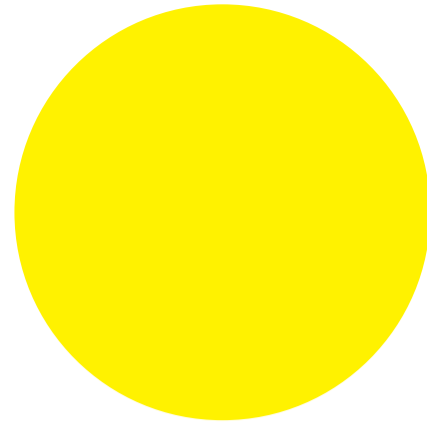


OIC seeks probe into 'war crime' over Khan Younis mass graves

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Pakistan, security neighborhood policy of Iran



By **Abed Akbari**
International affairs expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Iran urgently needs to utilize its advantages in a stable regional environment which implies the existence of minimum political and security stability to enable the pursuit of the country's strategies and plans. Despite its potential geographical advantages, the surrounding environment of Iran remains unstable due to various reasons, including political instability (stemming from conflicting interests among various groups) and foreign interventions. The political-security dependence of some regional countries has increased regional vulnerability and consequently foreign interventions. Therefore, a significant portion of Iran's regional policy should be dedicated to stabilizing this environment. The new approach to the foreign policy adopted by the incumbent Iranian government entails formulating clear international and regional strategies and considering major changes in the international system, which can unlock Iran's geographical advantage and lay the groundwork for a coherent neighborhood policy. Achieving the outlined goals in the neighborhood policy necessitates precise identification of common opportunities in geopolitical, economic, and cultural realms, along with knowledge and idea exchange, cultural and artistic affairs, tourism development, large-scale investment opportunities, and economic profitability, as well as mitigating existing damages and threats.

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US-Israeli scenario for West Asia



By **Afifeh Abedi**
Foreign policy expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The US veto of the resolution recognizing Palestine as a full member of the United Nations in the Security Council should mark the beginning of a paradigm shift in the regional strategies of Muslim nations. More than six months have elapsed since the onset of relentless Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. The actual death toll likely exceeds 34,000, with two-thirds of them women and children. The majority of Gazans have been uprooted from their homes, enduring hunger and famine throughout this period. The US dealing with the Gaza war is a wake-up call to Arab nations relying on American guidance for regional matters, shedding light on the depth of US agendas in the region. The recent veto, after eighty years, can only be justified by the US primary allegiance to Israel's interests. The extensive US military support following Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7 indicates a fading role for Washington's Arab allies in shaping US policy in West Asia.

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Iran-Pakistan Unbreakable Bonds

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Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (C) is officially welcomed by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 22, 2024.
● president.ir



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistan enjoy unbreakable bonds and are determined to bolster their relations in different fields at all levels. He said a key decision to increase bilateral trade volume to \$10 billion has been reached as he addressed a high-profile joint press conference with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Monday. "In our meeting today, we (have) decided to promote bilateral relations between the two countries including political, economical, trade, cultural and others as far as possible," said Raisi, who arrived in Pakistan earlier during the day amid stringent security measures. "You will probably find some individuals who do not favor expansion and good bilateral relations between us but who cares – it is not important. We believe that it is important to expand relations between our countries," added the Iranian president.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (L) is officially welcomed by Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 22, 2024. [president.ir](#)

"We have decided as a first step to increase trade volume between our two countries to \$10 billion." The two sides – which currently have bilateral trade of over \$2 billion – also held a meeting earlier, and agreed on joint efforts to eradicate terrorism. Raisi noted that the Iranian nation has succeeded in turning cruel Western sanctions into an opportunity for the country's development and added that Tehran is ready to transfer its experience in the fields of science and technology, transportation and transit to Islamabad. "The entire Pakistani nation welcomes the visit of the Iranian President," Radio Pakistan quoted the PM as saying. In his address, Sharif said that

the two sides discussed religious, security and historic matters during their meeting. "Today is an opportunity to make this friendship a happy and prosperous one."

