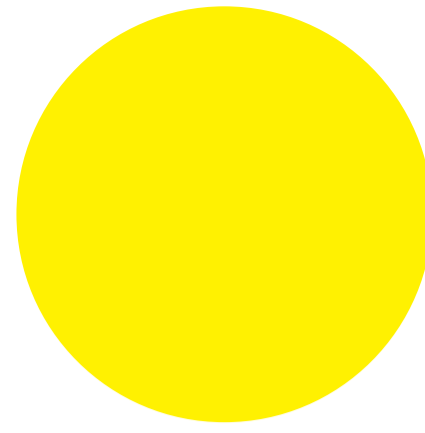


## Iran finish 3rd in Beach Soccer World Cup

Iran crushed Belarus 6-1 on Sunday during a third-place playoff in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in the UAE.



# Iran Daily



## Iran's Leader slams US for vetoing Gaza cease-fire resolution

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### Support for Ukraine, irresponsibility in Gaza

By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

**OPINION** The leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) stood by Ukraine against Russia on Saturday night in an online summit also attended by the Ukrainian president, and imposed new sanctions against Moscow on the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of its neighbor. At the same time, some Western leaders visited Ukraine to take part in a symbolic ceremony at the Kyiv airport to show their solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Canada and Italy also inked separate security pacts with Ukraine.

The West spared no effort to throw its weight behind Ukraine against Russia, while Israel's genocidal war raged in the Gaza Strip for nearly 5 months, killing nearly 30,000 Palestinians.

Continued pressure on Russia and unwavering support for Ukraine, while turning a blind eye to the catastrophe in the Gaza Strip, once again exposed the double standards of the West regarding human rights.

Media reports have shed light on the indescribable hardship the people of the Gaza Strip are going through under Israeli relentless strikes. In addition, the threat of a ground assault on Rafah in the southernmost region of the Gaza Strip looms large over the defenseless Gaggans, heralding another humanitarian disaster.

In an official statement, Israel categorically rejected the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and the United States keeps vetoing resolutions for a cease-fire in Gaza. The West, led by the United States, continues to ship weapons to Israel to press ahead with its crimes. All this implies that there is no clear vision for the security and life of the Palestinian people.

The West has irresponsibly ignored the disastrous situation in Gaza, while at the same time they focus on supporting Ukraine and ramping up pressure against Russia. No doubt, the war in Ukraine and the Ukraine people's plight should not be ignored. But the question is why don't the West pay such attention to the persecution of the Palestinian people?

Human values, such as the right to life and security for women, children, and civilians, as well as respect for human rights, should be upheld universally. What is considered a right for the people of Ukraine should also be considered a right for the people of Palestine and the Gaza Strip.

If these human values are to be inclusive and institutionalized in the world, it is expected that those who claim to be the advocates of such values to call for them for everyone and apply pressure on anyone violating them everywhere. Perhaps, if a little of the pressure applied against Russia was used against Israel, or at least arming this very belligerent regime were to be restricted, the scope of the disaster in the Gaza Strip would not have been so horrible.

It is wise for the G7 leaders to reflect on their acts and review that in a world in which they claim to be playing major roles, about 30,000 people have lost their lives in a densely populated area in nearly five months. Did the Palestinian victims have no right to the human values supported by the West?

## Campaigning Begins for Iran's Parliamentary Elections

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A large replica of a ballot box is seen in the middle of a square in the capital Tehran as Iran gears up for parliamentary and Assembly of Experts elections on March 1.  
● IRNA



EXCLUSIVE

Iran's March 1 Elections: **Parliament, Assembly of Experts await historic decisions**

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Iran's 11-month trade with neighbors tops \$55b: **Official**

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Oil sector's economic grew 21.8% in autumn: PBO

Iran's Plan and Budget Organization (PBO) chief announced that the oil and gas sector's economic growth in autumn 2023 reached 21.8 percent. Davoud Manzour said the country's economic growth in the season stood at 5.1 percent if the oil sector is included, and 2.5 percent if excluded, Shana reported. Pointing to the figures released by the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI), the official said the mining and services sectors witnessed 6.9 percent and 4.6 percent growth, respectively, during the three-month period, and the agricultural sector's growth rose to minus 1 percent, from minus 3 percent.

## Toy producers eye entering EAEU market: TPOI



Iranian toy producers have shown their interest in partaking in the 18th Moscow International Specialized Exhibition of Goods and Services for Children, said the director general of the technical-engineering services' office of the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI). Speaking in a coordinating meeting between Iranian producers and exhibitors, Mohammadreza Karimzadeh pointed to the issue of sanctions and the lack of the presence of some toy brands in the Russian market, adding that Iranian producers of toys should make the most of the opportunity to attract customers and introduce their products to their foreign peers in the toy industry. With the implementation of the trade agreement inked with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)'s member states, suitable grounds have been prepared for Iranian producers to showcase their latest products in the international arenas, he emphasized, reported Tasnim News Agency. Placing special emphasis on taking advantage of the capacities of Russian department stores, Karimzadeh pointed out that this issue should be taken into serious consideration by the exhibitors.

The TPOI is ready to throw its weight behind the domestic producers of toys participating in this edition of the exhibition, he said. The exhibition will kick off in Moscow on February 27, and will run through February 29, 2024.

# Iran's 11-month trade with neighbors tops \$55b: Official

The volume of Iran's trade exchanges with its 15 neighboring countries increased by 2.5% in past 11 months by reaching \$55.27 billion, the director general of Iran's Customs Administration announced. "A total of \$25.84 billion pertained to exports and \$29.43 billion pertained to imports from Iran's to-

tal trade exchanges with its neighboring countries," Mohammad Rezvanifar said, reported IRNA. He pointed out that Iran's exports to neighboring countries over past 11 months compared to the same period last year decreased by 3% in terms of weight and 9% in terms of value, and imports from

neighboring countries increased by 11% and 15%, respectively in terms of weight and value during this period. Rezvanifar pointed out that during this period, the value of Iran's exports to eight

neighboring countries decreased while it showed an increase to seven other neighboring countries during the same period. He pointed out that the value of Iran's exports to Iraq, Turkey, the Republic of

Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia decreased and to the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Oman, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan and Bahrain increased.

