



Iran posts growth in exports to Russia, Belarus

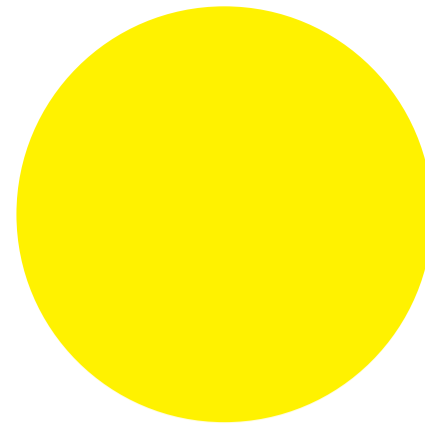
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Revenge, geopolitics and ideology

SPECIAL ISSUE

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Why was Iran victorious on the battlefield?



By Ali Kakadezfuli
Managing Director

OPINION

Throughout its political history, Iran has demonstrated that it has never been, and will never be, the initiator of war, even against its top adversaries. However, it has consistently invested in strengthening its defensive capabilities. This is in stark contrast to Western and European nations, which have been historically unreliable and have demonstrated a readiness to engage in military actions against political systems that do not serve their interests. Despite the inevitability of having to prepare for war, a closer look at the political and military track record of Iran reveals a clear adherence to the ethics of warfare, often termed "responsible warfare."

In responsible warfare, Iran observes the following principles: it sets forth initiatives that can either achieve peace or de-escalate to prevent wars; it adheres to ethical principles and international laws during armed conflicts; it distinguishes between soldiers and civilians on the hostile side; it uses military force proportionally according to the nature of the conflict; it upholds principles of justice and fairness in military engagements; it makes efforts to minimize long-term consequences of conflicts; it achieves military objectives while preserving ethical values; it minimizes the impact of conflict on all parties involved, both directly and indirectly.

Iran's defensive reactions to Israel also reflect these notable characteristics.

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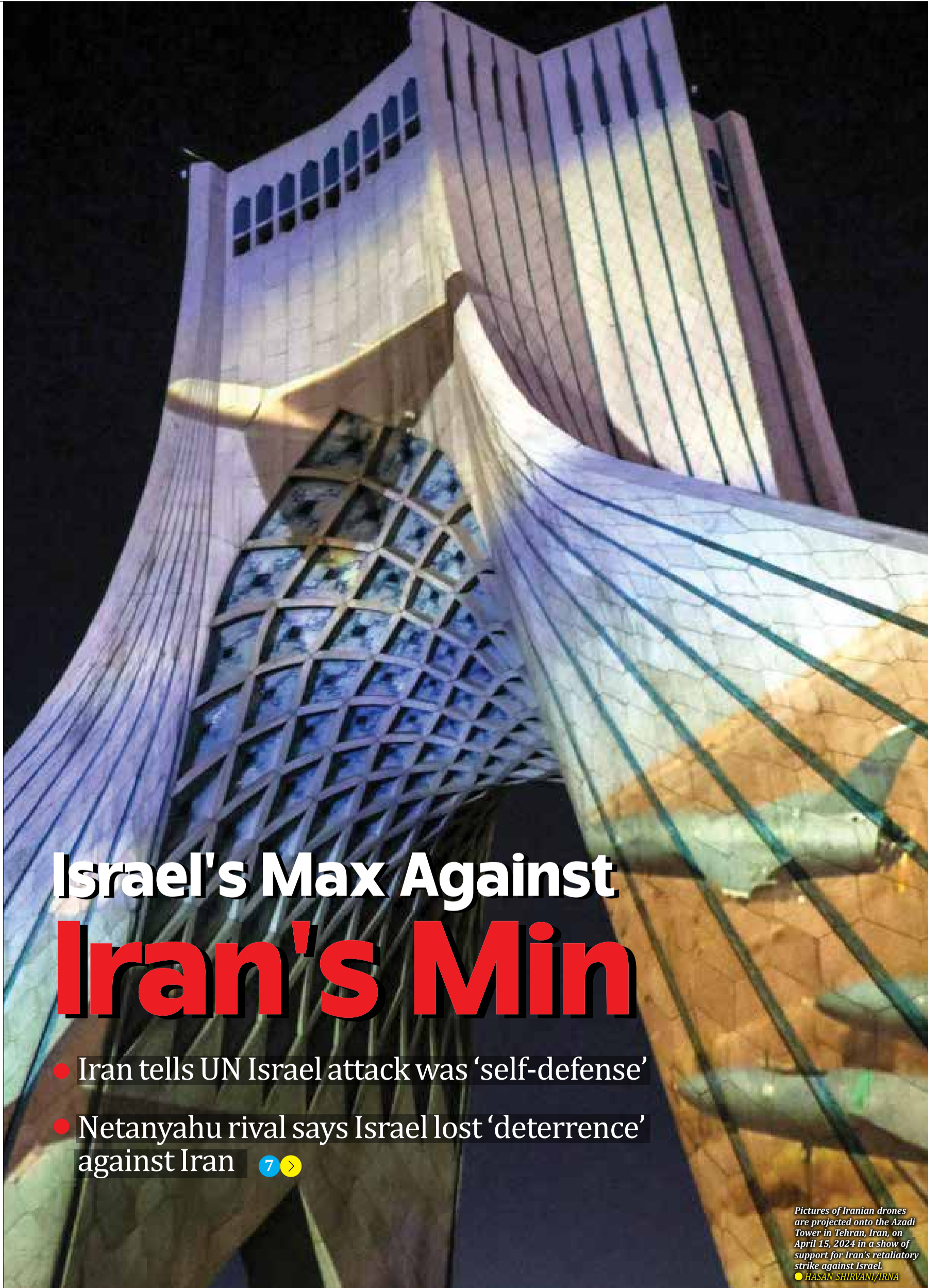


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Pictures of Iranian drones are projected onto the Azadi Tower in Tehran, Iran, on April 15, 2024 in a show of support for Iran's retaliatory strike against Israel.
● HASAN SHIRVANI/IRNA

Iran's annual aluminum ingot output exceeds 635,000 tons: IMIDRO



Iran's production of aluminum ingot in the previous Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2023 to March 19, 2024) surpassed 635,000 tons, showing an about one percent rise compared to a year earlier.

Iran's four major aluminum production companies produced 635,597 tons of aluminum ingot during the 12 months, the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) added, Tasnim News Agency reported. In this period, Iran's Alumina Production Company produced 222,138 tons of alumina powder, 374,106 tons of aluminum hydrates and 598,599 tons of bauxite, it added. According to the available statistics, the country had produced about 632,166 tons of aluminum ingots from March 21, 2022, to March 20, 2023.

