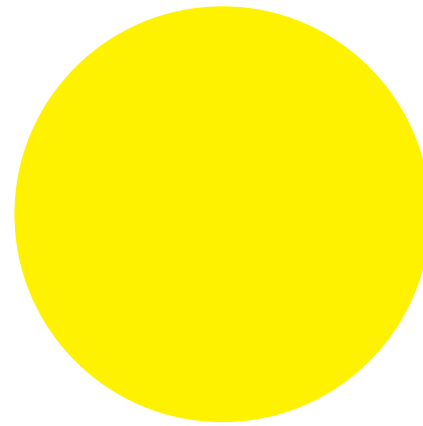


Israel's public enemy number one

How Yahya Sinwar became October 7 'mastermind'

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SPECIAL ISSUE



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ICJ rulings pave way for acts against genocide



By Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh

International relations expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Yesterday, the International Court of Justice issued a preliminary ruling on South Africa's lawsuit against Israel, accusing it of "genocide" in the Gaza Strip. Although the court has yet to hand down a final ruling on possible genocide in the Palestinian territory, the key point of this verdict lies in endorsing South Africa's claim and affirming the ICJ's jurisdiction to investigate it against the Israeli wishes.

The court further mandated specific measures against Israel to prevent genocidal acts. The judges' overwhelming vote count and its significance in this early stage of the ruling have been unprecedented for Israel in legal terms. Among other aspects, the vote of 15-to-2 commanded Israel to employ all means at its disposal to prevent any acts related to the genocide in Gaza. Furthermore, a resounding 16 votes in favor versus one vote against has underscored that Israel must punish and stop those who incite genocide in Gaza. Plus, it emphasizes that Israel must promptly and effectively take measures to ensure the provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Every year, numerous judgments are rendered against Israel in United Nations human rights committees, which typically carry a symbolic nature. However, what is issued by the ICJ holds a legal foundation, and if Israel's crimes in Gaza persist, based on these special directives, hearings could be held against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his hawkish cabinet.

Naturally, it was anticipated that the ICJ would issue a temporary cease-fire to halt the war in Gaza, but such extraordinary verdicts can also precipitate the cessation of hostilities and the legal prosecution of war criminals. South Africa and other nations can present the Gaza war as an exemplification of genocide by providing evidence.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who has faced Israel's backlash in recent months due to his extensive criticism of the atrocities in Gaza, can now vociferously denounce Israel and demand an end to the war, bolstered by these ICJ rulings.

Another crucial legal point is that the ICJ's preliminary judgments can serve as a consultative document for the UN Security Council. In accordance with Article 98 of the UN Charter, the UN chief can, leveraging the aforementioned rulings and based on the ICJ report affirming the catastrophic situation in Gaza, request an urgent UN Security Council session and propose a resolution to stop the war.

Moreover, the confirmation of the ICJ's jurisdiction to investigate the genocide charge, along with its verdicts to prevent Israel's ongoing killing of people in Gaza, has upset the balance of power and credibility, both in the eyes of the public and governments, to Israel's detriment. Even the United States, as a staunch supporter of Israel, which viewed the Gaza war as a political and military conflict, is now losing its standing as the issues of genocide and human rights violations in Gaza come to the forefront. Hence, the division between Europe and the US will widen concerning their support for Israel.

Ultimately, what was announced yesterday in the ICJ marks the inception of a path that could eventually lead to the trial of Netanyahu and other belligerent members of his cabinet and the Israeli army.

Iran, Turkey sign 10 agreements

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ICJ Orders Israel to Prevent Genocidal Acts in Gaza

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Raisi lauds South Africa for taking Israel to court

President of the International Court of Justice Joan Donoghue (c) speaks at ICJ prior to the verdict announcement in the genocide case against Israel, brought by South Africa, in The Hague on January 26, 2024. AFP

Iran plans to export renewables-oriented electricity: SATBA

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The group stage of the AFC Asian Cup concluded on Thursday in Qatar, where Iran was one of only three teams to progress to the round of 16 with maximum points. A trademark linkup between Sardar Azmoun, who was handed a first spot in the starting XI, and Mahdi Taremi saw the latter find the net twice against Yahya Al Ghassemi's late consolation as Amir Qalenoee's men defeated the United Arab Emirates 2-1 on Tuesday for a clean sweep of group victories – a feat only achieved by the host and Iraq.



Iran remains Asian title contender amid average displays by heavyweights

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EXCLUSIVE

Iran, Niger ink two cooperation deals



Iran and Niger on Wednesday signed two documents on expanding cooperation in the economic, political and health sectors, Xinhua reported. During a ceremony in the Iranian capital Tehran, officials from both countries signed a document on the comprehensive economic and political cooperation as well as a memorandum of understanding for collaboration in the health sector, the report said.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Niger's Prime Minister Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber said a main strategy of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's administration has been to develop political, economic and cultural ties with African states, including Niger.

He congratulated the African country on the formation of its independent government, adding that Iran is satisfied with the preliminary steps to reopen Niger's Embassy in Tehran, a move that would definitely contribute to the two countries' growing relations.

Mokhber noted that the two countries had earlier held two joint cooperation commission meetings in Tehran, adding the Iranian government believed that the groundwork should be prepared swiftly to hold such meetings again.

The Nigerien prime minister, for his part, called for efforts to turn the documents signed between the two countries during his visit to contracts as soon as possible.

He said that good consultations and meetings were held during his trip to Tehran, adding that the two countries' bilateral relations could definitely be improved by convening sessions of the joint cooperation commission.

The Nigerien prime minister arrived in Tehran on Tuesday on a three-day visit at the invitation of the Iranian first vice president.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in a meeting with Niger's FM Bakary Yaou Sangaré on Thursday emphasized the readiness his country to cooperate with the African state in economically beneficial areas.

Speaking in the meeting, Niger's FM said his visit to Iran was to strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries and to raise the level of cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran, Turkey sign 10 agreements

Top officials from Iran and Turkey signed 10 cooperation documents in various fields during Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's official visit to Ankara, as the two neighbors weighed plans to meet the target of \$30 billion in annual trade exchange.

Raisi traveled to Ankara on Wednesday for his first visit to Turkey as the president of Iran, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Following the eighth meeting of the High Council of Iran-Turkey Cooperation in the evening, senior officials from the two countries signed 10 cooperation documents in the fields of culture, media and communications, rail and air transportation, electricity, energy, and economic and free trade zones.