## Iran-Qatar Cooperation Committee convenes in Doha

The Sixth Iran-Qatar Joint Cooperation Committee meeting convened between Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare and Qatar's Ministry of Labor in Doha.

It set the stage for a new era in technical and professional cooperation as discussions deeply rooted in the shared vision of facilitating skilled Iranian labor and engineers to Qatar, according to mcls.gov.ir. The meeting which was co-chaired by Iran's Minister of Labor, Cooperatives and Social Welfare Sowlat Mortazavi and Qatari Minister of Labor Ali bin Samikh Al Marri underscored a mutual commitment to fostering growth and opportunities beyond borders.

The core agenda of the meeting revolved



around not only the deployment of skilled Iranian workforce to Qatar but also the intricate exchange programs for labor inspectors.

A significant highlight was the decision to form a joint committee aimed at aligning both countries' views on labor and employment matters. This move is seen as a strategic step towards implementing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed previously, laying down a robust framework for future collaborations.

The seventh committee meeting, slated to be held in Tehran in mid-2024, is eagerly anticipated as a next step in this evolving partnership.

The backdrop of this meeting was the preceding encounter between the labor ministers of both nations in Geneva, in June 2023. There, emphasis was placed on the need for increased cooperation in labor, employment, and skill training, highlighting the strategic importance of Iran-Qatar relations.

This dialogue not only acknowledged the mutual benefits of collaboration but also paid homage to the support extended during sanctions against Qatar, showcasing a testament to the resilience and solidarity between the two nations.

## Raisi to attend 7th GECF summit

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi will take part in the 7th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit of Heads of State and Government in Algiers, the capital of Algeria, on March 2, announced Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trade Ahmad Asadzadeh on Saturday.

Heading a high-ranking delegation, Raisi will deliver a speech at the summit to raise Iran's stances on strategies and policies of GECF for safeguarding its member states' interests, promoting their cooperation on the natural gas industry's development and its role in providing energy security, and investing more in the sector, the deputy oil minister continued, Shana reported.

The summit will open up an opportunity for GECF member states to hold constructive talks and exchange views about the recent energy, particularly natural gas, developments and future perspectives, he said.

According to the official, a High-Level Ad Hoc Working Group meeting and an extraordinary ministerial meeting to be attended by GECF member states' oil and energy ministers, including Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji, will be held prior to the summit, during which the essential documents, including the declaration,

will be prepared.

Asadzadeh pointed to important side events, saying the headquarters of GECF's Gas Research Institute (GRI) will open during an official ceremony in Algeria, the latest edition of the GECF Global Gas Outlook will be unveiled, exemplary individuals and institutions will be awarded, and a ceremony for signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with the African Energy Commission (AFREC) and the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) will be also held. Iran will host the 8th Gas Exporting Countries Forum Summit of Heads of State and Government in 2027.



## Pakistan poised to complete pipeline after decade to get Iran gas

The Pakistani government approved the start of construction work on its segment of the Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline. Islamabad's Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) approved the project, allowing work to begin from the Iranian border to the strategic port area of Gwadar in southwestern Balochistan Province at an estimated cost of \$158 million in a last-ditch effort to ward off \$18 billion in potential penalties from Iran, The Cradle reported. "CCoE approved the recommendations of the

Ministerial Oversight Committee for the IP project constituted by the prime minister in September 2023 whereby the committee recommended to start work on the 80-kilometer segment of the pipeline inside Pakistan, i.e., from Pakistan border up till Gwadar in the first phase," reads an official statement issued by the Ministry of Energy. "All the concerned divisions gave a positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy

needs of the country," the statement adds. Pakistan's Interstate Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd will execute the project, which is

set to be funded through the Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). The 2,775-kilometer-long IP project was launched



in 2013. However, it missed several deadlines due to long-standing US sanctions against Tehran. In September 2023, a senior Pakistani Petroleum Ministry official told a Senate committee that Islamabad was negotiating with Tehran to escape a potential penalty of \$18 billion in liabilities as the long-stalled project's deadline approaches in 2024.

Islamabad also approached Washington last year, asking for a solution, but received no response. Iran says it has already completed its side of the

pipeline and has invested \$2 billion in the project. Pakistan was initially expected to complete its part of the project by December 2014.

In March 2013, former Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari and his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad held a groundbreaking ceremony near Iran's port city of Chabahar, with an estimated cost of \$7.5 billion at that time.

Due to Pakistan's dire economic crisis, the nation faces regular blackouts lasting 12 hours per day, if not longer.

## New hydropower plants to boost power generation capacity by 4,000MW

Construction of new hydropower plants in Iran will increase the electricity generation capacity of the country by 4,000MW, announced the deputy head of the Energy and Water Resources De-

velopment of Iran on Sunday. Mashaallah Tab'e-Jama'at added that hydropower plants contribute to 73 percent of Iran's total electricity production, IRNA reported.

In line with the development of small- and medium-sized power plants with the participation of the private sector, the country has plans to build 200MW of small hydroelectric power plants

and 430MW of medium-sized power plants across the country, he noted.

The country's installed power plant capacity has reached 92,000 MW as Iran's capacity of renew-

able energies stands at 1,100 MW. According to Iran's energy ministry, there are more than one million kilometers of high- and medium-voltage and distribution networks in the country.

# Mysterious Khurbas Cave in Qeshm attractive for tourists



## Iranica Desk

Hormuzgan Province in southern Iran boasts various attractions, many of which are situated in Kish and Qeshm islands. One of the most renowned destinations in Qeshm Island is the Khurbas Cave. Located 15 kilometers from the city of Qeshm, this cave holds a mysterious and enigmatic past, one that remains open to interpretation.