Aluminum oxide, which is commonly called alumina, is an inert, odorless, white amorphous material often used in industrial ceramics. Alumina is an important ceramic material for industrial applications. The numerous fields of application range from construction materials to filling materials, as well as abrasives and catalysts.

Iran posts growth in exports to Russia, Belarus



An official at the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI) said the country's export of products to Russia and Belarus in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024) registered a considerable growth in volume and

value. Head of the Central Asia, Caucasus and Russia Office of the TPOI Akbar Godari said Iran exported 2.185 million tons of non-oil products, valued at \$946 million, to Russia from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, reg-

istering a hike in value and volume compared to a year earlier, reported Tasnim News Agency. The statistics indicate that Iran's export of various types of products to Russia in this period registered a 26 and 52 percent growth in value

and volume respectively, Godari stated. He pointed to the import of products into the country from Russia and said \$1,691 million of products were imported into the country from the Russian Federation last year, showing a 9

and 27 percent growth in value and volume respectively compared to a year earlier, IRIB news reported. Elsewhere in his remarks, Godari pointed out that Iran exported \$20 million of products to Belarus from March

21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, showing a 34 percent hike in value compared to a year before. In this period, Iran imported \$59 million of products from Belarus, registering a 35 percent growth compared to a year earlier, he added.

IRICA seizes Israeli-made chemical fertilizer cargo

The customs officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) confiscated a cargo of Israeli-made chemical fertilizer being transited through the country.

The cargo of the chemical fertilizer, containing potassium nitrate manufactured by the Zionist regime of Israel had been declared to Iran's Bazargan Customs

Office through a truck carrying the cargo for fulfilling the foreign transit formalities heading to the Republic of Uzbekistan, IRICA added, reported IRNA.

The import and transit of any kind of Israeli-made products through the customs offices of the country is strictly banned. Tough controlling and

monitoring measures are now carried out by the customs officials of the country on Israeli-made goods, the report added.

Earlier, an Iranian Foreign Ministry official said that an updated list of the banned products made by Israeli-linked companies had been forwarded to the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran.



Iran a reliable economic partner for gas importing countries



PERSPECTIVE

Iran has been introduced as a reliable economic partner after long years of signing contracts with and exporting gas to neighboring states.

The Oil Ministry has put great emphasis on promoting energy diplomacy since the 13th administration took office in August 2021, Shana reported.

To achieve the strategic goal by relying on domestic capacities, all affiliated companies and groups of the Oil Ministry, including the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC), have put the talks with other

countries, particularly the neighboring states, on the agenda in an effort to earn foreign currencies.

The extension of the contract on exporting Iran's gas to Iraq for the next five years on March 27 was the latest move to attain the objective.

The contract extension was signed by Majid Chegeni, the NIGC managing director, and Ziyad Ali Fazel, Iraq's minister of electricity, in Baghdad.

Based on the contract, the volume of gas exports to Baghdad and Basra will vary during the warm and cold periods of the year. Based on two contracts,

Iran exported around 52 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas worth \$15 billion to Iraq in the past five years. Fazel has underlined that Iraq's power plants are in dire need of Iran's gas to generate electricity, calling Iran a good economic partner, which has met his country's needs in critical conditions.

Untangling a 'mess'

Iran has taken major steps to extend its contract on exporting gas to Turkey and untangle what is once described as a "mess". Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Alparsalan Bayraktar held

talks with Iran's Oil Minister Javad Owji on April 4, expressing his country's willingness to extend the gas contract during a session on technical issues.

Speaking at the 8th meeting of Iran-Turkey High-Level Cooperation Council in Ankara in January 2024, Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi said, "Given the existing capacities in the two states, Iran-Turkey annual trade volume could hit \$30 billion."

Raisi and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan also met at the 16th Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Summit in

Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan, in November 2023, showing their interest in extending the gas contract.

Iran exported over 156 billion cubic meters of gas to Turkey in the past 28 years, and the two sides are keen to extend the strategic deal.

Fruitful talks with Pakistan

Tehran's negotiations with Islamabad on the revival of their contract for exporting gas to Pakistan have borne fruit, as the latest news and reports show that Islamabad has commenced the work after a 10-year hiatus to begin the construction of

the 80-kilometer section of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline from Gwadar to a point where it can be connected with the Iranian section of the project.

The development comes amid the United States' explicit opposition to the bilateral project.

Speaking to congressmen during a congressional hearing in Washington last month, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu stated that the United States opposes the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project and is exerting maximum efforts to prevent its construction.

The US official said Washington was in contact with Islamabad on the matter.

Reacting to Lu's remarks, Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch underlined that since the pipeline is being constructed inside the country's territory, "we do not believe there is room for any objections by any third party".

Last month, Pakistan's Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik said Islamabad's position on the gas transfer project with Iran is not merely an expression of desire but "the need of the hour".

Other achievements

Iran has been exporting gas

to Armenia according to their gas-electricity swap contract since the incumbent government took over in August 2021.

On August 15, 2023, Tehran and Yerevan extended their agreement until 2030 under which Iran exports more natural gas to Armenia in exchange for electricity and the ratio of bartering gas with electricity was amended in favor of Iran's NIGC.

In another move toward promoting energy diplomacy, Owji announced in May 2023 that Iran's gas debt to Turkmenistan has been cleared, saying the debt was fully paid in three installments over the past 20 months.

Following the debt settlement, the imports of gas from Turkmenistan resumed and volume of gas swap rose to 8 billion cubic meters per day from 4.5 bcm/d.

Iran's participation in the 7th Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) Summit of Heads of State and Government in the Algerian capital Algiers in March 2024 was also among important developments.

Delivering speech at the summit, President Raisi made strategic proposals, which will undoubtedly play an effective role in strengthening Iran's position in the assembly.

Masouleh on the path of global registration



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By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The dossier for the global registration of the historical city of Masouleh in Gilan Province has been prepared and will be submitted at future sessions of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, announced a Parliament representative from Furman and Shaft.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Khalil Behrouzifar highlighted that the global recognition of Masouleh is expected to boost tourism in this historic city and province.

Situated in the southern part of Gilan province, Masouleh is located 36 kilometers from Fuman and 60 kilometers from the provincial capital of Rasht. Known for its unique stepped architecture, where houses are built on the mountain slope, the area has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the northern region of the country. Masouleh's distinct architectural style features lower buildings with courtyards that serve as the roofs of upper buildings, while both front yards and rooftops are uti-

lized as pedestrian paths.

