

Victims Laid to Rest

Raisi vows revenge at 'appropriate time, place'
Several arrested over Daesh bombings in Kerman

National Desk

Iran held a funeral on Friday for the 89 people killed in the Daesh suicide bombings in the southern province of Kerman, with the president warning that the armed forces will retaliate for the attacks at the appropriate time and place. The funeral took place at the Imam Ali Mosque in Kerman, where crowds gathered in front of dozens of coffins wrapped in the Iranian flag. The suicide bombings struck crowds in the southern city, where many had gathered on Wednesday to mark the fourth anniversary of the US assassination of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani – the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). The attack killed 89 people, raising an earlier toll following the deaths of several of the wounded. The victims include multiple women and children

and at least a dozen Afghan nationals. Speaking at the funeral ceremony of the victims of the blasts on Friday, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi warned that Iran's armed forces will retaliate for the terrorist attacks at the appropriate time and place. "I assure the people that the initiative is in the hands of our forces and that the time and place will be determined by our forces," he said. "The enemy has seen and experienced the power of the Islamic Republic many times and I assure you that the enemy will see the power of the Islamic Republic concerning the latest cases." In a statement published Thursday on Telegram, the Daesh terrorist group said two of its members "activated their explosives vests" at the gathering.

US and Israeli mercenaries

Daesh "has disappeared

nowadays," said IRGC chief Hossein Salami during the funeral ceremony, arguing the terrorists "only act as mercenaries" for US and Israeli interests.

The United States rejected any suggestion that it or its ally Israel were behind the bombings, while Israel did not comment.

Salami vowed that Iran "will find you wherever you are," referring to any Daesh members behind the bombing plot.

Iran's Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi told state TV that "some individuals involved in the attack have been arrested," without elaborating.

The site of the explosions was 1.5km and 2.7km from the burial place of Gen. Soleimani, where it was not possible to pass through the inspection gates in the area.

Iranian investigators had already confirmed that the first blast at least was the work of a "suicide bomber" and believed the trigger for

the second was "very probably another suicide bomber," the official news agency IRNA had reported earlier, citing an "informed source".

Global condemnations

The terrorist attack has drawn condemnations from many countries and international bodies.

The United Nations Security Council in a statement issued on Thursday condemned the terrorist attack on Wednesday.

"The members of the Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the cowardly terrorist attack in the city of Kerman, the Islamic Republic of Iran on 3 January."

Expressing condolences to the families of the victims and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the UN body added, "The members of the Security Council underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism



MEHR

accountable and bring them to justice."

The Security Council urged all states to cooperate actively with the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to punish the criminals responsible for carrying out the terrorist act.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also issued a statement on Wednesday "strongly" condemning the terrorist attack in Kerman.

"The secretary-general strongly condemns the attack today on a memorial ceremony in Kerman city

in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The secretary-general calls for those responsible to be held accountable," deputy spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino told reporters.

The European Union's high representative also issued a statement on behalf of the EU.

It said the EU condemns in the strongest terms the bombing in the city of Kerman in Iran. This shocking act of terror has cost the lives of innocent civilians, with many injured. The EU expresses its sol-

idarity with the Iranian people. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families.

Pope Francis also expressed his heartfelt condolences, sorrow, and prayers for those who were killed or injured by explosions in Kerman and for those who mourn their loss.

Leaders from Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and other countries from across the globe have likewise voiced strong condemnation of the atrocity.

Arab states slam Israeli calls for Gazans' emigration

International Desk

Several Persian Gulf Arab states on Thursday strongly condemned comments by two Israeli ministers calling for Palestinians to emigrate from the Gaza Strip. Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir on Monday called for promoting "a solution to encourage the emigration of Gaza's residents" and the re-establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory, a day after far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich made similar comments, AFP reported. Saudi Arabia "categorically condemns and rejects the comments of the two min-

isters", the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The kingdom called on the international community to act in the face of the Israeli cabinet's "persistence" in violating international law "through its statements and actions".

Qatar, which played a mediating role in the temporary truce between Israel and Palestinian resistance group Hamas at the end of November, also "condemned in the strongest terms" the comments made by the two ministers.

"The policy of collective punishment and forced displacement practiced by the occupation authorities against the inhabitants of

Gaza will not change the fact that Gaza is Palestinian land and will remain Palestinian," reads a statement published by Qatar's Foreign Ministry. Kuwait followed suit, warning against "Israeli plans to displace Gaza residents in particular, and the Palestinian people in general".

The United Arab Emirates, which normalized ties with Israel in 2020, also "condemned in the strongest terms the extremist statements" of the two ministers. The United States, France and the European Union have also denounced the comments.

The Israeli cabinet under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not officially suggested plans to evict Gazans or to send Jewish settlers back to the territory since the conflict broke out in October.