Speaking at a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Raisi highlighted the determination of the authorities of the two countries to promote relations in various sectors, especially in the commercial and economic



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (l.) meets his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, Turkey on January 24, 2024.



fields. "We believe that the two countries, with their very high capacities, can take important steps in the path of development and leap in relations, and in this regard, in the first stage,

it is targeted to increase commercial and economic cooperation to \$30 billion, which, with the efforts of economic leaders of the two countries, is completely possible," Raisi said, his official website reported.

He also described the serious will of the regional countries in the fight against terrorism as the only way to create stability and security in the region, adding, "The Islamic Republic of Iran considers

the security of Turkey and other countries in the region as its own security, the smallest insecurity in a corner of the region affects stability and security of the entire region; therefore, the cooperation of

the countries of the region in this field and in the direction of neutralizing the conspiracy of the hegemonic system to sow discord among the nations of the region to create insecurity will be very effective."

Iran plans to export renewables-oriented electricity: SATBA

The head of Iran's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (SATBA) said that planning is underway to export electricity generated by wind and solar power plants in the country.

Mahmoud Kamani put the current generation

capacity of the renewable power plants in Iran at 1,122 megawatts, adding that the construction operation of new power plants, with a total capacity of 11,000 megawatts, is underway in the country, IRNA reported.

Three countries, namely, Turkey, Pakistan and

Afghanistan will be the destinations of Iran's export of renewable energy, Kamani added.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 13th International Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Exhibition, he said that tender notices have been launched for the construction of a 4,500-MW solar power plant.

He added that his organization has reached an agreement with the National Development Fund of Iran for the construction operation of a 10,000-MW renewable power plant, costing about \$5 billion.



Iran, Tajikistan to implement visa-free travel pact: Envoy



Iran and Tajikistan will soon implement a pact on the cancellation of visa requirements, which was signed during a recent visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to the Central Asian country.

Iranian Ambassador to Dushanbe Alireza Haqiqian announced the above in a meeting with Faizulla Barotzoda, the head of Tajikistan-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group, held in the Tajik capital on Thursday.

He referred to the process of comprehensive development of relations between the two countries and hailed the role of parliamentary cooperation in deepening ties.

The visa waiver agreement is part of a larger package of bilateral treaties which include cooperation in transportation, the establishment of free economic zones, anti-drug trafficking efforts, and crisis management.

Barotzoda, for his part, emphasized the readiness of the Tajik Parliament to create a legal platform in order to further expand cooperation.

Date: 1402/11/07 - No.: 55/02/28435

INVITATION TO RENEWAL OF ONE STEP INTERNATIONAL TENDER
First Announcement

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES COMPANY

Agricultural Support Services Company, hereinafter will be referred as ASSC, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Jihad-Agriculture of I.R. of Iran, is considering the purchase of $2 \times 30000 \pm 5\%$ MTS of Granular Mono Ammonium Phosphate **GMAP (11-52)** through renewal of one step international tender.

All of the qualified and interested companies are invited to receive tender documents from **Saturday** dated **27/1/2024** until **Wednesday** dated **31/1/2024** (5 working days) from our purchasing committee (located at the 9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

The bidders are requested to submit their letters of introduction, along with remittance bill of Iranian Rial 1,200,000 to ASSC's account no. 4001039704005791 with SHEBA no. IR250100004001039704005791 at the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran through payment order of SATNA or PAYA with the 30 character identification code of 358039782263500650000000000006.

The bidders are required to submit their sealed and stamped envelopes containing offers latest on **Saturday** dated **2/3/2024** (during official working hours) to our security office, located on the 8th floor. Meanwhile the meeting for the opening of the envelopes will be on **Sunday** dated **3/3/2024** at 14:00 with the presence of bidders' representatives in our purchasing committee (9th floor, no. 1, fourth alley, Gandhi St., Tehran, Iran).

- ❶ The bid bond value should be at **€ 317000** or in equal value of that in any other foreign currencies, except US dollars, based on the Telegraphic Transfer rate of the basic and essential commodities on CBI's ETS website, www.fxmarketrate.cbi.ir, on 16/1/2024 for each lot of 30000 MTS $\pm 5\%$ in bank guarantee.
- ❷ The bidders are permitted to submit the bid bond in Iranian Rial. Therefore, the value of bid bond for each lot of 30000 MTS $\pm 5\%$ will be **IRR 98,902,693,003** which must be only submitted by the bidders.
- ❸ After approval of ASSC's Financial Manager, the bidders are permitted to use their previous and definite outstanding claims as the bid bond.

For more information, you may refer to our website www.assc.ir, and <http://iets.mporg.ir> or contact us by phone no. 00982188776325.

Public relations and international affairs of agricultural support services company

1653960-4215

Baraghan village, home to abundant historical and natural attractions



● virasafar.ir



● barzan.app

Iranica Desk

Baraghan village is situated in Savojbolagh, just 13 kilometers from Karaj, Alborz Province. It boasts an ancient section and abundant gardens that are particularly appealing to tourists throughout the year, especially in the spring and summer. The *husseinieh* of Baraghan, where traditional Muharram mourning ceremonies are held annually, the historical Baraghan bridge, the ancient plane trees of Jaame Mosque, an old white poplar tree, and an ancient hill are among the unique attractions of this village.

The Shahroud and Sanj rivers, which originate from the central Alborz Mountains, flow past this village. Its bazaar and some old houses date back to the Qajar period.

In this village, an ancient tree with a lifespan of over 1,000 years can be seen, indicating the ancient history of Baraghan. The sour green plums known as *gojeh*



● barzan.app

sabz are considered one of the main and popular agricultural products of this village. The village has a texture of stone, adobe, and wood as the main materials used in its structures. However, the construction of summer villas in this area has altered its traditional texture, with new buildings predominantly adopting an imitation of urban architecture. Although the expansion of new buildings has no-

ticeably changed the traditional face of this village, the expanse of green gardens and farms around its rivers has bestowed a beautiful landscape upon this area. *Ta'zieh*, a religious performance held during the lunar month of Muharram marking the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his companions, is considered a popular traditional ceremony of the village. The *ta'zieh* is performed during



● chtn.ir

the first ten days of Muharram at the historical *husseinieh* of the village, attracting many people. According to the inscription on its entrance, the *husseinieh* dates back about 570 years. After entering the building, two-story vaulted passageways, separated by walls and wooden beams, are noticeable. These vaults are where mourners and spectators of the *ta'zieh* gather. On the western and eastern

sides of the *husseinieh*, there are five vaults, and on the northern side, there is an *ivan* (portico)-shaped vault, which is the residence of the *khan*, known as *khan neshin*. The ceiling of this *husseinieh* only covers the vaults and the *khan neshin*, while the central part, which is above the main platform and the place for performing the *ta'zieh*, is without a ceiling. In a corner of the *husseinieh* there is an old

pulpit, which is also considered a valuable historical relic.