Call to end genocide in Gaza

The Pakistani PM also said Tehran and Islamabad have expressed their concern over Israel's war in Gaza and asked the world to immediately put an end to the regime's act of genocide in the strip. Sharif added that an independent Palestinian country with al-Quds as its capital should be established, Press TV wrote. He praised Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's legitimate support for the Palestinian people. Israel waged its brutal US-backed war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified

Raisi: Trade with Pakistan to hit \$10b

atrocities against the Palestinian people. However, the Tel Aviv regime has failed to achieve its declared objectives of "destroying Hamas" and finding Israeli captives despite killing at least 34,151 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 77,084 others.

Signing accords

Meanwhile, Iran and Pakistan signed eight accords on varying subjects to enhance cooperation in the different fields including trade, science technology, agriculture, health, culture, and judicial matters. Raisi and Sharif witnessed the ceremony as the representatives from both sides signed the documents, APP reported. The establishment of free trade zones along with the common border crossings, cooperation in the cinema and media sector, animal health, security, cooperatives and social welfare, standard, legal and judicial assistance in civil and commercial affairs were among main

high-level delegation, comprising the foreign minister and other members of the cabinet, senior officials and a business delegation.

He was received by Federal Minister Riaz Hussain Pirzada. This is the first visit by any head of state to Pakistan after the February 8 general elections. The leader's visit comes after Tehran launched an unprecedented retaliatory attack on Israel last week. Meanwhile, a statement issued by the Pakistani Foreign Office (FO) had said Raisi will meet President Asif Ali Zardari, Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani and National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. "He will also visit Lahore and Karachi and meet with the provincial leadership," it added.

Pakistan-Iran relations," the FO concluded.

Later on Monday, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari welcomed his Iranian counterpart Raisi at the President's House. "[I am] honored to welcome my brother President Ebrahim Raisi," a post on the official X account of the President of Pakistan said.

"We expressed satisfaction at the trajectory of bilateral ties and agreed to further strengthen our dialogue and cooperation to reinforce existing ties." He further said that Pakistan and Iran were bound by common religion, history and culture.

A public holiday was announced in Karachi Division on Tuesday in view of the "visit of



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (2nd L) and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (R) witness a ceremony of signing eight cooperation agreements in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 22, 2024. [president.ir](#)

issues of the documents signed between the two sides. The Iranian president's visit comes at a significant time, especially in terms of rising tension in the region amid the Israeli aggression in Gaza, its attack on the Iranian consulate, and Iran's subsequent retaliation followed by strikes on its territory. Raisi arrived in Pakistan on an official visit accompanied by a

"The two sides will have a wide-ranging agenda to further strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties and enhance cooperation in diverse fields including trade, connectivity, energy, agriculture, and people-to-people contacts," the FO said. "Pakistan and Iran enjoy strong bilateral ties anchored in history, culture and religion. This visit provides an important opportunity to further strengthen

foreign dignitaries and to avoid inconvenience to the general public".

As per a notification issued from the Commissioner Karachi office, all government and private offices, educational institutions (public/private), would remain closed on Tuesday except the essential services and officials involved in emergency duties.

Pakistan, security neighborhood ...

On the other hand, the most significant challenge facing the Islamic Republic of Iran in its neighborhood policy is finding ways to ensure the security of the region without the presence of extra-regional security providers. The "basic security" neighborhood policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the medium and long term, can alleviate this challenge, provided its clear policy is successful. According to this policy, each regional country, based on its capabilities and prioritized perceived risks, can assume a responsible role in ensuring regional security. In this scheme, Iran and its neighboring countries determine their security cooperation priorities within a cooperative and mutually beneficial framework and take steps to address them. This policy, in addition to being flexible in adapting to opportunities and challenges, will also be compatible with the ambitions of each neighboring country at the regional level. If the policy is adopted, the incumbent Iranian government would find the opportunity to

fill the fundamental vacuum of a neighborhood policy by opening the door to dialogue through economic and cultural interactions. In turn, the continuation of successful dialogues in political, economic, and security domains can fulfill the basic function of a neighborhood policy. By increasing the diplomatic dynamism of the country and providing a new playing field for Iran, these capacities can significantly contribute to Iran's economy, politics, and security. If successful, this plan will eliminate the need for heavy expenditures to eliminate security gaps in relations with regional countries. Enhancing the level of economic, cultural, and security cooperation between Iran and Pakistan can create a new power equation for economic development in the regional environment with the participation of Iran, China, and Pakistan. Cooperation on such levels creates the basis for enhancing the security coefficient of Iran and Pakistan. The necessities of the neighborhood policy in Iran-Pakistan relations not only lead to the enhancement of mutual power equations but also provide the

