



## Worldwide protests call for Gaza cease-fire

Londoners urge end to UK complicity in Israel's decades-long oppression

### International Desk

Hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets on Saturday in several major cities around the world to show solidarity with Palestinians and call for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. In Britain's capital, London, tens of thousands of protesters marched in central city to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. The march, from Hyde Park Corner to the US Embassy, was the 10th pro-Palestinian march in central London since Israel started its onslaught on Gaza following the October 7 attacks by the Hamas resistance group. "We will continue to protest until a cease-fire is called, and until there is an end to all UK complicity with Israel's decades-long oppression of the Palestinian people," march organizer Ben Jamal said ahead of the protest. Singer Charlotte Church was

seen at the front of the march as it set off.

The Welsh singer, who has been a vocal campaigner, said she had joined to "show solidarity" with Palestinians "for all that they are suffering through".

Israel's military launched an air and ground strike on the Gaza Strip after Hamas's deadly attacks on Israel on October 7, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 253 others were taken captive. Israel has killed nearly 31,000 people in Gaza since then.

The conflict has created a growing humanitarian crisis in the territory and the UN has warned that famine in Gaza is "almost inevitable".

At least 576,000 people across the Gaza Strip – one quarter of the population – are facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, and one in six children under the age of two in the north are suffering from acute malnutrition, a senior

UN aid official warned last week.

### Israel's president not welcome in Amsterdam

In Netherlands' capital Amsterdam, where Dutch King Willem-Alexander officially opened the country's first Holocaust Museum on Sunday, demonstrators angry at Israel's military campaign in Gaza protested against the regime's President Isaac Herzog, who also addressed the ceremony.

Thousands gathered waving Palestinian flags and banners, and shouting "Never Again Is Now," a reference to their belief Israel is committing genocide in the Palestinian territory.

They booed and shouted slogans as the dignitaries arrived at the museum.

"There's only one place for him [president of Israel] here and that's the ICC," said Estelle Jilissen, a 25-year-old consultant, referring to the International Criminal Court that tries sus-

pected war criminals.

"A lot of Jewish people are against his arrival here as well because the pain of their ancestors, the suffering of their ancestors, is being smeared by this president's arrival," said Jilissen.

### New York demonstration

In the US, thousands of pro-Palestine protesters flooded the streets of New York as part of a demonstration on International Women's Day, which saw them storm the Oculus near the World Trade Center.

Footage shows the demonstrators clutching Palestinian flags, shouting and cheering after they successfully squeeze into the shopping center on Friday. Once inside, they formed a drumming circle and waved banners which read: "30, 878 dead and Joe is eating ice cream," in reference to the president nonchalantly slurping on an ice cream cone while being grilled about the situation between Israel and Gaza recently.



Pro-Palestinian activists and supporters wave flags and carry placards on a march through London during the National Day of Action for Palestine on March 9, 2024.

● HENRY NICHOLLS/AFP

### Rallies in Bosnia, Serbia

Meanwhile, thousands gathered in the capitals of Western Balkan countries to show support for Palestine amid an intensified Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip. People in Bosnia and Herzegovina gathered with Palestinian flags in their hands in front of the public fountain in Bascarsija in Sarajevo.

Meanwhile, hundreds participated in protests in Serbia's Novi Pazar, where most Muslims reside.

Protesters came together with banners painted in red, symbolizing blood, and created a human text message: "Free Gaza". Similar protests were also held in Calgary, Canada; Rome, Italy; and Paris, France.

## Raisi congratulates Zardari on his election as Pakistan's new president



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi congratulated Asif Ali Zardari on his election as the new president of Pakistan. In a message on Sunday, Raisi expressed hope that the two countries will further develop mutual relations during Zardari's presidency given mutual historical, cultural and religious bonds.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as always and especially in the new tenure, announces its readiness to develop relations with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan," he said.

Zardari, the widower of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, on Sunday was sworn in after winning a second non-consecutive term. He previously served as president from 2008 until 2013.

Pakistan's newly formed National Assembly, as the lower house of parliament is called, on March 3 elected Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister for the second time by 201 votes, presiding over a shaky alliance that has shut out followers of jailed opposition leader and former prime minister Imran Khan.

## Hezbollah targets Israeli positions with rockets, drones

The Hezbollah resistance movement launched rocket and drone attacks on positions in the Israeli-occupied territories in retaliation for a deadly attack by the regime's military on southern Lebanon carried out early on Sunday.

In a statement released on Sunday, Hezbollah said that its fighters had targeted the Meron settlement in the occupied territories with Katyusha rockets, Press TV reported.

The group said it also launched a drone attack on Israeli artillery launchers in the Arar barracks and fired rockets at a gathering of the regime's soldiers east of the Birkat Risha outpost.

The operation came "in response to the enemy's attacks on the steadfast southern villages and civilian homes, the most recent of which was the attack on ... Khirbet Selm and the martyrdom" of five people, it said.

A family of four, including a father, his pregnant wife and their two sons, and another individual, were killed in the Israeli strike on a house in the Khirbet Selm village in southern Lebanon on Sunday, Lebanon's official National News Agency reported.

The air raid also wounded at least nine others who lived nearby.



Smoke billows above buildings following an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese border village of Majdal Zoun on March 9, 2024.

● AFP

## The year since Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement



By Emad Abshenas  
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### OPINION EXCLUSIVE

A year ago, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia returned to normal after several years following an agreement mediated by China. After different experiences and based on the existing facts, Iran and Saudi Arabia came to a conclusion that they should restore diplomatic relations, while each side had its own reasons to do so. Since the signing of the agreement, it was expected that relations between the two countries would expand to economic fields and international cooperation.

However, contrary to expectations, these relations have remained at the diplomatic or political level for now, and have not expanded to other areas. Perhaps there are still some political issues and controversial issues that have not been resolved. On the other hand, it seems that Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries of the Persian Gulf region are waiting for the results of the presidential elections in the United States.

One of the reasons behind Riyadh's decision to ease tensions with Theraan was its differences with the policies of the US government – the issue that sparked Saudi Arabia's decision to expand relations with the East, namely China, Russia and Iran.

Saudi Arabia also needed to establish peace with the Ansarallah movement in Yemen to proceed with its development plans, and the agreement with Iran helped to end the war in Yemen.

On the part of Iran, there are still some concerns regarding relations with Saudi Arabia, as the economic relations between the two countries have not changed significantly, and even the issue of Hajj and pilgrimage between the two countries is still facing problems.

At the level of international cooperation, differences still exist between Tehran and Riyadh – an issue that was obvious during a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the Gaza war.

In addition to bilateral issues, some external pressures may also have an impact on relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Before the restoration of relations, countries such as Oman, Qatar and Iraq had acted as mediators, but the signing of the agreement required a reliable mediator to guarantee the agreement. Therefore, China stepped in and played a positive role.

Although the United States did not oppose the normalization of relations between the two countries, it exerted pressure on Riyadh to also normalize relations with Israel. However, due to domestic opposition and opposition from the Arab world, Saudi Arabia could not advance the issue of normalization with Israel before determining the issue of Palestine.

Therefore, there may be pressure from the US and Israel on Riyadh to hinder progress in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While there are many capacities on both sides to develop relations and extend them to economic, cultural and international cooperation fields, ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia have remained at the diplomatic level over the past year.