The fighting erupted after Hamas resistance group attacked Israel on October 7, resulting in the deaths of around 1,140 people.

In response, Israel launched bombardment and a ground invasion that has reduced swathes of Gaza to rubble and claimed at least 22,600 people lives, according to the territory's health ministry.

The vast majority of Gaza's

residents have been forced out of their homes by nearly three months of war.

Israel's defense minister has also publicly presented for the first-time proposals for the post-war administration of Gaza.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's plan for the "day after", shared with the media late Thursday but not yet adopted by Israel's war cabinet, says that neither Israel nor Hamas will govern Gaza and rejects future Jewish settlements there.

The minister's broad outline was unveiled on the eve of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's fourth trip to the region since October 7. Questions over the future of the besieged Palestinian territory have multiplied as Israel insists it will continue with its military operations despite international calls for a cease-fire.

Much of the Gaza Strip has been reduced to rubble, while civilian deaths have soared.

Bombing continued in the southern areas of Khan Yunis and Rafah as well as parts of central Gaza, according to AFP correspondents.

The Gaza health ministry on Friday said it had recorded 162 deaths in 24 hours.

Bonds between Israel and Daesh in terror

By Ja'far Qannadbashi
Mideast affairs expert

OPINION
EXCLUSIVE

Following the terrorist operation in Kerman on Wednesday, and before the Daesh terrorist group claimed responsibility, suspicions were initially cast on Israel. Many believe Israel is directly responsible for the terrorist operation on the fourth anniversary of the martyrdom of General Qassem Soleimani, the late commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). This belief is attributed to several factors. Firstly, Israel has a track record of killing innocent people, including women and children, exemplified by the recent killings in Gaza over the past three months. Secondly, Israel carried out several terrorist actions in the past few days, targeting an Iranian military adviser in Syria and orchestrating another terrorist act in Lebanon that resulted in the death of prominent Hamas figure Saleh al-Arouri. Therefore, it was assumed that the ter-

rorist operation in Kerman followed Israel's consistent pattern. The third factor is that Israel has faced severe blows from General Soleimani, making it conceivable that they seek revenge during the anniversary of his martyrdom by targeting his followers.

Therefore, the people had the right to consider Israel as the perpetrator of this terrorist operation. However, despite the acknowledgment from Daesh, there are still ambiguities in this matter. Moreover, one cannot deny the links and connections between Israel and Daesh. Some media outlets in Iran have characterized the terrorist group's claim of responsibility for the terrorist operation in Kerman as unclear. They note differences in this claim compared to the group's past statements, particularly the delay in taking responsibility. Another ambiguity arises from the fact that, contrary to previous cases, they did not show the faces of the suicide attackers. Therefore, according to some media or analysts, it is not far-fetched to suggest that Israel may have been the primary instigator of the terrorist operation in Kerman, with Daesh acting

as the executor. I believe that even if Israel was not directly responsible for this terrorist operation, there are significant links and connections between Israel and Daesh, as the regime was fundamentally involved in the creation of Daesh, and the terrorist group had also acted in line with Israel's goals. Therefore, I doubt that Israel was unaware of this operation. Consequently, the Iranian people's demand for a response to this terrorist act is justified, especially considering Israel's recent atrocities in Gaza, fueling strong sentiments against the Israeli regime. Iranian authorities have also emphasized taking revenge for both this terrorist act and the Jan. 2 assassination of a military adviser in Syria at an appropriate time and place.

In my opinion, Iran's emphasis on the timing and location reflects a strategic and responsible approach to avoid falling into Israel's traps. While Israel lacks the desire and capability for an extensive war, it attempts to manipulate Iran and the United States into a confrontation, creating a secure margin for itself.



People carrying some of their belongings arrive in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip on January 4, 2024, after fleeing from Khan Yunis amid continuing Israel's attacks.

AFP

Over 11,000 qualified for parliamentary elections: Constitutional Council

National Desk

Iran's Constitutional Council said on Friday that more than 11,000 people have been qualified for the March parliamentary elections. The spokesman of the Constitutional Council, Hadi Tahan Nazif,

said that the final list of candidates has been sent to the Interior Ministry.

He said that more than 21,000 people were eligible to register for the elections, of whom around 11,000 have been approved by the council. Tahan Nazif added that 26 current

lawmakers have been disqualified. To secure victory and serve as a lawmaker for a four-year term in the 290-seat Parliament, a candidate needs to attain a minimum of 20 percent of the votes cast in its constituency.

Iran will hold the 12th parliamen-

tary elections on March 1 – the day which also sees elections for the Assembly of Experts.

Tahan Nazif also said that the names of the qualified candidates for the Assembly of Experts elections will be announced on January 24.