groundwork for preventing the spread of regional conflicts. Iran and Pakistan, within the framework of the neighborhood policy, have the necessary potential to enhance the level of mutual relations and combat extremism, terrorism, and crisis-inducing groups in the regional environment. Economic issues play a very significant role in Iran-Pakistan neighborhood policy. Pakistan's large population and its energy deficit can be addressed with Iran's fuel reserves. Although the underdevelopment of border regions of Iran and Pakistan and the lack of communication and economic infrastructure are considered inhibiting factors, the economies of both countries can be intertwined with a softening of security-oriented strategies and enhancing the capacities of the para-diplomatic approach. This is because the neighborhood policy oversees long-term directions for reducing threats and furthering neighbors' interests. Recent changes in power equations at the global and regional levels also reinforce Iran's neighborhood policy toward Pakistan.

IRCS to become BRICS Health Working Group chair



The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) will become the chair of the health working group of the BRICS group of emerging economies. IRCS Chief Pir-Hossein Kolivand in a meeting with Co-Chair of BRICS Civil Forum Alena Peryshkina introduced the IRCS as the main option for the chair of the health working group of BRICS, reported Tasnim News Agency. During the meeting, Kolivand pointed to the achievements of the IRCS in recent years and added that the society is active in various fields such as render-

ing relief and rescue services to the vulnerable strata of society. Today, the Iranian Red Crescent Society, benefiting from three million volunteers and 70,000 expert rescuers and relief workers, offers quality road, mountain, and coastal relief services round-the-clock, he emphasized. Presenting relief training services to students and schoolchildren is an example of the trend of developing public training among all walks of life in society, Kolivand added. He further noted that the society has taken effective steps

by utilizing 18 relief helicopters, and hundreds of the relief-and-rescue vehicles. Rendering quality relief and rescue services to the earthquakes that happened in Turkey, Afghanistan, and Syria is a part of the other measures taken by the Iranian Red Crescent Society in the international arena which resulted in receiving the highest award of Turkey, Kolivand stated. The Iranian Red Crescent Society's clinics are also active in several countries with the most experienced and expert Iranian doctors offering quality relief services to the people in Africa, Asia and Latin America, he added. Co-Chair of BRICS Civil Forum, for her part, said that the Iranian Red Crescent Society enjoys high capabilities and potential in various fields both in national and international arenas. After coordinating with the Iranian foreign minister, it was agreed that the IRCS would be the representative of Iran's civil society in the BRICS group of emerging economies, Alena Peryshkina added.

Ancient clay bas-relief restored in Jiroft



● MEHR

Iranica Desk

The ancient clay bas-relief discovered during the excavations carried out in Jiroft, Kerman Province, in the 2000s, has undergone restoration. Fathollah Niazi, an expert at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism, who restored the bas-relief, mentioned that the artifact, unearthed by a team led by Youssef Majidzadeh, is one of the oldest from around 5,000 years ago. He further stated that due to inadequate maintenance and various damaging factors over

the years, a part of its upper section was lost. Necessary restoration work has been completed on this valuable artifact, including cleaning, layer removal, strengthening, and stabilization. The upper part of the bas-relief was intentionally not reconstructed to maintain the authenticity of the artifact, and the restoration was focused on the existing remains of the statue.

Niazi highlighted that the skirt of the bas-relief is adorned with black, red, and yellow pigments in geometric patterns. Additionally, more plans have been made

for the preservation of this valuable artifact, which will soon be implemented in collaboration with the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Department of Kerman Province. Seyyed Sajjadi, an archaeologist who resumed excavations at this ancient site after a 16-year hiatus, previously expressed concerns about the deteriorating condition of the bas-relief. He emphasized that during the years of neglect, irreparable damage had been inflicted upon it. Sajjadi noted that the site had been neglected without any restoration efforts.