The Member of Parliament further emphasized that Masouleh, the historic town, stands as a pivotal tourist destination in Gilan Province. Over the recent years, substantial endeavors have been dedicated to overcoming the hurdles obstructing its inclusion on the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List.

Up to now, representatives from UNESCO and their accompanying delegations have conducted two comprehensive visits to Masouleh and its surrounding areas to compile detailed reports essential for the global registration process. Highlighting Masouleh's rich history spanning 800-1000 years, he noted its initial registration on Iran's National Heritage List in the 1970s, with endeavors towards global recognition commencing in 2010.

From 2020 onwards, provincial authorities have persistently navigated the intricate pathway towards Masouleh's global registration. Each visit by international assessors and UNESCO experts has propelled this town closer to the coveted global acknowledgment, marking significant progress in this ongoing journey.

He expressed, "Undoubtedly, the global recognition of Masouleh will draw an influx of tourists and travelers from both Iran and across the globe in Gilan Province. This surge in visitors will not only bolster the tourism sector but also positively impact the livelihoods of the local community."

Additionally, he highlighted the historical significance of Rudkhan Castle as another prominent tourist attraction in Gilan Province. Spanning over two hectares and situated atop the highest peak in the region, the castle served military purposes in the past. Accessing the castle necessitates ascending a minimum of 800 steps meticulously constructed to reach its summit.

Gilan Province consistently leads the nation in hosting travelers during Nowruz (Iranian New Year), attracting seven to eight million visitors annually from various parts of the country. Touching upon the attractions of Shaft, he noted that Shaft stands out as a forested and elevated town in Gilan Province, housing the revered tombs of two Imamzadehs named Imamzadeh Es'haq and Imamzadeh Ebrahim. These sites hold



Khalil Behrouzifar

significant religious and touristic value in Gilan Province.

The mausoleum of Imamzadeh Es'haq is perched atop Siahkuh's summit, soaring over 1,000 meters above sea level. Regarded as an emblem of Gilan Province, it provides a breathtaking vantage point showcasing the entirety of the province and the city of Rasht. This picturesque setting offers travelers and tourists a stunning panorama, immersing them in the natural beauty of the region.

In contrast, Imamzadeh Ebrahim rests within the verdant and elevated landscapes of Shaft, boasting a distinctive architectural style. The site features multi-story wooden houses intricately arranged side by side, forming a striking historical architectural ensemble nestled within the heart of nature.

Embark on a peaceful day trip to Dasht-e Havij

Iranica Desk

For the residents of Tehran, a day away from polluted air, noise, and urban traffic is a great blessing. Therefore, the natural attractions around the capital are of great importance and have always had many fans. The Dasht-e Havij (Carrot Plain), also known as Garchal Plain, is one of the most beautiful tourist attractions in Tehran Province and is located in a delightful area near Afjeh village.

Introduction

Situated at an altitude of 2,400 meters above sea level, upstream of the Afjeh and Lavasan, Dasht-e Havij offers a breathtaking view of Mount Damavand from its heights. For residents of Tehran and nearby cities, Dasht-e Havij is considered one of the best options for a one-day trip.

The name *havij* is interesting, and its origin can be traced back to the history of this plain. Historical accounts mention that in the past, a large part of the lands of this plain were dedicated to the cultivation of carrots, although there is no trace of this today.

It is said that in the Safavid era, this plain was a hunting ground and connected to the Lar Lake plain via a path. Along the way, remnants of Safavid caravanserais can be seen near a stone wall. The plain and its surroundings have many attrac-



karnaval.ir

tions, so it is advisable to start your trip early in the day to visit all the attractions without getting tired of the heat. If you travel to this area, it's worth visiting the beautiful attractions and pristine landscapes of the valley located in the north of Afjeh. This valley attracts tourists throughout the year and is a favorite of mountaineers.

Best time to visit

Since Dasht-e Havij is considered a warm place, it is not recommended to visit in the summer. In the autumn and winter, despite the cold weather, this area takes on a different charm; especially in winter, it becomes a popular place for winter sports. With all

these features, the best time to visit the plain is in the spring; a time when nature puts on a new garment and a fresh atmosphere reigns over the plain.

Recreational facilities

Dasht-e Havij is somewhat part of the properties of the people in the surrounding villages; those who spend their days gardening and fruit picking. So, do not forget to respect the rights of the people and be careful not to damage the trees and properties of the people. This area does not have any special recreational facilities; however, in Afjeh village, you can use facilities such as a restaurant, a shop, and a restroom.



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Empowered by Biden's grant of impunity

Netanyahu violates Vienna Convention, plays the victim



By Juan Cole
Expert on
Middle East affairs

OPINION

It was not only the strike on the Iranian embassy that set the stage for Iran's barrage but also the six months of intensive Israeli bombing of the Palestinians of Gaza, in which the vast majority of those killed were innocent non-combatants, with 70% being women and children and many others noncombatant men. The death toll now stands at 33,686 Palestinians.

Only a small clique of fighters committed the horrific October 7 attack on Israel, without telling anyone else what they were planning. There is no military or other justification for using an artificial intelligence program to identify all members of Hamas's paramilitary (some of which is the equivalent of a neighborhood watch for local security) and to murder them from the skies along with their spouses, children, extended families, and neighbors.

Iran is pledged to defend the Palestinians, and Israeli atrocities have set the blood of the peoples in the Middle East to boiling and much raised the esteem in which they hold Iran. The embassy strike was the last straw. If Iran did not reply to it at least symbolically, its credibility, and any deterrence it was perceived to have, became a joke. Netanyahu for his part was attempting to provoke Iran, in the hope that Tehran would take the bait. He knew that even Washington had come to see Israel as the aggressor in Gaza and that he was losing support in Congress. He knew that if the issue became an Iranian attack on Israel, the Western capitals would all rally around him and forgive him, at least for a while, for having brought the Israeli equivalent of Neo-Nazis into his cabinet and then gone Amalek on tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

Earlier on Saturday the naval section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps boarded and confiscated a container ship in the Gulf of Oman that belongs to the company of one of Netanyahu's billionaire backers. While this action violated the law of the sea and can't be condoned, it hit Netanyahu where it hurts, and no one would have cared about it in the outside world.

Now, we have to suffer with Netanyahu proclaiming his victimhood (he started it) and suffering through statements of solidarity with his fascist cabinet.

