



Iranian FM: World facing most 'shameful moral' crisis in Gaza

Security Council inaction on Gaza, Ukraine could 'fatally' hurt its authority: UN chief

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian described Israel's atrocities in the Gaza Strip as the most shameful moral and humanitarian crisis in history, saying that the regime should be held accountable for its crimes. Addressing the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in the Swiss city of Geneva on Monday, he said the realization of the human rights goals in the international arena is facing serious challenges, including systematic and widespread killing of humans by the world's only apartheid regime, Israel. Amir-Abdollahian said the world is facing the most shameful moral and humanitarian crisis that is because of 75 years of support and negligence towards the colonial occupation and the continu-

ous violation of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. The Iranian diplomat said that during the past 140 days, more than 100,000 people have been killed, injured, or buried under the rubble due to Israel's strikes on Gaza, and those who are still alive are at risk of imminent death from hunger and infectious diseases in Gaza and the West Bank. Amir-Abdollahian underlined that the world should not let genocide and committing heinous crimes become a matter of routine. He added that, today, the world is witnessing the unwavering support of the US and its allies for the regime. Amir-Abdollahian said that the UN Human Rights Council must hold Israel and its allies accountable for the regime's crimes against humanity.

The Iranian diplomat also held a meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on the sidelines on the conference.

Famine in Gaza

Amir-Abdollahian pointed to the humanitarian crisis in the north of the Gaza Strip, saying that the Israeli regime has killed thousands of Palestinians with bombs, and now wants to kill the remaining Palestinians by starvation. The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini on Sunday warned that famine is stalking Gaza as aid agencies struggle to deliver food to the north of the territory. Aid agencies say that Israel has been delaying deliveries. Israel also plans to launch a ground invasion on Gaza's southern city of Rafah, where 1.4 mil-

lion Palestinians live in crowded shelters near the Egyptian border. Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council, Guterres said that Rafah is "the core of the humanitarian aid operation" in besieged Gaza. A full-scale Israeli military operation in Rafah would deliver a death blow to aid programs in Gaza, the UN chief warned.

Deadlock in UNSC on wars

The UN chief also warned Monday that deadlock in the organization's Security Council on the wars in Gaza and Ukraine risked "fatally" undermining its authority, stressing the need for "serious reform". In another shock impact of the almost five-month-old war, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh in the occupied West Bank handed in his govern-



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian delivers a speech at the opening of the 55th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on February 26, 2024. **GABRIEL MONNET/AFP**

ment's resignation to the head of the Palestinian Authority, President Mahmoud Abbas. Shtayyeh cited "developments related to the aggression against the Gaza Strip and the escalation in the West Bank and Jerusalem [Al-Quds]" where deadly violence has surged amid the Gaza war. Shtayyeh in brief comments cited "the new reality in the Gaza Strip" and urged inter-Palestinian consensus and the "extension of the Authority's rule over the entire land of Palestine". Israel's war on Gaza has so far killed at least 29,692 people, mostly women and children.

Heavy snowfall hits most Iranian provinces

National Desk

Heavy snowfall has blanketed many cities across Iran, leading to the closure of schools, cancellation of flights, and shortage of gas in several cities. Government closed its offices in several provinces including Gilan and North Khorasan due to severe cold weather and insufficient gas supplies. The governor of the northern province of Gilan, Assadollah Abba-

si, reported more than one meter of snowfall in the mountainous areas. He said that efforts are underway to open roads that have been closed due to the snowfall. Gilan airport announced the cancellation of six flights to the capital Tehran, northeastern city of Mashhad and Kish Island in the Persian Gulf due to snowfall on Monday. Meanwhile, two flights from Tehran to Kerman were forced to return due to poor

visibility. In Tehran, especially in its northern areas, snow has covered everything. There are also reports of disruption in gas supply in several areas in the capital, as cold weather has increased gas consumption in the country. Temperatures dived to minus 14°C in the northwestern city of Heris, in East Azarbaijan Province, making it the coldest Iranian city on Monday.

Arab states tell ICJ Israeli occupation is 'affront to justice'

The League of Arab States on Monday called Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories an "affront to international justice", saying failure to end it amounted to "genocide". The International Court of Justice entered its last day of week-long hearings after a request from the United Nations, with an unprecedented 52 countries giving their views on Israel's occupation, according to AFP.

"This prolonged occupation is an affront to international justice," the 22 Arab-country bloc's representative told judges in The Hague. "The failure to bring it to an end has led to the current horrors perpetrated against the Palestinian people, amounting to genocide," Abdel Hakim El-Rifai said, reading a written statement. Most speakers during the hearings have demanded that Israel end its occupation, which came after a six-day Arab-Israeli war in 1967. But last week the United States said Israel should not be legally obliged to withdraw without taking its "very real security needs" into account. Speakers on Monday warned a prolonged occu-



AFP

pation posed an "extreme danger" to stability in the Middle East and beyond. "If left unchecked, it runs the risk of not only threatening regional, but also global peace and security," Turkey's representative Ahmet Yildiz said. Zambia's representative however told judges that both sides had a duty to negotiate a peaceful settlement. "Both Israel and Palestine have a duty to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law," Marshal Mubambe Muchende said. The UN has asked the ICJ to hand down an "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem [Al-Quds]". The court will probably de-

liver its opinion before the end of the year but it is not binding on anyone. Israel is not taking part in the oral hearings. It submitted a written contribution, in which it described the questions the court had been asked as "prejudicial" and "tendentious". The hearings began a week ago with three hours of testimony from Palestinian officials, who accused the Israeli occupiers of running a system of "colonialism and apartheid". The case before the court is separate from one brought by South Africa against Israel for genocide during its current offensive in Gaza. In that case, the ICJ ruled that Israel should do everything in its power to prevent genocidal acts in Gaza and allow in humanitarian aid.

Hezbollah fires rockets at Israeli military base

Hezbollah fired on Monday a volley of rockets at an Israeli military base, the Lebanese group said after Israel's first strikes on Lebanon's east in months of hostilities linked to the Gaza war.

Two Hezbollah members were killed in the Israeli strikes in the eastern Baalbek area, AFP reported. "In response to the Zionist aggression near the city of Baalbek," fighters targeted an army base in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights "with 60 Katyusha rockets", Hezbollah said in a statement. The Israeli army told AFP that "dozens of rockets" had been launched from Lebanon. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The military had said the strikes near Baalbek targeted Hezbollah air defense systems in retaliation for the group downing one of its drones in south Lebanon earlier on Monday. One of the Lebanese security sources said Israeli strikes hit a building used by Hezbollah in a Baalbek suburb, and a warehouse near Baalbek belonging to the group. Hezbollah later announced two of its fighters had been killed by Israeli fire. Israeli attack was the first Israeli attack on Hezbollah outside Lebanon's south since war erupted on October 7 between Israel and Palestinian Hamas resistance group Hamas.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Raisi: Some int'l legal cases need offensive approach



National Desk

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said it is necessary to take an offensive approach in defending the rights of the Iranian nation in some legal cases.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the officials of the Presidential Department for Legal Affairs on Monday. "So far, the dominant approach in the country's international legal cases has been a defensive approach, while in some cases, it is necessary to take an offensive approach in defending the rights of the Iranian nation and facing aggressive countries in order to assert our rights," he said. Raisi also thanked the department's officials for following up Iran's legal cases in international courts, including the US assassination of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

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Cartoonist