Dating back to the Medes period, Khurbas Cave is a product of erosion within the Zagros Mountains. The cave features a peculiar and mysterious architecture, nestled amidst short and towering coral hills. Its structure bears resemblance to caves found in Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Lorestan, Bushehr, and Khuzestan provinces. The rock walls of Khurbas Cave stand at a height of 20 to 30 meters. The formation of these caves can be attributed to the retreat of seawater within the mountain, leading to the creation of interconnected cavities. Over time, individuals have imparted unique carvings, bestowing it with a distinct shape.

In recent years, artists have crafted new corridors and patterns within the cave to highlight the primary caves. These new passages feature designs akin to ancient carvings, serving to uphold its authenticity.

The Khurbas Cave, a notable tourist attraction in Hormuzgan Province, is located 15 kilometers south of the city of Qeshm, on the right side of the road leading from Qeshm to

the villages of Khurbas and Ramchah.

The entrance to Khurbas Cave comprises nine openings. Beyond these openings, there is a hall with two small alcoves that immediately capture one's attention. Inside the cave, there are interconnected halls, corridors, rooms, springs, and numerous openings. These rooms and halls measure approximately 4 by 5.5 meters. Additionally, at the base of the cave's entrance, there is a pond utilized for collecting rainwater, which remains full during the rainy season.

There are various theories regarding the people of this region and the use of Khurbas Cave in the past. Some suggest that during the time of the Medes, this cave was used as a place of worship. It is also believed that the cave's hall was utilized for holding memorial ceremonies for the deceased.

Others propose that after the people of this region converted to the Zoroastrian faith, it served as a "dakhmeh," a place where the bones of the dead are placed according to Zoroastrian tradition.

Another theory suggests that due to the cave's layout, it provided refuge for defenseless people who were attacked by pirates in the past. They carved out cavities inside the cave to seek shelter during times of danger for children, women, and the elderly. Additionally, they stored water, food, and stones for self-defense in this cave, while young men would go to war with invaders.



## Historical marvels of Tang-e Dalan village in Hormuzgan Province



## Iranica Desk

The historical Tang-e Dalan village in Hormuzgan Province can be considered a key to unlocking the historical treasures of Bandar Khamir. This village is located in the north-western tip of Khamir, and has been situated on the historical commercial route of Lar-Hormuz for centuries.

Every corner of the historical village reflects its long and eventful history. The artifacts that hold the secrets and mysteries of the past speak of the creativity, art, and forward thinking of the people of this land. A vast collection of very creative water structures, rarely seen in these regions, can be found here. Caravanserais, mills, water reservoirs, and more,

are just a few identified parts of these artifacts. The spring water that originates from the surrounding mountains is directed towards Tang-e Dalan through a canal, and after reaching a large and flood-prone river, it safely passes through it. Based on observations, it can be inferred that the water system and structure operated as follows: a cy-

lindrical structure was constructed at the beginning of the river, attached to the valley wall, and still stands today. Spring water cascaded down from the top of this structure through a pipe-shaped channel carved into the rock, descending below the river's surface. The water then flowed horizontally into another cylinder below the riverbed, guided upwards without the use of

mechanical tools. Continuing along the path, a combination was apparent, with some water passing through open channels. Similar to the initial cylinders, in certain sections, the water followed the same pattern and continued in this manner until reaching the end of the flood-prone area. The intriguing aspect here is that in the heart of the

mountain, a passageway and tunnel were excavated to transport water to the other side of the mountain. Subsequently, the water flowed into two watermills, constructed in a stair-like fashion on top of each other, before continuing into farms and agricultural areas. Two caravanserais were built around 10 meters apart, and the structural variances suggest they

were either constructed in different historical periods, or served different purposes. One of the caravanserais stands out significantly from others observed in Bandar Khamir. It boasts a strikingly high and beautiful entrance, a ceiling positioned much higher above the ground compared to its counterparts, and showcases distinct patterns and designs.

# On civilians' return to north Gaza

## What int'l humanitarian law requires



by Eliav Liebllich  
Law Professor  
at Tel Aviv  
University

### ANALYSIS

the International Court of Justice's recent ruling on provisional measures in South Africa's case against Israel.

In recent weeks, Israel has reportedly "scaled back" its operations in some areas in Gaza, while it prepares to ramp up in others. At present, the humanitarian situation among displaced Palestinians in South Gaza remains extremely dire, with the UN warning of impending famine. The humanitarian situation in the area was central to

The majority of those sheltering in the Rafah area in South Gaza have fled from North Gaza, when in the weeks following the October 7 attacks by Hamas, Israel called on all residents of the area to evacuate south of Wadi Gaza. With the worsening humanitarian situation, the United States, as well as other actors, stressed that residents should be allowed to return to North Gaza as soon as possible. While the area is itself devastated after months of war, this might, at the very least, alleviate the overcrowding in the camps in the South. Should Israel expand its operation into Rafah, the need for people to move back north, it seems, would be even more accentuated.

In its initial calls to leave North Gaza, the Israeli military declared that the evacuation was temporary and that its sole purpose was to protect civilians from the intensive bombardments in the area. Nonetheless, the policy was criticized by some international organizations as a potential act of forcible displacement, and the United Nations General Assembly has called upon Israel to rescind the policy (operative paragraph 5). Furthermore, some worry that

the Netanyahu cabinet's "true" intention behind the evacuation — following statements by far-right ministers that Palestinians should be "encouraged" to leave Gaza, and that Israel should rebuild its settlements there — is to permanently ban evacuees from returning, or at least to elongate the evacuation for political reasons, such as to pressure Hamas to release Israeli captives. For his part, the IDF Chief of Staff reemphasized, on January 13, that in his view, the

evacuation is temporary and that "[w]hen we know there is no danger to the population [in North Gaza], we will be able to consider bringing them back."