As many observers are pointing out, this very dangerous situation was caused by President Joe Biden's mishandling of the Gaza crisis. He should have cut Netanyahu off at the knees by January 1, once it became clear that the Israelis were implementing their notorious Amalek imperative, which implied genocide. By vetoing three United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding a cease-fire and by undercutting the only one he allowed to pass by branding it non-binding, Biden let the butchery continue apace. It continued the past week, during which Israel continued to bomb the bejesus out of Gaza, to kill hundreds of innocents, and to starve them (despite phony pledges to let more aid in, on which Netanyahu did not follow through).

Biden, UK PM Rishi Sunak, and other leaders could also have defused the deliberate provocation of Iran by Netanyahu by simply condemning the embassy attack of April 1 and defending the Vienna Convention. The Iranian mission to the UN said this plainly:

"Had the UN Security Council condemned the Zionist regime's reprehensible act of aggression on our diplomatic premises in Damascus and subsequently brought to justice its perpetrators, the imperative for Iran to punish this rogue regime might have been obviated."

Instead, Biden and his allies declined to condemn Netanyahu's action, continuing the North Atlantic insouciance toward Israeli war crimes and continuing the implementation of their double standard whereby International Humanitarian Law applies only to white people. That is, there is not as much difference between Trumpian white nationalism and Biden's foreign policy as it might seem on the surface, though the latter is, of course, worse.

The full article first appeared on Informed Comment.



US President Joe Biden (3rd-R) meets with members of the National Security team in the White House Situation Room regarding the unfolding missile attacks on Israel from Iran on April 13, 2024.

ADAM SCHULTZ/THE WHITE HOUSE

Revenge, geopolitics and ideology

Why did Iran attack Israel?



People wave the Palestinian and Iranian flags as they gather in the streets of Tehran in celebration of Iran's drone and missile attack on Israel on April 13, 2024.

ATTA KENARE/AFP



By Daniel Harper
Freelance Journalist

PERSPECTIVE

Iranian missiles and drones rained down on Israel on Saturday, tipping the pair close to war. But why? What is driving hostility between Israel and Iran?

The Middle East is currently on high alert, bracing for more potential violence between Israel and Iran.

This heightened state of readiness comes in the wake of an unprecedented Iranian attack on Israel overnight from Saturday to Sunday, with Tehran launching hundreds of drones and missiles.

But why? What has pushed the two powers into direct confrontation?

Recent events in Syria

A recent air strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria has reignited hostilities between the regional rivals.

Israel is suspected of being behind the attack, though it has not claimed responsibility.

Several senior military officers, including two top Iranian Revolutionary Guard commanders, were killed in the strike, with Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei threatening to "slap" Israel in retaliation.

However, the incident underscored deep-seated animosity between the two nations, rooted in decades of geopolitical rivalry and ideological differences.

Initially, during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran, bilateral relations were relatively peaceful. Iran was even one of the first Muslim-majority countries to recognize Israel's statehood.

This suited Israel's diplomatic stance toward creating ties with non-Arab neighbors, as the Arab nations surrounding Israel were hostile after events like the 'Nakba' and the Six-Day War.

The dynamics shifted dramatically with the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which saw the establishment of the anti-Western Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. This regime change led to the severance of diplomatic ties between Iran and Israel, with Iran's new theocratic rulers not recognizing the legitimacy of Israel.

They rallied in support of fellow Muslims in Palestine and denounced Israel as an imperialist creation of the US.

A cold peace followed. However, the onset of Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet in Israel in the early-mid 1990s saw an adoption of a more assertive stance towards Iran.

One reason was the defeat of Iraq by the US in the Gulf War, which shifted regional power towards Israel and Iran.

The rhetoric between the two nations then intensified during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran in the 2000s, who made inflammatory statements against Israel, exacerbating bilateral tensions.

Iran's pursuit of nuclear technology since the 2000s has raised alarm bells in Israel and beyond, with fears of a potential nuclear arms race in the region.

Spheres of influence

One of the key drivers of conflict between Iran and Israel is their pursuit of influence in the Middle East through proxy wars. Iran has a long history of supporting resistance groups such as Hezbollah in the 2006 Lebanon War and Hamas in Gaza, both of which have engaged in armed conflict with Israel.

Israel has conducted numerous military strikes against Iranian targets in Syria, perceiving Tehran's presence as a direct threat to its security.

Iran and Israel have been engaged in a prolonged proxy conflict since 1985, significantly shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. Both countries have provided support to opposing factions in Syria and Yemen.

In Syria, Iran backed the Syrian govern-

ment, while Israel has supported opposition groups.

In Yemen, Iran has supported the Houthis, while Israel has assisted the Saudi-led coalition.

These conflicts are driven by geopolitical interests with each trying to undermine the other or achieve goals that would enhance their position.

Hostilities have extended into realms such as cyber-attacks and sabotage, targeting each other's infrastructure, including nuclear facilities and oil tankers.

Entanglement in Israel-Hamas war

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza has further heightened tensions in the region.

Iranian leaders have openly criticized Israel's military operations in Gaza, expressing support for Hamas and other groups engaged in attacks against Israeli targets.

The recent escalation of violence in Gaza has exacerbated the already volatile situation, raising concerns about the potential for further conflict across the Middle East.

The conflict between Iran and Israel holds significant implications not only for the region but also for international actors like the United States.

With Israel being a key ally of the US, any escalation in tensions could draw American involvement, impacting broader strategic interests in the Middle East.

The article first appeared on Euronews.

Iran has a long history of supporting resistance groups such as Hezbollah in the 2006 Lebanon War and Hamas in Gaza, both of which have engaged in armed conflict with Israel. Israel has conducted numerous military strikes against Iranian targets in Syria, perceiving Tehran's presence as a direct threat to its security.

Are embassies off-limits?

Ecuadorian, Israeli actions set dangerous precedent



By Jorge Heine
Interim Director of
Pardee Center

OPINION

It has long been held that embassies should be treated as "off-limits" to other nations. Yet in a single week, two cabinets stand accused of violating, in different ways, the laws surrounding foreign diplomatic missions. First, on April 1, 2024, Iran's embassy in Damascus was bombed, presumably by Israel, killing several high-ranking commanders of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Then, on April 5, Ecuadorian police forced their way into the Mexican Embassy in Quito to arrest a former vice president of Ecuador who was seeking political asylum. Both actions have led to claims of international law violations and accusations that the Vienna Convention, which establishes the immunity of diplomatic missions, was contravened.

