



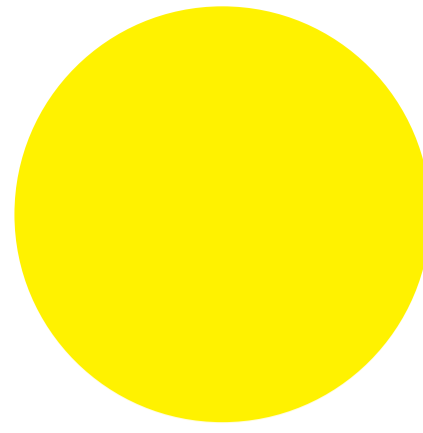
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Iran Daily



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Vol. 7513 • Wednesday, February 21, 2024 • Esfand 2, 1402 • Sha'ban 11, 1445 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

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US goals for cease-fire in Gaza



By Abdolreza Faraji-Rad
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

As per reports, the United States is gearing up to table a draft resolution at the Security Council for a temporary cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. The US has

shot down several peace proposals and blocked Algeria's suggestion yesterday.

Washington's opposition to these peace initiatives, especially as the death toll among Palestinians nears 30,000, has cast doubt on the global standing of the United States. The ongoing protests against Israel and the growing sympathy for Palestinians worldwide, particularly in Western nations, have added to these concerns.

With the likelihood of an Israeli ground assault on Rafah in Gaza's southernmost region on the rise, the US is laying out a cease-fire plan to prevent further Palestinian casualties and mitigate its international repercussions. However, this proposal is only a temporary measure, not a permanent solution.

A temporary truce may serve Israel's interests more than Hamas', given the uncertainty surrounding the cessation of Israeli attacks and the release of captives held by Hamas. Netanyahu aims to leverage a possible temporary cease-fire to secure the release of prisoners, bolster his forces, and prolong the conflict. He believes that ending the war would spell the end of his cabinet, indicating his reluctance to halt the war at this juncture.

While mediators like Qatar and Egypt are striving for a lasting cease-fire and an end to the conflict, the US is not yet on board with a permanent truce. Washington seeks to quell the current volatile situation through a cease-fire, prisoner release, and subsequently, exert pressure on Israel at a later stage to end the conflict and pursue its plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue sans the Netanyahu cabinet and Hamas.

The US strategy appears to revolve around formalizing the concept of two states, envisioning an independent Palestinian state coexisting with Israel. Netanyahu's cabinet opposes this notion. Opposition within Israel against Netanyahu's hardline cabinet is mounting, with many anticipating its premature downfall post-conflict. The US is closely monitoring Israel's internal dynamics and aims to execute its plan in collaboration with Arab nations, the European Union, and potentially with backing from China and Russia, contingent on Netanyahu's exit.

The US is open to adjusting its strategy with a more moderate Israeli government in place—a blueprint to end the conflict. The administration of Gaza would be transferred to the Palestinian Authority, with Hamas transitioning from a military entity to a political faction within the PA. This shift aims to advance the establishment of a Palestinian state and normalize Israel's relations with Arab nations. Such a move would be advantageous for the Democrats and President Joe Biden. However, the fate of this plan during the implementation phase remains uncertain.

Media experts at the 24th Iran Media Expo:

Israel, main loser in media battleground

Real battle rages in arena of media: Turkish journalist

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Sakine Gungor, a journalist working for Turkey's Quds News Network, poses for a photo on the sidelines of the 24th Iran Media Expo in Tehran on February 20, 2024.

IRAN DAILY

Pakistan to start laying part of IP pipeline to get Iran gas



Islamabad is considering initiating construction on an 80-kilometer segment of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, stretching from the Iranian border to Gwadar, in order to avoid a potential penalty of \$18 billion. The penalty could be imposed if Tehran decides to pursue arbitration at the International Court of Arbitration in Paris due to the project's non-execution. A source from the Ministry of Energy disclosed that Pakistan also plans to seek a waiver of US sanctions for the IP project, wrote economy.pk.

Initially, it has been decided to commence work on the 80-kilometer segment from the Pak-Iran border to Gwadar in the first phase of the IP project. The estimated cost for this portion of the project is \$158 million, and funding will be facilitated through the Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). According to the official, the agreement for the project, signed in May 2009, entails the supply of gas for 25 years from Iran's South Pars Gas Field to the Pak-Iran border.

The project involves laying a 1,931-km pipeline to transport Iranian gas to Pakistan, with 1,150 kilometers in Iran, and 781 kilometers in Pakistan. Both countries are responsible for implementing the project within their territories. As per the agreement, gas supply was scheduled to commence by January 2015. While Iran has completed over 900 kilometers of construction within its territory, the remaining 250 kilometers are yet to be built.

On December 21, 2023, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) issued a Material Breach Notice to Pakistan's Inter-State Gas Limited (ISGS), on the breach of buyer's warranties. ISGS was given 180 days to remedy the breach, failing which the matter would be referred to the Coordination Committee for resolution. Failure to implement the project may lead Tehran to pursue arbitration, potentially resulting in a contractual liability of approximately \$18 billion for Pakistan.

However, Iran also proposed that it can provide Pakistan with its legal and technical expertise in order to jointly develop a win-win strategy before the end of the deadline.

Tehran, Colombo eye enhanced ties given shared values

President Raisi invited for official visit to Sri Lanka

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian in a meeting with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry in the country's capital Colombo on Tuesday hailed the "good relations" with Sri Lanka and called for the expansion of cooperation in various fields. The Iranian foreign minister said the two countries should work for the expansion of diplomatic ties as well as the enhancement of relations in economy, tourism, science and technology, wrote Press TV. Amir-Abdollahian under-

scored the need for establishing direct flights between the two countries.

The Iranian minister appreciated Sri Lanka's position in supporting the people of Palestine in international forums, not least the United Nations. "I held comprehensive and useful meetings with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and President Ranil Wickremesinghe," he also said.

Amir-Abdollahian added that he had received the invitation for President Ebrahim Raisi's

visit to the capital Colombo.

"This visit will be a priority for Iran despite Ayatollah Raisi's busy schedule," said the minister.

Ali Sabry, for his part, said he hoped – given the values Sri Lanka and Iran share – the two countries expand relations of cooperation further in the new era.

