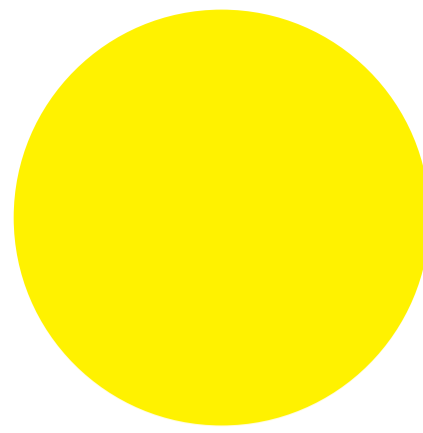




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# Iran Daily



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## Tehran's security principle



By Esmail Kowsari  
Iranian MP

**EXCLUSIVE OPINION**

After the missile strikes on the terrorist strongholds in Idlib, Syria, and an Israeli spy base in Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq, the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran also launched assaults on the hideout of a terrorist group known as Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan.

These strikes were a direct response to acts of terror targeting Iran, the most recent instances being the tragic loss of over 90 innocent lives in Kerman and the killing of 11 policemen in Iran's easter town of Rask.

Several terrorist groups have taken root in neighboring countries of Iran, hatching conspiracies against the Iranian people. Iran has repeatedly conveyed its demands and security concerns to these neighbors through bilateral political and security talks, even signing agreements for border control. Tehran has taken the logical and anticipated path of engaging in dialogue and diplomacy. However, these neighbors, including Iraq and Pakistan, have failed to honor these agreements and address the issue of terrorists within their borders. Either they lack the capability to deal with these terrorists or, for some other unknown reasons, they are unwilling to take out or expel them from their territories.

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**EXCLUSIVE**

## Raisi, Putin to sign new interstate treaty soon

Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that it expected President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart to soon sign a new interstate treaty between the two countries which was in the final stages of being agreed. Putin held five hours of talks in the Kremlin with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi last month amid growing political, trade and military ties between Moscow and Tehran, Reuters reported. Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, told reporters on Wednesday that the new treaty would consolidate the strategic partnership between Moscow and Tehran and cover the full range of their ties. **2** >



**Petchem industry welcomes but does not wait for foreign investment: NPC**



Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) managing director said the country's industry welcomes foreign investment but does not wait for foreign companies' participation in its development projects.

Morteza Shahmirzaei added domestic petrochemical industry's growth from 1958 – the year the executive operations of Iran's first petrochemical project started – to 1978 was extremely low, so that its capacity amounted to around three million tons of 8-9 types of products, with having an absolute dependence on foreign designing, equipment supplying, and commissioning in the pre-revolution era, Shana reported.

Relying on Iranian experts, Bandar Imam Petrochemical Company will achieve the goal of completing value chain and diversifying products, he added.

Iran's petrochemical industry will be among the most-developed industries in the world in the future, pledged the deputy oil minister, justifying that the country enjoys the essential features for development, including abundant feedstock, highly-skilled human resources, and access to water resources and coasts.

The global fossil fuel consumption will sharply decline by 2050, predicted the CEO of NPC, underlining that oil and gas resources should be used as feedstock of petrochemical plants.

Iran is now producing 550 grades of petrochemicals and the industry's annual production capacity will surpass 180 million tons by the end of the 8th National Development Plan (2028-2032). Domestic petrochemical industry prides itself [on having a brilliant performance] in spite of sanctions, he said and continued 95 percent of industries will be dependent on petrochemical products in the future, and that is why the industry's development is of great significance.

Pointing to the document on development and completion of value chain of petrochemical industry unveiled in May 2023, the official vowed that Iran will have no dependence on foreign catalysts by the end of the 13th administration's term (August 2025).

"Domestic experts' capability for making petrochemical equipment, particularly compressors, valves, pumps, and turbines, has increased stunningly, and we are moving toward self-sufficiency," Shahmirzaei concluded.

## Raisi, Putin to sign new interstate treaty soon

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eign Ministry, told reporters on Wednesday that the new treaty would consolidate the strategic partnership between Moscow and Tehran and cover the full range of their ties.

"This document is not just timely, but also overdue," said Zakharova.

"Since the signing of the current treaty, the international context has changed and relations between the two countries are experiencing an unprecedented upswing," Zakharova said the new treaty was expected to be



signed during what she described as one of the upcoming contacts between the two presidents. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry

Peskov was quoted by the TASS state news agency as saying that an exact date for a meeting between the two leaders had yet to be deter-

mined. Iranian authorities have said military cooperation with Russia is expanding day by day. Iran said in November it

had finalised arrangements for Russia to provide it with Su-35 fighter jets, Mi-28 attack helicopters and Yak-130 pilot training aircraft.

## Targeted \$2b trade for Iran-Vietnam possible: *Lawmaker*

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou  
Staff writers

Iran and Vietnam should expand their level of cooperation in various fields with implementing the signed agreements in order to achieve the targeted bilateral trade goal of \$2 billion per annum, said the head of Iran-Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Talking to Iran Daily, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi added that the level of commercial exchanges between Iran and Vietnam during the past years was not satisfying due to reasons such as the lack of knowledge about the economic situation and market of the two countries.

Referring to the visit of Vietnam's National Assembly Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue to Tehran in August 2023, the MP said the visit took place after about 25 years during which agreements were signed in various econom-

ic fields including paving the ground for the private sectors of the two countries for having a greater role in the projects.

On August 8, 2023, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf hailed the friendly ties between the Islamic Republic and Vietnam, saying the two countries have agreed to expand their cooperation in various fields.

Qalibaf made the remarks at a joint press conference with Vuong Dinh Hue in Tehran after the two officials held talks on a range of political and economic issues.

He went on to say that during the meeting, the two sides emphasized the need for the establishment of joint committees between Iran and Vietnam to boost cooperation in the economic, fishery, health and medical sectors.

Qalibaf also noted that the two sides have reached agreements on customs



and not collecting taxes on imported goods, stressing the need to accelerate their implementation.

He further pointed to an agreement on easing the visa regime between the two countries, saying direct flights between Tehran and Hanoi will be launched soon.

The Iranian Parliament speaker described Hue's trip to Iran as a turning point in the development of ties between the two nations in various economic, cultural and social fields.

He further said a top foreign policy priority of Iran is to pay a special attention to East Asia and expand ties with the countries of that region.

Hue, for his part, appreciated his Iranian counterpart for inviting him to travel to Iran, expressing hope that the trip would help further strengthen the ties between Iran and Vietnam.

He also lauded Iran's significant role in West Asia, adding that Hanoi pays attention to the promotion of collaboration between the two countries

in various parliamentary, governmental, municipal and friendship groups. At the end of the press conference, the two top parliamentarians signed a memorandum of understanding on parliamentary cooperation between the two countries.