As someone with a fair amount of knowledge of embassy life — I have served as Chile's head of mission in China, India, and South Africa and co-edited *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* — I believe the two incidents are of greater concern than much of the international community appears to be viewing them. Contrary to the famous quip from late businessman and presidential candidate Ross Perot, embassies are not just "relics of the days of sailing ships". Rather, in an increasingly complex world where geopolitical conflict, mass migrations, pandemics, and climate change require careful and stable diplomatic management, any incidents that erode the sanctity of embassy rules could have serious negative consequences. In short, they make for a more dangerous world.

Curious indifference to embassy attack

Of the two recent incidents, the Iranian embassy bombing is the more serious, as it involved the loss of life and resulted in retaliatory attacks.

Yet, Western countries, leaders of which often voice concern over upholding the so-called "rules-based order," have been reluctant to condemn the act. It was notable that the three liberal democracies on the UN Security Council — the United States, the United Kingdom, and France — all refused to condemn the strike on Iran's embassy when the issue came up before them. Israel, while not officially acknowledging responsibility, argued that the Iranian ambassador's residence was not really a diplomatic venue but "a military building ... disguised as a civilian building". As such, to Israel, it was a perfectly legitimate target. But by this logic, nearly all embassies would be seen as fair game. Almost by definition, the vast majority of embassies — particularly of the larger countries — are populated with significant numbers of military and intelligence personnel. To suggest that, for that reason, embassies should lose their diplomatic immunity and become legiti-

mate targets for armed attacks would bring the whole edifice of the Vienna Convention crashing down. And with it would come the structure on which worldwide formal diplomatic interactions are based. The comparatively relaxed international attitude to the embassy violations by Israel and Ecuador reflects, I believe, a failure to grasp the significance of eroding diplomatic immunity and norms. As global challenges increase, embassies and their representatives become more important, not less so. If the takeaway from the two latest embassy incidents is that the protection of diplomatic premises can be secondary to whatever is politically expedient on any given day, then it will be of great detriment to the management of international relations. Diplomacy will become much more difficult. And given the enormity of the challenges the world faces today, that is the last thing any country needs.

The full article first appeared on The Conversation.



A man looks through the gate at the rubble of Iran's consulate building, which was leveled by an Israeli strike, in Damascus, Syria on April 1, 2024.

Amid Israel-Iran escalation

It's time for region-wide cease-fire



By Daoud Kuttab
Award-winning
Palestinian journalist

OPINION

When the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved the air strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, he knew what he was doing. Although any attack on a diplomatic mission is a clear violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, the Israeli leader proceeded, hoping to divert

attention from his failures in the Israeli war on Gaza. With Israel having previously carried out a series of assassinations against Iranian officials and scientists, this act was hard to deny. No other power in the region could conduct such a brazen violation of international law regarding the sanctity of diplomatic missions.

Coming on the heels of other Israeli attacks on Iranian targets in Syria, this was a provocative act aimed at establishing military hegemony in the region. For their part, the Iranians were caught in a bind. The international response to the brazen Israeli defiance of international law was muted, especially in the West, and Tehran could no longer tolerate the Israeli provocations. Iran also has its own considerations of military deterrence in the region. The result was an attack from Iranian territory, which sent a clear message to Israel and its allies. It demonstrated the Iranian capabilities but also provided space for de-escalation. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian described the attack as "limited" and said Tehran had warned the United States ahead of launching it.

Due to the deployment of US forces to the region and Israel's own air defence capabilities, nearly all of the drones and missiles Iran launched were intercepted.

This display of military power by Israel and Iran has left the rest of the Arab world terrified of what another regional war could do to an already devastated region. And if it is to take place, there will be not just regional, but global repercussions. Any regional Iranian-Israeli conflict will pull in the Gulf countries, but also the US, Russia, and China, creating a potentially explosive global confrontation.

As Israel and Iran are establishing this new "balance of terror", the international community has to act. The United Nations Security Council must pass a strong binding resolution imposing a full cease-fire in the region that includes the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel, Iran, and all neighboring countries involved, as well as non-state actors.

Importantly, this resolution must recognize that at the core of much of the instability in the region is the unresolved Palestinian question. Therefore, it needs to call for an end to Israel's genocidal invasion of Gaza and the exchange of captives. It must provide a clear roadmap to Palestinian statehood and the end of the Israeli military control of all Arab territories occupied in 1967. It must create an international peacekeeping force that will ensure compliance by all parties, especially in Gaza but also in the West Bank, where settler violence has reached unprecedented levels.

A clear declaration in support of the Palestinian right to self-determination and a roadmap to its realization is paramount now. Already most European countries have indicated their plans to join the list of 139 states that have recognised the state of Palestine.

This resolution should not repeat the mistakes of UNSC 2728 passed on March 25, which the US tried to undermine immediately by claiming that it was "nonbinding". The resolution was binding but it lacked "teeth" — or clear measures to be undertaken in case of violation. That is why Israel ignored it.

A new resolution, therefore, will require the use of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Article 41 of this chapter reads: "The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to



Israeli interceptors engage over the Al-Aqsa Holy Mosque with Iranian drones and missiles heading toward Israeli targets in occupied Palestine as part of the IRGC's Operation True Promise on April 14, 2024.

be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations."

The possibility of imposing biting sanctions and a diplomatic boycott on those who do not abide by its provisions must be made clear in the resolution. Mention must also be made of the other provisions in Chapter VII which include the use of military force to ensure maintenance of international peace.

For decades, Israel has gotten away with perpetrating egregious violations of international law because it has faced no consequences. Now, the International Court of Justice has declared that Israeli actions in Gaza "plausibly" amount to genocide in Gaza. Israel will not stop its aggression in Gaza or elsewhere in the region unless it is faced with a credible threat of sanctions. Iran, for its part, already faces sanctions pressure from the West, but if China and other non-Western powers were to join such measures, it would think twice before violating the resolution.

With Iran clearly demonstrating it is willing to de-escalate after the attack, a small window of opportunity now exists for action. The US and other countries have come to the rescue of Israel, and this means that it will have to pay back its allies by complying with the cease-fire.

Unless the world wants to deal with the economic and humanitarian catastrophe of a region-wide war in the Middle East, it must move quickly and lay the foundations for a comprehensive lasting peace in the region. The key to that is resolving the Palestinian question once and for all.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

Yazdani and Qassempour to decide 86kg wrestling berth in Paris



Hassan Yazdani (L) and Kamran Qassempour will likely go head-to-head for the 86kg slot in the Iranian freestyle squad in the Paris Olympics. UWW

Sports Desk

With just over 100 days until the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the biggest question facing the coaching staff of the Iranian wrestling team is who will be the country's freestyle 86kg contestant in Paris.