To the extent that the initial evacuation from North Gaza was unlawful, on whatever grounds, then it obviously cannot serve as a justification for the prevention of return to the area. Furthermore, any suggestion that people should be "encouraged" to leave Gaza is so blatantly unlawful, that it does

not require serious legal engagement at all. However, this essay is not about the consequences of unlawful evacuation. Rather, it discusses the rules that should determine return assuming that an initial evacuation could be grounded in law as a temporary measure, as claimed by the IDF. Furthermore, this essay does not deal with obligations to ensure humanitarian access to civilians in Gaza, which remain in place in any case.



Palestinians leave their homes and migrate to safe areas with their belongings as Israeli attacks continue on the Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City on February 20, 2024.

● DAWOUD ABO ALKAS/  
ANADOLU AGENCY



An Israeli tank and other military vehicles guard a position as Palestinians flee Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on January 26, 2024, amid ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian resistance group Hamas.

● AFP

## Assessing two possible legal grounds

Before proceeding, it should be emphasized that there are extremely narrow grounds that could allow, under international humanitarian law (IHL), for the temporary evacuation of civilians during armed conflict. An evacuation that runs counter to these — as well as prevention of return when the relevant grounds have expired — may amount to an international crime of forcible transfer (when the evacuation is within the territory) or deportation (when the evacuation is to an area outside the territory).

The first potential legal ground for temporary evacuation is when a warning of impending attacks is given as a precautionary measure. Sometimes, such an evacuation can be a consequence of the duty to give an advance warning before an attack that may endanger the civilian population. Usually, such a warning is

given before a specific attack. However, in certain circumstances, an advance warning could relate to a wider area, where attacks on a large scale are expected. If not an advance warning in the strict sense, such a call could also follow the more general duty to take constant care to spare the civilian population. To emphasize, as with all precautions, under no circumstances does a warning alone transform any protected object or person into a lawful target. Furthermore, issuing such a warning does not release the party to the conflict from its obligations to ensure humanitarian access to those remaining in the area.

More crucial for our purposes is that such a measure — if viewed as a type of advance warning or precaution — is extremely limited in its ability, if at all, to justify prolonged evacuation. Crucially,

an advance warning does not create a legal obligation for civilians to evacuate — as the attacker has no legal authority over them — nor does it in itself justify preventing persons from returning. Indeed, if the purpose of the call to leave an area is to advise civilians to evacuate for their own safety, and does not create an obligation to do so, it obviously cannot provide a legal basis for preventing return. This reveals a broader conundrum: if the earlier evacuation call is phrased as a warning (which people are free to accept or reject), there needs to be another source to actively bar their return. Even setting this conceptual problem aside, a threshold issue concerns the scale of hostilities. When the intensity of the fighting in the relevant area decreases below the level that putatively justified the initial broad warning, it is no longer

possible to rely on the previous level of danger to civilians to prevent them from returning to the area now.

Therefore, the IDF Chief of Staff's statement that once the danger subsides people would be permitted to return to North Gaza is in the right direction; however, it is wrong on the law by requiring that this will be the case only when there is "no danger" in the area. Unfortunately, there is always a danger to civilians during hostilities, particularly in urban areas. The question is not whether there is any danger, but rather whether the danger remains on a level that justified the initial evacuation, or perhaps whether the situation is imminently expected to return to such a level. It would be hard to argue this is the case any longer in North Gaza, especially as IDF operations have been reportedly "scaled

back" in the area and considering the extent of the aerial bombing that already took place.

The second ground for evacuation stems from the law of occupation, and as opposed to the previous ground, may also provide legal authority for evacuations. Under Article 49(2) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the occupying power may evacuate a population from a certain area if the safety of the population or imperative military reasons require it. However, it is impossible to invoke powers under the law of occupation without the corresponding duties. Crucially, this power is preconditioned on an obligation to ensure as much as possible that proper living conditions exist in the area to which civilians are evacuated, and furthermore, the evacuees must be allowed to return to their



homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question cease. In any case, since there is a significant risk of abuse of the powers recognized in Article 49(2) — and in particular concerning military reasons for evacuation — it should be interpreted narrowly.

Now, many of those who criticize Israel's initial evacuation, proceed from the assumption that Israel was an occupying power in Gaza at the time the order was issued and has failed to ensure proper living conditions in South Gaza. The question of whether Gaza was fully, "functionally," or not occupied at the time is beyond the scope of this essay. What is important is that in recent weeks, the Israeli military has claimed to possess "operational control" in North Gaza, which supports the view that at least now it is an occupant in North Gaza (although, this control might be in flux in some areas). This remains the case even if there are some clashes in the area, as the mere existence of such clashes does not necessarily negate the existence of occupation. Article 49(2) itself concedes this possibility by recognizing that some hostilities can take place within occupied territory, as grounds for evacuation. Arguably, then, even if it is accepted that the initial evacuation was predicated on an advance warning during active hostilities, after which Israel proceeded to occupy the area, any prevention of return post-occupation becomes a de facto evacuation order also under the law of occupation and subject to its regulation.

This de facto transformation of the warning into an order under the law of occupation has two key implications. First, the occupant is under a strong affirmative obligation to restore public order and to act for the benefit of the local population. This obligation requires that the military commander act positively to facilitate the residents' return. Second, the occupying forces must work to ensure that proper living conditions exist in the area to which people were evacuated. That, indeed, goes beyond the occupant's general obligation to ensure the welfare of civilians in the area it controls.

In terms of the safety of the population as grounds for evacuation from occu-

piated territory, here the analysis seems to merge with that above concerning advance warning. The occupant cannot rely on reasons for evacuation that were predicated on intense and sustained aerial bombardment of the area, to justify prevention of return after the area is occupied. Namely, it is clear that evacuation under Article 49(2) cannot stand until the end of the armed conflict as a whole, and it is likewise clear that this provision cannot allow prevention of return as long as there is fighting of any intensity in the area.

