



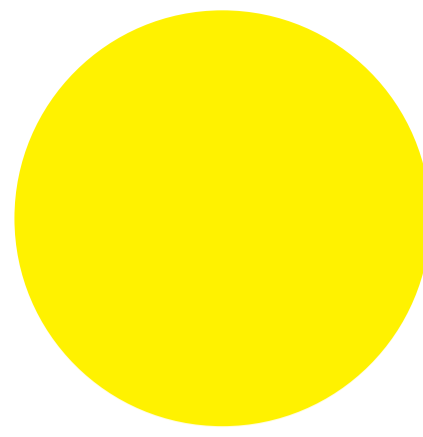
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Iran Daily



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Houthis setting the stage for Gaza peace talks



By Mohammad Bayat

Mideast affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the ongoing saga of clashes between resistance factions and pro-Israel forces, Yemeni armed forces targeted a British vessel and brought down an American drone in

response to US and British assaults. As the war on the Gaza Strip is being protracted, the persistent Israeli atrocities against Palestinians have spurred the resistance factions to ramp up pressure on American and British interests in the region as part of their "unification of fields" strategy. Recent events, such as the strike on an American military base on the Jordanian border with Syria and Yemeni assaults on ships en route to Israel in the Red Sea, are key components of this pressure campaign.

These concerted efforts by the resistance factions against Israel and its supporters, namely the US and the UK, aim to bolster peace talks and secure a cease-fire in Gaza. The Houthis have made it clear that they will sustain their offensives until a lasting truce is achieved in Gaza. Consequently, these attacks serve as leverage on the Americans to push Israel toward accepting the cease-fire proposal.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) labeled the recent Houthi assault on the British ship as the most significant of its kind. This could potentially signal a serious intent for peace. However, the cease-fire must be durable, not temporary. While Israel has agreed to a 6-week cease-fire, Hamas refuses to bear the burden of a temporary truce, considering it as a tactical maneuver by Israel to regroup and subsequently target Hezbollah in Lebanon. A long-term cease-fire with backing from major powers and a commitment to Gaza's reconstruction is essential to safeguard the interests of Hamas and the Palestinians.

Amidst the intensifying pre-election heat in the US, the Democratic administration faces severe backlash from the rival Republicans, largely triggered by the attacks on American bases orchestrated by the resistance groups. Thus, brokering a cease-fire in Gaza serves the interests of the American administration and President Biden. US efforts to persuade Israel to embrace the ceasefire align with this objective. Consequently, it's probable that certain resistance group attacks on American interests are carried out with tacit approval and minimal harm, leveraging pressure on Israel while maintaining American lives safe, potentially bolstering cease-fire negotiations in Paris or Egypt.

As campaigning for the US presidential election gathers steam, failing to thrash out a cease-fire poses a significant challenge to Biden and the Democrats. With the Middle East in turmoil, traditional Democratic supporters like Muslims may hesitate to back the party's candidate, compounded by Republican pressure. Hence, establishing a cease-fire is pivotal for the Biden administration. It appears that Iran and the US share common interests in securing a cease-fire, with both sides working to prevent the Gaza crisis from spiraling out of control in the region. Overall, the Houthis and other resistance factions' actions are geared toward setting the stage for a sustainable peace.

Raisi: More Knowledge-based Companies Create More Jobs 7 >



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (2nd R) visits an exhibition of knowledge-based products at the Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT) in the capital, Tehran, on February 19, 2024. president.ir



Yemeni TV presenter: Yemen to keep up assaults on Israeli bound ships until achieving its goals

Iran Daily conducted an interview on the sidelines of the exhibition with Mohammed Abdulhameed Mohammed al-Zabidi, the political analyst and presenter of the political section on the Almasirah Yemen TV channel.

EXCLUSIVE 2 >

Ansarallah claim attack on UK ship in Gulf of Aden, say it could sink

International Desk

The Yemeni military said on Monday they struck a British ship in the Gulf of Aden, after a maritime security firm reported overnight an attack on a UK-registered ship.

The military said they had attacked the Rubymar cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden and the vessel was now at risk of sinking.

Since mid-November in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war, the Ansarallah movement (Houthis) launches military attacks on Israeli ships and its supporters until they achieve their goals: halting attacks on the blockaded enclave.

The military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement that the crew of the British cargo ship are safe. The Houthis had also shot down a US drone in the port city of Hodeidah, Reuters quoted him as saying.

"The ship was seriously hit which caused it to stop completely. As a result of the extensive damage the ship suffered, it is now at risk of sinking in the Gulf of Aden," Sarea said.

The Rubymar sustained damaged after two missiles were fired at the vessel from Yemen although the crew were able to evacuate, the vessel's maritime security company LSS-SAPU told Reuters on Monday. "We know she was taking in water,"

LSS-SAPU said when asked about the vessel's condition. "There is nobody on board now," LSS-SAPU said. "The owners and managers are considering options for towage."

So far, no ships attacked have been sunk or any crew killed but there are growing safety fears.

The Belize-flagged, British-registered and Lebanese-operated general cargo ship came under attack in the Bab el-Mandab Strait off Yemen on Sunday, British maritime security firm Ambrey said. The UK Maritime Trade Operations agency reported on Sunday that the crew had abandoned a ship off Yemen after an explosion – apparently the same incident.

US-owned ship attacked

In a second incident in hours, a Greece-flagged, US-owned bulk carrier was attacked on Monday by missiles in two separate attempts, with no injuries to the crew although one window onboard was damaged, Greek shipping ministry sources told Reuters.

The vessel was sailing from Argentina to Aden with grain with 23 crew members onboard including 5 Greek nationals, the ministry source said.