Hadi Vafaiepour was hoping to build on double gold medals at the National Championships and the Yasar Dogu & Vehbi Emre tournament in Turkey to get a shot at the Olympic berth against Hassan Yazdani, but his failure to bag the gold in the Asian Championships last week left him out

of contention for the showpiece in Paris.

A fully fit Yazdani, a winner of a national-high nine world and Olympic medals, is all but guaranteed a spot in the squad as he will be looking to beat familiar American foe David Taylor for only the second time in six meetings, should the two dominant forces of the weight class go head-to-head in the Games.

However, with the event fast approaching, questions have been raised about his fitness as the Iranian sensation has just recently returned to light training after being sidelined for six months due

to a surgery on his injured shoulder right after a gold-winning campaign at the Asian Games last October.

"No wrestler in Iran has fully recovered from a shoulder injury over the past 20 years. That's what happened to me as my career came to an end when I was 25. Hassan showed great passion and resilience to participate at the World Championships [last September] and win a medal there but he just couldn't continue like this. I hope he will be the first wrestler to overcome the problem," Alireza Dabir, the chairman of the Iranian Wrestling Federa-

tion, said days after his surgery, with veteran Iranian Mansour Barzegar, the national team head coach in the 90s, sharing his opinion, saying: "From what I've seen over the years, no wrestler has ever been able to wrestle again after a shoulder injury."

Asked about Yazdani's situation days ago, Iran head coach Mohsen Kaveh said: "Hassan will be back in the national team training camp in May and then the technical staff and the federation will decide to send him to a tournament in Armenia or Hungary to have his fitness assessed for the Olympics."

Meanwhile, Kamran Qassempour, a back-to-back world 92kg champion in 2021 and 2022, has been regarded as a contender for the 86kg spot in recent weeks, though he has had his own injury blows over the past 12 months, which ruled him out of the title defense in the world event as well as the following Asian Games.

Qassempour moved up to the 97kg Olympic class for the start of the new year but a comprehensive defeat against Kyle Snyder at the Zagreb Open Ranking Series event in January, followed by Amir-Ali Azarpira's sensational victory over the American great

in the final, saw the Iranian prodigy emerge as the frontrunner in the upcoming Asian Olympic qualification tournament in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Many wrestling pundits in the country have argued against Qassempour moving to the 86kg class, believing he will barely have a chance of success after a massive weight loss in such a short space of time.

"I'm sure the final decision will be in the best interest of the national team," Dabir said last week, adding: "It will all depend on how Yazdani will return from the shoulder injury."

Iranian girl Kiani flexes muscles ahead of Olympics

Sports Desk

Iranian girls bagged a couple of medals at the Galeb Belgrade Trophy G2 - Serbia Open taekwondo event, including a -53kg gold for reigning world champion Nahid Kiani.

Headlining the country's six-woman team in the Serbian capital, Kiani overcame opponents from Thailand and Italy before a 2-1 victory over Bosnian Ada

Avdagic for a place in the final showpiece.

Kiani outclassed Dominika Hronova of the Czech Republic in straight rounds (18-0, 20-0) to walk away with the ultimate prize.

A four-time medalist at the Asian Championships, Kiani will be the favorite Iranian female for the Olympic glory when the Games get underway in Paris in late July.

She will be joined by teenage girl Mobina Ne'matzadeh as well as male duo Arian Salimi and Mehran Barkhordari in representing Iran in the taekwondo contests in the French capital.

Elsewhere in Belgrade,

Saeideh Nasiri (defeated world No. 13 Supharada Kisskalt of Germany (2-1) and then came out victorious against high-profile Croatian Lena Stojkovic - reigning back-to-back world gold medalist - in three rounds to progress to the last-four bout against Spain's Adriana Cerezo Iglesias. Nasiri put in a brave performance against the Tokyo Olympic silver winner, who took the bronze in last year's World Championships, but fell to a 2-1 defeat and settled for a consolation bronze.

Ma'someh Ranjbar (-46kg), Elham Haqiqi, Saghar Moradi (-62kg), and Yalda Valinejad (-67kg) were the other members of the Iranian team in Belgrade but left the event empty-handed.

Leverkusen coach Alonso honoured to be part of special day for champions

REUTERS - Bayer Leverkusen's undefeated run to their first Bundesliga title was fully deserved and it was an honour to be part of a special day for the club, coach Xabi Alonso said on Sunday.

His team had earlier crushed Werder Bremen 5-0 to open a 16-point gap over deposed title holders Bayern Munich with five matches left in the season, securing their first trophy in 31 years amid wild celebrations from a 30,000 home crowd.

"We wanted to play games with a good mentality this season and the players quickly started working well together. After the first few matches we saw this team can play really good football," Alonso told a press conference.

"But to achieve this in such a way was a top performance. Finally it is an honour to say that Leverkusen are champions. It is totally deserved for the team, fans and the club."

The 42-year-old Spaniard, who took over in October 2022, can win more titles this season with his team also through to the German Cup final and the Europa League quarter-finals. "It is a big success for the club.



Bayer Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso celebrates with the fans after winning the Bundesliga title in BayArena, Leverkusen, Germany, on April 14, 2024. KAI PFAFFENBACH/REUTERS

The first time is special for everyone. We can say we were part of this big day for Bayer Leverkusen. It feels great," said Alonso, who will stay on at the club despite major interest from top European teams.

Leverkusen are on a 43-game unbeaten run across all competitions and have further extended the longest unbeaten streak in a single Bundesliga season to 29 matches.

"We did not talk much about the title in the changing room but it was in our heads

that this year we could be champions," said Alonso.

"Now we must enjoy the moment. It has been a totally intense season so far and it is not yet over. We cannot forget it."

"Now this is behind us and we still have big goals this season," he said before the players stormed into the room showering their coach with beer.

Leverkusen travel to West Ham United next for their Europa League return game after a 2-0 first leg victory.



GETTY IMAGES

Iran tells UN Israel attack was 'self-defense'

International Desk

Iran's United Nations envoy told the Security Council on Sunday that the Islamic republic was exercising its "inherent right to self-defense" in its unprecedented attack on Israel.

"Iran's operation was entirely in the exercise of Iran's inherent right to self-defense as outlined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and recognized by international law", Amir Saeid Irvani said. Overnight on Saturday and early Sunday morning, more than 300 Iranian drones and missiles rained down on targets in the Israeli-occupied lands.