He said Sri Lanka was ready to implement economic projects undertaken by Iranian experts in the country in light of the Islamic Republic's industrial and economic capabilities.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (L) shakes hands with his Sri Lankan counterpart Ali Sabry in Colombo, Sri Lanka on February 20, 2024.
IRNA

Iran overtakes Qatar in extracting gas from SP joint field: *CEO*

The chief executive of Iran's Pars Special Economic Zone Organization said Iran has outpaced Qatar in the extraction of gas from joint field.

Sakhavat Assadi put the value of investment made by Iran for the development of its projects in the South Pars Gas Field at \$150 billion, reported Tasnim News Agency.

Currently, 26 development projects, costing \$1 billion, are underway in the South Pars

field, he emphasized.

Turning to the conspiracies waged by enemies against the Islamic Republic, he said that the enemy has left no stone unturned to wage a full-fledged war against Iran since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, but all their plots have been foiled.

The South Pars Gas Field is shared between Iran and Qatar, he noted, adding that many countries continue cooperation with Qatar on the field incessantly but Iran has been faced with tough sanctions imposed

against the country.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Asadi pointed to the construction of a refinery at Phase 14 of the South Pars Gas Field and added that 73 percent of the refinery has been constructed by domestic engineers.

Iran's gas extraction from the South Pars Gas Field exceeds that of Qatar, the official said, putting Iran's daily extraction of gas from South Pars at about 710 million cubic meters, while gas extraction by the Qatari side stands at about 650 million cubic meters/day.

Between 70 and 75 percent of the country's gas is produced in the South Pars Gas Field, Asadi added.



Tehran to host SCO's industry ministerial meeting: *Deputy minister*

A meeting of the industry ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states will be held in Tehran later this year, announced the head of the Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI).

Speaking at the 8th Working Group of Investment of SCO member states, Ali Fekri noted that organizing the first prestigious

economic event of the organization indicates the political will of Iran for the advancement of the programs of the organization, according to Tasnim News Agency.

The deputy minister of economy expressed hope that the country would use the high capacities and potential of the organization.

The OIETAI is ready, in addition to introducing

investment opportunities, to cooperate with the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in line with materializing mutual economic objectives, Fekri emphasized.

Accordingly, an expert-level meeting will be held at Pardis Science and Technology Park, he added.

The more social and economic bonds are strengthened among member states of the organization, the more the concept of unilateralism will be mitigated, the official continued.

Earlier, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's enormous potential in various areas has enabled it to deal effectively with unilateralism and contribute to regional and international convergence.

Over \$3b worth of commodities traded at IME

The Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed the trade of 14.158 million tons of commodities and 337 vehicles with a total value of more than \$3 billion on its physical market during the month to February 19, registering growths of 1.2% in volume and 14.6% in value terms compared to the month ending January 20.

According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 11.508 million tons of commodities and 337 vehicles valued at more than \$2 billion, reported ime.co.ir.

On this floor the IME sold 5,964,981 tons of cement, 2.694 million tons of iron ore, 2.036 million tons of steel, 712,500 tons of sponge iron, 96,850 tons of zinc, 42,959 tons of copper, 40,800 tons of

aluminum, 35,000 tons of cast iron, 1,150 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 57 tons of precious metals concentrate and 337 vehicles.

Moreover, the exchange saw trade of 2.442 million tons of commodities worth more than \$1 billion on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

Items traded on this floor included 883,906 tons of

bitumen, 677,500 tons of vacuum bottom, 474,154 tons of polymeric products, 151,100 tons of lube cut, 152,866 tons of chemicals, 49,025 tons of sulfur, 24,998 tons of oil, 3,640 tons of petroleum products, 1,705 tons of feedstocks and 1,395 tons of waterproofing materials. Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 116,215 tons of goods.



Meymand, Iran's ancient troglodyte village



apochi.com

arkeonews.net

amazingiran.media

amazingiran.media

In addition to the pristine nature, awe-inspiring architecture, and ancient history that Iran has to offer, visitors can't seem to get enough of its quaint villages. One such place is Meymand in Kerman Province, Iran's troglodyte village carved deep in the heart of the mountains, 2,240 meters above sea level.

Although artifacts and inscriptions found around the village date back some 12,000 years, and are indicative of life here at that time, the village itself is said to have been continuously inhabited for 2,000-3,000 years.

Culinary delights

While meat is more common these days, locals claim that the ancient inhabitants of the region were raw vegan. And that

makes sense considering one of the traditional dishes of Meymand is *ghaatoogh-e beneh*, a raw vegan, cold soup prepared with *beneh* (wild pistachios).

Religion and language

Prior to the advent of Islam, Meymand was a Zoroastrian settlement, and before that it is believed that the people worshipped the sun. In fact, Teer-e Khorin, a peak that receives the first rays of the sun at dawn, remains an important site for locals today.

While locals speak Persian, you'll notice that their speech retains elements of Middle Persian, or Pahlavi.

Architecture

Approximately 400 *kichehs* (alleys)

have been dug out to reach enough depth to dig out rooms. Inside each alley, there's a terrace leading to 1-7 rooms, some with higher ceilings that serve as living quarters and others that serve as stables or storage. Currently, of these 2,500 rooms, about 80% are uninhabited.

Much like Kandovan (another rocky village in the northwest East Azerbaijan Province, which is about 700 years old), the rooms in Meymand have been chiseled by hand out of volcanic rock. Thanks to the open stone fireplaces in the verandas, the smoke from the fires coated the ceilings and walls, creating a thick black soot which not only prevented the rock from crumbling, it also deterred mosquitos and other insects.

In the past, people got their water from qanats, ancient underground aqueducts, but now neighbors share a source of running water just outside their *kicheh*.

Can you imagine living in a place with only 40 residents? Or even fewer because only about half of that number lives here year-round.

Seasonal migration and harvesting

Sustainability is important for locals which is why they live alongside nature and migrate three times a year, spending approximately four months in each location. They spend the winter months dwelling in the caves in Meymand, the center of the cultural

landscape. In the spring, they migrate to the south in a plain area suited for animal husbandry. This is also where they harvest wild almonds. In the warm summer months and the beginning of autumn, they move once again to the gardens in the north, where they harvest wild pistachios, pears, grapes, walnuts, and wild olives, among other things.