The Yemeni military has vowed to continue their attacks as long as Israel continues to commit "crimes"



against Palestinians.

The attacks have prompted several companies to halt Red Sea voyages and take a longer and more expensive route around Africa. US and British warplanes have carried out retaliatory strikes across Yemen.

Root of problem is Israeli invasion

Qatar's Energy Minister

Saad al-Kaabi on Monday called for a cease-fire in Gaza to end insecurity in the Red Sea which has disrupted hydrocarbon deliveries in the vital shipping route.

The minister, who is also the chief executive of state-owned hydrocarbon giant QatarEnergy, said the "root of the problem" in the Red Sea "is the Israeli invasion of

Gaza". "Hopefully there is a cease-fire soon that will stop that so that the economic impact on the entire world stops," he said.

US Navy's largest battle

Meanwhile, a US Navy admiral said the conflict against the Houthis in the Red Sea is one of the largest naval battles the US has fought in decades.

"I think you'd have to go back to World War II where you have ships who are engaged in combat," Vice Adm. Brad Cooper told the "60 Minutes" host Norah O'Donnell in an interview that aired Sunday.

"When I say engaged in combat, where they're getting shot at, we're getting shot at, and we're shooting back," he continued.

Cooper, the deputy commander of the US Central Command, told CBS's "60 Minutes" that the Navy had committed about 7,000 sailors to the Red Sea. CBS reported that the Navy had fired about 100 standard surface-to-air missiles against Houthi missiles and drones. AFP, REUTERS, and Business Insider contributed to this report.



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

A political analyst and presenter on the Yemeni TV channel Almasirah said that he believes that the military dynamics in the Red Sea have shifted, and Yemenis will continue to launch military attacks on ships of Israel and its supporters until they achieve their goals. Almasirah is a Yemeni television channel associated with the Ansarallah movement (Houthis).

Throughout the Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen, this TV channel played a crucial role in reporting on the conflicts, with several of its journalists killed during coalition attacks.

Following the Gaza war and subsequent clashes between Yemeni forces and the US-led coalition in the Red Sea, the TV channel has focused on covering military events as a primary aspect of its news reporting.

The Yemeni TV network is currently participating as a foreign guest in the media exhibition held in Tehran. Iran Daily conducted an interview on the sidelines of the exhibition with Mohammed Abdulhameed Mohammed al-Zabidi, the political analyst and presenter of the political section on the Almasirah Yemen TV channel. Here is a summary of the interview:

Yemeni TV presenter:

Yemen to keep up assaults on Israeli bound ships until achieving its goals



Can you briefly explain the Almasirah network and its activities regarding the Gaza war?

Almasirah network in Yemen strives to express the truth and convey accurate information about the political currents in the region. As you may know, Palestine has been a primary issue for the Islamic world for many years, and

we, as a media outlet, have prioritized addressing this issue as a significant focus in our agenda. This is because Palestine is the frontline barrier of Islamic countries and, if it falls, the enemy will infiltrate into other regions and Islamic lands, boldly continuing its military aggression. I believe that the Gaza war boils down to a battle of

narratives. The accounts and news stories shaping the narrative of this war wield substantial influence over its outcome and associated matters. Hence, triumph in this conflict rests with those who craft superior and concurrently more precise narratives of the battlefield and war events.

How do you evaluate the media battle in the Gaza war with these interpretations?

Truth and justice always prevail. Based on this belief, our narratives about the Gaza war and its developments are accurate and true. However, major news agencies and media outlets supporting the Zionist regime have exerted all their efforts to spread false and fabricated news and reports. While it is true that media outlets supporting the Zionist regime have substantial resources for winning this media war, media outlets aligned with the resistance can counteract them by creating a media atmosphere. For instance, producing a visual clip of

Zionist atrocities in Gaza can dispel all the media lies of the Zionists. This underscores the influence that the resistance media outlets can leverage.

On the other hand, if the media of Islamic nations and resistance groups join forces and synchronize their efforts, portraying Zionist regime atrocities more compellingly, we could completely turn the tide of the war in favor of the resistance front and uphold truth and justice.

As a political analyst on Almasirah network, I would like to express our perspective on Yemen's attacks on ships supporting Israel in the Red Sea. Some media outlets attempt to attribute these attacks to the Islamic Republic. What is your opinion?

Our attacks on ships supporting the Zionist regime in the Red Sea are, in our belief, related to our commitment to supporting the Palestinian people. The decision for these military actions by Yemen is entirely independent, with consensus from the

government, parliament, military, and the Yemeni people. These attacks convey a clear and explicit message from the Yemeni government and people to the Zionists: either end the Gaza war sooner or your ships in the Red Sea will not be safe, becoming targets for Yemen.

After Yemen's attacks on ships in the Red Sea, we witnessed a military coalition response by the United States and the UK in the Red Sea against Yemen. However, these attacks did not deter Yemen from continuing its assaults on ships. Could you elaborate on this?

As a result of our attacks, the Americans entered the Red Sea, claiming their military presence is for security in the region. However, in reality, they entered the Red Sea to support the Zionist regime in the Gaza war, accompanied by the UK and some other countries. In response to them, I have to emphasize that nothing can deter our backing of the Palestinian people and the ongoing Yemeni

assaults on ships. They believed that launching military operations against Yemen would put a stop to our attacks, but we continue with full confidence in our path. As the Yemeni government and spokesperson have declared, our attacks will not cease.

So, will Yemen's attacks continue until a complete halt to the Gaza war?

After the military coalition, led by the US, entered the Red Sea, the military equations in the region shifted. Their military presence in the Red Sea and their attacks on Yemeni targets, resulting in the death of some Yemenis, essentially means they have engaged in war with us. Previously, the equation was that if the Gaza war stopped, our attacks on ships would cease. Now, even if the Zionists stop their attacks on Gaza, we will not be satisfied, and since the American coalition has attacked Yemen, they must completely withdraw their military threats against Yemen.