The large-scale operation came less than two weeks after Israeli warplanes bombed the consular annex of Iran's Embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus, killing seven members of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) who were on an advisory mission to the Arab country.

Irvani underlined that the concluded action was necessary and proportionate. It was precise and only targeted military objectives, and carried out carefully to minimize the potential for escalation and prevent civilian harm.

"The Security Council... failed in its duty to maintain international peace and security" after Israel's



Representative of Iran to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Irvani addresses the United Nations Security Council during an emergency meeting on April 14, 2024 at U.N. Headquarters in New York City.

● DAVID DEE DELGADO/AFP

apparent strike on an Iranian consulate in Damascus earlier this month, the Iranian diplomat added. Therefore, Tehran "had no choice" but to respond, he said, adding that his country does "not seek escalation or war," but will respond to any "threat or aggression."

Hypocritical meeting

During the meeting, Russia's UN envoy denounced as hypocritical the meeting of the Security Council on Iran's strikes. Vasily Nebenzya called it "a display of hypocrisy and double standards, which is almost embarrassing to watch."

"You know very well that an attack on a diplomatic mission is a casus belli under international law," he stated.

"If Western missions were attacked, you would not hesitate to retaliate and prove your case in this room. Because for you, everything that concerns Western missions and Western citizens is sacred and must be protected," the Russian official added.



Protecting Israeli regime

Iranian envoy also lambasted the US and the UK for their protecting the Israeli regime against accountability. "The US and the UK are fully responsible for all its (Israel's) decades-long aggressions and other crimes and unlawful measures in our region," he said.

"Furthermore, they are responsible for all crimes of the Israeli regime, as it cannot commit any of such savage crimes in Gaza without the consent, order, and all-out political, financial,

and military support of, and collaboration with, the United States and the UK." "We demonstrated our commitment to peace by exercising our restraint about involving the US Army in intercepting Iranian drones and missiles bound for military targets in the occupied Palestinian territories," Irvani added. "This underscores our dedication to de-escalating tensions and avoiding the expansion of conflict."

Call for de-escalation

Many countries, including the regime's allies, are now

urging restraint from Israel. French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France would help do everything to avoid "a conflagration - that is to say an escalation".

That would involve "trying to convince Israel not to respond by escalating," he said.

Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz also on Monday urged restraint by Israel.

UK Foreign Minister David Cameron urged Israel to "avoid escalation" and instead urged Israeli authorities to focus on freeing captives held by

Hamas.

The United States, the regime's main ally, has also said it will not join any potential Israeli counterattack against Iran.

"We would not be a part of any response they do," the Biden administration official told reporters on a call. "We would not envision ourselves participating in such an act."

However, Iranian officials have repeatedly warned of a much harsher response against any further action by Israel in the aftermath of Iran's retaliatory operation.

Iran: Seized Israel-linked ship broke maritime law



International Desk

Iran said Monday that the Israel-linked ship it seized on the weekend had violated international maritime law and was undergoing "necessary investigations". "The ship was directed into the territorial waters of Iran because it violated international maritime laws," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said.

The ship's crew failed to "adequately respond to questions from Iranian authorities," he told a briefing.

"It is certain that this ship belongs to the Zionist regime," Kanaani added, referring to Israel.

On Saturday, the special naval forces of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) seized the Israel-linked MSC Aries container ship near the Strait of Hormuz.

The ship was impounded by the Sepah Navy Special Force (SNSF) in a helicopter operation and rappelling of forces on the ship's deck, the agency said Saturday.

"The ship has now been directed towards the territorial waters of our country," IRNA said.

The Portuguese-flagged ship, operated by Zodiac Maritime, is owned by Israeli real estate, energy, technology and shipping magnate Eyal Ofer, it added. Zodiac Maritime is part of the Israeli billionaire's Zodiac Group.

A video released by IRGC shows SNSF commandos rappelling down onto a stack of containers sitting on the deck of the vessel.

Reports said the MSC Aries had been last located off Dubai heading toward the Strait of Hormuz on Friday. The ship had reportedly turned off its tracking data, which has been common for Israeli-affiliated ships moving through the region.

Israel's opposition leader Yair Lapid on Monday accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet of leading to a "total loss of Israeli deterrence" in the wake of an unprecedented Iranian attack.

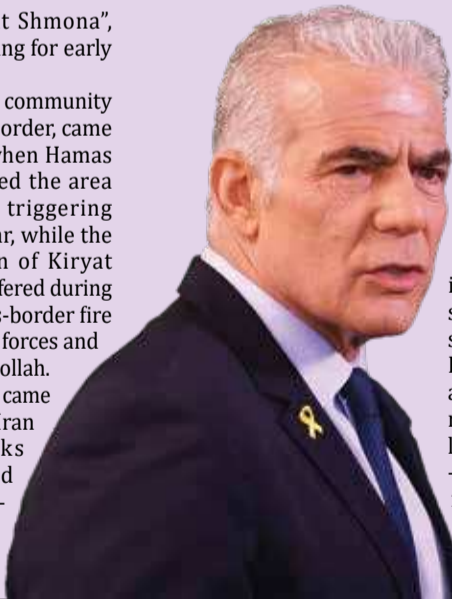
In a scathing criticism posted on X, former premier Lapid also said that under Netanyahu, "Jewish terrorist violence" against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank was "out of control", AFP reported.

Netanyahu, who returned to power in late 2022 at the helm of a coalition with far-right parties, has brought "heaps of destruction from

Beerli to Kiryat Shmona", Lapid said, calling for early elections.

Beerli, a kibbutz community near the Gaza border, came under attack when Hamas fighters stormed the area on October 7, triggering the ongoing war, while the northern town of Kiryat Shmona has suffered during months of cross-border fire between Israeli forces and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Lapid's remarks came two days after Iran - which backs both Hamas and Hezbollah - launched more than 300 mis-



Netanyahu rival says Israel lost 'deterrence' against Iran

siles and drones at Israel in retaliation for a deadly strike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. Israel, the United States and other allies intercepted nearly all launches in the late Saturday aerial attack - the first direct Iranian military action against arch foe Israel.

Netanyahu's cabinet has

weighed Israel's response to the Iranian attack, but the prime minister has not made any public comments. In the West Bank, where violence has soared since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, Israeli settlers torched Palestinian homes and cars over the weekend, killing at least two people, after an Israeli teen was killed, accord-

ing to the Israeli military. The Netanyahu's cabinet, which includes hardline settlers, has prioritized Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967. Netanyahu has faced in recent months mass protests over the fate of captives held in Gaza and pressure from a resurgent movement.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Why was Iran ...