Youssef Majidzadeh, an archaeologist who conducted excavations in Jiroft and Konar Sandal Hill in Kerman Province in the 2000s, provided insights into this sculpture. He described it as a prominent clay relief depicting a man with a patterned skirt, holding his hands clasped in front of his chest. The discovery of this bas-relief suggests that the site was once a hub for governmental activities like administration, storage, and guarding. The upper part of the bas-relief has suffered damage due to erosion and weather conditions, leaving only two arms and a tri-

angular-patterned skirt intact at the lower end.

According to Majidzadeh, the available documents, the richness of its artworks, and their quantity and quality indicate that the Halil Rud area, where Konar Sandal is located, was the largest industrial-commercial center in the ancient East in the early third millennium BCE, specializing in the production and export of goods made from various types of soapstone and marble.

The extensive destruction in the area has forced them to prioritize restoration efforts before proceeding with further excava-

tions. The history of this ancient area, located near the city of Jiroft in southern Kerman Province, dates back 4,600 years and holds significant cultural heritage value. Despite its historical significance, Jiroft was relatively unknown in terms of archaeology until 2001, when it suddenly became one of the most important archeological sites in West Asia. Most of the excavated sites at Konar Sandal used few stones and metals, while materials like brick and clay were employed more. If not addressed, these structures would be damaged by weather changes, wind, and rain.

Revival of khersak-weaving, an economic opportunity for Semnan Province

Iranica Desk

In Semnan province, traditional hand-woven textiles such as rugs, *ja-jim*, and *khersak* have been prevalent for centuries, each carrying a remarkable essence of artistic craftsmanship. Khersak is a type of rug crafted from sheep's wool, showcasing a palette of seven natural hues.

Khersak-bafi (khersak-weaving), an ancient art rooted in Aftar village within the city of Sorkheh, has been predominantly practiced by skilled women, who intricately weave original and captivating patterns.

Khersak is meticulously woven using wool, hands, and tools, with each piece reflecting the artisan's flair and imaginative prowess, setting it apart from its mass-produced counterparts.

The name khersak derives from the rug's plush texture, boasting a pile reaching nearly 2 to 2.5 centimeters in height, maintaining its length post-weaving, akin to the thickness and softness of a bear's skin (*khers* means bear in Persian).

Khersak-weaving is listed on Iran's National Heritage List. Aftari women have revitalized the production of these woolen rugs by establishing multiple workshops in the village.

Sakineh Hamidi is one of the artists in the village who has set up a small khersak-weaving workshop in her home. She mentioned, "We used to weave khersak rugs since childhood, but over the past 30 years, this tradition, which was part of our culture, was forgotten. However, in recent years, we have returned to kher-

sak-weaving, and I established a workshop."

As the name implies, these rugs are a type of carpet that, like other types of rugs, has its own unique weaving and production methods. They come in various sizes, ranging from 1.5 to 2 square meters, and are commonly used as floor coverings, particularly during the winter season. Even the elders in Aftar used to place khersak on the painful area during backaches, bone pains, and rheumatism to warm it up and alleviate the pain.

The thickness of the wool used in khersak-weaving limits the intricacy of these rugs. Khersak rugs are known for their high durability, attributed to the various wool knots woven within them. The pile of these rugs is reversible, allowing them to easily absorb moisture. Primarily falling under the category of handicrafts, these rugs are predominantly woven by artists from various cities in Semnan Province as well as Arak, Mashhad, and the Bakhtiari tribes.

A fascinating aspect of traditional khersak-weaving is the use of natural dyes such as walnut shells, barberry roots, and madder to color the wool, adding unique value to the rugs. Additionally, khersak weavers do not rely on patterns for weaving and instead memorize all the intricate designs.

With the support of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Semnan Province, several small khersak-weaving workshops have been established in the village in recent years. The younger generation is increasingly interested in learning this ancient art and tradition, eagerly

engaging in khersak-weaving with enthusiasm.

Handicrafts not only play a vital role in preserving identity and culture but also serve as a key driver for building a resistance economy. By increasing production and establishing robust sales channels for these products, a substantial portion of sustainable employment objectives, particularly in rural regions, can be met.