Zilu, a labor-intensive artwork woven by skillful masters



● IRNA



● soophi.ir



● IRNA

Iran is no stranger when it comes to traditional handicrafts. In fact, it boasts several cities registered by the World Crafts Council, an affiliate of UNESCO. Meybod, a desert city in Yazd Province, known for its *zilu*, is one of the latest of these to join the bunch. While most people are familiar with the highly-regarded Persian rug, fewer have heard of *zilu*.

What is zilu?

Zilu (also spelled ziloo or zilou) is a traditional floor covering that dates back thousands of years. Unlike Persian rugs with their elaborate patterns, *zilu* is quite simple. But don't let its simplicity deceive you. It is a labor-intensive work of art, woven by masters who rely on nothing more than their imagination to create the various motifs, iranvegantravel.com wrote.

Zilu is often mistaken for *kilim*, but one of the underlying differences is that *zilu* is woven from organic cotton, whereas wool is used for *kilim*. Traditionally, this cotton was obtained from surrounding fields in the region, though these days it may come from elsewhere. For warmer regions closer to the desert, cotton is ideal as it's cool in the summer and warm in winter.

Plants such as madder, pomegran-

ate skin, and walnut shell are used to create natural dyes for *zilu*, which typically comes in two color combinations – blue and white, blue and yellow, and green and orange are among the most common color combinations, though reds are also used. The winning combination of organic cotton and natural plant dyes makes this traditional Iranian handicraft a 100 percent vegan souvenir option.

What are the common patterns?

The most common and traditional motifs are those of cypress trees, geometric patterns, and a key-like pattern. However, skilled weavers can create some 60 different designs. Words or special messages can also be woven upon request. *Zilu* is woven so clean that the front and back are indistinguishable and, therefore, it is reversible.

Zilu museum and workshops

Located in the Shah Abbasi Caravanserai, the Zilu Museum of Meybod is dedicated to the history of this craft. It leads visitors through the first steps of picking and sorting the cotton to dyeing the threads to weaving the *zilu*. You'll witness some fine examples of *zilu* here, dating back to the 16th century.

While the museum provides valuable insight into the process and history, you are highly recommend to visit a *zilu* workshop, where you cannot only watch nimble master weavers hard at work but also experience just how much time and effort goes into creating each one. You'll watch in awe at how deftly the weaver's fingers move and how patterns are transferred onto the loom from the weaver's imagination. We guarantee you'll have a whole new respect for *zilu* and the love that goes into weaving each and every one.

Where can I buy zilu?

No doubt you'll want to take a piece of *zilu* back home. As Meybod has been named the World City for *Zilu*, you can ideally purchase one from the city itself. There are many stores around town and in the caravanserai, including one attached to the *zilu* museum. Workshops also offer *zilu* for purchase; however, keep in mind that some only create special orders and therefore only weave specific patterns upon request.

In addition to floor coverings, *zilu* have also been turned into other products such as car seat coverings, prayer rugs, cushions and other home furnishings, so you'll have a variety of options to choose from.



Natural marvels of Rageh Canyon in Kerman Province

Iranica Desk

Undoubtedly, the pristine beauty of untouched nature is a major draw for visitors to Iran. Kerman, a sprawling province, boasts a plethora of stunning natural landscapes, including the Lut Desert, Meymand cultural landscape, and the lesser-known yet breathtaking Rageh Canyon.

Situated approximately 28 kilometers outside Rafsanjan, Rageh Canyon has been sculpted by the forces of nature over millennia, with wind, water, and soil erosion contributing to its unique formation. Spanning 20km, a trek through this gorge allows you to unravel its ancient narrative, with each turn revealing a new spectacle – from imposing boulders to towering pillars and narrow passages, presenting a landscape unlike any other in Iran.

Beyond its natural wonders, Rageh Canyon is also a haven for wildlife enthusiasts. Birdwatchers will delight in spotting eagles soaring above, their nests perched high in secluded corners. Pheasants and partridges are among the many avian residents that call this awe-inspiring canyon home. With minimal light pollution, Rageh Canyon offers an ideal setting for stargazing, though nighttime visits are best



● safarzon.com



● visitiran.ir

undertaken with a knowledgeable local guide. The canyon's hiking trail, particularly the northern route, is relatively flat and suitable for most visitors in good health. In contrast, the southern

path features more exotic natural formations but presents challenges such as massive boulders obstructing the way, requiring skilled rock-climbing abilities in certain sections.

For safety reasons, inexperienced hikers should avoid these more treacherous areas. Optimal times for trekking through Rageh Canyon are during the spring and autumn, with the latter

season offering warmer temperatures within the canyon itself. A sturdy pair of hiking boots is essential, as some parts of the canyon may involve traversing through water.

Yemeni ambassador in Iran: Ansarallah will hit any enemy target in crosshairs

Yemen's primary goal is to 'eradicate cancerous tumor' of Israel

INTERVIEW

Ibrahim Mohammed al-Dailami, the ambassador of Yemen in Iran, said that in response to the US and British attacks on the Arab country, the Ansarallah movement will "hit any target in their crosshairs".

The war in Gaza has entered its fifth month, while the military operations of the Yemeni army have caused Israel to be under severe economic pressure, and this issue has brought the United States and the United Kingdom to the region to counter the actions of the Yemeni resistance under the pretext of establishing security in the Red Sea.