Furthermore, Iran's commitment to international laws and its recognition of the right to legitimate defense against hostile states highlight its emphasis on ethical conduct in warfare and attention to humanitarian issues. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a religious political system, has demonstrated its capability to fulfill its political functions ethically, a quality often lacking in Western political systems. It's worth noting that Iran has never initiated war,

and even when providing military assistance upon request, it aims to be a constructive actor. Reviewing Iran's track record in countries like Syria, Yemen, and Iraq reveals Iran's supportive role that facilitated resolutions to existing problems rather than exacerbating them. In contrast, a look at the history of warfare worldwide, especially conflicts initiated by the United States and Israel, demonstrates that wherever they engaged militarily, they not only failed to achieve their political goals but

also caused significant human and infrastructural damage, with repercussions lasting for decades. Interestingly, these regimes, despite their lack of adherence to the ethics of warfare, were unable to achieve their political objectives and, in essence, faced defeat repeatedly. Why was Iran victorious in this latest operation? It was because while fighting responsibly and observing the ethics of engagement, Iran demonstrated very little of its capability to respond to Israel than Israel did to defend itself.

Iran refrained from utilizing many of its new and advanced missiles and relied on a small portion of its missile and drone capabilities to carry out this operation, while Israel employed its maximum defensive capability. This disparity in military capacity deployment is a clear indicator of Iran's victory; Iran lost nothing and maintained its power in the international arena. Meanwhile, Israel still struggles to prove its legitimacy; a legitimacy that will never be established.

Over 63m accommodations recorded during Nowruz holiday

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian Deputy Minister of Tourism, Ali Asghar Shalbafian, announced the accommodation statistics during the long Nowruz holiday of the new Persian year. From March 14 to April 12, 63 million and 647 thousand overnight stays were recorded, indicating a 5% increase compared to the same period last year. Official accommodations saw a 2.5% increase, ISNA wrote. The authorities emphasized the mandatory utilization of official accommodation capacities. Shalbafian mentioned that Khorasan Razavi, Mazandaran, Hormuzgan, Gilan, Isfahan, Fars, Tehran, East Azarbaijan, Bushehr, and Ardebil had the highest number of stays.

He noted the shift in travel behavior during Nowruz, experiencing three waves of travel: a decrease in the first wave due to climate changes, a similar volume to the previous year in the second wave, and an increase during Eid al-Fitr holidays in the third wave. He also highlighted the launch of 1,047 handicraft markets along travel routes during the one-month period. He also disclosed that the total number of foreign travelers entering Iran by the end of March 19 was 6 million and 382 thousand and 755, compared to over 4 million and 230 thousand the previous year. Shalbafian declared a 58% growth in foreign visits to Iran last year, primarily individual travelers, despite the

Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts' focus on organized tours. Mostafa Fatemi, Director-General of Domestic Tourism Development, continued, stating that during the same period, Mazandaran, Gilan, Khorasan Razavi, Hormuzgan, Bushehr, Fars, Khuzestan, Isfahan, East Azarbaijan, Tehran, and Alborz experienced the highest accommodation growth. He added that the highest growth in road traffic was observed in Fars, Sistan and Baluchestan, Hormuzgan, Lorestan, Tehran and Alborz, Yazd, Qazvin, East Azarbaijan, Ardebil, and South Khorasan. Mashhad, Shiraz, Kish, Bandar Abbas, and Tehran were among the cities receiving the most attention from travelers.



Raisi: Relief foundation hands over 23k residential units, up 44%

Social Desk

Over 33,000 residential units were provided to the families supported by the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation throughout the country. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi made the statement during a ceremony for the allocation of 33,863 residential units to these people, marking a 44% increase in housing production and distribution for these families during the last Persian year ended on March 19, compared to the previous



year. Raisi expressed satisfaction with the government's efforts to meet the housing needs of applicants nationwide, fulfilling its promises in this regard, IRNA wrote. He praised the collaborative efforts of all sectors and institutions involved in this significant initiative. Raisi emphasized that housing expenses constitute the highest portion of family budgets and applauded the efforts of all agencies in facilitating home ownership.

Iran to participate in Astana Publishing Fellowship



Arts & Culture Desk

Astana Publishing Fellowship, a scholarship for publishers held in Astana, Kazakhstan, will host participants from 19 countries including Iran. Reza Hajiabadi, the director of Hezarehe Ghoghnoos Publications, highlighted the international attention drawn to Kazakhstan's literature and publishing scene through this event, part of the Eurasia International Book Fair, IRNA wrote. The fellowship, scheduled for April 18-19, aims to showcase Kazakhstan's cultural and artistic initiatives globally. Hezarehe Ghoghnoos Publications is the only Iranian invitee among 60 publishers, writers, literary agents, and copyright agencies participating in the inaugural fellowship.

Hajiabadi explained the application process, which ran from December 22, 2022, to March 23, 2024, with successful applicants announced in March. Participants will benefit from three different packages: gold, silver, and bronze. Gold includes free flights, accommodation for three nights, meals, cultural tours, and participation in host-funded sessions for ten publishers from ten different countries. Silver offers similar benefits to twenty participants, while bronze allows for cultural tours and participation in sessions with costs borne by participants. Apart from Kazakhstani publishers, participants from Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, China, Mongolia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uzbekistan will attend the fellowship.

Life expectancy in Iran 66.2 years, official data shows



Social Desk

The National Organization for Civil Registration announced that the average life expectancy in Iran is 66.2 years, with Gilan having the highest at 71.3 and Sistan and Baluchestan with the lowest at 50.7. The rough mortality rate of the country in the last year (ending March 19) was 5.3 per thousand people, with Gilan having the highest rate at 7.4 per thousand people and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad having the lowest at 3.9 per thousand people, IRNA

wrote. The report emphasizes that the highest number of deaths is in the age group of 85-89 years, with 9.9% of total deaths being male and 12.5% being female, respectively. The organization also reported that 207,663 death events were registered in the first six months of last Persian year, indicating a 0.2% decrease compared to the same period the previous year, which had 208,145 deaths. Of these, 56.8% were male and 43.2% were female. Moreover, for every 131

male deaths, there were 100 female deaths, and male deaths were 6% higher than female deaths. Based on data from the first six months of last Persian year, men accounted for 56.8% and women accounted for 43.2% of registered deaths, compared to 56.9% for men and 43.1% for women in the same period the previous year. Additionally, compared to the same period the previous year, male deaths decreased by 0.3% and female deaths decreased by 0.04%.