Ancient art

North of Meymand, you can find ancient graffiti, petroglyphs and pictographs, the oldest of which is said to be 4,500 years old. In fact, UNESCO states that this pictograph, the only one of its kind in Iran, appears to be a birth scene.

Evolution of Persian art from the 16th to 18th century

Scholars of the Persian miniature are inclined to believe that the last quarter of the 16th century was not only a time when old traditions were followed but when a new style was formed which found its expression in the works of the Isfahan school.

Unfortunately, other branches of Persian art of the 16th century, above all applied arts such as ceramics, carpets and textiles, although they are represented by hundreds of examples in the world's museums, have not yet been sufficiently researched to enable one to confirm or deny the idea that a new phase in the history of art was formed in the second half of the 16th century. Perhaps the lack of thorough research on these materials, and especially on the evolution of their ornamentation, is a factor here.

But it is possible to assume that the changes in art during the second half of the 16th century were not as great as during the second half of the 14th century and therefore they are not reflected in all art forms (for example, it is entirely unclear whether there were any sort of changes in architecture). In other words, we can now consider the second half of the 16th century to be a time of transi-

tion to a new phase, although this latter is not as clearly distinguishable as its predecessors. It is therefore difficult to speak of a canon style during this phase. We now see a renewal of interest in representations of the human form, which is probably most clearly visible in textiles, although one may suppose that such fabrics do not represent a large proportion of the entire range of textile production. In 17th-century ceramics the strong influence of Chinese art can again be observed, but now aroused by the interest of Europeans in Chinese porcelain. Other art forms do not seem to experience any new Chinese influences.

During this phase active contacts with European art begin – first of all in painting. Traces of European influence can already be observed in the mid-17th century. First and foremost, this influence involves the court miniature, but it then spreads to other branches of art where it is reflected to varying degrees. Here it is important to stress the fact that interest in European art initially arose in court circles, although there were various channels through which the influence was transmitted. Apparently, the appearance of this new

factor in 17th-century Persian art did not yet signify the emergence of a separate phase, nor even the onset of a transitional period – which became noticeable only from the end of the 17th century. An analysis of metalwork serves to support this argument.

Although there are few precisely dated pieces from the late 17th and early 18th centuries, a chronological series can be reconstructed. Changes are noticeable which could be explained by a decline in the quality of pieces, linked to their increased mass-production. For example, on copper and bronze (brass) items, the surface of the background to the design is not entirely hatched. Although hatching was obligatory during the 17th century; we now see in places only the engraved design against a plain background.

The omission of the hatching increases during the first half of the 18th century and around the middle of the century a complete break with tradition takes place, for in the second half of the century the background of Iranian copper and bronze (brass) objects is tooled with punches and the hatching disappears completely.



A ceramic plate from 18 century



By Agnès Callamard
Secretary-general of
Amnesty International

OPINION

After more than four months of conflict, Israel's campaign of retaliation against Hamas has been characterized by a pattern of war crimes and violations of international law. Israel's stated justification for its war in Gaza is the elimination of Hamas, which is responsible for the following acts committed during its October 7 attack on Israel: 1,139 people, mostly Israeli civilians, killed; thousands more wounded; and 240 people taken captive, many of whom are still held by Hamas.

In response, Israel forcibly displaced Palestinians, imposing conditions that have left hundreds of thousands without basic human necessities. It has carried out indiscriminate, disproportionate, and direct attacks on civilians and "civilian objects," such as schools and hospitals. Some 28,000 Palestinians have been killed, the majority of them women and children. Vast sections of Gaza have been pulverized; a fifth of its infrastructure and most of its homes are now damaged or destroyed, leaving the region largely uninhabitable. Israel imposed a prolonged blockade, denying Palestinians adequate food, potable water, fuel, Internet access, shelter, and medical care: action amounting to collective punishment. It is detaining Gazans in inhumane and degrading conditions, and Israel admits that some of those detained have already died. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, violence against Palestinians by Israeli forces and settlers has increased markedly.

The United States and many Western countries have supported Israel, providing military assistance, opposing calls for a cease-fire at the United Nations, stopping funding of the UN Relief and Works Agency serving Palestinian refugees, and rejecting South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), even as the carnage continued to unfold.

Today's diplomatic complicity in the catastrophic human rights and humanitarian crisis in Gaza is the culmination of years of erosion of the international rule of law and the global human rights system. Such disintegration began in earnest after 9/11, when the United States embarked on its "war on terror," a campaign that normalized the idea that everything is permissible in the pursuit of "terrorists". To prosecute its war in Gaza, Israel borrows ethos, strategy, and tactics from that framework, doing so with the support of the United States.

It is as if the grave moral lessons of the Holocaust, of World War II, have been all but forgotten, and with them, the very core of the decades-old "Never Again" principle: its absolute universality, the notion that it protects us all or none of us. This disintegration, so apparent in the destruction of Gaza and the West's response to it, signals the end of the rules-based order and the start of a new era.

Gaza, end of rules-based order

What Israel-Hamas war means for future of human rights, int'l law



Displaced Palestinians from Beit Hanoun sleep inside a UNRWA school in Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip.
ALESSIO ROMENZI/TIME

The age of universality

Universality, the principle that all of us, without exception, are endowed with human rights equally, no matter who we are or where we live, lies at the heart of the international human rights system. It was the foundation of the Genocide Convention and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both adopted in 1948, and it continued to inform new means of accountability over the years, including the International Criminal Court, established in 2002. For decades, that legal infrastructure has helped ensure that states uphold their human rights obligations. It has defined human rights movements globally and underpinned the twentieth century's greatest human rights achievements. A critic of this system might argue that states have only ever paid lip service to universality. The twentieth century abounds with examples of failures to uphold the equal dignity of all: the violence used against those advocating for decolonization, the Vietnam War, the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, and many more. These events all testify to an international system rooted more in systemic inequality and discrimination than in universality. With good reason, one could contend that universality was never applied to Palestinians, who, as the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said expressed it, have been instead, since 1948, "the victims of the victims, the refugees of the refugees". Yet the fate of universality resides not in the hands of those who betray it. Rather, as a perennial ambitious project for humankind, its power rests, first and foremost, in its continual proclamation and in its persistent defense. Throughout the twentieth cen-

ture, the principle of universality had countless setbacks, but the overarching direction was toward proclaiming, affirming, and defending it. That shifted, however, in the early years of the twenty-first century, with the unleashing of the "war on terror" following the tragic events of 9/11.