Of particular significance is the resurgence of individuals embracing their rich cultural heritage and deep-rooted history, leading to the revitalization of indigenous arts and the unlocking of numerous latent opportunities.

While it may appear initially that many traditional handicrafts have lost relevance in modern society, leveraging their designs and motifs alongside contemporary skills can lay the groundwork for the creation and advancement of indigenous handicrafts.

Providing adequate support to artists through low-interest loans, actively addressing barriers, offering educational programs, extending support services, attracting private sector investments, and fostering a culture that values handicrafts are key strategies that can contribute to the realization of sustainable economies, especially in rural areas.

Conversely, while many artists are exploring and engaging in new artistic disciplines, this pursuit, while commendable, can sometimes result in the production of substandard and non-indigenous art products. This trend has significantly impacted the decline of the local handicraft market, indicating the need for intervention in this aspect as well.



● carpetour.net



● carpetour.net

How do Israel, Iran's militaries compare?



By David Brennan
Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

Last week's conflagration between Israel and Iran has once again left the Middle East region on the brink of a major war, with Israeli allies and enemies retaliating after Tehran's drone and missile bombardment. Iran's mission to the United Nations said that "the matter can be deemed concluded" after attacks on Saturday night and the early hours of Sunday morning, which saw around 170 drones, more than 30 cruise missiles, and more than 120 ballistic missiles fired at Israel, the Israel Defense Forces said. The vast majority were shot down, the IDF reported.

President Joe Biden reportedly urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "take the win," the Iranian attack seemingly representing a relatively ineffective but necessary response to Israel's assassination of a top Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) commander in Syria earlier this month.

Israeli wartime Cabinet member and long-time opposition leader Benny Gantz said that Sunday that Israel intends to "build a regional coalition and exact a price from Iran, in a way and at a time that suits us."

Israel and Iran have been in a "shadow war" for several decades, waged through covert operations, backed regional forces, long-range strikes, and cyber operations, all conducted both inside Iran and Israel. The battle has also been fought in the territory of neighboring nations like Lebanon, Syria, and the Palestinian territories. Any escalation of the war is likely to follow this formula, rather than a direct and sustained conventional clash.

Israel maintains a standing army of around 170,000 active personnel and 465,000 reservists, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies' 2024 Military Balance report.

The IDF is considered highly trained, well-equipped, and experienced. Military service is compulsory for most Israeli adults after the age of 18, with men expected to serve for 36 months and women for 24 months.



A banner depicting missiles and drones flying past a torn Israeli flag, with text in Persian reading "The next slap will be harder" and in Hebrew "Your next mistake will be the end of your fake state," is seen in Tehran, Iran, on April 14, 2024.

● ATTA KENARE/AFP

Iran has a much larger population, which is reflected in its standing regular military strength of some 420,000 personnel, with another 350,000 reservists. The powerful IRGC is estimated to have between 150,000 to 200,000 active personnel. Israel's air force has been key in its long confrontation with Iran. Israeli aircraft have been routinely used to strike Iranian-linked targets in Syria and Lebanon, including IRGC facilities and personnel. Israeli aircraft were also active in the collective defense against Iran's recent attack, tracking and shooting down drones and missiles.

Israel's air force is considered among the world's most potent. It has around 310 combat-capable fighter and ground attack planes, including 75 F-15s, 196 F-16s, and 39 F-35s, according to the IISS. The air force also has 46 Apache attack helicopters and a wide range of surveillance and attack drones.

Iran's air force is less sophisticated. It is an aging fleet hamstrung by long-imposed international



Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari (R) and his deputy, Masha Michelson, pose near what they say is an Iranian ballistic missile that they retrieved from the Dead Sea after Iran launched drones and missiles towards Israel, at Julis military base, occupied Palestine, on April 16, 2024.

● GIL COHEN-MAGEN/AFP

sanctions and weapons embargoes. Tehran's air arm is made up of outdated US-made aircraft such as 10 F-14s and 55 F-4s. More recently, Iran has turned to Russia to outfit its air force, and currently has 35 MiG-29s in service, with a new deal to acquire Su-35 fighters agreed upon last year.

Iran has also developed domestically produced fighter jets like the HESA Saeqeh and Azarakhsh, though these are not considered to be capable of competing with foreign-made platforms. Iran's formidable drone arsenal is perhaps more relevant in any future conflict than its air force.