Iran and Vietnam established relations in 1973 and since then the two countries have increased political and economic cooperation through exchange of visits by senior officials from both sides.

Jahanabadi stated that following the decisions taken during the trip, bilateral relations are expanding, and the level of trade relations will witness significant growth in the coming months.

"The recent signing of MoUs has provided greater opportunities for cooperation between specialized parliamentary commissions and friendship groups of the two countries, so that the two countries can exchange experiences."

He added that a number of Iranian lawmakers had

a trip to Vietnam to follow up on the agreements, as important meetings were held with Vietnamese officials of the Foreign Relations Committee and the Economic Committee of Parliament, the Ministry of Agriculture and various departments.

"With the implementation of agreements and follow-ups, the improvement of relations between the two countries is quite evident and many problems, including trade barriers, have been resolved, as in the field of livestock and agricultural products, there were some quarantine difficulties, which have been reduced with the implementation of new agreements."

In the field of tourism, the two countries enjoy great capacities to cooperate with each other, the MP added, noting, "With the decisions made in this field, in the future we will see a rise in this field, too."

The ground is paved now for the exchange of agricultural products, household and electronic appliances, industrial parts and machinery, as well as steel products and petrochemicals, he concluded.

## Iran-EAEU trade to surge to \$20b after FTA implementation : *Official*

The trade between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states will rise to \$20 billion with the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signed by the two sides, said an

official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI).

The adviser to the head of the TPOI for international affairs pointed to the FTA between Iran and EAEU, inked on December 25,

2023, and noted that this agreement will be put into operation after being approved by the parliaments of Iran and member states of the union, reported Tasnim news agency.

It is expected that it will take from one year to one and a half years to be officially implemented, Mir Hadi Seyyedi said.

A golden opportunity has been provided for domestic producers and exporters to ready themselves for having an active presence in the Eurasian market, he said, adding that exporters should first identify the market

for their productions according to the EAEU standards to be successful in doing trade with these countries.

Seyyedi pointed to the role of the government in promoting trade with the EAEU member states and called on the government officials to strengthen the trade infrastructures in terms of transportation and customs rules, etc. to facilitate the trade relations between Iran and Eurasia.

Turning to the problems facing the money transfer between businesspeople, he added that monetary

contracts have been inked in rial and ruble and also a Letter of Credit (L/C) has been launched between Iranian and Russian banks which can help promote the financial transactions. It is for about six years that intensive talks have been ongoing between Iran and the EAEU member states over the implementation of the FTA, he continued.

Before launching the Free Trade Agreement, the trade exchange value between Iran and EAEU member states within the framework of the Preferential Trade Agreement

(PTA) stood at \$2.5 billion, the rate of which is expected to increase to \$20 billion with the implementation of FTA, Seyyedi added.

The free trade agreement between the EAEU and Iran was signed during the EAEU Summit in St. Petersburg on December 25, 2023.

In 2018, Iran and the EAEU inked a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which came into effect on October 27, 2019. The two sides later began negotiations to upgrade the PTA to an FTA after the success of the former.





# Impact of thriving Iranian handicraft industry on domestic economy



Firoozeh-koubi  
tappersia.com



Giveh-weaving  
tappersia.com



Mina-kari  
tappersia.com

## Iranica Desk

Iran is globally renowned for its diverse and beautiful handicraft products, which stand out as a valuable treasure. According to the Deputy Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Maryam Jalali, out of 400 registered handicrafts worldwide, 299 originate from Iran. Additionally, Iran boasts 18 officially registered major handicrafts. Skilled craftspeople in the country produce unique artworks in various fields, including painting, pottery, and marquetry. Based on figures released by the cultural heritage organizations of various provinces, a total of 531,556 people are engaged in the production of officially registered handicrafts, with 429,831 women and 101,725 men actively involved. All fields are currently active, and the number of artists engaged in them is regularly and continuously recorded. It's important to note that handicraft production is a family-oriented matter; a large number of families, especially those in rural areas, traditionally are active in this sector, chntn.ir wrote. All of this highlights how focusing on handicrafts can alleviate

unemployment and contribute to greater income generation. The thriving handicrafts sector, in addition to enriching the country's cultural and artistic heritage, can address gaps in macro policies and serve as a strategic export-oriented commodity with the right policies in place. Iranian handicrafts are fortunately exported to numerous countries, including Iraq, Qatar, China, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, Canada, and others, garnering dedicated fans in these regions. Despite handicraft exports being common worldwide, Iran has the potential to further enhance the export of its handicraft products by implementing effective policies. Presently, Iran's annual handicraft export value stands at \$325 million, yet experts estimate that the figure could exceed \$2 billion. This is certainly feasible, given Iran's unparalleled capacity in producing handicraft products. Iran ranks third globally in terms of diversity and first in terms of capacity within the field of handicraft production. Jabar Koochakinejad, a Majlis representative from Rasht, said "Iran's handicrafts have many enthusiasts around the world,



Kilim-weaving  
tappersia.com

and marketing is the most important way to increase exports. He emphasized the need to organize handicrafts exports and the necessity of creating market for Iranian handicrafts by Iranian embassies in different countries, adding: The carry-on-luggage exports of Iranian handicrafts reflects the interest of foreign tourists in these artworks. Therefore, it is essential for officials to find target markets and find a more effective mechanisms for this matter. He urged Iranian embassies in

various foreign countries to take a more proactive role in promoting and marketing Iranian handicrafts, as there is significant global interest in these traditional products. He added that officials should organize the supply of traditional products and arts systematically. In fact, organizing the export of handicrafts with the creation of tax incentives and facilities can significantly contribute to economic prosperity. Accessing new markets is the missing link in increasing the export of handicraft

products.

This is while Zahra Elahian, Tehran's representative in the Parliament, emphasized that the approach to handicraft production in the country should be export-oriented, and highlighted that neglecting the packaging is a mistake. Elahian also pointed out that based on conducted studies, an export-oriented approach to handicraft production could significantly increase sales of these products in other countries. She further stated that most of the handicraft productions are tailored to the tastes and needs of Iranians, overlooking the fact that foreigners have different preferences. Elahian suggested that artists involved in this industry could be familiarized with the tastes and desires of foreign customers through appropriate classes. He emphasized that production aligned with global demand in the handicraft industry can significantly contribute to its prosperity through increased exports, resulting in a substantial influx of foreign currency to Iran. Regarding the role of packaging in the sale of handicrafts, he noted that Iranian handicrafts are renowned for their exceptional quality and beauty worldwide.