Taking the gloves off

For the last 20 years, the doctrine and methods of the "war on terror" have been adopted or mimicked by governments all over the world. They have been deployed to expand the reach and range of state "self-defense" measures and to hunt down, with the barest of restraints, any people or authorities deemed to warrant the loosely defined but widely applied designation of "terrorist threat".

The extraordinary toll of civilian killings in Gaza committed in the name of both self-defense and countering terrorism is a logical consequence of that framework, which has perverted and almost dismantled international law and, along with it, the principle of universality.

American airstrikes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria resulted in mass civilian casualties. Invariably, the US military would claim that it had taken the necessary steps to protect civilians. But it gave little explanation as to exactly how it distinguished civilians from combatants and why, if distinguished properly, so many civilians had been killed. Israel's massive bombardment of Gaza has roots that go deeper in history than the long-running "war on terror," including the 1948 expulsion of roughly 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, which came to be known as the Nakba, or catastrophe. But it is also a thoroughly twenty-first-centu-

ry manifestation of the erosion of international law, in which little to none of the restraints set by the post-World War II system have been respected: not those in the UN Charter, in international human rights law, or even under the Genocide Convention, as argued by South Africa.

Where is the outcry?

Immediately after October 7, Western governments condemned Hamas and expressed unconditional support for Israel, an understandable and predictable response to the horror inflicted on the population of a close ally. But they should have shifted their rhetoric once it became clear, as it quickly did, that Israel's bombing of Gaza was killing thousands of civilians. All governments, especially those with influence over Israel, should have unequivocally and publicly denounced Israel's unlawful actions and called for a cease-fire, for the return of all captives, and for accountability for war crimes and other violations on both sides.

It did not happen. For the first two months of the war, the Biden administration largely downplayed the loss of lives in Gaza. It failed to denounce Israel's relentless bombings and devastating siege. It did not acknowledge the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including 56 years of Israeli military occupation, and instead bought into Israel's counterterrorism framing.

And as the war continued, the Biden administration defended Israel's tactics. It parroted certain of Israel's unverified and later repudiated claims about Hamas atrocities. Although the United States eventually became more vocal about the protection of Palestinian civilians, it has refused to publicly support key steps that would

help save their lives. Instead, at the UN, the United States vetoed Security Council resolutions calling for humanitarian pauses to the war. Only on December 22 did it permit, through its abstention, the Security Council to adopt a compromise resolution calling for "urgent steps to immediately allow safe and unhindered and expanded humanitarian access" to Gaza and "the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities". It has never publicly entertained stopping its arms transfers to Israel.

Within days of the ICJ ruling and its calls for provisional measures to prevent genocide in Gaza, the United States and a number of other Western governments canceled funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides a lifeline to people in Gaza. That decision does not just ignore the evident risks of genocide; it serves to amplify and accelerate them. The United States' superpower status and its influence over Israel means Washington is uniquely positioned to change the reality on the ground in Gaza. More than any other country, the United States can prevent its close ally from continuing to commit atrocities. But thus far, it has chosen not to.

This pattern of conduct comes at a huge cost. As one G-7 diplomat has put it, "We have definitely lost the battle in the Global South. All the work we have done with the Global South (over Ukraine) has been lost. ... Forget about rules, forget about world order. They won't ever listen to us again."

A change of eras

Although there were rehearsals for events in Gaza that showed extreme disregard for international law, the war there may well signal a curtain



call. The risk of genocide, the gravity of the violations being committed, and the flimsy justifications by elected officials in Western democracies warn of a change of eras. The rules-based order that has governed international affairs since the end of World War II is on its way out, and there may be no turning back. The consequences of this abandonment are all too apparent: more instability, more aggression, more conflict, and more suffering. The only check on violence will be more violence. The end of the rules-based order will also bring spreading and palpable anger across all layers of society, in all corners of the earth, except among those positioned to reap whatever sullied rewards can be extracted from the breaking international system.

But steps can be taken to avert this worst-case scenario. They start with the immediate cessation of all military operations by both Israel and Hamas, with the immediate release of all remaining civilian captives detained by Hamas and of all Palestinians unlawfully detained by Israel, and with the lifting of the siege of Gaza. The ICJ's provisional measures to prevent genocide in Gaza must be fully implemented.

Israel and its biggest supporter, the United States, must accept that the stated military objective of destroying Hamas has wrought an overwhelming cost to civilian lives and infrastructure, which likely cannot be justified under international law. It is now more important than ever that the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court act decisively to deliver indictments for crimes committed by all parties to the conflict. Neither historical grievances nor

It is as if the grave moral lessons of the Holocaust, of World War II, have been all but forgotten.

long-term prospects for peace in the Middle East, and arguably beyond, can be addressed without an international and inclusive process that specifies a dismantling of Israel's system of apartheid and allows for the security and rights of all populations to be protected. The painful memories of wrongs, both recent and from long ago, can help save lives today, as well as in the future, in Israel, in the Palestinian territories, and beyond. That process must begin immediately, however, as time is running out. If history indeed repeats itself, as we are told it often does, then we should consider ourselves well warned. With the universal application of international law likely in its death throes and nothing yet to take its place save brutalist national interests and sheer greed, widespread anger can be, and will be, exploited by the many ready to foster even broader instability on an even greater global scale.

The full article first appeared on Foreign Affairs.

Defunding UNRWA, int'l law and compelling Israel to compliance

By Quraysha Ismail Sooliman
Scholar,
human rights activist

OPINION

For global citizens, the preference is unequivocal: a rejection of war and violence. They cherish life, prioritize the well-being of their children, and maintain a profound love for their homeland, culture, and religion. The resistance against state-sponsored terrorism is rooted in a desire for personal autonomy — a refusal to allow external forces to dictate choices related to attire, voting preferences, or aspirational pursuits. In essence, individuals assert their right to make these decisions independently.

Individuals with a deep sense of humanity find that the Gaza Genocide has fundamentally altered their perception, prompting a shift away from indoctrinated perspectives. South Africans, given their historical context, intimately understand the profound 'question of humanity and human dignity' that the Gaza Genocide evokes. This tragic event has sparked a heightened awareness among many about the moral shortcomings of political elites and the corporatocracies operating under the guise of democracies.