The famous Shahed drone platform and its variants — for example — were central to Tehran's recent strike.

Israel and Iran possess significant missile stockpiles, giving both nations the ability to strike each other's territory directly. Israel has the short-range Jericho 2 ballistic missile with a range of up to 930 miles, encompassing much of the Middle East and parts of Iran. Its Jericho 3 missile has a range of up to 3,000 miles. Shorter-range cruise missiles include the Lora, Delilah, and Gabriel platforms.

Missiles are key to Iran's deterrence and power projection. Tehran's decades of investment have earned it "the largest and most diverse missile arsenal in the Middle East," according to the CSIS Missile Defense Project.

Its longest-range platforms are the Sejil, Ghadr, and Khorramshahr ballistic missiles, all of which can reach targets out to around 1,240 miles, including all of Israel. Other missiles include the Emad (range over 1,000 miles) and Shahab-3 (range over

800 miles), as well as several other shorter-range cruise missiles. The prominent role expected by aircraft, drones, and missiles makes air defense all the more important for both nations. Israel — with the help of its allies — demonstrated the capabilities of its anti-air umbrella last week, using systems including David's Sling, Iron Dome, and Arrow to down incoming Iranian projectiles. Israel also still has the US-made MIM-104 Patriot.

Iran's most established anti-air defense system is the Russian-made S-300, which is relatively outdated compared with what Israel possesses. Tehran also has the domestically produced Bavar-373 surface-to-air missile platform, as well as the Arman and Azarakhsh defense systems unveiled earlier this year.

At sea, Israel maintains a small but advanced navy, primarily used to defend its coastline and support land and air operations. Its navy includes five submarines, including three Dolphin-class vessels capable of launching nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. Israel also has at least three corvettes, eight missile boats, and 45 patrol boats.

Iran's navy is larger and designed in part to control and potentially shut down strategic maritime bottlenecks like the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has more than 30 submarines, five frigates, three corvettes, and more than 200 patrol craft.

Beyond the conventional realm, both Israel and Iran have fearsome covert, proxy, and cyber capabilities, often used in their simmering confrontation. Israel's Mossad spy agency — for example — has been accused by Tehran of a series of assassinations inside Iran, including of prominent scientists working on the country's nuclear program.

Mossad was also involved in the landmark Stuxnet cyber-attack when Israel and the US used it to target Iranian nuclear facilities in what is generally considered the first major cyber warfare operation.

Iran's Quds force — which operates under the IRGC umbrella and is responsible for Tehran's activities worldwide — poses a constant threat to Israeli and allied interests in the Middle East and beyond.

The article first appeared in Newsweek.

Missiles, drones used by Iran in recent strike on Israel

ANALYSIS

ARMY RECOGNITION — According to the spokesperson of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Iran fired 170 drones, 110 ballistic missiles, and 30 cruise missiles at Israel on April 13, 2024. Iran launched a significant attack on Israel in retaliation for the bombing of a consulate in Syria by Is-

rael. An IDF spokesperson stated that the barrage of strikes had virtually no effect, as "99% of the drones and missiles" launched by Tehran were intercepted by the Israeli defense system and its American, British, French, and Jordanian allies. In this article, we detail all missiles and drones used by Iran to strike Israeli territory. As a result, very little damage was

caused. No drone entered Israel, and only a few missiles managed to hit their target, the Netivim military base in the south of Israel. The Islamic Republic described the operation as "limited and minimal" but showcased the diversity of its arsenal by using multiple attack vectors. In total, 170 killer drones, 110 ballistic missiles, and 30 cruise missiles were fired.

Shahed drones

The Shahed-136 drones appear to have been launched from Iran towards Israel last night. The Shahed-136 is an Iranian-made loitering munition, commonly referred to as a "kamikaze drone designed to deliberately crash into a target, detonating its onboard explosives upon impact". Their effectiveness is limited: guided by GPS, they can be jammed or

destroyed by anti-air defenses. They can only target fixed locations, which limits their tactical value.

But the Shahed drones have two advantages: their range, several hundred kilometers, and their modest cost, which allows the attacker to save precision missiles and saturate air defenses. This tactic has only partially worked, as only a few rare ballistic mis-

siles managed to breach the Israeli defenses.