Notably, Article 49(2) does not refer only to the security of civilians as grounds for evacuation, but also to imperative military considerations. Furthermore, some claim — as the US Department of Defense Manual states in Section 5.19 — that in sieges, belligerents may prevent civilian access to certain areas. Israel might argue, in this context, that if the return to North Gaza is permitted, there is fear that Hamas fighters will impersonate civilians and return to the area. However, this risk cannot justify a blanket denial of the return of all civilians. Just as the presence of some enemy fighters in a civilian area cannot alone justify the complete removal of civilians from the area to begin with, so is the fear that some enemy fighters may return cannot justify total prevention of the return of civilians. Even if one accepts that the law of siege might recognize such restrictions — an issue not dealt with here — it is difficult to view the situation in the whole of North Gaza as one of siege, considering that Israel claims to exercise operational control within the area. A siege is about exercising external control. One cannot have it both ways. Furthermore, should an argument be made that imperative military considerations can include the creation of a security buffer zone by evacuating civilians from an area, this would not hold on any reasonable reading of Article 49(2). Not only is the article to be read narrowly so as not to weaken the prohibition on forcible transfer or deportation, but it is also explicit that evacuees should be allowed to return as soon hostilities in the evacuated area cease. This quite clearly excludes any preventive rationale as an imperative military consideration.

## Proportionality

Whatever rationale a force invokes for evacuations, the principle of proportionality has special significance. Although this principle usually applies to "attacks," Israel's own Supreme Court has ruled that proportionality also applies to other measures undertaken in armed conflict and occupation, such as the route of the West Bank Wall. Other sources also apply proportionality beyond attacks. The San Remo Manual, as part of a broader trend, applies proportionality to blockades, and the updated version of the DoD Manual also adopts proportionality in the context of measures intended to starve enemy forces (Section 5.20.2). It is also possible to argue that residual "laws of humanity and dictates of public conscience," which are part of IHL, require that military considerations cannot justify unlimited harm to civilians, even when the law does not explicitly speak the language of proportionality. This also makes sense in terms of the law's coherence. It would be unsustainable to argue that a single attack that might risk, say, a few people, would be subject to a proportionality assessment while military measures that might affect millions would not.

Thus, it seems that even in cases where civilian safety or imperative military considerations could justify evacuation, if a humanitarian crisis occurs in an area to which civilians have been evacuated, proportion-

ality may under certain conditions create an obligation to allow the civilians to return. Concerning North Gaza, any security advantage potentially sought by preventing disguised Hamas fighters from returning to North Gaza must be balanced against the acute humanitarian crisis that exists in Southern Gaza due, among other things, to the overcrowding there. Likewise, any risk for civilians in North Gaza today does not seem to outweigh the risk in South Gaza, due to the humanitarian conditions there — not to mention the risk to evacuees if significant military operations take place in Rafah itself.

The war in Gaza raises complex dilemmas, owing to the extent of embeddedness of armed groups in the urban infrastructure both above and underground, the offensive capabilities and motivation they displayed on October 7 and since, as well as the presence of captives. These factors implicate both the safety of the local population and give rise to operational challenges across the board. When military considerations arise, however, they must remain military and not political; and even when they remain as such, some rational balance must exist between benefit and harm. Proportionality as a general principle under IHL best captures this balance and closes the normative void that otherwise exists. The conditions in South Gaza are a quintessential example of harm that one

would be incredibly hard-pressed to justify, even in relation to civilian safety or military considerations in North Gaza.

In sum, there are two potentially lawful grounds for evacuations: the safety of civilians and, in cases of occupation, imperative military considerations. Any evacuation of civilians on these grounds must be temporary and closely related to the underlying lawful cause. The initial grounds for the evacuation of North Gaza in October — which were officially predicated on the safety of the civilian population — cannot be said to persist at the level of intensity that putatively justified the evacuation almost four months later, and accordingly, cannot alone justify maintaining the situation. If the cause of evacuation is related to imperative military considerations, these should be concrete, defined, and limited. Perhaps most importantly, proportionality requires Israel to take into account the humanitarian calamity in South Gaza. Owing to the scale of this crisis, that humanitarian cost almost certainly outweighs any putative safety or military consideration in letting civilians return to relative safety in North Gaza; indeed, especially when those competing safety and military interests could be afforded through other measures.

*The article first appeared on Just Security.*



Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint, as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City on January 27, 2024.

● REUTERS



# Iran skipper Hajsafi rejects international retirement rumors

## Sports Desk

Ehsan Hajsafi, the long-serving captain of the Iranian national football team, says he has no intention of calling time on his international career.

The 34-year-old fullback, the third most-capped Iranian player of all time, was part of the team at the re-

cent-

ly-finished AFC Asian Cup in Qatar, where Iran suffered a 3-2 defeat against the host in the semifinals.

The Iranian squad was the oldest in Qatar and many think the team needs fresh blood ahead of the World Cup in two-years' time, with manager Amir Qalenoeei insisting last week that he and his staff have already embarked on a rejuvenation project for the upcoming qualification double-header against Turkmenistan in late March, which may come at the expense of some of the senior players.

However, in a recent interview with Varzesh3, Hajsafi, who plays for Greek Super League champion AEK Athens, said he is yet to consider international retirement as he is "in the best form of my life."

"No one has talked to me about that and I have not given it a thought either as I am in top mental and physical form," said Hajsafi, who made four starts in the Asian Cup and was the last player to score from the spot as

Iran defeated Syria in the last-16 shootout.

"I play for one of the top teams in Greece and was the best left back in the league last season, not to mention played against some high-profile sides in the Europa League this term," added the Iranian, whose contribution convinced the club to sign a two-year extension to his contract.

"I think I am in the best form of my life, though Team Melli's coaching staff will have the final say on who will be called up for the national team. All

I know is that I will try to deliver my best if I am selected again."