Opposite the *husseinieh*, in its northern part, there is an ancient Jaame (Grand) Mosque of Baraghan, connected by a vestibule. In the courtyard of the Jaame Mosque, two ancient plane trees, one with a diameter of about 12 meters, and the other about 10 meters, are visible. The interior of the larger tree is completely hollow, while the smaller tree, located in the southern part, is fully rounded and green.

Baraghan village offers a variety of souvenirs, including mulberries, walnuts, honey, and dairy products. At the village's end, a winding path leads to the Karaj fire temple. Recently, 979 tourist-target villages in the country were assessed and ranked, based on four criteria: Attraction, infrastructure, development, and sustainability. Among these, 30 villages were recognized as top destinations, with Baraghan village achieving the fourteenth rank among them.

Soffeh Mountain: A haven of natural beauty and adventure in Isfahan



● wikipedia.org

In southern Isfahan, a strong, tall mountain stands as the protector of the city. This awe-inspiring mountain is a haven for those seeking relaxation on its green hills, climbers aiming to reach its peak, and visitors wanting to take a leisurely walk on Soffeh Mountain to behold the stunning views of the city,

both day and night. This gorgeous mountain is part of the Zagros Mountains and stands at an elevation of 2,257 meters. It offers numerous routes to the top, ranging from easy to challenging, and the views are truly spectacular. Near the peak there are beautiful waterfalls and caves, making this

mountain a wonderful place to visit. Even from a distance, Soffeh Mountain is truly stunning.

Entertainments

In addition to its visual beauty, at the foothill of the magnificent Soffeh Mountain there is a great forest park where many inhabitants spend their leisure time.

The park features a cable cabin, bowling alley, playground, restaurants, and a zoological park, adding more charm to the area and making it one of the greatest attractions of the city. Although some areas may be crowded, there are peaceful spots to be found around Soffeh Mountain, especially at the top

of the mountain.

Rock climbing and breathtaking views

With its old rocky structure and suitable height, Soffeh Mountain provides an excellent location for rock climbing practice. The path to the top of the mountain is safe and has a

gentle incline. Depending on your level of preparedness, it typically takes about one to two hours to reach the peak. Locals often climb the mountain every Friday morning. While it may seem challenging, the breathtaking view of the entire city from the top makes it all worthwhile.



● stdconline.com

Israel's public enemy number one

How Yahya Sinwar became October 7 'mastermind'

The attack caught Israel's military and intelligence establishment off guard and shattered the image of Israeli invincibility, as Hamas fighters killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and captured around 240 captives.

In December, Israeli forces had surrounded Sinwar's house, Benjamin Netanyahu said. "It's only a matter of time before we get him," he said.

The IDF said he is hiding underground. Obsessive and disciplined, Sinwar is Hamas's top leader inside the Palestinian territory, a rarely seen veteran who learned fluent Hebrew during years in Israeli prisons and carefully studied his enemy.

Israeli officials have vowed to kill him and crush the resistance group that was founded in 1987 and has ruled Gaza since 2007.

But as the war rages into its fourth month, Sinwar remains alive, in hiding and at the helm of Hamas's gunmen as they battle Israeli forces.

He also controls the group's negotiations over the fate of the remaining captives captured during the October 7 attack.

'Intractable' in defending Hamas interests

In March 2021, Sinwar was re-elected as the head of Hamas's political wing in Gaza, extending his tenure as the Islamist movement's de facto leader in the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian enclave. He succeeded politician Ismail Haniyeh.

Haniyeh, who was based in Qatar, congratulated Sinwar and said the election marked "a victory" for the Islamist group. After a career in the shadows, spent in Israeli prisons, and the internal security apparatus of Hamas, Sinwar rose to lead the Islamist movement in the Gaza Strip. The October 7 attacks, probably a year or two in the planning, "took everyone by surprise" and "changed the balance of power on the ground", said Leila Seurat of the Arab Centre for Research and Political Studies (CAREP) in Paris.

The ascetic mastermind has not been seen since October 7.

Known for his secrecy, Sinwar is an excellent security operator, according to Abu Abdallah, a Hamas member who spent years alongside him in Israeli jails.

"He makes decisions in the utmost calm, but is intractable when it comes to defending the interests of Hamas," Abdallah said in 2017 after his former co-detainee was elected Hamas's leader in Gaza.

Respected by Palestinians

Security sources outside Gaza say that both Sinwar and Deif have taken refuge in the network of tunnels built under the territory to withstand Israeli bombs.

If he can win the release of all Palestinian prisoners and the lifting of the 16-year blockade of Gaza, people will feel they have obtained something, said Hani al-Masri, a veteran Palestinian analyst.

A former commander of Hamas's military wing, when Sinwar became its leader in Gaza in 2017, it represented for some the hardest line within the Islamist movement, which has fought three wars against Israel since 2008.

Hamas said it launched the October 7 attack in retaliation for increasing Israeli depredations against Palestinians and the continuing occupation of the West Bank and blockade of Gaza — and to push the Palestinian cause back onto the world agenda.

Among fellow Palestinians, some respect



By James Callery
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

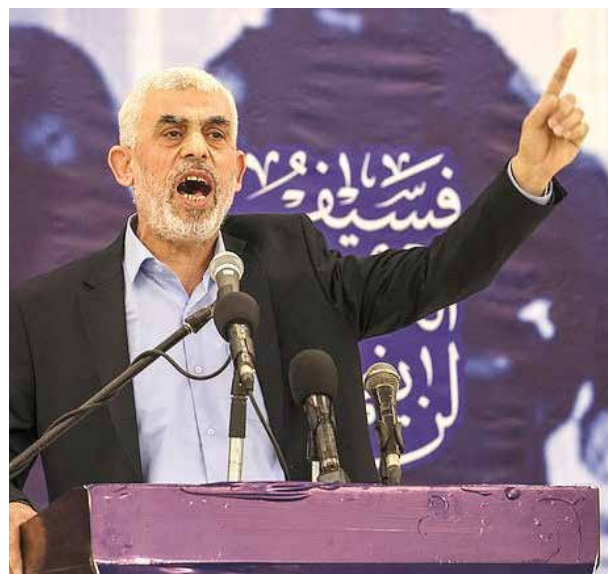
The wiry, grey-haired 61-year-old is believed to have engineered the surprise October 7, 2023, attack into southern Israel, along with the shadowy Mohammed Deif, the head of Hamas's armed wing.