However, the lack of attention to packaging has hindered significant sales. He stressed that implementing scientific, contemporary, and high-quality packaging for handicrafts can notably impact sales, as customers prioritize quality and packaging above other factors. Aside from Parliament, the government also has a crucial role in enhancing export opportunities for handicrafts. Minister of Interior Ahmad Vahidi emphasized the government's backing for the handicraft industry, especially in the field of exports. He assured that the Ministry of Interior supports the artists and exporters, ensuring dedicated spaces in every city for showcasing and selling handicraft products. He considers backing those involved in the handicraft industry as one of the ministry's foremost policies and noted that mayors across various cities have been directed to allocate spaces for the presentation and sale of handicraft products. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of supporting handicraft producers, particularly women, highlighting that providing a venue for showcasing their products can lead to increased sales and effective marketing.

## Historical and geographical significance of Kerman

### Iranica Desk

Several roads connect Kerman with Quhistan, the mountainous region in the southern part of Khorasan; mentioned especially often is the road through Rawar and the oasis of Nayband to Khur, and that through Khabis to Khusb. Quhistan did not have a great significance in the history of Iran. As early as the tenth century the villages were separated from each other by extensive areas where only nomads could live; there were no rivers there, but only wells and underground canals. Palm trees grew in the southern part of Quhistan, but the rest of the province was counted among the "cold regions." Wilhelm Tomaschek, a Czech-Austrian geographer and orientalist, remarks that Quhistan gives an idea of what Iran may look like many thousands of years hence, as a result of dessication (extreme dry-

ness) and weathering of the soils. Qaen and Tun (Ferdows) were the chief towns, so that the whole region is called Tunocain or Tonocain by Marco Polo. Only Qaen had commercial importance; Maqdisi, a historian, calls it "the warehouse of the goods of Khorasan and the treasure-trove of Kerman. There were, moreover, many mountain castles in this region, so that Quhistan became in the eleventh century one of the centers of power for the Isma'ilis. The deserts of Kerman, Makran, and Sind were considered less sterile than that of Khorasan, and they were inhabited by nomadic tribes. The areas near mountains were suited for agriculture and fruit growing, and here the inhabitants soon adopted a sedentary way of life. Herodotus, a Greek historian, counts the people of Kerman among the sedentary tribes of Persia.



The Arabs divided the cultivated areas according to the kind of crops grown there, into surud (cold areas) and jurum (warm areas), from the Persian words *sard* (cold) and *garm* (hot). In Kerman, only the northern districts, occupying approximately one-fourth of the whole region, were reckoned as surud, the rest were jurum; and whereas the

crops of the former cold region could absolutely not be grown in the southern regions, the reverse did occasionally occur. The cultivated lands in Kerman lay in separate patches and thus differed from the more continuous areas under cultivation in Fars. The towns of Kerman mentioned by the Arab geographers

have partly conserved their former names, as, for example, Bam, Khabis, Zarand, and some smaller places like Mahan. The last-named town is noted for the fact that the only monument from the Achaemenid period found in Kerman was located there: in the mausoleum of Ne'matullah Vali, a saint who lived in the fifteenth century and who founded the Ne'matollahi order of dervishes. The find was a small pyramid on a triangular base, with a trilingual inscription (Persian, Assyrian, and the language of Susiana): "I, Darius, great king, king of kings, king of the regions, king of this land, son of Gushtasp, the Achaemenid." The names of some other cities mentioned by the tenth-century geographers are now applied primarily to their corresponding districts, such as Narmashir, Bardasir, Jiruft, and so on. The Arabs mention Sirjan as the chief city of Kerman. Its location was probably not identical with

that of Sa'idabad, the present capital of the district of Sirjan, but must have been to the northeast of it, in the present district of Rafsanjan, with its chief town, Bahramabad: this probability is based on the fact that the Arab geographers count only two days' march from Sirjan to Zarand. In Tomaschek's opinion, Sirjan became the capital of the province only in Arab times; prior to that the capital would have been the city of Kerman, built by Ardashir, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, who named it Weh-Ardashir, a name transformed by the Arabs into Bardasir. Sirjan, nevertheless, had already been the capital of the province of Kerman in pre-Islamic times. The town created by Ardashir seems to have been just a military camp; only in the second half of the tenth century, under the Buyid dynasty, did it become the capital of the province.



# Crimes against history

## Over 200 archeological sites in Gaza destroyed by Israeli army

The Israeli army has destroyed more than 200 archeological and ancient sites out of 325 that were registered across the Gaza Strip in the course of its devastating onslaught since Oct. 7, authorities in the enclave said, Anadolu Agency reports.

The Government Media Office in Gaza reported that Israeli

Occupation Forces (IOF) have destroyed over 200 heritage sites out of the 325 in Gaza.

Gaza is an ancient and historic city that came under the rule of several empires and civilizations, including the Pharaohs, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines then the Islamic age, among others.

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Gaza is an ancient and historic city that came under the rule of several empires and civilizations, including the Pharaohs, the Greeks, the Romans, the Byzantines then the Islamic age, among others. According to a statement, this includes historic mosques, churches, schools, museums, ancient houses, and various heritage locations.

In the statement, it highlighted that the IOF destroyed heritage sites date back to the Phoenician and Roman eras, some 800 years before Christ, 1400 years, and 400 years. It added that the IOF destruction of heritage sites in Gaza constitutes a clear

international crime under international laws, especially humanitarian law and the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict. The 1999 Protocol explicitly prohibits intentional targeting under all circumstances of cultural and religious sites.

It added "We call on all relevant international organizations and bodies to condemn this organized crime committed by the Israeli Occupation Forces in Gaza. We urge immediate intervention to stop this crime and work towards rehabilitating and restoring these destroyed heritage and cultural sites."

Key religious sites struck by airstrikes since Israel's war began include the Great Omari Mosque, one of the oldest and most important mosques in historical Palestine, that was destroyed - with only its ancient minaret standing.

The mosque, in the heart of Gaza City's old

town, has been a Christian or Muslim holy site since at least the fifth century.

Many churches suffered damage. Built in 406 CE, the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Porphyrius, the oldest church in Gaza originally founded in 425 CE, was bombed on October 19. The church's nave sustained major damage, while the administration building was totally demolished. Over 20 Christian families who sought sanctuary within the church were murdered, according to Watani Newspaper.

In Jabalia, indirect bombardment partially destroyed the 444 CE Byzantine Church and the Holy Family Catholic Church, which was established by Fr. Jean Morétan in Gaza in 1869.

The Baptist Church, which was established by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England in 1882, is housed at the National Baptist Hospital. On October 26, Israel bombed the hospital, severely dam-



Al Qarara Cultural Museum, in southern Gaza, suffered serious damage, losing much of its pottery collection from the Byzantine period.