The Asian Cup had been tipped as a perfect opportunity for arguably the finest generation of the Iranian footballers in years to celebrate a fitting finale to their Team Melli careers by lifting a first trophy in the continent's flagship international event in nearly five decades but the final outcome turned out to be a seventh last-four heartbreak for the country.

Qatar, which had been hammered

by four goals against Iran in a friendly in October, went on to defeat Jordan in the final for a second successive Asian crown.

"I still can't believe Qatar won the title. They were not as good as the previous edition and we were thrilled to land them in the semifinals," said Hajsafi, who represented the country in a fourth consecutive Asian Cup.

"I believe in luck in football and if we had converted our chances the result would have been different. I still regret the defeat. We should have been in the final and lifted the trophy."

Qalenoeei's men stepped into the last-four showdown on the back of a massive 2-1 victory over Japan – widely regarded as the most formidable team in the continent and the pretournament favorite – and many Iranians say the team was carried away by the triumph when taking on the host, but Hajsafi thinks that was hardly the case.

"We were fully focused on the contest and started right on the front foot. When we scored after five minutes, I thought we were going to beat them by three or four goals again. We only had ourselves to blame for the individual errors on their goals and should take lessons for the future," said Hajsafi, who was forced out with an injury at halftime in the semifinal.

With eight Asian teams directly qualifying for the expanded World Cup in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, Iran looks to have a comfortable path toward a fourth successive berth in the global showpiece, though Hajsafi has other ideas, given

some decent runs by the likes of Jordan, Uzbekistan, and Iraq in the Asian Cup.

"All Asian teams have improved as we saw some shock results in Qatar. No one fancied Palestine, given the situation in the country, but they progressed to the knockouts, or even Hong Kong had a good game against us. That was a wakeup call for us as there will be no easy games in the qualifiers."



ADAM NURKIEWICZ/GETTY IMAGES

## World Freestyle Wrestling Clubs Cup: Iran's Shahr Bank crowned champion



IRNA

## Sports Desk

Iran's Shahr Bank was crowned the champion at the 8th World Freestyle Wrestling Clubs Cup in Tonekabon, northern Iran. The Iranian club dominated the Indian representative 9-1 in the final showdown on Friday.

Mahdi Veisi (57kg), Reza Atri (61kg), Russian Abasgadzhi Magomedov (65kg) – the reigning world silver medalist

– Morteza Qiasi (70kg), Amir-mohammad Yazdani (74kg), Amirhossein Firouzpour (92kg), Ahmad Bazri (97kg), and Mojtaba Goleij all came out on top against their opponents, with Mohammad Nokhodi handed a walkover victory in the 79kg contest, as the Iranian club claimed the team title for a second successive year.

The Indian team's single win came in an all-Iranian 86kg showdown, where Ali Savadk-

ouhi suffered a shock defeat against Sajjad Gholami.

Iranian side Shazand Petrochemicals defeated the Kazakhstan team 8-2, thanks to victories for Reza Mo'meni (61kg), Armin Habibzadeh (65kg), Ali-Akbar Zaroudi (70kg), Amirhossein Hosseini (74kg), Mohsen Kouchnejad (79kg), Ali Shakouri (86kg), Ali Mansouri (92kg), and Abolfazl Rostampour (125kg), to finish on the third podium.

## Croatian Ivankovic named China head coach

CGTN – Branko Ivankovic, former manager of Oman, has been appointed at the helm of the Chinese men's national football team, succeeding Aleksandar Jankovic, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) announced on Saturday.

"In order to better prepare for the Asian section of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualification, the CFA, after discussions among experts, has decided to hire Branko Ivankovic as the manager of the Chinese men's national football team," the Chinese football governing body said in a statement.

Ivankovic, 69, managed Shandong Taishan in the Chinese Super League (CSL) between 2009 and 2011, helping the club win the CSL title in 2010. He also worked as the boss of the national teams of Iran and Oman. Back in 2002, Iran won the football men's gold medal at the Asian Games in Busan, South Korea, under his leadership.

Ivankovic served as the manager of Oman between 2020 and 2024. The team failed to make it out of the group stage at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup in Qatar

this year with two draws and one loss.

China had the same record as Oman did at the Asian Cup under Jankovic. After two goalless draws against Tajikistan and Lebanon, China lost to Qatar 1-0, failing to advance to the knockout stage.

As a result, Jankovic was sacked, the CFA said in another announcement earlier on Saturday.

"After the Asian Cup in Qatar, since the Chinese men's national football team didn't ad-

vance to the knockout stage, the contract of the manager and the coaching staff was automatically terminated," the CFA said. "Jankovic is no longer manager of the team. The CFA thanks him and his coaching staff for their efforts in managing the team and wishes him good luck in both his life and at work in the future."

Jankovic became the manager of China in February 2023. The team finished the 15 games under him with four wins, four draws and seven losses.



AFP

# Iran's Leader slams US for vetoing Gaza cease-fire resolution

International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei denounced the US for "brazenly vetoing" a UN Security Council resolution to stop the ongoing Israeli genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The third US veto of a Security Council resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza revealed "the lies of Western civilization's claims about human rights and the hypocrisy of Westerners in the Gaza issue", the Leader said Saturday, Press TV reported.

The US vetoed a draft UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on Israel's war on Gaza, prompting widespread criticism from rivals and allies alike.

The move on Tuesday was the third US veto of a UNSC resolution demanding a cease-fire in Gaza, and came a day after Washington circulated a resolution that would support a temporary cease-fire linked to the release of all Israeli captives from the Palestinian territory.