The assertion of freedom in democracies comes into question when it necessitates conformity or silent submission to imposed norms. This sentiment is at the core of the defund UNRWA campaign, initiated concurrently with the ICJ's provisional measures against Israel. The timing of Israel's accusations, announced at the time of the ICJ order, can be understood through a South African idiom: "Hulle gatte krap hulle lekker" (they are fuming at the South African victory at the ICJ).

Israel's assurance of steadfast support from the West, particularly the US, heightened after the US dismissed allegations of Israeli genocide on January 10, 2024. With the belief that European and American judges at the ICJ would align with US interests, Israel's arrogance reached its zenith. Despite a supposed US assurance of a veto (US-controlled and decided outcome) at the ICJ, South Africa secured a victory, prompting Israel to resort to its next basket of lies. This time accusing UNRWA staffers of collaboration with Hamas.

By February 5, 2024, Israel had still not provided any evidence for the accusations. The Gangster Club, comprising the US, Canada, Australia, Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, Estonia, Japan, Austria, and Romania, swiftly announced aid cuts to UNRWA following Israel's accusations.

UNRWA stands as a manifestation of international law, being a UN agency established in 1949 by a resolution of the UN General Assembly with the mandate to provide relief to refugees affected by the Nakba. Its pivotal role becomes even more significant following the recent ruling by the ICJ. UNRWA operates the critical infrastructure for basic services and humanitarian assistance in Gaza. The binding nature of the ICJ ruling imposes a legal obligation on all countries, including Western states, to facilitate the fulfillment of these measures. Refusal to comply highlights the clash between a rules-based system and international law.

initially established within the framework of the rules-based order. However, as the geopolitical landscape evolves, adherence to international law has transitioned from being a responsibility for others to becoming a challenge for those who initially shaped these rules.

The West attempts to maintain a narrative of defending a 'rules-based order' while engaging in actions that undermine it. This complex and evolving dynamic signals a global shift, with the former architects of the rules now finding themselves at odds with a multipolar world order they no longer fully control. And global citizens are cognizant of their doublespeak.

The dystopian notion of humanity, freedom, democracy, and rights, emanating from the US and its coalition of subservient states, is critiqued by Andrey Sushentsov. According to Sushentsov, "American elites believe in democracy at home and dictatorship abroad; that's why the world is so dangerous right now." The professed values of human rights, equality, justice, peace, and dignity espoused by the US and its client states mask a darker reality of violence, greed, power, and domination. Sushentsov underscores Washington's difficulty in acknowledging the sovereign equality and unique perspectives of other nations, illustrating an inherent arrogance.

It is this arrogance that manifests as bullying on the global stage. Settler colonial states, in particular, grapple not only with the concept of sovereign equality but also with the 'audacity' of those they consider inferior who refuse, revolt against, or resist their oppressive actions. This sentiment echoes South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ, where the refusal to submit to perceived superiority becomes a powerful act of resistance. It has now become another act of bullying, as South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor is being threatened by Israeli officials. According to Pandor, "The Israeli agents, intelligence agencies, [this] is



South African professor of International Law John Dugard (C) shakes the hand of South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) prior to the verdict announcement in the genocide case against Israel, brought by South Africa, in The Hague.
● AFP

Despite the claim of a Western commitment to a 'rules-based order,' the immediate defunding of UNRWA by the Gangster Club, mere hours after the ICJ ruling, underscores a blatant assault on international law. The underlying message is clear: those challenging the established order will face ruthless opposition. This power dynamic is revealing, as the US, in its response to the ICJ ruling, positions itself as an adversary to international law, signaling a shift from its historical role as the global enforcer.

In John Dugard's analysis, the 'rules-based order' operates outside of international law, serving the interests of the US and its allies in a momentary context. The disregard for the ICJ verdict and the defunding of UNRWA represents an unprecedented attack on institutions designed to uphold international law. This irony is palpable, considering that many of these institutions were

how they behave. They seek to intimidate you. We must not be intimidated." Gangsterism and racism at its finest. In this mindset, and despite the numerous expert opinions and overwhelming evidence, US officials described South Africa's case as "meritless" and expressed "disgust at this filing". For the white supremacists who have been controlling the 'rules-based order' and its application to nation-states who need to be 'reeled in', South Africa's actions were distasteful because a small African country dared to say "enough". According to Pandor, "For the first time in 75 years, Israel is being held accountable by an institution and by the global community. We have now, as South Africa, broken a dangerous culture of impunity that has characterized the illegal occupation of Palestine."

The full article first appeared on The Palestine Chronicle.



Beach Soccer World Cup UAE 2024: Iran salvages Tahiti triumph to face host in knockouts

Iranian players celebrate a 5-3 victory over Tahiti in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Dubai, UAE, on February 19, 2024.
● FIFA

Sports Desk

A thrilling comeback victory saw Iran defeat Tahiti 5-3 to finish atop the Group B table at the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Dubai and get a showdown with the host in an all-Asian quarterfinal.

The Iranian goalkeepers were the heroes of day for the country at the Dubai Design District Stadium on Monday, scoring three goals between them to inspire the fightback.

The Tahitians – two-time runners-up in the tournament – looked to be on their way to a repeat of the 2017 last-four win against the Asian champion when Tearii Labaste and Roonui Tinirauarii gave them a two-goal lead in the second period, before Hamid Behzadpour bagged a brace either side of a superb strike by fellow-Iranian keeper Mahdi Mirjalili.

A Teaanui Tehau's own goal doubled Iran's advantage but Patrick Tapa reduced the deficit to one, before Mohammad Mokhtari guaranteed a clean sweep of group victories for Ali Naderi's men, taking his tally in Dubai to six with 90 seconds left on the clock.

"We knew before the game that there would be space for our goalkeepers to have a go at goal, given the way they play, and our coach encouraged us to do so," Behzadpour said following his Player-of-the-Match performance, adding: "Iran is never finished. We will never, ever give up."

Iran will be looking to celebrate a second victory over the United Arab Emirates in less than a year on Thursday to head into the semifinals for only the second time in the history of the competition.