● MOHAMMAD ABULEHIA  
/AL QARARA CULTURAL  
MUSEUM







Damage at Gaza Baptist Church after a blast on December 26, 2023

The Grand Omari Mosque, bombed by the Israeli army on December 8, 2023

aging the church and its annexes and leaving hundreds of people dead or injured. So too have the Palestinian Legislative Council's (PLC) memorial monument in the Memorial Park for the Unknown Soldier, symbolising the struggle of the Palestinian people. Jihad Yasin, the ministry's director of museums and excavations confirms, however, that the 2,000-year-old Roman cemetery discovered last year in northern Gaza, containing dozens of ancient graves and two rare sarcophagi made of lead, was "almost completely destroyed" by bombardment. He says the ministry has no information on the condition of the artefacts or of one of the coffins that had been transferred to storage in Gaza. The second coffin was still on site. "If it's [the store] still safe or bombed, we don't know," Yasin says. "If we lose this material, I think we lose a page from our history."

Moreover, Anthoned Harbour, inhabited from 800 BCE to 1100 CE, Gaza's first known seaport and one of three Gazan sites on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage was severely impacted by Israeli strikes, while the main library in Gaza, containing historical documents and books, was partially destroyed. At least six key cultural centres have also been damaged, among them the Rafah Museum, a space dedicated to teaching about Gaza's heritage that housed hundreds of artefacts, which partially collapsed, and Al Qarara Cultural Museum in Khan Younis, which was also badly damaged. In late November, intense Israeli shell-

ing destroyed Gaza City's Central Archive building, which contained thousands of historical documents dating back over 150 years. "These documents represent an integral part of our history and culture," the mayor of Gaza, Yahya Al-Sarraj, said following the incident, highlighting their historical value for the community. Birzeit University in the occupied West Bank posted photos from inside the heavily damaged municipal building. "The Israeli occupation destroys the central archive of Gaza municipality, executing thousands of historical documents, and deliberately razing all life forms; erasing the city and its history. It is worth noting that the archive holds documents more than a hundred years old," it said. The papers housed within the archives held important national records dating back generations and information documenting the history of Gaza and its people, along with plans for Gaza City's urban development. The Rashad al-Shawwa historical cultural centre, a crucial cultural hub founded in 1985 that hosts a theatre and library holding around 20,000 books, also suffered considerable damage and destruction in airstrikes. Israel's bombardment of Gaza also destroyed five bookstores. In addition, the Israeli army has destroyed most parts of the Old City of Gaza City, which contained 146-year-old houses and dozens of historical buildings.

The over 1,600-year-old Monastery of Saint Hilarion at Tell Umm Amer, the late Ottoman-era House of Al-Ghussein, and the Hammam al-Samara are among the other noteworthy locations impacted. In addition, one of Gaza's most important archaeological sites has been largely destroyed by Israel's invasion, according to a report by Forensic Architecture. The investigative organisation used open source and satellite imagery to show that the site, located near Al-Shati refugee camp, had been hit by bombings and then bulldozed for what appears to be a military camp. The imagery also reveals the development of Israeli water pump infrastructure in and around the site, nominally for the purpose of flooding tunnels. Forensic Architecture said the site had been excavated between 1995 and 2005 and that among the items discovered were an Iron Age rampart underneath Achaemenid period houses, Roman and Hellenistic-era structures including an emporium, a tiled fountain on the coast, and a Byzantine cemetery in the north. It noted that other sites were severely damaged, including the 400-year-old Al-Saqqa House, the Sayed al-Hashim Mosque, the Shrine of Al-Khadir in Deir al-Balah city in central Gaza Strip, Sheikh Shaaban Mosque, Al-Dhafar Damri Mosque, Mosque Khalil al-Rahman, Khan Yunis mosque, and the Balakhiya Byzantine cemetery (The Anthonedon of Palestine), northwestern Gaza City which is one of the oldest mosques in Gaza.

International support

Hamas urged UNESCO and other cultural institutions to protect historic buildings in the Gaza Strip. Hamas-run Ministry of Antiquities condemned the "ransacking of historical and archaeological sites" by the Israeli army. "The crime of targeting and destroying archaeological sites should spur the world and UNESCO into action to preserve this great civilisational and cultural heritage," said the antiquities ministry, which estimates that 104 mosques have been razed since the start of the war. Geneva-based rights group, Euro-Med Monitor, said Nov. 20 that Israel deliberately destroyed archeological and historical monuments in the Gaza Strip, and accused it of "explicitly targeting Palestinian cultural heritage." Palestinians also say that the deliberate targeting of Gaza's heritage sites is part of an ongoing effort to suppress Palestinian culture, identity, and, ultimately, their presence on the land. "From displacement of Palestinians to destruction of heritage sites, it's all part of a campaign under which no other connection to the land except the Jewish one should be preserved," political analyst Khalil Sayegh told TNA. Maher Azmi Abu-Samra, an Amman-based architect originally from Bethlehem, said that destroying historical and cultural heritage has the effect of altering the landscape of the Palestinian territory, depriving its inhabitants of their identity. "Behind such acts of destruction, there is a policy of erasure of the identity of Palestinians," he told TNA. "The next generation won't have any connection with the land, their memory will be erased," he added, pointing out how this is part of a strategy to permanently displace Palestinians from the besieged coastal enclave. Drawing a comparison with Daesh terrorist group, the architectural designer said that like the extremist group, the Israeli state is destroying historical landmarks with the view to change the culture of the indigenous people and replace it with "a whole new reality". Abu-Samra, who's among the few architects in the Middle East to design and build using traditional techniques, says that rebuilding ancient structures in their original style won't be possible. Well-versed in the load-bearing construction method, which does not involve the use of steel and concrete, he said: "This traditional technique has vanished nowadays. We don't have skilled craftsmen with such know-how who can redo those sites in the old way". The Ministry of Culture's public relations officer appealed to the international community to protect and restore critical historical buildings in Gaza. "We call on international organisations to stop this 'culturecide,'" she said, urging UNESCO to save Gaza's heritage. Hamas-run Ministry of Antiquities has also recently called on UNESCO to preserve the remaining archaeological and historical sites in the besieged territory. But even with pledges of foreign aid after Israel's war ends, it will be almost impossible to rebuild houses and infrastructure with Israel's blockade in place. Much of Gaza's rich history and culture, meanwhile, could be lost forever. Since Hamas' cross-border attack on Oct. 7, Israel has continued relentless attacks on the Gaza Strip, killing at least 24,400 Palestinians and injuring 61,500, according to local health authorities. The Israeli onslaught has left Gaza in ruins, with 60% of the enclave's infrastructure damaged or destroyed and nearly two million residents displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicines.