"The Westerners, who make noise and uproar for the execution of a criminal, have turned a blind eye to the killing of 30,000 innocent



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses organizers of a conference to honor the sacrifices of Iran's Khuzestan province during the 1980-1988 war on Iran. [khamenei.ir](http://khamenei.ir)

people in Gaza, and the US has brazenly vetoed the resolution to stop bombing Gaza for the umpteenth time," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"This is the true face of Western culture and civilization and liberal democracy, which on the surface,

there are spruced-up politicians with smiles on their faces, but inside, it is a rabid dog and a blood-thirsty wolf," he added.

Ayatollah Khamenei likened Western civilization to a "lopsided load that will not reach home", but "the culture of the righteous and

correct logic of Islam will prevail". The US veto of the UN resolution drew criticisms from many countries.

Zhang Jun, China's envoy to the UN, expressed "strong disappointment and dissatisfaction" with the US.

"The US veto sends a wrong message, pushing the situation in Gaza into a more dangerous one," said Zhang, adding that objection to a ceasefire in Gaza is "nothing different from giving the green light to the continued slaughter".

Russia's Ambassador to the UN Vasily Nebenzia said the US veto marked "another black page in the history of the Security Council".

He accused the US of trying to play for time so that Israel could complete its "inhumane plans" for Gaza, namely to squeeze the Palestinians out of the territory and completely "cleanse" the territory.

France's UN envoy Nicolas de Riviere expressed regret that the resolution "could not be adopted, given the disastrous situation" in Gaza. Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour told Al Jazeera that the US veto was "very regrettable".

"Call it whatever, humanitarian, describe it as you wish, but immediate cease-fire, as requested by the secretary-general of the UN, and almost all humanitarian agencies of the United Nations, and a massive number of countries in the General Assembly," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

## Iran denies sending ballistic missiles to Russia

Iran categorically denied Western media accusations that it provides ballistic missiles to Russia in its war with Ukraine.

The dismissal came after Reuters cited "six sources" as claiming earlier in the week that Iran had provided Russia with a large number of powerful surface-to-surface ballistic weapons amid deepening military cooperation between the two strategic partners.

"Despite no legal restrictions on ballistic missile sales, Iran is morally obligated to refrain from weapon transactions during the Russia-Ukraine conflict to prevent fueling the war—and that is rooted in Iran's adherence to international law and the UN Charter," Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations said in a post on its official X account on Friday.

Reuters also claimed in its report that the "shipments began in early January after a deal was finalized in meetings late last year between Iranian and Russian military and security officials that took place in Tehran and Moscow."

Following the groundless accusations, the US administration warned Iran of a "swift and severe" response from the international community if it had provided Russia with ballistic missiles.

## Campaigning begins for Iran's parliamentary elections

National Desk

Candidates running for the Iranian parliamentary seats launched their election campaign on Thursday, one week ahead of the polls.

Voters are due to cast their ballots on March 1 to select new members of parliament, as well as the 88-seat Assembly of Experts that oversees the activities of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and is in a position of authority to either appoint or dismiss the Leader.

A large number of electoral

posters and banners have been erected in favor of individual candidates or their coalitions. The candidates have also been allowed to place campaign ads on television.

Large billboards and election posters have sprung up in the capital Tehran and other cities to announce the start of campaigning, urging people to take part. Officials have also repeatedly called for a high turnout in the elections.

Last week, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei urged

people to head to the polling stations.

"Everyone should participate in the elections," he said last week. "It is important to choose the best person, but the priority is for people to participate."

President Ebrahim Raisi has also urged people to cast their ballots on March 1.

Some 15,200 candidates have been approved by the country's Constitutional Council to compete for Parliament's 290 seats. It's a record number and more than twice the candidates who ran in the 2020 elections, when

voter turnout was just over 42%. The current Parliament has been dominated by conservatives.

On Wednesday, the Constitutional Council sent the names of the 15,200 qualified candidates to the Interior Ministry, which holds the elections. Any candidate for elections in Iran must be approved by the council.

The candidates include 1,713 women, which is more than double the 819 who ran in 2020. The elections will be held on March 1, and the new Parliament will convene in late May.



## Algerian magazine publishes special issue on Iran



International Desk

The Algerian magazine for children, Ghomaida, has published a special issue to introduce Iran.

The six-page story is titled, "Iran, the Land of Civilization and Revolution".

Ghomaida is one of the most professional magazines for children in the Arab country. Ghomaida means 'hide and seek', which is a popular children's game.

The magazine has published articles about Iran's historical sites including Persepolis – the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire, and Iran's scientific achievements.

## US, UK launch fresh strikes on Yemen

American and British forces on Saturday carried out a fresh wave of strikes on Yemen, including the capital Sana'a.

A joint statement by the US-led coalition forces in the

Red Sea claimed the strikes targeted 18 Ansarallah movement's targets across eight locations in Yemen including weapons storage facilities, attack drones, air defense systems, radars

and a helicopter, according to AFP.

It was co-signed by Australia, Bahrain, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand, who gave unspecified "support" to

the new round of strikes, the second this month and fourth since Yemen began their attacks on Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Yemen's Armed Forces' spokesman Yahya Saree was defiant, vowing in a social media statement that the Ansarallah movement would "confront the American-British escalation with more qualitative military operations against all hostile targets in the Red and Arab Seas."

Saturday's operation comes after several vessels were struck this week in the region, including the fertilizer-filled Rubymar, whose crew had to abandon ship after it was hit several days ago and began taking on water.

British maritime security agency UKMTO reported another attack on an unspecified ship near the port of Djibouti on Saturday night, saying there had been an "explosion in close prox-

imity to the vessel, no damage is reported to the vessel and there are no injuries to the crew."

Iran condemned on Sunday the latest strikes by the US and Britain on Yemen, saying they were seeking to "escalate tensions and crises" in the region.

"With such attacks, America and Britain seek to escalate tensions and crises in the region, and expand the scope of war and instability," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a statement.

"Certainly, this kind of arbitrary and aggressive military operation, aside from aggravating insecurity and instability in the region, will not achieve anything for these aggressor countries," Kanaani added.