The mastermind of the Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the worst Israeli-Palestinian bloodshed in generations is a secretive leader, feared on both sides of the battle lines.

In Gaza, no figure looms larger in determining the future trajectory of the war than Yahya Sinwar.



Yahya Sinwar (C), the elected leader of Hamas, appears in a ceremony at Yarmouk Football Stadium in Gaza City on May 24, 2021, to commemorate Palestinian fighters killed by Israeli air strikes.
● GETTY IMAGES



Head of the political wing of the Palestinian Hamas movement Yahya Sinwar speaks during a meeting in Gaza City on April 30, 2022.
● AFP



Yahya Sinwar (C) waves to supporters as he arrives to attend a rally marking Al-Quds Day, a commemoration in support of the Palestinian people celebrated annually on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, in Gaza City, on April 14, 2023.
● AFP

Sinwar for standing up to Israel and for remaining in impoverished Gaza, in contrast to other Hamas leaders living more comfortably abroad.

In a show of defiance two years ago, Sinwar ended one of his few public speeches by inviting Israel to assassinate him, proclaiming: "I will walk back home after this meeting." He then did so, shaking hands and taking selfies with people in the streets.

Early taste of displacement

Sinwar was born in Gaza's Khan Younis

refugee camp in 1962.

Israel's 1948 war forced his family out of the Palestinian town of Madjal.

Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced in a period known as the Nakba, which means 'catastrophe' in Arabic.

After Madjal's Palestinian population had left — with the remaining residents deported in 1950 — Israel renamed the city Ashkelon, where Sinwar would later spend time in prison.

Sinwar spoke of the lack of sanitation and the poverty of living on UN handouts, said

Mansour.

"He'd always go back to these stories when he'd tell us to struggle against the occupation," Mansour said.

Stalwart in prison

Sinwar was first arrested by Israel in 1982 when he was a student at the Islamic University in Gaza, where he was a founding member of Hamas's student movement, said Ibrahim al-Madhoun, a Hamas-affiliated columnist.

Mansour said he would stand by his decisions "even if they are harsh".

Sinwar was active during the first intifada against Israel, which started in Gaza in 1987.

He formed a close bond with Hamas's founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. They prayed together at the same Gaza City mosque.

Sinwar was detained again in 1988 when an improvised explosive device he was making detonated, said Michael Koubi.

Koubi noted that on the first day, he appeared very strong and did not want to speak.

Sinwar quickly rose through the Hamas ranks after his release from jail in 2011, along with 1,026 other Palestinians in exchange for Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier captured by Hamas in a cross-border raid.

But it was in prison that he managed to further this influence.

"He didn't come from nowhere," said Mkhaimar Abusada, a professor in politics at Gaza's al-Azhar University.

As a young man, Sinwar led the Majd, Hamas's internal security force.

He is now the man Israel wants to kill most.

Sinwar is thought to be sheltered beneath Gaza's intricate underground tunnel network as Israeli soldiers search the enclave and shower it with missiles.

The precision behind the October 7 attack was decades in the making.

His former prison mate Esmat Mansour recalled that Sinwar said his family lived in tragic circumstances and that he would never be able to shake off those memories.

Initially, he carried little gravitas in the Israeli penal system, where prisoners are split into various Palestinian factions.

But while incarcerated, he continued to search for collaborators with Israel, Mansour and Koubi said.

As Hamas's clout within the Palestinian political scene strengthened, Sinwar began his journey to power.

He was elected Hamas's leader in the prison around the time of the second intifada, where he organized strikes for better conditions.

"Being a leader inside prison gave him experience in negotiations and dialogue, and he understood the mentality of the enemy and how to affect it," said Anwar Yassine, a Lebanese citizen who spent about 17 years in Israeli jails, much of the time with Sinwar.

In June 2006, Sinwar's younger brother, Muhammad, was thought to have played a significant role in the cross-border raid that led to Shalit's capture.

"When Hamas got stronger and they kidnapped Shalit, he became the one-man show," Mansour said.

Mansour said he lost interest in meeting with prison authorities and instead received attention from Israeli intelligence and other officials asking for Shalit's release.

Sinwar addressed cheering crowds in Gaza City upon his release, urging Hamas to free those remaining in Israeli prisons. "This must turn immediately into a practical plan," he said.

'I don't want any more wars'

After his release from jail, Sinwar initially made a number of public appearances. Later, however, he disappeared from public view and was presented in Hamas media as the commander of Qassam's elite units.

According to those who know him, he still

holds a deep interest in the plight of Palestinian prisoners, which likely spurred the drive for the capturing of Israeli captives on October 7.

Washington accuses Sinwar of pushing for kidnapping more Israeli soldiers as a bargaining chip for Palestinian prisoners.

In public interviews before the October 7 assault — including one with an Israeli newspaper in 2018 — he said he was not looking for confrontation.

“I don’t want any more wars,” he told Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth.

In joining the political wing of Hamas, Sinwar effectively knocked down the divide between the group’s officials and fighters, said Israeli journalist Shlomi Eldar, who wrote a 2012 book on Hamas and interviewed some of its most senior officials.

Eldar said that he was a pioneering figure in the movement.

Other group leaders would have been too fearful of the repercussions to have staged an attack of the magnitude of the October 7 onslaught, he said.

In taking the risk, others suspect he was attempting to position himself as the leader of the Palestinian cause, a long-sought role.

“No one can deny that he recorded his name in history, on the one hand, and changed the static situation that Israel adopted to deal with the Palestinians,” one Palestinian official who met Sinwar numerous times said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

As the search for the mastermind ramps up, he is likely accompanied by close confidants, including his brother Muhammad. Muhammad faked his death

in 2014 but was shown in a video issued on December 17 being escorted in a car through the four-kilometre long and 50-meter deep “strategic” level tunnel it had revealed earlier that day.

Koubi said that the leader will battle until the end.

Seeking unity with West Bank

Sinwar has come to endorse the idea of a single Palestinian administration, bringing together the Gaza Strip, the occupied West Bank — controlled by Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah party — and annexed east Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

The same year he was elected, Hamas for the first time accepted in principle a Palestinian state in the pre-1967 borders, while not recognising Israel and retaining the ultimate goal of “liberating” all of historic Palestine.