Addressing a ceremony on February 13, Abdul-Malik Badruldeen al-Houthi, the leader of Yemen's Ansarallah, discussed the developments of the war in Gaza. In his speech, he stated that despite Israel's numerous crimes and support by foreigners, the regime failed to achieve its goals. One indication of this failure is the extension of the duration of military service in the regime. He also said that the Israeli army is not accustomed to prolonged conflicts. Additionally, he noted that following his previous speech, the Yemeni army continued its attacks on Umm al-Rashrash, or Eilat, resulting in the failure of the Eilat port.

He also said that the movement of ships from the Bab el-Mandeb towards Israel has been completely halted, which is a success. Referring to the clashes with Americans, he stated, "This week we had five clashes with US forces, one of which lasted for 14 hours according to the Americans' admission. Instead of implementing a cease-fire, the US has decided to enter into war and engage in the region. In the end, he pointed to the silence of the Arab governments and said, "For every Jew in Palestine, there are more than 150,000 Muslims who only watch the killing of the Palestinian people and do nothing for them."

Regarding the Yemeni government and people's support for the Palestinian resistance, IRNA had an interview with the country's ambassador in Tehran. The full text of the interview is as follows:



IRNA: About four months have passed since the war in Gaza, and Yemenis, like some countries, find themselves involved in this war. Western experts and media present the Yemeni army as powerful and capable. For example, Thomas Faiz, an American journalist, said that what the Yemenis are doing will be recorded as a historical and transformative turning point in the modern era. He said we are talking about a poor country that has fought and won against the US, one of the most powerful armies in the world. In addition, the Yemeni people widely welcomed the support of their country's army of the Palestinian people. What is the motivation of the people and the Yemeni army to do such a thing, which certainly imposes a lot of costs on them?

DAILAMI: We are a Muslim nation and we see oppression against Palestinians

to a great extent. Considering our moral, human and religious responsibility, we cannot be indifferent in this matter and not show any reaction. The actions of the people and the Yemeni army are a natural reaction to supporting the oppressed and preventing oppression. This is the position of every person who has a high sense of responsibility. It is not appropriate for the Arab and Muslim people to be indifferent in this matter and not take any action.

Our role in this case is not limited to military and security operations. The people of Yemen organize millions of demonstrations every week out of a sense of duty. The Yemeni government passed the law of embargo on the entry of American and Israeli goods into the country's markets through the House of Representatives. The Yemeni people also donate whatever they can by collecting financial aid for the Palestinians.

Armed men stand on the beach as the Galaxy Leader commercial ship, seized by Yemen's Ansarallah in November, is anchored off the coast of al-Salif, Yemen, December 5, 2023.

REUTERS



Ibrahim Mohammed al-Dailami, the ambassador of Yemen to Tehran

A view of ballistic missiles during a military parade held by the Ansarallah movement to mark the anniversary of their takeover in Sanaa, Yemen September 21, 2023.

REUTERS





A video released by the military media of Yemen's Houthi group of what they say were missiles launched against Israel this week, via Houthi military media.



Houthi fighters fire anti-tank grenades during a military maneuver near Sanaa, Yemen, October 30, 2023.

A few months ago, an image of the seizure of the second Zionist ship by Ansarallah in the Red Sea was published and quickly spread on social media. This picture showed that the Yemeni forces are smoking hookah on the ship's deck after taking possession of it. This image shows well the lack of fear of the Yemeni forces from their enemy. What is the reason for the exemplary courage of Yemenis?

This was an operation carried out by the people and the Yemeni army. Regarding the pictures that were broadcast about the ship, it can be said that as [Ayatullah] Khamenei said, those who fear God, do not fear anyone other than God.

Yemen's naval capability is one of the points that have been discussed a lot in the past few months. Al-Akhbar newspaper has written in a report quoting informed military sources that in response to the request of the then government of Yemen in 2014 to equip the country's navy in an efficient manner, Chinese experts said that it is impossible to implement this request. How did the Yemeni army achieve this capability?

The Yemeni army is more than a hundred years old. The navy of this country was one of the strongest naval forces in the region during the 20th century, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. During that period, the Yemeni army was supported by Soviet technology and weapons. The military force of this country is trained and efficient, and it is connected with the army of different countries in the region and the world.

The Yemeni people and armed forces faced Saudi-American aggression for more than eight years and have gained a lot of experience. In addition, Yemen is primarily a maritime country and the length of its coast reaches more than 2,500 kilometers, which makes it strong in terms of naval power.

Westerners are bending over backward to attribute the actions of Ansarallah and the Yemeni resistance, both during the conflict with Saudi Arabia and presently, to direct instructions from Iran. What are your thoughts on the Iran-Yemen relationship, and why are Westerners attempting to implicate Iran in these activities? Also, there are claims that Iran is the source of Yemeni missiles and other armaments like drones. Given the existing naval blockade, how plausible is this assertion? If these armaments are not originating from Iran, where are they getting them from, and is there any significant military capability they are planning to reveal soon?

The Western propaganda machine incessantly brings up this ludicrous and baseless issue. They habitually point fingers at other parties in every situation. The West accused the resistance during Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, carried out by the Palestinian people as if the Palestinians were devoid of issues and oppression. We consider these accusations to be unfounded and absurd, aiming to divert attention from the atrocities committed by the Zionists in Palestine. Iran has repeatedly refuted these allegations through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Americans claim the formation of an international coalition against the Yemeni resistance, can you elaborate on this?

The coalition orchestrated by the American and British administrations raises suspicions. This coalition is primarily established to shield Israel and hinder the Yemeni armed forces from executing their responsibilities in the Red Sea. Notably, countries bordering the Red Sea like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Djibouti, and Eritrea, wary of the sea's insecurity, have refrained from joining this

questionable alliance. I believe that the reluctance of these nations to engage in a coalition that seeks to militarize the Red Sea and safeguard Israel can be attributed to their understanding of the American intentions.