During the attack by Iran, videos identified the use of the Shahed 238 drone, an evolution of the Shahed 136, with major improvements in propulsion; the Shahed 238 is equipped with a turbojet engine increasing its speed to over 500 kilometers per hour, compared to 180 for the Shahed 136.



Iranian-made Shahed 238 drone (black livery) is seen next to Shahed 136 (white livery).
● IRGC

Kheibar, Ghadr, and Sejil ballistic missiles

Among the 110 ballistic missiles fired at Israel, Iran seems to have used the medium-range ballistic missiles Kheibar Shekan and Sejil, according to several observers. The Kheibar, also referred to as Khorramshahr-4, is a medium-range ballistic missile developed by Iran. It belongs to the fourth generation of the Khorramshahr missile family and is produced by the Ministry of Defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The missile was officially revealed on June 4, 2023, with Mohammad Reza Ashtiani, the Iranian Defense Minister, in attendance. Capable of reaching distances up to 2,000 km, the Khorramshahr ballistic missile can be equipped with a warhead weighing up to 1,500 kg. The Ghadr-110, a medium-range ballistic missile, might also have been spotted in the Israeli skies. With a range of 2,000 km and a payload of 650 to 1,000 kg, it is an improvement of the Shahab 3 derived from the North Korean Nodong-1 missile. Iran also has other similar ballistic missiles, which might have been used in Israel: the Sejil, the Imad (still in development), and the Haj Qassem, named in honor of General Qassem Soleimani, killed in a US drone attack in January 2020.

The Sejil missile is a domestically produced Iranian medium-range ballistic missile that utilizes a two-stage, solid-propellant design. Its development likely commenced in the late 1990s, building upon the technologies and designs of earlier Iranian missiles, notably the Zelzal short-range ballistic missile. The Sejil's initial test flight took place in 2008, achieving a distance of 800 km. A subsequent test in May 2009 focused on enhancing its guidance and navigation systems. Since then, four additional tests have been conducted, with the most recent reaching roughly 1,900 km into the Indian Ocean.

The missile measures 18 meters in length and 1.25 meters in diameter, with a launch weight of 23,600 kg. It is capable of carrying a 700 kg payload over a distance of up to 2,000 km. Currently, it is equipped with high-explosive warheads, with the potential for nuclear capabilities in the future. The estimates of its range and payload capacity are based on the missile's construction from aeronautical-grade steel.

A ballistic missile is a rocket-propelled weapon designed to deliver explosives over a long distance with high precision. Upon launch,

it follows a ballistic trajectory, involving an initial powered phase where the rocket engines propel the missile into an upward trajectory, followed by an unpowered phase that occurs as gravity pulls it back towards the Earth. This trajectory can carry the missile through the upper atmosphere or even into space before re-entering the atmosphere and descending toward its target. Ballistic missiles vary greatly in range and size, from short-range missiles that travel a few hundred kilometers to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of traveling over 10,000 km.

Cruise missiles

Iran also fired several cruise missiles on April 13, 2024, for the aerial attacks against Israel. None have been formally identified. Iran has been actively developing its cruise missile capabilities as part of its broader military strategy. The development of Iranian cruise missiles is an integral aspect of the country's defense posture, designed to enhance its long-range strike capabilities and provide a strategic deterrent.

The origins of Iran's cruise missile program date back to the acquisition of Soviet Kh-55 cruise missiles in the early 2000s. Since then, Iran has embarked on an ambitious plan to reverse-engineer and enhance these designs to suit its specific strategic needs. Iranian engineers have focused on increasing the range, accuracy, and payload capacity of their cruise missiles.

Significant advancements were showcased with the unveiling of various models over the years, including the Soumar and the Hoveyeh cruise missiles. These missiles are reported to have ranges of approximately 700 km and 1,350 km, respectively, illustrating significant strides in propulsion and guidance technology.