The Middle East Eye, Arab News, New Arab, Art Newspaper, Anadolu Agency, Asharq Al-Awsat contributed to this article.



A Palestinian man walks past the remains of a Khan Yunis mosque in the southern Gaza Strip, which witnesses said was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike.

Palestinians are inspecting the debris at the Jaffa Mosque, which was hit by an Israeli bombardment, in Deir el-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, on December 8, 2023.

A view of the damaged historical Greek Orthodox Saint Porphyrius Church, where civilians took shelter, after an Israeli airstrike in Gaza City, Gaza, on October 20, 2023.





## Asian Handball Championship: Iran falls short against South Korea, to face Japan in main-round opener

### Sports Desk

The final round of the preliminary phase in the Asian Men's Handball Championship in Bahrain saw Iran suffer a 26-24 defeat against South Korea in Group B. Having come out victorious against New Zealand (40-13) and China (24-22) earlier in the competition, Majid Rahimizadeh's men started right on the front foot against the record nine-time champion and took a 13-10 lead at halftime before Kim Yeonbin, who finished on a game-high nine goals, inspired the South Koreans to bounce back in the second period and go through to the last eight as the group winner. "That was a really tough game as both sides desperately wanted to win the group," Rahimizadeh said after the game, adding: "We were in front for the best part of the contest and

could have won it. The result would have been different, had we not missed on four one-on-one occasions when leading by two."

Jang Dong-hyun also contributed with five goals for South Korea, while Pouya Norouzzinejad topped the scoring chart for Iran with seven goals, followed by Afshin Sadeqi, who had four.

The second-place finish sent Iran into Group I of the main round – alongside Japan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

South Korea, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq are in Group II, with Saudi Arabia, which stood third in the 2022 edition on home soil, battling for the 9-16 spots after finishing behind Japan and Iraq in Group C.

Iran will face Japan in Isa Town's Sheikh Khalifa Sports City Hall today – in a repeat of last October's game in the Asian qualification tourna-

ment for the Paris Olympics. Japan beat Iran 25-20 before going all the way to come out on top against host Qatar in the final and punch the ticket for the French capital in July and August.

"Japan has improved massively over the past couple of years and will enter the game fresh from October's victory, but I still believe we are capable of beating them [on Thursday]," added Rahimizadeh, who replaced Montenegrin Veselin Vujović following a group exit in the Asian qualifiers.

Looking to improve on the fourth place in the previous edition, Iran will play four-time winner Qatar on Friday, before squaring off against the UAE two days later.

The top two of the main-round groups will advance to the semifinals, securing a place in next year's World Championship – cohosted by Croatia, Denmark, and Norway.



South Korea's Lee Hyeonsik (71) shoots during a victory over Iran in the Asian Men's Handball Championship in Isa Town, Bahrain, on January 16, 2024.  
● IRIHF

## Inter 'in pole position' to sign Taremi in summer: *La Gazzetta dello Sport*



● GETTY IMAGES

### Sports Desk

Serie A giant Internazionale is "in pole position" to sign Porto striker Mahdi Taremi, once the Iranian's contract with the Portuguese club runs out on July 1, according to Italian newspaper *La Gazzetta dello Sport*.

Taremi has bagged 86 goals and 53 assists in 171 appearances for the Dragons across all competitions, including 22 strikes which saw him finish as the leading marksman in the Portuguese top flight last season.

The Iranian, now with the national team at the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar, has only managed six goals in 24 outings for the club this season.

The Milan-based daily wrote on Tuesday that Taremi's camp met with Inter representatives last

week and are closing in on a three-year deal, worth €3 million per year, for the former Persepolis and Al Gharafa forward, who was only introduced to the European club football in 2019 with Portuguese side Rio Ave.

The newspaper added that Taremi's priority for the next chapter of his career is to join the Nerazzurri as his answer to offers from Turkey and the Saudi Pro League has simply been: "No, thanks."

The Iranian was on the verge of signing for Inter's archrival AC Milan last summer, only to see the deal fall through on the transfer deadline day after the two parties failed to agree on personal terms.

Inter also considered a move for the prolific striker as a replacement for Romelu Lukaku and Edin Dzeko but refused to meet Porto's asking

price for a 31-year-old player who was entering the final year of his contract and was to go on international duty for two to four weeks in the winter.

However, in light of Alexis Sanchez and Marko Arnautovic failing to impress during the first half of the ongoing campaign, Inter head coach Simone Inzaghi sees Taremi as a perfect alternative to Argentine skipper Lautaro Martinez and France international Marcus Thuram.

Taremi will hope to inspire the country to a first trophy in the continent's flagship international event since 1976, before seeing out the final months of his four-year spell with Porto, which is third in the Portuguese league – trailing Sporting on top by five points – and will face Arsenal in the last-16 round of the UEFA Champions League.

## Hearing date set for Man City's financial rule breach charges: Premier League CEO

REUTERS – A date has been set for the hearing into Manchester City's alleged financial rule breaches, the Premier League's CEO Richard Masters said on Tuesday.

City were charged in February with more than 100 alleged breaches of finance rules since their acquisition by the Abu Dhabi-based City Football Group, and were referred to an independent commission for a hearing.

"There is a date set for that proceeding. Unfortunately, I can't tell you when that is but it is progressing," Masters told the Culture, Media and Sport

(CMS) Committee of the UK Parliament.

When the charges were announced in February, City said they welcomed "the review of this matter by an independent commission, to impartially consider the comprehensive body of irrefutable evidence that exists in support of its position."

The charges against City, who are targeting a fourth straight Premier League title this season, are different to those brought against Everton and Nottingham Forest on Monday, Masters told the committee.

"If any club, the current champions or otherwise, had been found in breach of the spending rules, they would be in exactly the same position as Everton or Nottingham Forest," he said.

"But the volume and character of the charges laid before Manchester City, which I obviously cannot talk about at all, are being heard in a completely different environment."

Everton and Forest are facing potential points deductions – which would be a second for Everton this season after they were docked 10 points in November.



● LEE SMITH/REUTERS

## Embiid outshines Jokic as 76ers beat Nuggets

BBC – Joel Embiid scored 41 points as he outshone Nikola Jokic in the Philadelphia 76ers' 126-121 win over NBA champions the Denver Nuggets.

It was Embiid's second game in a row with 40-plus points while he also dished out 10 assists and claimed seven rebounds.

Jokic finished with 25 points and 19 rebounds for Denver, but reigning Most Valuable Player Embiid starred late on. He scored 11 fourth-quarter points to lead the 76ers to a third straight win.

Philadelphia are third in the Eastern Conference, while the Nuggets stay third in the West, a game and a half behind the conference leading Minnesota Timberwolves.