As the Yemeni government, we have invited all Red Sea-bordering countries to convene conferences and committees to ensure the security and navigation of this vital sea for them. The involvement or non-involvement of European countries or others in this coalition holds little significance for us; our priority is to counter this aggression.

European countries have shown limited interest in joining this coalition; what could be the rationale behind this decision?

The militarization of the Red Sea by the US and the UK does not align with the interests of European nations. Many countries do not adhere to the American storyline. Moreover, numerous shipping companies operating in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea recognize that only Israeli vessels, or those bound for occupied Palestine, are targeted. Hence, they are skeptical of the claims made by the US and UK and do not perceive them as significant, as other ships unrelated to Israel traverse the Red Sea without incident.

The naval actions of the Yemeni resistance have significantly impacted Israel's economy. How long do you believe they can withstand these circumstances?

We believe that the Zionist regime cannot endure further losses. The economic, military, and moral setbacks have rendered this regime vulnerable globally. However, Yemen has obligations, and our duty is to persist in supporting the Palestinian people until the cessation of aggression and the lifting of the block-

ade on them.

We will escalate anti-Israel operations in Yemen to exert more effective pressure on halting the Zionist aggression machinery.

The Zionist regime's Transportation Minister tweeted about pushing forward with a plan to establish a hub for goods transfer from India to the occupied territories via the UAE, aiming to sidestep Yemeni army attacks in the Red Sea. The notion that Arab countries might transport goods needed by Israel by land raises questions. Are these claims accurate?

The actions taken by the Zionist regime are futile, unable to conceal its incapacity to allow Israeli-related ships into Palestine.

We strongly believe that Arab nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, should refrain from engaging in such disgraceful endeavors. These countries must not remain silent in the face of Zionist aggression; they need to take a stance. We caution the world against ties with the Zionist regime, emphasizing its aggressiveness and oppression against the entire Arab and Islamic world.

Is this news true?

I don't confirm or deny it. The responsibility lies with the UAE and Saudi Arabia to address such claims and clarify their veracity.

If this claim proves true, do you have a plan to prevent it?

We'll do our utmost, but remember, this isn't solely Yemen's responsibility; it's a duty for all Muslims and Arabs.

It is said that the US airstrikes are carried out in uninhabited areas and are mostly for show. Is this claim true? Why doesn't the US get seriously involved in the war with Yemen?

This claim is not true. The US is resolute in its aggression against Yemen, not a symbol of peace, but a clear enemy. While in a full-scale war with the US, we find strength in God's support.

About a month ago, Politico magazine cited US intelligence sources mentioning Yemen's plans to ramp up their attacks. Given the recent "promised conquest and holy jihad" drill aimed at seizing Israeli settlements, how viable is this assertion?

Our prime objective in Yemen and within the axis of resistance is to eradicate the cancerous tumor of Israel from the Arab and Islamic world.

Brigadier Yahya Sare'e, the spokesman of the Yemeni armed forces, has declared that US assaults will not go unchallenged. What are Yemen's avenues to retaliate against the US?

In light of the US and UK's recent aggression in Yemen, we are locked in an ongoing struggle with them. It's not the right time to discuss responses to these aggressions, as our ongoing operations with full force against the US and UK's interests in the Red Sea and the Arab Sea are part and parcel of these responses. We are currently in full conflict with them and hit any target in our crosshairs.

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The militarization of the Red Sea by the US and the UK does not align with the interests of European nations. Many countries do not adhere to the American storyline. Moreover, numerous shipping companies operating in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea recognize that only Israeli vessels, or those bound for occupied Palestine, are targeted. Hence, they are skeptical of the claims made by the US and UK and do not perceive them as significant, as other ships unrelated to Israel traverse the Red Sea without incident.



Asian Indoor Athletics Championships:

Teenage Aqaei grabs men's 400m gold; Iranian girls post 800m one-two

Sports Desk

Teenage sprinter Sajjad Aqaei notched up a first men's gold for Iran at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran on Sunday, while his compatriots Totkham Dastar-Bandan and Negin Azari Edalat claimed the women's 800m gold and silver respectively.

Representing the country in the men's 400m final, Aqaei, 18, crossed the finish line in 47.95 seconds to beat Mohammad Jahir Rayhan of Bangladesh, who clocked 48.10 seconds, to the ultimate prize, with Iraq's Yasir Ali Al-Saadi taking the bronze on 48.40 seconds.

"It was a dream come true to win this medal at such a young age," Aqaei said after the final, adding: "I trained so hard over the past year to prepare for this competition. I knew I had a chance to win a medal before the tournament but I never thought it would be a gold."

Meanwhile, Dastar-Bandan registered the fastest time of 2:09.17 minutes in Monday's showdown for Iranian women's second gold at the event on home soil – following Farzaneh Fasihi, who retained her

60m crown on the preceding day. Azari clocked 2:11.43 minutes to finish as the runner-up, while Nurmamet Akbayan (2:13.10 min.) of Kazakhstan settled for the bronze. Elsewhere in the women's contests, Nazanin Eidian and Kazhan Rostami added a silver and a bronze to Iran's medal haul, finishing behind Japanese Nanako Matsumoto in the 400m final.

Eidian registered 55.33 seconds to finish second to Japan's Nanako Matsumoto (55.14 seconds) with Rostami crossing the line in 55.35 seconds.

Male contestants Ali Amirian (1500m) and Mahdi Saberi (shot put), as well as Elham Hashemi in the women's shot put, were the Iranian bronze winners over the first two days of the championships in Tehran's Aftab-e Enghelab Sports Complex.

