket attacks that hit sensitive locations in Israel, cyberattacks, and visits by senior military officials to the battlefield. Concerns about the politicization of the military censor are not merely hypothetical. Last month, the Israeli censor reportedly complained that Netanyahu was pressuring him to crack down on certain media outlets without legitimate reason. Netanyahu denied the charge.

Self-censorship and secrecy

The Israeli Military Censor is a unit located within the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate. The unit is commanded by the chief censor, a military officer appointed by the defense minister. Since Israel's war on Hamas started, more than 6,500 new items were either completely censored or partially censored by the Israeli government, Guy Lurie, a research fellow at Jerusalem-based Israel Democracy Institute, told The Intercept.

To put the figure in context, Lurie said it was about four times more than before the war started, citing a report in the Israeli outlet Shakuf based on freedom of information requests. The number of submissions to the censor, however, are

significantly higher at this time of heightened conflict, so Lurie noted that news items are facing a normal level of censorship in light of the ratio to total submissions.

The actual number of new stories affected by the censor, however, can never be quantified. Because of a system of close relationships and a feeling for what to expect, Israeli journalists can censor themselves.

"People self-censor, people do not even try to report the stories they know won't get through," Omer-Man said. "And that is really showing right now in how little regular Israelis are seeing in the press about what is happening in Gaza to Palestinians." It is these kinds of unofficial censorship that give the censor in Israel its power, said experts.

In a 2022, a State Department report on human rights in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories took on the military censor, singling out two Arabic-language newspapers in occupied East Al-Quds. While noting that the IDF censor didn't review the papers, the State Department said, "Editors and journalists from those publications, however, reported they engaged in self-censorship due to fear of retribution by Israeli au-

thorities."

At one time, the censor had an Editors Committee composed of three members: One from the press, one from the military, and a publicly elected member who served as chair. Though the Editors Committee no longer officially exists, a similar, albeit informal body still maintains some sway. Though the law that mandates the censor gives it widespread powers, the censor maintains its respectability in Israel by being politically independent and exercising restraint, especially in comparison to other countries in the region.

"If you look at the law that governs censorship, it's really draconian in terms of the formal authorities the censor has," Lurie told The Intercept. "But it's mitigated by this informal arrangement." Almost all of it happens in secret: Committee discussions are confidential, as are most communications between media outlets and the censor.

Asked why the processes are so secretive and why even the news organizations won't speak out, one Western journalist based in Israel and Palestine, who asked for anonymity to avoid reprisals, had a blunt assessment: "Because it's embarrassing."

Foreign press and the censor

That the memo of directives for the current Israeli war on Gaza was in English suggests that it was intended for Western media. Foreign journalists working in Israel must obtain government permission, including a declaration that they will abide by the censor.

"In order to get a visa as a journalist, you have to get approval from GPO" — Government Press Office — "and therefore you have to sign a document that says you will comply with the censor," said Omer-Man. "That in itself is probably against the ethics guidelines at a bunch of papers." Nonetheless, many journalists do sign the document. While The Associated Press, for instance, didn't respond to The Intercept's query about whether it cooperates with the military censor, the news wire has in the past reported on the issue, including admitting that it holds itself to the directive.

"The Associated Press has agreed, like other organizations, to abide by the rules of the censor, which is a condition for receiving permission to operate as a media organization in Israel," the agency wrote in a 2006 story. "Reporters are expected to censor themselves and not report any

of the forbidden material."

Asked if it complied with guidance from Israel's military censor and whether its compliance had changed since the onset of the war, Azhar Al-Fadl Miranda, the communications director for the Washington Post, told The Intercept in an email, "We aren't able to share insight," adding that "we don't publicly discuss our editorial decisions."

The New York Times told The Intercept, "The New York Times reports independently on the full spectrum of this complex conflict. We do not submit coverage to the Israeli military censor." (Reuters did not answer The Intercept's questions.)

Foreign press that cooperates with the censor is subject to the same system: Many stories don't get passed through the censor, but certain issues merit submitting the stories.

"They know that they need to pass onto the censor reports that they want to publish on certain subjects," said Lurie. "There are subjects that the media know that they need to get the censor's approval."

One of the things that makes the written, English-language censorship order unusual, however, is the order's overt reference to the Hamas war. "I've

never seen that for a specific war," Lurie said.

One subject known to be sensitive in Israel is the country's covert nuclear arsenal. In 2004, BBC journalist Simon Wilson interviewed Mordechai Vanunu, a whistleblower on the nuclear program, who had just been released from prison. The Israeli censors demanded copies of the interview, but Wilson did not comply.

Wilson was then barred from reentry, and the Israel government demanded an apology. Initially, the BBC refused to furnish one, but eventually the worldwide news giant folded.

"He confirms that after the Vanunu interview he was contacted by the censors and was asked to give them the tapes. He did not do so. He regrets the difficulties this caused," the BBC said in the apology. "He undertakes to obey the regulations in future and understands that any further violation will result in his visa being revoked."

The apology, like so much else of the censor's work, was to have remained secret, according to a 2005 Guardian story, but the BBC accidentally posted it on its website, before quickly removing it.

This article first appeared on theintercept.com.



Foreign journalists working in Israel must obtain government permission, including a declaration that they will abide by the censor.