Elsewhere, the Phoenix Suns produced an incredible comeback to beat the Sacramento Kings 119-117 in Arizona. With eight minutes and 22 seconds remaining, the Suns trailed by 22 points before they went on a 32-8 run to snatch the win.

Kevin Durant led the way, scoring 15 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter,

and clinched the victory from the free-throw line.

Meanwhile, Paul George inspired the Los Angeles Clippers to a 128-117 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder. The 33-year-old forward scored 38 points against his former side with Kawhi Leonard and James Harden each adding 16 points for the Clippers.

NBA commissioner Adam Silver has also announced that the Clippers' new Intuit Dome, which is set to open next August, will host the 2026 NBA All-Star Game.



Nuggets' Nikola Jokic (1) and 76ers' Joel Embiid reach for a rebound during an NBA game in Philadelphia, PA, US, on January 16, 2024.  
● MATT SLOCUM/AP



# Terrorists 'legitimate' targets

## IRGC hits back at Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan

### International Desk

Iran's defense minister on Wednesday defended strikes on terrorists' positions in some neighboring countries as a "legitimate defense" that the country is entitled to.

Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani underlined that Iran warns the countries and uses diplomatic channels and negotiations before taking any military action against anti-Iran terrorists.

Ashtiani made the remarks after Iran's attacks on positions of anti-Iran terrorists in Pakistan, Syria and Iraq. The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) carried out missile and drone attacks against the bases of anti-Iran terrorists in Syria and Pakistan as well as facilities run by the Israeli Mossad spy agency in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region.

### 'Decisive' response

"We see no limitations in defending our national interests and the people, and will certainly do this authoritatively. No matter where threats against the Islamic Republic come from, we will react and the response will surely be proportionate, decisive and strong," he emphasized.



Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani  
● IRNA

Ashtiani added, "We condemn terrorism anywhere in the world. We will definitely respond to any action meant to violate the [Iranian] nation's rights, as well as any act of terror targeting the people. We have already demonstrated this forcefully, and see no limits in this regard." The Iranian defense minister also said that Iran respects the sovereignty, interests, rights and regulations as well as the territorial integrity of other countries, especially

neighbors. It, however, won't allow anyone to cause mischief on its borders and will deal with any such move, Ashtiani emphasized. Iran's top diplomat said on Wednesday that his country's armed forces targeted an anti-Iran terrorist group, Jaish al-Adl, in Pakistan. "None of the nationals of the friendly and brotherly country of Pakistan were targeted by Iranian missiles and drones," Foreign Minister

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

### Pakistan's reaction

Pakistan denounced the strike near the nations' shared border, recalled its ambassador from Iran and blocked Tehran's envoy from returning to Islamabad. Pakistan said two children were killed and three others injured in the attack. "This illegal act is complete-

ly unacceptable and has no justification whatsoever," it said in a statement. "Pakistan reserves the right to respond to this illegal act. The responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," Pakistani Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday.

Amir-Abdollahian said Iran's attack on "Pakistan's soil" was a response to the Jaish al-Adl group's recent deadly attacks on Iran, particularly on the city of Rask, in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan.

At attack on January 10 on a police station in the city killed a policeman, almost a month after 11 police officers were killed in a similar attack in the area.

Both attacks were claimed by Jaish al-Adl that was formed in 2012 and is blacklisted by Iran as a "terrorist" group.

"The group has taken shelter in some parts of Pakistan's Balochistan Province," Amir-Abdollahian said, adding, "we've talked with Pakistani officials several times on this matter."

The foreign minister said Iran respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan but would not "allow the country's national security to be compromised or played with".

## Iran warns US not to tie its destiny to fate of Netanyahu



● CNBC

Iran's foreign minister warned the US not to "tie its destiny" to the fate of Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and said Washington's full support for Israel is "the root of insecurity in the region."

"The US should not... tie its destiny to the fate of Netanyahu," Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told CNBC's Dan Murphy on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos.

The US has expressed steadfast support for Israel in its onslaught on the Gaza Strip after Hamas resistance group launched an unprecedented attack on the occupied territories, killing nearly 1,200 people.

In the aftermath of the attack, US President Joe Biden flew to Tel Aviv in a show of solidarity, pledging billions of dollars in military support. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has since visited Israel several times since.

"The full-scale cooperation of Biden and the White House with thugs like Netanyahu in Israel is the root of insecurity in the region," Amir-Abdollahian added.

Iran wants the US to "stop the war in Gaza," Amir-Abdollahian said.

Referring to the developments in the Red Sea, where Yemen's armed forces have launched several attacks on Israel-bound ships in support of Palestinians in recent weeks, he stressed that security in the Red Sea is important to his country.

In response, a US-led coalition in the Red Sea has conducted several strikes against the Ansarallah resistance movement in Yemen.

"The people of Yemen and other countries in the region who defend the Palestinian people are acting according to their own experience and in their own interests, and they are not receiving any orders or instructions from us," he said.

"Maritime security is of paramount importance to us, because we export oil," the Iranian minister said. "So, if there is insecurity near our vicinity, it will not be in our favor."

"We believe that any action to destabilize the region is rooted in Israel and its genocide in Gaza."

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas launched the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm into the occupied territories in response to the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed more than 24,400 Palestinians, according to data provided by the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The US and its Western allies have expressed their support for Israel's war, with Washington going further by vetoing UN Security Council resolutions demanding a cease-fire in Gaza.

## Iran to act as 'third party' in South Africa's ICJ case against Israel

### International Desk

Iran has formed a commission and is preparing documents to act as a third party in South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, the Iranian Vice President for Legal Affairs Mohammad Dehghan said on Wednesday.

"As soon as South Africa filed a complaint, we formed a commission [...] and will soon file a complaint against Israel at the International Court of Justice as a third party. This claim was brought by South Africa under the 1948 Convention for the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, and Iran, taking into account Article 9 of the Convention, did not file a complaint on its own, since this would mean recognition of Israel as a state," he said. The International Court of Jus-

tice in The Hague held hearings on the case on January 11 and 12. In its testimony, South Africa urged the court to oblige Israel to end its military operation in Gaza, to ensure that its residents have access to food, water and humanitarian aid, and to not impede the access of international missions to the strip.

South Africa accused Israel of "chilling" and "incontrovertible" intent to commit genocide in Gaza on the opening day of the landmark case before the UN's top court.

Calling on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Israel to cease military operations in Gaza, lawyers for South Africa said that Israel has gone beyond its intention to eradicate Hamas and is aiming to bring about the "the destruction" of the besieged territory's

population. Israel was accused of breaching the UN Genocide Convention, with lawyers saying that even the October 7 attack by Hamas on the occupied territories - during which around 1,200 people were killed - could not justify such actions, according to The Independent newspaper.