Sajjad Aqaei celebrates with the Iranian flag after winning the men's 400m final at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran, Iran, on February 18, 2024.

ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA



Azmoun on target to keep Roma in fourth place hunt

Sports Desk

Iranian striker Sardar Azmoun marked his first Serie A start with a goal as AS Roma defeated Frosinone 3-0 to remain in the mix for a Champions League spot.

Dutch center-back Dean Huijsen got the visitors off the mark late in the first half before Azmoun doubled the Giallorossi's lead with 20 minutes left on the clock.

Frosinone keeper Stefano Turati managed to keep out a Bryan Cristante's effort from behind the box but the Iranian international found the net with a cool touch on the rebound to bag his second goal in 15 appearances in the Italian top flight.

An 81st-minute spot-kick from Argentine midfielder Leandro Paredes secured the three points for Daniele De Rossi's men, who are sixth in the table with 41 points – four adrift of four-place Atalanta and Bologna.

"It was a tough match, especially in the first half. But we changed tactics at the break

and played much better in the second half. Scoring goals is my job and I'm so happy with the victory," Azmoun said after the match.

When asked about his apologetic gesture to the home supporters at the Stadio Benito Stirpe after his goal, Azmoun replied: "The fans didn't appreciate Huijsen's goal celebration and the Frosinone players made us aware of that. Respect is the most important thing in football. We are colleagues, friends. It might be difficult on the pitch sometimes, but we should respect each other."

Azmoun, who is on a season-long loan from Leverkusen, praised De Rossi's impact since he took over from Jose Mourinho in mid-January.

"De Rossi was very aggressive as a player but also had a big heart. He is the same as a coach as he motivates us a lot," added the Iranian, who will now be looking to have more opportunity in the starting XI following Sun-

day's performance.

Azmoun began the match alongside Romelu Lukaku but was played in a more advanced position after the Belgian striker was replaced by Lorenzo Pellegrini at half-time.

Asked about his decision to substitute Lukaku, De Rossi said: "It was tactical. I didn't like how he and Azmoun were playing together. It was also because Romelu has played so many matches this season. We need him and we need him fresh."

"I liked how Azmoun was playing so I kept him on after that horrible first half we had. I'm the coach and I have to go with those who are doing the best on the pitch."

"Sardar is a forward that can play as a trequartista [No. 10] and get involved in building attacking moves. He knows how to play between the lines. My initial idea was to play [Houssein] Auar, who's another great player, but I saw Sardar doing well in training and I wanted to go with him."

Sinner savours Rotterdam success after Australian Open high



REUTERS

REUTERS – The Rotterdam title may pale in comparison to winning the Australian Open Grand Slam but Jannik Sinner said his victory in the ATP 500 event was still important to him after the Italian

rose to a career-high number three in the world rankings.

Sinner, who lifted his first major at Melbourne Park by defeating Daniil Medvedev in the final, stretched his winning run in 2024 to 12 matches with a 7-5 6-4 victory over Alex de Minaur in the Rotterdam final on Sunday.

The 22-year-old's second trophy of the season means he leapfrogged Medvedev to number three in the updated rankings on Monday.

"Every time you win a title, it doesn't matter how big, it means a lot," Sinner said.

"I had a bit more attention (as Australian Open champion), but when you earn something, you have to deal with that. I felt like I was trying to put 100% effort into everything I've done and that's the result of this week."

It's going to start again from zero at Indian Wells, so I'm already trying to improve. Let's see what's coming." Sinner will look to gain ground on world number two and defending Indian Wells champion Carlos Alcaraz in the hardcourt tournament next month.

Israeli swimmer booed by crowd in Doha World Championships

REUTERS – An Israeli medallist was booed by the crowd in a sour finish to the Doha World Aquatics Championships on Sunday, taking the gloss off some stunning achievements in the pool highlighted by Sarah Sjöström's third consecutive 50 metres freestyle world title.

Anastasia Gorbenko took silver in the women's 400m individual medley but her celebrations were spoiled as a chorus of boos rained down from the terraces, drowning out her post-race interview by the floor presenter.

The jeers continued as Gorbenko left the Aspire Dome pool, and she was booed again at the medals ceremony though there was also applause. Briton Freya Constance Colbert won the race.

The presence of Israeli swimmers at the championships has drawn criticism from some Qatari media outlets and pro-Palestine groups amid

Israel's military campaign in Gaza in response to Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel.

Gorbenko said she had been booed multiple times during the week and it had affected her emotionally.

Swimming's global governing body World Aquatics declined to comment. Politics infused the event in Doha where Belarusian swimmers competed as neutrals due to restrictions imposed on their athletes, and Russia's, stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine – which Moscow called a "special military operation".

Russia's swimming federation called the restrictions unacceptable and none of the country's swimmers competed.

The boycott further weakened the competition, with Doha snubbed by a number of top swimmers due to its unusual scheduling in the lead-up to the Paris Olympics in July and August.



Israel's Anastasia Gorbenko is seen with her silver medal of the women's 400m individual medley swimming event at the 2024 World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar, on February 18, 2024.

Oli SCARFF/AFP



AS Roma striker Sardar Azmoun scores during a 3-0 win against Frosinone in Serie A in Stadio Benito Stirpe, Frosinone, Italy, on February 18, 2024.

asroma.com

Raisi: More knowledge-based companies create more jobs

National Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that the establishment of more knowledge-based companies will lead to the creation of more jobs in the country. He made the remarks during a visit to an exhibition of knowledge-based products at the Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT) in the capital, Tehran, which was attended by managers of the Presidential Department for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy. About 689 companies showcased over 2,000 innovative and knowledge-based products at the exhibition. Addressing the managers, the Iranian president emphasized the importance of the department's role in

the creation of jobs for the country's educated people, which is one of the country's main priorities. Raisi praised the "valuable" measures taken by the Department for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy. However, he said that much still needs to be done. He said that the department should first focus on meeting the needs of the country and at the same time have a look at the scientific progress in the region and the world so that the country does not fall behind. Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT), which is also active in Kenya, Syria, China, Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Turkey and Iraq, is under the supervision of the Presidential Department for Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy.



Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi (C) visits an exhibition of knowledge-based products at the Iran House of Innovation and Technology (IHIT) in the capital Tehran on February 19, 2024. IRNA

Israel's economy shrinks sharply on impact of war

Israel's GDP shrunk by almost one-fifth in the final quarter of 2023, compared to the three months prior, according to official figures published on Monday. The 19.4 percent fall in the final quarter was attributed to the scale of the ongoing Gaza war's effect on the high-tech regime's economy. Overall, Israel's GDP grew by 2.0 percent in 2023, short of the 2.3 percent projection made by the Bank of Israel after the war's outbreak in October, the Central Bureau of Statistics figures showed, according to AFP.

It was the single worst quarter for the Israeli economy in terms of GDP per capita since the opening quarter of the Covid pandemic in early 2020. Exports fell by 18.3 percent and imports by 42.4 percent, fueled in part by airlines terminating flights and international shipping avoiding the Red Sea after Yemen began attacking ships over Israel's war on Palestinians in Gaza.

The regime has seen massive labor shortages and the collapse of the tourism industry since the outbreak of war on October 7. Israel's onslaught on Gaza has killed over 29,000 people, mostly women and children.

The chairman of the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces said on Monday that the Israeli regime has undoubtedly suffered an "unprecedented and irreparable" defeat in its war against the oppressed people of Palestine. "The Zionists seek to make up for their defeat by killing defenseless [Palestinian] people, which is definitely not possible," Major General Mohammad Baqeri said.

The regime is preparing to launch a ground offensive in the Gaza city of Rafah where around 1.5 million Palestinians are sheltering. The European Union on Monday warned Israel against launching an offensive in Rafah that ministers said would create a disaster for the refugees crammed into the city on the southern edge of Gaza.

Palestinian FM urges ICJ to stop Israel's occupation

Maliki accuses Israel of 'apartheid'



Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki (R) and Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour attend a hearing at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, the Netherlands, on February 19, 2024. REUTERS

Palestinians are suffering "colonialism and apartheid" under the Israelis, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki told the UN's top court Monday, urging judges to order an immediate and unconditional end to Israel's occupation of Palestine. "The Palestinians have endured colonialism and apartheid... There are those who are enraged by these words. They should

be enraged by the reality we are suffering," Al-Maliki told the International Court of Justice (ICJ), according to AFP. The ICJ is holding hearings all week on the legal implications of Israel's occupation since 1967, with an unprecedented 52 countries, including the United States and Russia, expected to give evidence. Israel will not participate in the hearings but sub-

mitted a written contribution, dated July 24, 2023, in which it urged the court to dismiss the request for an opinion. Speaking in the Peace Palace in The Hague, where the ICJ sits, the minister appealed to the judges to declare the occupation illegal and order it to stop "immediately, totally and unconditionally." "Justice delayed is justice denied and the Palestinian people have been denied justice for far too long," he said. "It is time to put an end to the double standards that have kept our people captive for far too long." Summing up, Palestinian

UN envoy Riyad Mansour struggled to hold back his tears as he called for a "future where Palestinian children are treated as children, not as a demographic threat."

In December 2022, the UN General Assembly asked the ICJ for a non-binding "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

While any ICJ opinion would be non-binding, it comes amid mounting international legal pressure on Israel over its war in Gaza. The hearings are separate from a high-profile case brought by South Africa, which has accused Israel of committing genocide during its current Gaza offensive. Al-Maliki charged, however, that "the genocide un-

derway in Gaza is a result of decades of impunity and inaction."

"Ending Israel's impunity is a moral, political and legal imperative," he said. In January this year, the ICJ ruled in that case that Israel must do everything in its power to prevent genocide and allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, stopping short of ordering a cease-fire.

The UN General Assembly has asked the ICJ to consider two questions. Firstly, the court should examine the legal consequences of "the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination".

This relates to the "prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967" and "measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of

Jerusalem [Al-Quds]".

In June 1967, Israel crushed some of its Arab neighbors in a six-day war, seizing the West Bank including East Al-Quds from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt.

Israel then began to settle the 70,000 square kilometers (27,000 square miles) of seized Arab territory. The UN later declared the occupation of Palestinian territory illegal. Cairo regained Sinai under its 1979 peace deal with Israel.

The ICJ has also been asked to look into the consequences of what it described as Israel's "adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures".

Secondly, the ICJ should advise on how Israel's actions "affect the legal status of the occupation," and what the consequences for the UN and other countries are.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



New destroyers join IRGC naval force

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Navy on Monday took delivery of two new patrol and combat destroyers.

In a ceremony at Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas, the "Sayyad Shirazi" and "Hassan Baqeri" military vessels, named after two former senior commanders, joined the fleet of the IRGC's Navy, Tasnim News Agency reported. The two stealth destroyers are the second and third models of Soleimani-class vessels, the first of which, unveiled on January 6, has been named after Abu

Mahdi al-Muhandis, a commander of the Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units, who was killed alongside Iran's Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike in Baghdad in January 2020.

The two new ocean-going catamarans are armed with various strike and air defense missile systems, including the 'Navvab' vertical launching system (VLS) for firing 'Sayyad' cruise missiles with a range of 700 kilometers. Each destroyer, weighing 600 tons, is powered by four propulsive engines and can carry a combat

helicopter and three light corvettes.