Naderi's men walked away with a commanding 7-2 triumph when the two sides met in the Asian Cup group phase in Thailand last March.

Following a goalless stalemate on Monday, the UAE came out on top against Italy in the shootout but still had to settle for the second spot behind the European powerhouse in Group A.

Asian Indoor Athletics Championships:

Girls shine as Iran scoops 16 medals on home soil

Sports Desk

Iranian girls took credit for nine of the country's 16 medals at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Tehran.

The three-day event in the capital's Aftab-e Enghelab Sports Complex was one to remember for sprinter Farzaneh Fasihi, who retained her 60m crown thanks to a championship record-equaling time of 7.20 seconds – also a new national high – in the final.

Meanwhile, Iranians Toktam Dastarbandan and Negin Azari Edalat posted a one-two in the women's 800m final, with the former shattering the national record with 2:09.17 minutes.

Fatemeh Mohitizadeh scored 3970 points to grab the women's pentathlon silver, while Nazanin Eidian finished second to Japanese

Nanako Matsumoto in the women's 400m final – followed by fellow-Iranian Kazhan Rostami, who took the bronze.

Eidian and Rostami then collected their second medals when they teamed up with Shahla Mahmoudi and Maryam Mohebi for the 4×400m relay silver.

Mahsa Mirzatabibi's new national record of 4.10m sealed the pole vault bronze for the Iranian girl, with Elham Hashemi finishing on the third podium in the women's shot put contest.

In the men's competitions, teenage sensation Sajjad Aqaei was the only Iranian to walk away with the ultimate prize of his respective event, clocking 47.95 seconds in the 400m final.

Sobhan Ahmadi (800m) Amir Zamanpour (3000m) were the Iranian silver medalists,

with Ali Amirian (1500m), Mahdi Saberi (shot put), and Amir-Mahdi Hanifeh (heptathlon) adding three bronzes to Iran's medal haul.

The country's 4×400m relay team – comprising Aqaei, Amirian, Arash Sayyari, and Mohammadreza Talei – also won a bronze behind Kazakhstan and Iraq.

The results saw Iran settle for the fourth spot in the medal table, though it still went down as a massive improvement on last year's edition in Astana, where the country left the event with a single medal through Fasihi's gold.

China dominated the table with eight golds, six silvers, and one bronze.

Japan and Kazakhstan collected four golds apiece, but the former finished as the runner-up with four silvers against the Central Asian country's two.



● ALIREZA MASOUMI/ISNA



● FIFA

German World Cup winner Brehme dies aged 63

BBC – Former Germany defender Andreas Brehme, who scored the winning goal in the 1990 World Cup final, died aged 63.

Brehme converted a late penalty in the final of the 1990 tournament to secure victory against Argentina in Rome. He earned 86 caps, including eight goals, for his country and won league titles while at Kaiserslautern, Bayern Munich and Inter Milan.

"FC Bayern is deeply shocked by the sudden death of Andreas Brehme," said the German club.

"We will always keep Andreas Brehme in our hearts – as a world champion and even more so as a very special person."

"He will always be part of the FC Bayern family. Rest in peace, dear Andi." Brehme played for Kaiserslautern from 1981-86 and 1993-98.

He won the Bundesliga title in 1998 and German Cup in 1996 during his time at the club, with whom he also had a spell as manager from 2000-02.

"The FCK mourns the loss of Andreas Brehme," said a Kaiserslautern state-

ment.

"He wore the Red Devils jersey for a total of 10 years and became German champion and cup winner with FCK."

"In 1990, he shot the German national team to the World Cup title with his penalty and finally became a football legend."

Germany were managed by Franz Beckenbauer, who died aged 78 in January, at the 1990 World Cup.

Brehme also scored when his country beat England on penalties in the tournament's semi-finals.

Media change
equation of Gaza war

Based in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Al-Aqsa TV channel was launched in 2006 and is run by Hamas. Mohammed Hamed, the director of the TV channel, discussed the network's challenges during the Gaza war. Despite facing intense bombardment, the channel's news teams in Gaza continue their operations under difficult circumstances, with support from offices in other countries.

Hamed emphasized the critical role of the media in conveying the realities of the conflict, highlighting the efforts to report on the human losses and tragedies inflicted by the Zionists in Gaza, a stark contrast to the Zionist media's attempts to conceal these atrocities. Since its establishment, this TV channel has been the target of attacks by the Zionist regime several times, and dozens of its journalists have been killed.

He pointed out that the media's role in exposing the truth about the war crimes of the Zionists has been instrumental in shifting global perspectives on the Gaza conflict. He noted a change in Western countries' attitudes towards the war, attributing it to the media's efforts to reveal the realities on the ground.

Despite facing challenges from well-funded pro-Zionist media outlets, Hamed emphasized the strength of truth and the credibility of pro-resistance media in garnering trust and support from people worldwide.

It is true that we are facing an unequal war on the media front, where the pro-Zionist media have much broader resources at their disposal. However, the one who is in the right is always stronger, and those who lie ultimately end up as losers. In the media front, the truth and righteousness are on our side, he concluded.

People worldwide put
their faith in
pro-resistance media

Ugur Aktas, the production manager at Turkey's Channel 14, highlighted the significance of Turkey's On 4, a news and cultural network advocating for the resistance axis. Broadcast on the Turksat satellite across Georgia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and various European nations, the network has a large audience among Turkish speakers worldwide. Discussing the Gaza conflict, Aktas emphasized

Media experts at the 24th Iran Media Expo:

Israel, main loser
in media battlegroundReal battle rages in arena of media: *Turkish journalist*By Sadeq
Dehqan
Staff writer

Media experts present at the 24th Iran Media Expo in Tehran believe that media channels supporting the resistance axis have played a crucial role in the Gaza conflict by exposing the tragedies unfolding, particularly the killings of women, children, and innocent civilians, thereby revealing the true face of the Zionist military to

the world.

The experts argue that despite the Zionists' attempts to portray themselves as victims and justify their heavy military actions against the defenseless people of Gaza, their objectives were not met due to the efforts of the media backing the resistance axis. This led to widespread awareness among people worldwide about the deceptive tactics employed by the Zionists through their media narratives.