South Africa's Justice Minister Ronald Lamola said that Israel has "crossed the line" with its bombardment of Gaza, with health officials in the Palestinian territory putting the death toll at more than 24,400 people.

"The intent to destroy Gaza has been nurtured at the highest level of state," Tembeka Ngcukaitobi, advocate of the High Court of South Africa, told the court. "The evidence of genocidal intent is not only chilling, it is also overwhelming and

incontrovertible," Ngcukaitobi said.

Lawyers for South Africa told the court that Israel's military response to the Hamas attack has gone beyond what is reasonable. "This killing is nothing short of destruction of Palestinian life," Adila Hassim, a South African lawyer and member of the delegation,

said. "It is inflicted deliberately. No one is spared. Not even newborn babies."

Post-apartheid South Africa has long defended the Palestinian cause, a relationship forged when Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organization backed the African National Congress's struggle against white-minority rule.



● AFP

**Procurement, Construction, Test and Commissioning of**

LOT 1: Main Lines, Laterals & Interceptors of Zone C & D of Darab wastewater Networks.

and

LOT 2: Main Lines, Laterals & Interceptors of Zone E & L & I of Darab wastewater Networks.

Following the Procurement Notice of Fars Water and Wastewater Company with NCB No. DA-SL1 and DA-SL2 which was published on December 12, 2023 and December 21, 2023 in this newspaper, this is to announce that the bid opening date has been postponed up to 11:00 a.m. January 31, 2024.

**اصلاحیه آگهی مناقصه**

لات ۱: باقیمانده کارهای تدارکات، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی «خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی زونهای C و D شبکه جمع آوری فاضلاب داراب» و

لات ۲: باقیمانده کارهای تدارکات، ساخت، آزمایش و راه اندازی «خط انتقال و خطوط اصلی و فرعی زونهای E و I و L شبکه جمع آوری فاضلاب داراب» و

پیرو آگهی مناقصه شرکت آب و فاضلاب استان فارس به شماره های DA-SL2 & DA-SL1 که در تاریخهای ۱۴۰۲/۰۹/۳۰ و ۱۴۰۲/۰۹/۳۰ در این روزنامه به چاپ رسیده است، بدین وسیله به اطلاع می‌رساند که تاریخ بازگشایی پیشنهادها تا تاریخ ۱۴۰۲/۱۱/۱۱ رأس ساعت ۱۱ صبح تمدید گردید.

## Tehran's security ...

Moreover, international organizations followed in the footsteps of certain world powers including the United States to demonstrate double standards when it comes to terrorism. Consequently, they lack a proper understanding of the crimes committed by terrorists in Iran.

Despite holding multiple rounds of talks and striking agreements with neighboring countries, and issuing necessary warnings, the Islamic Republic had hoped these neighbors would take the required measures to tighten their border control and prevent terrorists from crossing into Iranian territory. Now that they have failed or been unable to contain the terrorists for any reason, Iran launched attacks on the terrorists' strongholds to ensure

its security and protect its people. Ensuring the security of its citizens is a matter of utmost importance for the Islamic Republic of Iran and in fact is a red line for Tehran. Therefore, in this specific case, there is zero tolerance for any group or country. It is a principle for Iran that if its neighbors fail to address anti-Iranian terrorists, Tehran will take action directly. In other words, these neighbors, with whom we share strong and fraternal relations, must take this warning seriously and work out a wise security strategy to combat terrorists. Otherwise, Tehran will intensify its efforts to crack down on terrorists, whether they are in Pakistan, Iraq, or elsewhere abroad. Defending the people and guaranteeing their security is an indisputable and legitimate right of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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# Trump made mistake; Biden ducked responsibility

By Ebrahim Behnam  
Guest contributor

The US secretary of state once again brought up the recurring stance of the Joe Biden administration on America's withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran on the sidelines of the Davos summit in Switzerland. Anthony Blinken called the move that took place under former president Donald Trump in 2018 "deeply unfortunate".

Blinken said that "it was a big mistake to tear up the Iran nuclear agreement," because it had kept Iran's nuclear program "in the box".

"Since the agreement was torn up, it's escaped from that box," he added.

The acknowledgement of the wrongness of Trump's decision to withdraw from the JCPOA dates back to 4 years ago and during the 2020 US presidential election campaigns. Biden went even a step further in his statement and, upon entering the White House, announced that one of his administration's key foreign policy initiatives would be the revival of the JCPOA and Washington's return to the nuclear agreement.

Now Biden's secretary of state says that the US is "now at a place where we didn't want to be because we don't have the agreement."

Such a stance reveals a sort of evasion and attempt to dodge responsibility on the part of the US government. Mr. Blinken and other US statesmen and decision-makers have failed to ask themselves why they find themselves in such an undesirable position.

Who is accountable for creating such a situation? Why did multiple rounds of negotiations to bring back to life the nuclear deal not yield results? Undoubtedly, Trump's decision was wrong, but what has the Biden administration done to make up for its predecessor's mistake? Have they charted a new course aimed at resolving the issue, or have they brought the talks to a standstill by introducing non-JCPOA matters into the nuclear talks and pressing for their own excessive demands?

What is evident is that the Biden administration has not taken any constructive measures to return to the JCPOA and allow Iran to reap the benefits of the nuclear deal. Furthermore, they have imposed new sanctions on Tehran. The US government, alongside the European trioka - France, Britain and Germany - has yet to even lift the arms embargo against Iran as stipulated in the JCPOA.

Hence, raising Trump's ill-advised move to withdraw from the nuclear deal ahead of the US presidential election, while taking into account election campaigns and a new potential confrontation between Trump and Biden, only serves as a gesture to win more votes and not a genuine step toward breaking the gridlock in the nuclear saga. The admission of mistake will prove useful only when it is followed by the US government's accountability and clear determination to resuscitate the nuclear agreement. It goes without saying that until such resolve is realized, the unfortunate situation as asserted by the US secretary of state, will persist and perhaps even worsen.

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Address: 208, Khorramshahr Ave., Tehran, Iran

● Editorial Dept. Tel: +98 21 84711171  
● ICPI Publisher: +98 21 88548892-5  
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# Israel escalates Gaza strikes after medicine-for-aid deal



● AFP

Israel stepped up strikes Wednesday on Gaza's south, where medicines were expected to be delivered for

hostages in exchange for humanitarian aid under a newly brokered deal. Air strikes and artillery

fire targeted Khan Yunis throughout the night. "It was the most difficult and intense night in Khan

Yunis since the start of the war," said Gaza's Hamas government, whose health ministry reported 81 deaths across the Palestinian territory, AFP reported.

Fighting has ravaged Gaza since Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attacks on Israel that resulted in the death of about 1,140 people.