Iran's Navy has in recent years achieved self-sufficiency in manufacturing surface and sub-surface

vessels. It has also increased its presence in international waters to protect naval routes and provide security for merchant vessels and tankers.



'Smart Kid' hits \$1.24m, third most viewed film of year



Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian animated film 'Smart Kid', produced by Hamed Ja'fari, reached a significant milestone in the children's cinema, surpassing the \$1.24 million sales.

'Smart Kid' is the only non-comedic Iranian film to enter the \$1.20 Iranian cinema, being categorized among the top six highest-grossing films in the history of Iranian cinema, ILNA wrote.

The first five highest-grossing films are 'Fossil,' 'Hotel,' 'Lawless City,' 'Solitary,' and 'Hawaii,' respectively.

Since its debut in the fall, the animated film has garnered widespread appeal among children and their families, amassing nearly 1.9 million viewers in the country's cinemas. Consequently, it currently ranks third in terms of audience numbers for films screened as of the Iranian year (March 21, 2023).

Jointly produced by the Honar Pooya Animation studio and the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 'Smart Kid' is the result of the collaborative efforts of a 250-member powerful team of young Iranian artists.

Iran's 'Paper Dream' wins at Abu Dhabi Film Festival



Iranian film 'Paper Dream,' directed by Ali Atashani, won the Best Film Award at the Abu Dhabi International Film Festival. The film premiered in Iran on February 14 and secured the top honor at its 91st international screening in Abu Dhabi.

Presented by Shokoufa Film domestically, with distribution and promotion overseen by Saeed Pakestani, 'Paper Dream' has been screened at various international festivals,

collecting significant awards from different global events including Best Director Award at the South Texas International Film Festival in the U.S. city of Edinburg, Mehr news agency reported.

The film tells the story of a young man who has been out of the public view because of his being an Albino. A young girl takes advantage of his pure heart and makes him a social media influencer; meanwhile he falls in love with the girl.

Iran's Farhadi to be awarded in Belgrade for his contribution to film art



Award Belgrade Victor for Outstanding Contribution to Film Art at the



52nd International Film Festival FESB, which runs from February 23 until

March 3, goes to Iran's two-time Oscar-winning director Asghar Farhadi. Two-time Oscar winner Farhadi, an Iranian film director and screenwriter, who will receive the Belgrade Victor on 29 February in the Serbian capital, is considered one of the most prominent filmmakers of Iranian and world cinematography of the 21st century, according to the festival's official website.

According to critics, his

scripts are deep sociological, psychological, and philosophical studies of problems that are universal in society, and his films have gained recognition because of their focus on the human condition and because they describe intimate and challenging stories about family conflicts.

In 2011 his film 'A Separation' won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and received critical acclaim inside and out-

side of Iran, as well as the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, and won the Golden Globes and the Caesar Award. The film 'The Past' (Le passé, 2013) won the Best Actress award at the Cannes Film Festival. The film 'The Salesman' (2016) brought Farhadi his second Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, making him one of the few directors worldwide who have won twice this prize.

Germany to show Iranian film 'Maral'



Iranian shot film 'Maral,' directed by Parinaz Mehri, will experience its first international debut at the 32nd edition of the Regensburg Short Film Week (Regensburger Kurzfilmwoche) in Germany.

The film, marking Mehri's first project into writing and directing and produced by Amir Etminan, is the only Iranian representative in the international competition section.

The storyline of 'Maral' is about a 15-year-old girl forced into marriage with her mentally challenged

cousin in the absence of her father, under the guardianship of her grandfather and uncle.

Regensburg Short Film Week, established in 1994, is a renowned film festival in Germany. The competitive event spans 10 days (from March 7 to March 17), featuring various sections. Alongside the main competition sections, the festival includes special programs with thematic focuses and national highlights, complemented by exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and a film market.

Tajik maestro Davlatmand Kholov dies at 74

Arts & Culture Desk

Davlatmand Kholov, a prominent Tajik musician and singer, died at the age of 74 after a long battle with cancer.

Born in 1950, Kholov gained fame for his performance of the track 'Refuge' dedicated to Imam Reza (PBUH), the eighth Imam of Shia Muslims, written by contemporary Iranian poet Mahmoud Habibi Kasbi.

Death of Kholov, a master of the ancient Tajik music style 'Falak' and a virtuoso

on traditional instruments such as the dotar, Qeychak (a bowed lute), and setar left behind a legacy that has significantly shaped the musical landscape of Tajikistan, IRNA wrote.

He emphasized the cultural ties between Iranian and Tajik music, adding that Iranian music is a treasure that cannot be found under or on the earth.

Kholov's album 'Learned & Folk Music' released in 1996, was a testament to his deep understanding and innovative approach

to traditional music. His Sufi-inspired melodies were mostly based on the poetry of Rumi (Molavi).

Iranian Minister of Culture and the Islamic Guidance, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, extended condolences to the government and people of Tajikistan, highlighting Kholov's deep affection for the Persian language and the works of renowned Iranian poets.

Esmaeili praised Kholov's contributions to cultural exchange between the

two nations.

Moreover, Kholov was honored at the Imam Reza International Festival last year, receiving a plaque of devotion. Iran's Ambassador to Tajikistan, Ali Reza Haqiqian, expressed condolences to Kholov's family in Dushanbe, acknowledging the artist's significant impact on the cultural landscape.

Kholov was a recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the State Prize of Tajikistan named after Abuabduh



Rudaki. The President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, extended condolences to Kholov's family, acknowledging his invaluable contributions to the development of singing, particularly folk songs and the 'Falak' genre.