According to the European Council on Foreign Relations, a think-tank, Sinwar has vowed to punish anyone obstructing reconciliation with Fatah.

That coming together remains elusive, but the prisoner releases resulting from the truce agreement with Israel in November saw Hamas’s popularity soar in the West Bank.

Sinwar has pursued a path of being “radical in military planning and pragmatic in politics”, according to Seurat.

“He doesn’t advocate force for force’s sake, but to bring about negotiations” with Israel, she said.

In 2008, Sinwar survived an aggressive form of brain cancer after treatment at a Tel Aviv hospital.

Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released him in 2011 along with more than 1,000 other prisoners in ex-

change for kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

Netanyahu was harshly criticised for releasing dozens of prisoners held for their involvement in deadly attacks.

Back in Gaza, Sinwar closely coordinated between Hamas’s political leadership and its military wing, the Qassam Brigades.

In 2017, he was elected head of Hamas’s political bureau in Gaza.

Sinwar worked with Hamas’s leader in exile, Ismail Haniyeh, to realign the group with Iran and its allies, including Lebanon’s Hezbollah. He also focused on building Hamas’s military power.

For Hamas, surviving the war in any form would defy Israel and offer a victory of sorts. Sinwar himself may not survive.

The full article first appeared in MailOnline.

Who are other key leaders of Hamas?



By Lara Keay
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

“In order to survive as an entity, amid the threat of assassination, Hamas decided to have an internal and external leadership,” says Dr. Abdul Bashid Shaikh, lecturer in Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Leeds.

“That way, if all the key leaders were wiped out in Gaza, at least the organisation could regrow organically.”

From the Israeli perspective, killing Hamas leaders inside Gaza does not “cause a diplomatic crisis” with countries such as Qatar hosting its leaders abroad, adds Dr. Ahron Bregman, senior teaching fellow in the Arab-Israeli conflict at King’s College London and former Israeli army major.

Although not an exhaustive list, here we look at the key Hamas leaders inside Gaza and beyond, excluding Yahya Sinwar.

Ismail Haniyeh



As a prominent member of the movement that became Hamas in the late 1980s, Ismail Haniyeh is widely considered the group’s overall leader.

He was imprisoned in 1989 as part of the Israeli response to the first Palestinian uprising and then spent time in the ‘no man’s land’ between Israel and Lebanon in 1992.

Once back in Gaza, in 1997, he was put in charge of the office of Ahmed Yassin — one of the Hamas founders and spiritual leader — who was killed in an Israeli helicopter attack in 2004.

This increased his influence, and he was eventually elected Palestinian prime minister by its president and the leader of the rival group Fatah Mahmoud Abbas when Hamas won

the most seats in the 2006 elections. A year later, however, fighting broke out between Hamas and Fatah, ultimately ousting Fatah from Gaza and separating the Palestinian territories between the Hamas-controlled strip and the Palestinian Authority-run West Bank.

This made Haniyeh “de facto leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip” between 2007 and 2017, Dr. Shaikh says, until he was succeeded by Yahya Sinwar. He then moved to Qatar to become head of the political bureau.

He “chooses to be based in Doha as he is approaching his 70s now... and as a result of being a political interlocutor between Hamas, Qatar, Iran, and other international powers,” Dr. Shaikh adds.

Mohammed Deif



Mohammed Deif has been chief commander of the Qassam Brigades, Hamas’s military wing, since 2002. He helped engineer the network of underground tunnels that run under Gaza and into Israel, allowing Hamas fighters to access the territory.

Deif spent several years in prison, having been accused of planning bombings, kidnappings, and mass killings.

He escaped in 2000 during the second Palestinian uprising and has been almost untraceable ever since, with only three known photos of him.

Israel tried to assassinate him in 2002, which resulted in him losing an eye. Some reports claim he also lost a foot, hand, and some of his speaking ability.

A subsequent assassination attempt in 2014 killed his wife and two of his children.

Deif chose his nom de guerre, which means ‘guest’ in Arabic, to reflect the fact he is constantly on the move, often staying in other people’s homes for protection.

Marwan Issa is Mohammed Deif’s second-in-command as deputy head of the Qassam Brigades. He replaced Ahmed Jaabri in the job after he was killed in an Israeli air strike in 2012.

At 59, he is one of the younger Hamas leaders and among those based in Gaza.

“He’s very much on the operational side of things — in charge of strategy and military attacks on Israel,” Dr. Shaikh says.

As such, Issa is believed to be one of the main orchestrators of the October 7 incursion. Issa survived an assassination

attempt in 2006, as well as air strikes on his Gaza home in 2014 and 2021.

Despite his senior position, he had not been photographed until 2011, when he made a surprise appearance in a picture with exchanged Palestinian prisoners.

He was last photographed in 2015 at a Hamas security conference in Gaza.

His low profile is part of Hamas’s “psychological strategy”, Dr. Shaikh adds. “They’re willing to show themselves in public just to let Israel know it hasn’t eliminated them.”

Marwan Issa



Yahya Sinwar’s younger brother, Mohammed, is also on Israel’s most wanted list, with a \$300,000 (£237,000) reward.

At 48, he is the youngest senior Hamas figure, having joined the Qassam Brigades in 1991.

He became head of the Khan Younis Brigade in southern Gaza in 2005 and was part of the cell responsible for capturing and holding Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit the following year.

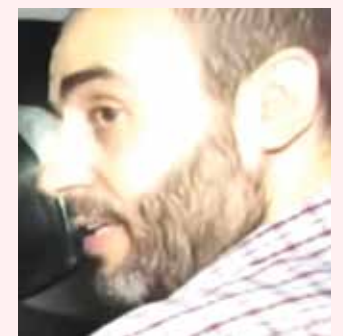
In 2014 he was widely assumed to be dead — after Hamas released images of what appeared to be his blood-soaked body.

But during the current conflict, he has appeared in a video being driven through Gaza’s tunnel network, where he is likely to have been hiding underground for the past 10 years.

Dr. Shaikh says: “A man widely assumed dead by most Western observers in 2014 appears to be well and truly alive.”

“Once again, Israeli and Western intelligence sources have been outfoxed by Hamas. And what makes this story even more sensational is that he’s played a massive role in masterminding the October 7 attacks.”

Mohammed Sinwar



Khaled Meshaal



Khaled Meshaal is one of the founding members of Hamas and, at 67, is among its older leaders.