The 24th exhibition of press, news agencies,

and information outlets, this year titled Iran Media Expo, has resumed after a six-year hiatus. The event, hosted at Tehran's Mosalla, includes a segment dedicated to Gaza, featuring 12 pro-resistance media outlets from countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Tunisia, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, and Lebanon. Additionally, 15 media activists from these outlets are present to showcase their contributions and activities during the Gaza conflict.



Pro-resistance media amplified the voice of justice and truth to a global audience.

Resistance media counters the false narratives perpetuated by the Zionist media, shaping global public opinion.

A photograph taken by Ali Jadallah, who lost several members of his family in an airstrike and has been documenting events in Gaza City.
● ALI JADALLAH/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

the media's pivotal role in shaping narratives, adding that alongside the military confrontation, a fierce media battle also rages on.

The Western media empire has adopted a confrontational approach not only towards Gaza but also towards Lebanon, Afghanistan, and other Islamic countries, publishing news in line with its own interests. This underscores the Islamic media's responsibility to deliver accurate information to Muslims and truth-seekers globally. Many individuals worldwide place their trust in resistance-based media outlets, underscoring the importance of disseminating war news via our channels.

Aktas proposed collaboration among Islamic media entities to counter the extensive Western media presence. By leveraging each other's resources, the Islamic media can

expand their reach and impact. This cooperative approach enables media outlets to access studios and equipment in different regions, facilitating the advancement of their collective media goals.

Zionists' fabricated
narratives in Gaza
war

Khador Reslan, the director of Communications and Public Relations at Lebanon's Radio Al-Nour, said the radio station is the voice of the resistance axis worldwide. He highlighted Radio Al-Nour's roots in the resistance movement's inception in Lebanon back in 1988. Regarding the media's role in the Gaza war, Reslan said media play a

pivotal function in uncovering and conveying the truth. He underscored the significant impact of the resistance media in countering the false narratives perpetuated by the Zionist media, shaping global public opinion.

Acknowledging the influence of social and digital platforms, Reslan noted their role in enabling widespread dissemination of war-related images and information. This becomes crucial, especially when the official media of the resistance movement faces direct attacks from the Zionist adversary.

He said the pro-resistance media outlets have not overlooked their presence on social networks, and now we also disseminate our news and information through virtual media such as X (formerly Twitter), among others. In fact, we have established connections between offi-

cial and unofficial media, as well as traditional and modern media.

Real battle rages in
arena of media

Sakine Gungor, the representative of Quds News Network in Turkey, told Iran Daily: the network, true to its name, stands in solidarity with Palestine. It broadcasts daily updates on the resistance movement to the people of Turkey and beyond.

Highlighting the media's pivotal role in the conflict, Gungor noted the initial dominance of Western and Zionist media during the Gaza war. However, over time, the media aligned with the resistance movement turned the

tide, amplifying the voice of justice and truth to a global audience.

Gungor said in today's world, media serves as a potent weapon and, indeed, the real battle unfolds in the media arena. While acknowledging the sacrifices made by the resistance forces and Hamas in Gaza, she underscored the crucial role of media efforts in preventing further tragedies and exposing Zionist atrocities to the world.

"Our efforts in this conflict have yielded results, as widespread dissemination of images and reports on the Zionist war crimes has sparked protests worldwide, even in Western and European nations," she said. This has compelled Westerners to confront the harsh realities in Gaza. The true nature of the Zionists has been unveiled, necessitating persistent utilization of all available media platforms to uphold this cause, Gungor concluded.

Media has played a key role in exposing the truth about the war crimes of the Zionists in shifting global perspectives on the Gaza conflict.

Iran dominates 60% of Qur'anic awards: Official

Arts & Culture Desk

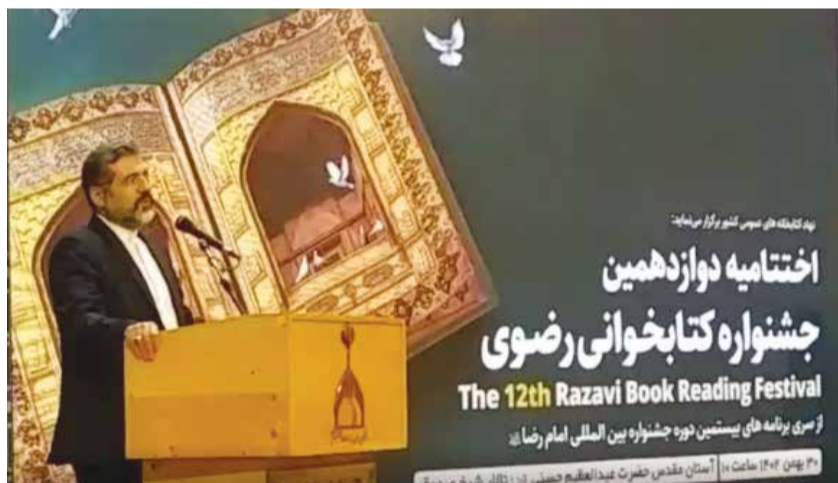
Iran has dominated 60 percent of Qur'anic accolades of the international competitions, said the spokesperson for the Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization. Gholamreza Adel, speaking at the 40th edition of Iran's International Qur'an Competition, informed that out of the 540 worldwide Qur'anic competitions held in the last years,

370 top awards were given to Iranians. He highlighted Iran's significant status, given that 40% of the positions are from other countries, IRNA wrote. He added the evaluations show Iran's record achievement in organizing Qur'anic competitions. Forty-four countries are participating in this round of Qur'anic recitation and memorization com-

petition, Adel said. He noted the presence of Malaysia in this edition, with over 60 years of experience in Qur'anic matters, contributing to the increased competitiveness of the event. The spokesperson concluded by addressing the theme of resistance in Islamic countries, expressing that these countries have advanced globally due to Islamic principles.