At least 24,448 Palestinians, about 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, have been killed in Israeli bombardments and ground assaults, according to the Gaza health ministry's latest figures.

Hamas and other resistance groups seized about 250 captives during the October 7 attacks, and around 132 remain in Gaza, includ-

ing at least 27 believed to have been killed. The fate of those still in captivity has gripped Israeli society, while a broader humanitarian crisis in Gaza marked by the threat of famine and disease has fueled international calls for a cease-fire. The agreement announced by Qatar on Tuesday following French and Qatari mediation will allow medicines to reach the hostages and aid to enter the besieged Palestinian territory.

The International Committee of the Red Cross welcomed the deal, under which 45 hostages are expected to receive medication, as "a much-needed moment of relief".

At the Abu Yusef Al-Najjar

hospital in Rafah, Palestinians stood in front of bodies wrapped in shrouds, mourning the loss of loved ones killed in an overnight Israeli strike.

"Why are they doing this? They are destroying us," Umm Muhammad Abu Odeh, a woman displaced from the north Gaza town of Beit Hanun, told AFP.

The Israelis "told us to go south, and we came here... but there is no safe place in Gaza".

The United Nations says the war has displaced roughly 85 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people, many of whom have been forced to crowd into shelters and struggle to get food, water, fuel and medical care.

# Arab nations reject Iranophobia project

Dialogue key to solving regional crises



By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

## INTERVIEW

The results of a survey conducted by the Qatar-based Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies among 8,000 people in 16 Arab countries indicate a heightened anti-American sentiment in the Arab world after the Gaza war. According to the survey, 94% of respondents evaluated the US position in the Gaza war negatively, and 98% opposed the official recognition of Israel. To discuss the results of this survey, Iran Daily interviewed Diako Hosseini, a researcher on strategic issues in Tehran.

According to the survey, the majority of people in 16 Arab countries perceive the United States and Israel as the biggest threats to the security and stability of the West Asia region. 51% of respondents consider the US the biggest threat, while 26% see Israel in that light. What factors do you think have contributed to these anti-American sentiments in the Arab world?

Public opinions are largely influenced by recent significant events related to a country, region, or the world. For instance, in 2003, when the US invaded Iraq and toppled Saddam Hussein's regime, there was a brief positive evaluation of the US actions in the Arab world. However, as the attacks intensified and insecurity escalated, opinions turned against the US. In 2011, during the Arab Spring protests, public sentiment in the Arab world initially supported US positions, but as tensions and US interventions persisted, sentiments turned against the US.

Especially regarding the Israel-Palestine issue, the US has lost credibility as a neutral mediator. Despite America's efforts to improve its im-

age through soft power, this survey indicates its failure. Today's Arab society, largely educated with a strong middle class, naturally compares US policies with those of other major powers like China, which tends to intervene less in Arab countries' internal affairs. Therefore, the intensification of anti-American sentiments doesn't seem unnatural. Recent Israeli atrocities, committed with US support, have undoubtedly played a significant role in this situation.

While the US has tried to repair anti-American sentiments through soft power, its Iranophobia policy aims to portray Tehran as the main threat to regional security. However, the survey shows that only 7% perceive Iran as the primary threat, while 51% consider the US the main threat in 2024, up from 39% in 2022. What does this tell you?

This suggests the failure of the Iranophobia policy, which used the alleged Iranian nuclear threat as a pretext and intensified after 2003. Despite heavy investments, Arab nations' historical and cultural ties with Iran pre-

vented the success of this policy. The Iranophobia policy peaked during the Syrian war when Tehran was supporting Bashar al-Assad's government. But even then, the majority of the Arab world considered the US to be the main threat to the region's security. Iran's rational positions during the Gaza war and support for the Palestinian people have increased its popularity in the Arab world, making it difficult for the US to convince the Arab world to view Tehran as a regional threat.

It seemed that before the Gaza war, Israel, with US support, had amassed some capital to strengthen its position in the Arab and Islamic world. For example, it had successfully advanced its project of normalizing relations with several Arab countries to the extent that there was talk of normalizing talks between Israel and Saudi Arabia right before October 7, 2023. However, according to the survey, 89% of people in Arab countries oppose recognizing Israel. Has Israel, along with the



US, lost whatever capital it had acquired?

Yes, it appears so.

It is noteworthy that if there were some achievements, they were made between Israel and Arab states, not Arab nations. Since the establishment of the Israeli regime, the majority of Arab nations have had a negative attitude towards it. The Palestinian issue holds both an Islamic and an Arab dimension for the Arab world, and the failure of Arab armies in wars against Israel was seen as a blow to Arab identity. However, Arab nationalism is still dear to Arab nations, which makes things difficult for Israel and the US. In this survey, 92% of respondents stated that the Palestinian issue concerns the entire Arab world.

Benjamin Netanyahu claimed in the early days of the war that it would bring fundamental changes to regional security. However, the survey reveals that, at least in terms of public opinion in the Arab world and globally, these changes have not benefited Israel. Only 5% of the Arab com-

munity considered Hamas' October 7 attack illegitimate.

Nothing else was expected from the beginning. What happened on October 7 with Hamas's Operation Al-Aqsa Storm was a predictable counter-attack against Israel by Hamas. The Gaza Strip had been under complete Israeli siege for years. What Hamas did was within the framework of legitimate defense, responding to Israel's numerous injustices against the Palestinians. Like the majority of the Arab world, most consider the October 7 attack a just defense.

The victimized image that Israel initially created for itself gradually disappeared with mass killings and genocide in Gaza. Strategically, Israel has little chance of achieving its stated goal of destroying Hamas, as long as discrimination and injustice persist. These groups will continue to exist under any name and ideology, as long as discrimination, injustice, and crimes persist.

You said that the US has lost its credibility as a neutral, sincere mediator. Considering the now-substantiated anti-American

sentiments of the people of the region, is there the possibility of other major powers stepping in to solve the Israel-Palestine issue?

It's hard to predict that. The waning US influence does not necessarily mean that other major powers will increase their presence in the region or in the case of Palestine. We are faced with a complicated global situation where no single power has enough influence to solve the Palestinian issue. What is more, the positions of Israel and Palestine are worlds apart. So, other powers, like China, neither have the ability to play a significant role, nor the willingness to try. Currently, China lacks the willingness to enter into major political issues that would entail some commitment from Beijing.

Therefore, there's no simple solution to various regional crises in Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, and other countries that is developed by major powers. The solution is for the regional countries to engage in dialogue and achieve understanding, just as agreements between Iran and Saudi Arabia ended the destructive, drawn-out war in Yemen.



Pro-Palestinian protesters burn the flags of Israel and the United States in Karachi, Pakistan, on October 8, 2023, after Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel. ● AP