

## Iran, UK FMs discuss Red Sea developments

### National Desk

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron announced that he had discussed the developments in Red Sea in a phone talk with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Sunday. "I spoke to @Amirabdollahian today about Houthi attacks in the Red Sea," which Cameron said, "threaten innocent lives and the global economy".

Iran's Foreign Ministry did not issue any statement regarding this conversation. Reiterating his country's claim, Cameron wrote on his X account, "I made clear that Iran shares responsibility for preventing these attacks given their long-standing support to the Houthis."

A British government spokesperson in early December had claimed that Iran bears responsibility for the actions of the resistance groups in the region.

"As we've previously stated, Iran has long provided military and political support to Houthi militants and it bears responsibility for the actions of its proxies and partners," the British spokesperson had said in a statement.

Iran at the time rejected "unfounded" allegations made by the UK government over Tehran's role in resistance groups' attacks against Israel and US targets in the region. Foreign Ministry's spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the British government tries to achieve its special political goals by making such allegations. He said that London is trying to distort the realities of the region.

Following the escalation of tensions in the Gaza Strip, the Yemeni armed forces announced that they would carry out attacks against the Zionist regime until the aggression against Gaza is stopped, and they will not allow any Israeli ships to travel in the waters of the Red Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. Claims against Iran's role regarding the actions of the Yemeni armed forces come as the resistance groups in the region act completely independently based on their own decision about the security of their countries or to support the oppressed Palestinian nation.

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist



# Leader hails Gen. Soleimani's role in revival of resistance front



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei (l.) speaks in a meeting in Tehran on December 31, 2023, with the family of the assassinated Iranian commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.  
● leader.ir

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei paid tribute to late Iranian commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani for reviving the resistance front in the region.

The family of General Soleimani, who was assassinated by a US drone strike near Baghdad on January 3, 2020, met with Ayatollah Khamenei on Sunday ahead of the

fourth anniversary of the martyrdom of the commander, Tasnim news agency reported. At the meeting, the Leader attributed the lasting memory of General Soleimani to the martyr's character, his steadfastness and sincerity.

"The most important role and service of the great martyr has been the revival of the resistance front in the region," Ayatollah

Khamenei added. Associating the resistance shown by the people of Gaza against the Israeli onslaught for around three months to the existence of the resistance front, the Leader said General Soleimani had made a great deal of effort to revive the resistance front in a sincere, prudent, wise and moral manner. The Leader praised the Commander of the Islamic

Revolution Guards Corps Quds Force Brigadier General Esmail Qaani for his services after succeeding General Soleimani, adding, "The course of strengthening of the resistance front must continue."

In the meeting, also attended by the commanders of the IRGC and the IRGC Quds Force, a daughter of the late commander, Zeinab Soleimani, gave a report on the

cultural and artistic programs that have been carried out or are underway to familiarize the younger generation with the spirit, manners and characteristics of General Soleimani. Also on Sunday, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi had an unannounced visit to the family of martyr Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi, as he extended his condolences to his family.

Raisi has condemned Israel's assassination of the senior Iranian military adviser of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Syria, stressing that the occupying regime will pay the price for the crime, Press TV reported.

The Iranian president called the murder a "cowardly act" and went on to say that the sacrifices and dedication of the martyrs form the cornerstone of the country's security and power.

"The services and sacrifices of this great commander in supporting and strengthening the Islamic resistance front will forever remain honored," he added.

"Certainly, this crime will not go unanswered, and the Zionist criminals will pay for this crime," he said.

Mousavi was killed in a terrorist Israeli airstrike on December 27, while on an advisory mission in Syria.

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.

## Netanyahu resists int'l truce calls amid increasing civilian deaths

### International Desk

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday that Israel's war on Gaza will continue for "many more months," pushing back against persistent international cease-fire calls after mounting civilian deaths, hunger and mass displacement in the besieged enclave. The Health Ministry in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip said Sunday at least 21,822 people have been killed in

the Palestinian territory since the war with Israel erupted on October 7. The figure includes 150 deaths over the past 24 hours, a ministry statement said. It added that 56,451 people have been wounded in Gaza since the start of the war.

The number of Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza combat rose to 170, after the military announced two more deaths Saturday.

The war has displaced some 85% of Gaza's 2.3

million residents, sending swells of people seeking shelter in Israeli-designated safe areas that the military has nevertheless bombed. Palestinians are left with a sense that nowhere is safe in the tiny enclave.

In new fighting, Israeli jets intensified attacks on central Gaza on Sunday, residents and medics said, as battles raged through the rubble of towns and refugee camps.

The United States, Israel's main ally, has urged it to scale down the war and European states have signaled alarm at the extent of Palestinian civilian suffering. Netanyahu's comments signal no let-up in a campaign that has killed many thousands and levelled much of Gaza, while his vow to restore Israeli control over the enclave's border with Egypt raises new questions over an eventual two-state solution.

### US honored for new weapons sales

Netanyahu also thanked the Biden administration for its continued backing, including approval for a new emergency weapons sale, the second this month, and prevention of a UN Security Council reso-

lution seeking an immediate cease-fire. Israel argues that ending the war now would mean victory for Hamas, a stance shared by the Biden administration, which at the same time urged Israel to do more to avoid harm to Palestinian civilians.

A Red Crescent video published on Sunday showed the chaotic aftermath of strikes in central Gaza, as rescuers worked in the dark to carry an injured child from smoking rubble. As the year drew to a close, Palestinians in Gaza were praying for a cease-fire but had little optimism that 2024 would be better. The US State Department said Friday that 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 m 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. Blinken made a similar decision on Dec. 9 to approve the sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition worth more than \$106 million.



### Risk of famine

The war and lack of supplies have left 40% of Gazans at risk of famine, the Gaza director of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said on social media on Saturday.

Israel blockaded most food, fuel and medicine after the Oct. 7 attack. It said on Sunday it was ready to let ships from some Western countries deliver aid directly to Gaza's shores after security checks in Cyprus. Gemma Connell, an official with the UN humanitarian agency OCHA who has been working in Gaza, said tens of thousands of people fleeing to Rafah had been through attacks and bombardment and had arrived often with no possessions or anywhere to sleep. "I just am so fearful that

the amount of deaths that we've been seeing is going to increase exponentially both because of this renewed offensive but also because of these conditions which are literally unbelievable," she said.

With Israeli forces expanding their ground offensive this week, tens of thousands more Palestinians streamed into the already crowded city of Rafah at the southernmost end of Gaza. Thousands of tents and makeshift shacks have sprung up on Rafah's outskirts next to UN warehouses. Displaced people arrived in Rafah on foot or on trucks and carts piled high with mattresses. Those who did not find space in overwhelmed shelters pitched tents on roadsides.