He was head of the political bureau until 2017 but is still based in Doha, where he is now regarded as one of the group’s chief negotiators and has led discussions over October 7 hostages.

Dr. Shaikh describes his position as “interesting”, having spent far more time outside the Palestinian territories than inside.

Meshaal was poisoned by Israeli intelligence agents while he was still living in Jordan, and having survived two further assassination attempts is considered a “living martyr”.

The handover of power to the leaders in Gaza saw Meshaal “pushed to the sidelines”, but he remains an “influential figure”, Dr. Shaikh says.

His age and involvement in factional disputes may have also been a factor, he adds.

Mahmoud Zahar



Fast approaching his 80s, Mahmoud Zahar is the oldest of the Hamas leaders and one of its original co-founders.

He was imprisoned by Israel in 1988 soon after setting up the movement and was released in 1992.

Dr. Shaikh describes him as “the most hardline Islamist” of the Hamas leaders. In terms of character, he is “brazen, outspoken... sometimes coming

across as a loose cannon”, he adds.

“I would describe him as a global Islamist. He’s already said Operation Al-Aqsa Storm is just the beginning and he wants to extend Islamic domination throughout the world. In that sense, he’s presenting himself as a visionary.”

The full article first appeared in Sky News.

Kings hold off Warriors, Lakers top Bulls



● USA TODAY SPORTS

AFP – The Sacramento Kings, fueled by a career-high 39 points from Harrison Barnes, edged the Golden State Warriors 134-133 on Thursday as Lakers star LeBron James celebrated his record-setting 20th NBA All-Star nod with a win.

Domantas Sabonis's dunk with 22.1 seconds remaining sealed a dramatic win for Sacramento after back-to-back dunks by Jonathan Kuminga gave the Warriors their first lead of the second half at 133-132.

Golden State had a chance to close it out, but Kuminga was denied by Barnes and superstar Stephen Curry, under fierce pressure from De'Aaron Fox, and lost the ball in the final second.

Sabonis posted his 26th-straight double-double with 18 points and 13 assists and Fox added 29 points for the Kings.

Curry scored 33 points to lead the Warriors, who were playing their second game since the death of assistant coach Dejan Milojevic from a heart attack last week.

In Los Angeles, James scored 25 points and handed out 12 assists in the Lakers' 141-132 victory over the Chicago Bulls, which came hours after James was named an All-Star Game starter for the 20th consecutive year – a streak stretching back to his second season in the league. D'Angelo Russell hit eight three-pointers on the way to 29 points, leading seven Lakers players in double-figures in the dominant victory.

Elsewhere, Pascal Siakam's triple-double propelled the Indiana Pacers to a 134-122 victory over Philadelphia that snapped the 76ers' six-game winning streak.

The Boston Celtics routed Miami 143-110 in an Eastern Conference final rematch, the New York Knicks thumped the defending champion Denver Nuggets 122-84 and Western Conference leaders Minnesota held on for a 96-94 victory over the Nets in Brooklyn.

The Pacers were in charge throughout in Indianapolis, where Siakam scored 26 points with 13 rebounds and 10 assists to lead the charge against the sluggish 76ers.

Philadelphia's reigning NBA MVP Joel Embiid scored 31 points, but coach Nick Nurse pulled Embiid and the rest of his starters for the fourth quarter as the Pacers romped despite the continued absence of injured Tyrese Haliburton.

Iran remains Asian title contender amid average displays by heavyweights



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

The group stage of the AFC Asian Cup concluded on Thursday in Qatar, where Iran was one of only three teams to progress to the round of 16 with maximum points. A trademark linkup between Sardar Azmoun, who was handed a first spot in the starting XI, and Mahdi Taremi saw the latter find the net twice against Yahya Al Ghassani's late consolation as Amir Qalenoee's men defeated the United Arab Emirates 2-1 on Tuesday for a clean sweep of group victories – a feat only achieved by the host and Iraq.

Iran's performance over the course of the three matches, however, has been far from convincing for the best part of the fans and pundits in the country.

Despite enjoying the majority of the ball possession and creating better chances in the three outings, which Qalenoee has been boasting about throughout his press conferences in Qatar, the Iranian head coach will have much to think about ahead of Wednesday's knockout tie against Syria and a likely showdown with Japan in the quarterfinals.

Iran's backline display – the Asian powerhouse's strong suit during ex-coach Carlos Queiroz's nine-year spell in charge – has been shaky, even against minnow opponents in Palestine and Hong Kong, not to mention the frontline failed to dominate consistently in each of the group games and Qalenoee hopes his side will not struggle against Hector Cuper's Syria, which kept clean sheets against Uzbekistan and India while conceding only one goal against Australia.

Iran might have much to improve on in chasing a first trophy in the continent's flagship international event in 48 years but the good



Iranian players celebrate during a 2-1 victory over the UAE in the AFC Asian Cup in Education City Stadium, Al Rayyan, Qatar, on January 23, 2024.
● AFC

news for Qalenoee and his team is that neither of the pretournament favorites have been flawless so far in the tournament.

Japan headed to Qatar on the back of impressive victories over Germany and Turkey, widely regarded as the top contender for the ultimate prize, but the Samurai Blue's defensive problems were exposed against Vietnam and Iraq, with the latter bringing Hajime Moriyasu's side's 11-game winning streak to an end with a shock 2-1 triumph.

For all the world-class talent in the squad in Son Heung-min, Kim Min-

jae, and Lee Kang-in, South Korea, looking to end a 64-year Asian Cup drought, hit the brick wall in stalemates against Jordan and Malaysia, though a runner-up finish in the group might eventually play out in Jürgen Klinsmann's favor after his team avoided Japan in the last 16. "We can do better in the defensive transition but overall, the group stage is done and now the tournament really starts... It wasn't our plan to concede three goals today just to avoid Japan. We wanted to go through as group winners and the team tried," Klinsmann

said after sharing the points with Malaysia in a thrilling 3-3 draw on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, has probably the most high-profile coach of the tournament in Roberto Mancini on its bench, but while the Saudis' buildup to the event was dominated by the exclusion of three senior players by the Italian, the Green Falcons had to dig deep to salvage a win against Oman and then secure the points against nine-man Kyrgyzstan before being held by Thailand in a goalless contest.

Australia also won the group with seven points but the Socceroos' most mediocre squad in years have hardly proved to be championship material.

With all of the Asian elite sides having their own woes to deal with in the knockout round, Qatar has enjoyed an easy run in its title defensive while Iraq has been the team to watch after an inspiring group campaign.

Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Bahrain, Thailand, Tajikistan, and Indonesia, meanwhile, will be looking to continue their fairytale runs in Qatar.

Australian Open:

Sensational Sinner dethrones Djokovic to reach final

Jannik Sinner downed defending champion Novak Djokovic 6-1 6-2 6-7(6) 6-3 at the Australian Open on Friday to hand the top seed his first defeat at Melbourne Park in six years and power into his maiden Grand Slam final.

Sinner provided a master class in tennis in the opening two sets to put the wheels in motion for Djokovic's only defeat in the semi-finals of his favourite major. It also made the youngster the only Italian player to reach an Australian Open singles final.

In marking the arrival of a new generation of tennis stars, the Melbourne title clash on Sunday will also be the first since 2005 not to feature Djokovic or fellow "Big Three" members Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal.

"It was a very, very tough match," said Sinner, who did not face a single break point in the match. "I started out very well, for two sets I felt that he was not feeling too good on court so I just tried to keep pushing and then in the third set I had match point and I missed the forehand, but you know, this is tennis.

"I just tried to be ready for the next set, which I started off really well, and of course the atmo-



Jannik Sinner celebrates winning his Australian Open semi-final match against Novak Djokovic in Melbourne, Australia, on January 26, 2024.
● ELOISA LOPEZ/REUTERS

sphere was so great. It's so great to play here."

Fourth seed Sinner stunned Djokovic twice in three matches at the end of last season and he made a rollicking start on Rod Laver Arena by targeting his

36-year-old opponent's shaky serve and error-prone backhand to comfortably win the opening set.

Djokovic had not lost at his favourite stomping ground since the 2018 edition when he

crashed to South Korean Chung Hyeon and there were worrying signs for the 10-times Melbourne champion as the 22-year-old Sinner eased through the next set following a double break. He outplayed me complete-

ly today," Djokovic said. "I was shocked with my level in a bad way. Not much that I was doing right... This is one of the worst Grand Slam matches I have played, that I can remember.

"At the same time, credit to him for doing everything better than me in every aspect of the game."

"I was looking forward to this match, it's always nice to have this kind of player where you can learn from," Sinner said.

"I lost (to him) last year in the semis at Wimbledon, I learned a lot from that, and it's all part of the process."

Victory meant that Sinner has now defeated Djokovic at the ATP Finals, the Davis Cup and in a Grand Slam.

"I don't know, ask him," Sinner said with a laugh when asked why his game was so difficult for Djokovic.

"We play similar and first of all you have to try and return as many balls as possible. He's such an incredible server, and I just try to guess sometimes, you know, trying to push, trying to move him around a little bit.

"I'm not going to give you the tactics because I hope I'm going to play him in a couple of different matches."

ICJ orders Israel to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza



Israel's deputy attorney-general for international law Gilad Noam and British jurist Malcolm Shaw stand on the day the International Court of Justice rule on emergency measures against Israel in The Hague, Netherlands, on January 26, 2024. ● REUTERS

Raisi lauds South Africa for taking Israel to court

The UN top court on Friday said Israel must prevent genocidal acts in Gaza and facilitate "urgently needed" humanitarian aid into the besieged territory, handing down rulings in a case that has drawn global attention. The court urged Israel to refrain from any possible genocidal acts as it presses its military operation in the Gaza Strip, but stopped short of ordering a ceasefire. Israel must take "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the

adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians," the court said, according to AFP. At this stage, the ICJ was not considering whether Israel is actually committing genocide in Gaza - that process will take several years. But the court warned Israel to "take all measures in its power to prevent" acts that could fall under the UN Genocide Convention, set up in 1948 as the world reeled from the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. It also said Israel should "prevent and punish" any incitement to genocide. The case was brought by South Africa, which has ac-

cused Israel of breaching the UN Genocide Convention. Over two days of hearings earlier this month in the gilded hall of the Peace Palace, where the ICJ sits, lawyers from both sides battled it over the interpretation of this Convention. South Africa accused Israel of "genocidal" acts that were intended to cause the "destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group." It urged the court to order Israel to "immediately suspend" its military operations in Gaza and allow humanitarian aid to reach the

civilians there. South Africa on Friday hailed a ruling by the United Nations' top court. "Today marks a decisive victory for the international rule of law and a significant milestone in the search for justice for the Palestinian people," the foreign ministry said. On Thursday, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said South Africa's case against Israel has drawn the admiration of all freedom seekers worldwide, Press TV wrote. **'Courageous' initiative** During a telephone con-

versation with his South African counterpart Cyril Ramaphosa, Raisi lauded the "courageous" initiative, stressing that the move was taken by a country that has experienced the menace of racism and genocide for years. "The measure is praised not only by the Muslim world but also by all freedom seekers across the globe," the Iranian president said, according to his press service. **Isolating Israel** Palestinian resistance group Hamas hailed the "important" ruling, saying it "con-

tributes to isolating Israel". "The (International) Court of Justice's decision is an important development which contributes to isolating Israel and exposing its crimes in Gaza," the group said in a statement, according to AFP.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed as "outrageous" South Africa's case against it at the UN's top court. "The charge of genocide levelled against Israel is not only false, it's outrageous, and decent people everywhere should reject it," Netanyahu said in a video statement. Israel earlier dismissed the case as a "grossly distorted story" and said that if any genocidal acts had been carried out, they had been executed against Israel during the October 7 Hamas attacks. Spain, one of the most critical voices in Europe of Israel's offensive against Hamas, welcomed the ruling.

The question now is whether the court's rulings will be obeyed. Although its rulings are legally binding, it has no mechanism to enforce them and they are sometimes completely ignored - it has ordered Russia to stop its invasion of Ukraine for example.

Netanyahu has already hinted Israel would not abide by any ruling saying "no one will stop us", not even a verdict in The Hague. The October 7 Hamas attack resulted in the death of around 1,140 people in Israel. At least 26,083 Palestinians, around 70 percent of them women, young children and adolescents, have been killed in the Gaza Strip in Israeli bombardments and ground offensive since then, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Iran, Russia, Turkey slam Israeli attacks in Syria

Iran, Russia and Turkey jointly stressed fighting against terrorism in all its forms, slammed Israeli attacks in Syria, and emphasized the leading role of the Astana Format talks in promoting a sustainable settlement to the Syrian crisis.

Delegations of the three guarantors made the remarks in a joint declaration adopted at the 21st international Astana meeting on Syria, held in the Kazakh capital of Astana on Wednesday.