He further condemned the US and Britain for failing to "take immediate and effective action" to stop Israel's deadly campaign in Gaza.

**Gaza situation**  
Yemen say their attacks on

shipping around the Red Sea are in support of Palestinians in war-ravaged Gaza. Israel's military campaign in Gaza has claimed the lives of more than 29,690 people so far. Israel's onslaught has also wounded 69,879 people since October 7.

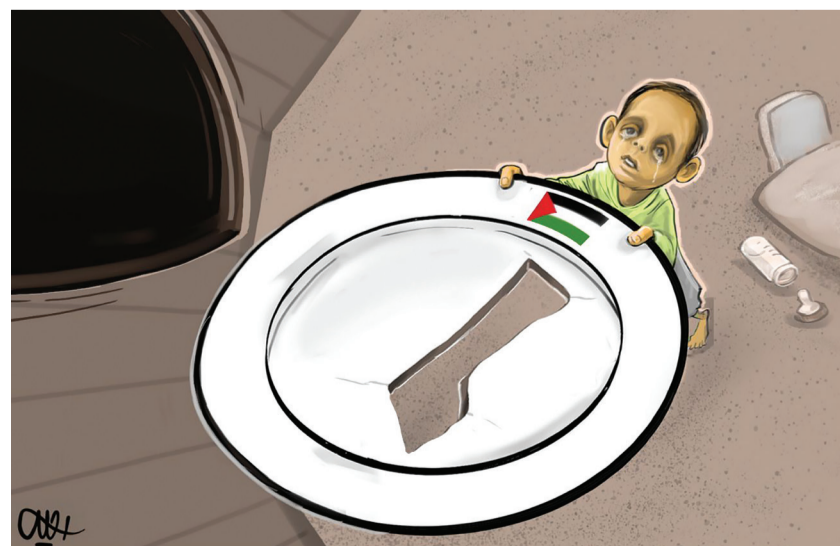
People in the besieged territory are also facing starvation as Israel has continued relentless bombardment and blocked delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid.

Dire food shortages sent hundreds of Palestinians fleeing northern Gaza on Sunday.

Desperate families in the north of the besieged war zone have been forced to scavenge for food as fighting have stopped humanitarian aid trucks from reaching the devastated area.

Hundreds fled northern Gaza Sunday and headed south whichever way they could, walking down garbage-strewn roads between the blackened shells of bombed-out buildings.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



# Iran's March 1 Elections: Parliament, Assembly of Experts await historic decisions

Iran is gearing up for two significant elections on March 1: the 12th parliamentary and the 6th Assembly of Experts elections. With the candidate list now finalized and preparations in progress, the country is eagerly anticipating these upcoming elections.



### Parliamentary elections

- Eligible voters from 31 provinces will choose their provincial representatives for the 290-seat Parliament.
- Five seats in the Iranian Parliament are reserved for religious minorities. A representative of Parliament has a four-year term.
- To secure victory and serve as a lawmaker for the four-year term in the 290-seat Parliament, a candidate needs to attain a minimum of 20 percent of the votes cast in his or her constituency.
- Should candidates fall short of the required percentage, there is a possibility of a second round of elections to determine the outcome for undecided seats.
- This term, approximately one million personnel will be involved in ensuring smooth elections at about 59,000 polling stations.



### Assembly of Experts

- Assembly of Experts is composed of 88 Islamic jurists and clerics who, based on the Constitution, are responsible for appointing, supervising, and dismissing the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.
- The body holds biannual meetings to review major national issues and every other year to appoint a new chairman.
- Members of the assembly are directly elected to office by the people for an eight-year term.
- All candidates must possess high-level clerical knowledge to be eligible to run for the Assembly of Experts elections.

### Registration process

- The 12th round of the parliamentary election registration process was carried out via the Interior Ministry's website, and candidates were required to meet specific criteria.
- The registration period for this term took place between Oct. 19-25, 2023.
- During this period, 24,829 volunteers registered, with 12% of them being women.
- The Constitutional Council confirmed the approval of 15,000 candidates for the parliamentary elections.
- The eligibility criteria for candidates include a minimum age of 30 and a maximum age of 75, a master's degree or its equivalent, Iranian citizenship, and no dual nationality.

### Election campaigns

- The election campaigns for the sixth round of the Assembly of Experts elections began on February 14, and will last for 15 days.
- A total of 500 hopefuls submitted applications for membership in the 88-member assembly, although jurists in charge of vetting the candidates only approved 144.
- In this election, as per the Constitution, the minimum age requirement is 40.
- It is compulsory to have a level four seminary degree.
- The Assembly of Experts has 88 seats, with 16 seats allocated to Tehran Province.

### Qualification process

- Under the Iranian Constitution, candidates who file their nominations are vetted by the Constitutional Council before they make it to the final list.
- The Constitutional Council is the 12-member oversight body, with six of its members being Islamic jurists, directly appointed by the Leader, and six members being nonclerical jurists.



### Elections in past years

- The first election for the Assembly of Experts took place on December 10, 1982, with approximately 18 million voters participating.
- Seventy-five candidates were elected, while the remaining candidates went to a second round of voting.
- The assembly commenced its activities on August 15, 1983.
- Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf was elected as the speaker.
- The vote was overshadowed by the disqualification of some reformist candidates as well as the lowest turnout in the country's history, 42.4%, which was attributed to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran.
- Reformists received 6.9% of the vote, a decrease from 41.7% in 2016.
- On the other hand, conservatives got a whopping 76.2% vote share, up from 28.6% in 2016.
- The 2020 parliamentary elections, out of roughly 14,000 people who registered to run for Parliament, more than 6,500 names were rejected by the Constitutional Council.
- The 2020 election was held in the backdrop of the anti-West wave in the country following the assassination of Iran's top military commander Qassem Soleimani in a US airstrike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020.
- The last election was swept by the conservatives, with reformists getting only 20 seats.