Minister: Younger generation focus of 12th Razavi Book Reading Festival



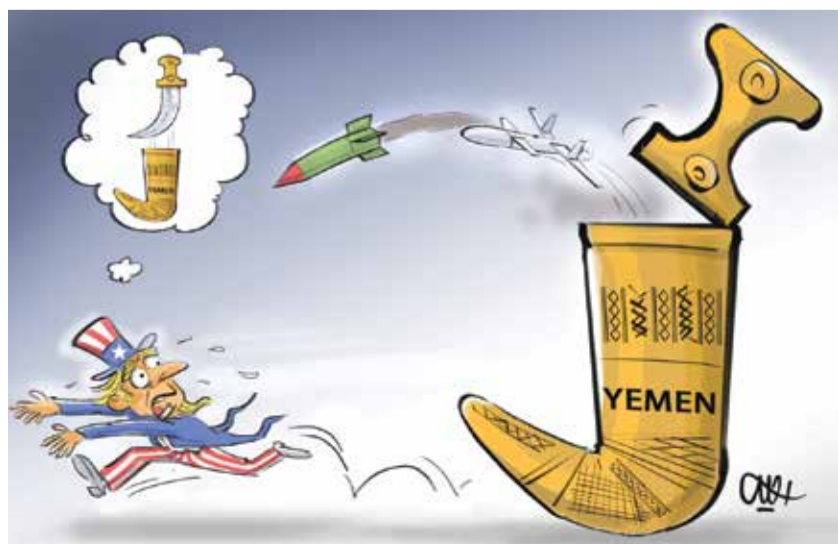
Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili emphasized that children, adolescents, and youths, particularly, are the main focus of their objectives in the field of books and cultural productions within

the community of readers. Esmaeili, speaking on the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the 12th Razavi Book Reading Festival stated, "By establishing numerous libraries for children and adolescents, we have created a more vibrant space in this field

compared to the past. By continuing on this path, we can build a better future for reading in the country." According to IRNA. He added, "the presence of over one million people in this year's book reading festival indicates that we have achieved successes in this area."

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
 Cartoonist



Iran ahead of West in defending animals' rights: Lawmaker

By Sadeq Dehqan
 Staff writer

The issue of animal cruelty and the neglect of animal rights, particularly urban and domestic animals, has been a consistent focus of Western media outlets to portray a negative and violent image of Iran in recent years.

They commonly share video clips depicting animal cruelty, specifically dog killings and cruelty leading to the deaths of stray dogs. At times, these reports suggest municipal authorities' indifference towards animal rights in Iran, leading to occasional media hype. However, Somayyeh Rafiei, the head of the Environmental Commission of the Iranian Parliament, questions the accuracy of Western media claims regarding animal rights in Iran. She acknowledges that there are some circulated images depicting animal abuse in Iran, stirring voices of environmental activists and animal lovers within the country. Rafiei emphasizes that while animal mistreatment is condemnable in any form, it is not exclusive to Iran and is prevalent worldwide.

Rafiei states, "Western media consistently searches for instances of animal-related crimes in Iran, exaggerating them beyond reality. However, I am willing to engage in a debate with environmental and animal rights activists to demonstrate that animals in Iran have better situation." She urges a more nuanced understanding of the issue, highlighting that animal mistreatment is a global concern rather than a uniquely Iranian problem. In a recent interview with France 24, Rafiei highlighted that even if we accept their claims about the absence of specific laws regarding ani-



mal rights in Iran, our country still adheres to various international laws related to animal welfare. She argues that the conditions for animals in Iran is much better than those in many other countries, emphasizing that animal rights extend beyond dressing them in peculiar outfits and using them as entertainment props.

Iran has stringent laws in animal's rights

The official states, "I believe that animal rights in Iran are better upheld than in the West, where the emphasis is often on slogans rather than actions. Iran boasts solid laws, such as the permanent Hunting and Wildlife Preservation Act, providing full protection to animals crucial for environmental ecosystems and wildlife." Iran also enjoys another significant law, the Environmental Protection and Improvement Act, outlining responsibilities for various entities in the field of wildlife and animal care. These laws demonstrate Iran's firm commitment to the protection of ecologically valuable animals. The official emphasizes the cultural and religious aspects, explaining, "In addition to legal measures, Iran's rich Islamic culture places great emphasis on respecting the rights of animals and all creatures bestowed with the right to live. Humans are advised to uphold ethics and justice when interacting with animals and

other living beings." The rapid increase in stray dogs is partly due to families initially opting to keep animals like dogs and cats, she says, but later finding it financially challenging or unsuitable for their living spaces. Consequently, these animals are abandoned, contributing to the growing population of ownerless and stray dogs.

Growth of rabies diseases among stray dogs

Rafiei accepts the criticisms regarding the organization of stray dogs, saying, "While many countries have various laws governing the care of domestic animals and commitment to them, we lack any such laws in our country. This issue has led to consequences, including the phenomenon of ownerless dogs, contributing to the spread of diseases among dogs, specifically the outbreak of rabies diseases." The increase in ownerless and stray dogs has resulted in the growth of rabies diseases, imposing significant costs on the government. Each visit for rabies exposure by stray dogs, and the potential risk of contracting rabies diseases, on average requires three doses of vaccine and the injection of a vial of serum. The total cost for the government ranges between \$180 to \$240 per dog, providing these services for free. Considering the high number of dogs needing these services daily, the

government faces substantial expenses to cover the demand.

Organizing stray animals

There has been no specific rule or law regarding the organization of stray dogs in the country. However, efforts are underway as part of the Seventh Development Plan to address this issue, she says. The government is tasked with presenting a proposal to the Parliament swiftly to regulate the situation and assign responsibilities for handling stray animals. A comprehensive top-level law is needed to guide various government entities, including the Ministry of Interior, Health Ministry, Iran's Department of Environment, and municipalities, in their roles related to stray and aggressive animals. In addition to the challenges posed by the increase in ownerless and stray dogs, another issue drawing criticism regarding animal management in Iran is the decline in rare and endangered species, specifically the Iranian cheetah. Statistics show a significant reduction in the number of cheetahs, from around 80 in the early 2000s to approximately 30 to 40 in 2022, indicating a 50% decrease in the Iranian cheetah population. Rafiei addresses this concern, stating, "Global biodiversity has faced limitations, and Iran is no exception. Climate change has impacted wildlife habitats, imposing constraints on their existence. Other factors, including road accidents and hunting, have also contributed to the decline in populations of rare or endangered animals. The Hunting and Fishing Act, established in 1967 with subsequent amendments in the 1970s, plays a crucial role in conservation efforts, particularly focusing on protecting rare and endangered species. However, there is a need for a comprehensive review of laws related to animals, and efforts have been made in the Seventh Development Plan to amend and improve these regulations."