The trio expressed their determination to continue working together to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stand against separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and threatening the national security of the neighboring countries, the final communiqué said.

Since the outbreak of Israel's brutal war on the besieged Gaza Strip on October 7, Israel has significantly increased its cross-border attacks against Syria.

In response to such hostilities, Iran, Russia and Turkey also "condemned all Israeli military attacks in Syria, considered these actions as a violation of international law, international humanitarian law, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, and recognized them as destabilizing and exacerbating tensions in the region, and called for the cessation of these attacks."

Baghdad, Washington to start talks to end US military presence in Iraq

The United States and Iraq said Thursday they will begin discussions on the future of American and other foreign troops in the country, with Baghdad expecting the talks to lead to a timeline for reducing their presence. Washington has forces in Iraq as part of the international coalition against the

Daesh terrorist group, but the country's prime minister has called for the coalition to leave, AFP reported. The talks - which have been planned for months - will come at a time of heightened tensions in Iraq and the region linked to the Israel's war on Gaza, which has sparked a surge in attacks on American

and other coalition forces. Washington and Baghdad agreed to form working groups that would eventually lead to formulating "a specific and clear timeline... and to begin the gradual reduction of its (the coalition's) advisers on Iraqi soil", Iraq's Foreign Ministry said. The ministry said the timeline

would be contingent on evaluating the threat posed by Daesh and its danger as well as the reinforcement of the capacities of the Iraqi security forces. US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin confirmed meetings would start "in the coming days" and said the process will "enable the transition to an enduring bilateral

security partnership between the United States and Iraq". There are roughly 2,500 US troops deployed in Iraq and about 900 in Syria as part of the anti-Daesh coalition formed in 2014 - the year the terrorist group overran around a third of Iraq. A senior US defense official said the upcoming meetings

would not be a negotiation on the withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, but said Washington "sees a need to transition to a normal bilateral security cooperation relationship". There have been more than 150 attacks targeting coalition troops since mid-October, many of them claimed by the

Islamic Resistance in Iraq that oppose US support for Israel in the Gaza conflict.

Washington has carried out strikes on resistance groups in response to the spike in attacks, sparking condemnation from Baghdad, with Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani calling on the coalition to withdraw from the country. Sudani said Daesh "is no longer a danger for the Iraqi state, and our armed forces are capable of fully assuming the maintenance of security and stability".

Pakistan's envoy to Tehran: Time to turn 'new leaf' in bilateral ties

Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, who left for Tehran on Friday to resume his diplomatic mission, said that the time is ripe for turning a new leaf in bilateral relations. Tehran and Islamabad briefly halted their diplomatic ties after tit-for-tat attacks which led to the death of several people from both sides. "In conformity with the sincere & good wishes of Pakistan's leadership, I am en route to Tehran," Mudassir Tipu wrote on his X account

on Friday. "Ever more determined to work for a more robust, stronger & peace-loving Pakistan," he added. "Strong Pakistan & Iran are critical for region & to promote historic people to people ties. Time to turn a new leaf." Iran and Pakistan announced Monday that their ambassadors would resume their duties after the two countries agreed to de-escalate tensions following an exchange of deadly strikes last week. Iran's Foreign Minister

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is also due to visit Pakistan on January 29, following an invitation from his Pakistani counterpart Jalil Abbas Jilani. The two neighboring countries witnessed an escalation of cross-border tensions over Iran's counter-terrorism operations. On January 16, Iran launched drone and missile attacks on two bases of Jaish al-Adl, an anti-Iran terrorist group that was formed in 2012, and has conducted several attacks on Iranian soil in recent years. The Iranian strikes in Paki-

stan drew a sharp rebuke from Islamabad, which recalled its ambassador from Tehran and blocked Iran's envoy from returning to Pakistan. Pakistan also carried out strikes against what it called bases of the separatist Baloch Liberation Front and Baloch Liberation Army in regions in Iran close to the border. Tehran condemned the attack as unacceptable and unbalanced and summoned Pakistan's charge d'affaires over the strikes, which left at least nine people dead.



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FIRE ENGULFS HOSPITAL

A fire engulfed the exterior façade of Gandhi Hospital in northern Tehran on January 25, 2024. The blaze was contained on Thursday evening. According to Jalal Maleki, the spokesman for the Tehran Fire Department, there were no fatalities. The area around the hospital was cordoned off, and an evacuation took place.



● IRNA



CLOSENESS TO GOD

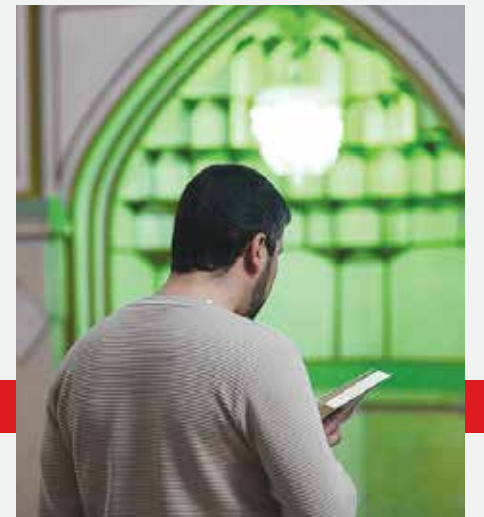


● FARS



● MEHR

The photos capture men and women congregating in mosques nationwide, participating in Itikaf—a period of time that one spends praying or studying religion in a mosque—held on Rajab 13-15, the seventh month of the Islamic lunar calendar.



● TASNIM

STREET PERFORMANCE

Theater groups present street performances in Tehran during the 42nd edition of the Fajr International Theater Festival. The Street Theater Section of the festival commenced its activities on Monday with six performances. The FITF will continue until February 1. According to the festival's secretary, Mehdi Hamedsaqayan, this edition of the event includes a special section dedicated to Gaza, featuring nine plays addressing the issue. Eight plays from Armenia, Greece, Tajikistan, Iraq, and Italy take part in the international section. The festival secretariat received about 1,650 works this year. There are 34 plays in the Iranian Theater Competition. Moreover, 33, 25, and 11 plays are competing in the student, street, and radio theater sections, respectively.



● IRNA



● MIZAN



● MIZAN

SNOWY BLANKET



● TASNIM



● MEHR

Heavy snowfall on January 24 covered Iran's northwestern provinces of East and West Azarbaijans as well as Ardebil, leading to road closures in Tabriz, the capital city of East Azarbaijan.



● TASNIM