A cruise missile is a type of guided missile equipped with a jet engine, allowing it to fly at a consistently low altitude, closely following the earth's terrain, making it difficult to detect and intercept. It is designed to deliver a large warhead with high precision over long distances. Cruise missiles can be launched from various platforms including ships, submarines, aircraft, and ground facilities. They typically have a maximum range that can vary widely, but some advanced models can travel up to 2,500 kilometers or more, depending on their design specifics such as fuel capacity and engine efficiency.



The Kheibar is an Iranian-made medium-range ballistic missile.
● WIKIMEDIA

Israel, the untamed hunter's dog in the wilderness



By Owei Lakemfa
Former secretary-general of OATUU

OPINION

Israel, on Monday, April 1, attacked the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, killing 16 persons, including two Iranian Generals, Mohammed Reza Zahedi and Mohammed Hadi Haji Rahimi. There were no apologies. No sense of remorse. Rather, the Israeli Army spokesman Daniel Hagari declared: "The ones attacked were engaged in terrorism against Israel." The attempt by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to discuss the attacks was blocked by the United States, Britain, and France. For Israel, the attacks were routine. After all, it had carried out over a dozen previous attacks against Iran, including within the country, and the Iranians had not responded.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (front-R) greets Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Berlin.
● DPA

It, therefore, came as a shock when on April 13, Iran, according to Israel, fired 185 armed drones, 110 ballistic missiles, and 36 cruise missiles into its territory. Like a beaten child with bruises but pretending not to be hurt, Israel claimed the attacks were of no effect because, with its American, French, and British allies, it shot down 99 percent of the Iranian missiles.

However, Israel imposed a media ban on the attacks when it was revealed that two of its bases, including the Nevatim military base, were hit.

What Israel did not say was that the Iranians might have deliberately used very slow missiles that announced their take-off, some five hours before, thereby giving Israel and its allies adequate time to shoot them down. Secondly, that Iran has far more sophisticated missiles, like the hypersonic ones it unveiled in 2023, which travel at Mach-5 or five times the speed of sound. These modern missiles travel at a kilometre per second, with a complex trajectory and unpredictable manoeuvrability.

These missiles can hit Israel in less than 17 minutes from Iranian territory. As such, it appears that Iran's strikes were like a mere warning; a way of assuring its allies that it can strike Israel.

Perhaps this reality is why the United States told Israel, point blank, not to respond. Rather, it tried to massage Israel's ego. US President Joe Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the Iranian attacks were a victory for Israel because there was "no significant damage within Israel itself". This, he said, demonstrated Israel's superior military capability.

The attacks, in themselves, cost Israel five times more than it did Iran. The latter used a cheap arsenal. The drones cost \$50,000 each; the cruise missiles, \$250,000; and the ballistic missiles an average of \$5 million. So, the maximum cost to Iran was about \$217 million. In contrast, Israel employed the Arrow and David Sling missiles, which cost \$3.5 million and \$1 million each. The defence overnight cost Israel \$1.1 billion.

The realisation that Iran did not use its modern missiles might also have been the reason Israel did not re-

spond immediately. Rather, it went wailing at the UN Security Council. Its UN envoy, Gilad Erdan, said the UNSC must sanction Iran for alleged terrorism.

Iran's counter-claim that it retaliated against the Israeli attack based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, could not be faulted. That Article states: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

The joint response of Prime Ministers Giorgia Meloni of Italy, Fumio Kishida of Japan, Justin Trudeau of Canada, and Rishi Sunak of the UK as well as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Presidents Emmanuel Macron of France and Joe Biden of the US was a classic case of duplicity in diplomacy. They had not condemned Israel's attacks on Iran but found their voices when Iran retaliated.

The leaders, who met virtually under the G7 canopy, said they "unequivocally condemn, in the strongest terms, Iran's direct and unprecedented attack against Israel". They expressed solidarity with Israel and rededicated themselves to its security. They gave the impression that Israel, like a spoilt brat, can go about attacking other countries, but that their victims have no right to self-defence. Their message is that only Israel deserves security, while countries like Syria and Iran, which are victims of its reckless attacks, have no right to defend themselves.

The hypocrisy in such statements was brought into sharp relief when the United Kingdom's Foreign Secretary David Cameron told Sky News presenter, Kay Burley, that Iran, by retaliating against the attacks on it by Israel, was "reckless and dangerous". But when Burley asked him how the UK would react were any of its consulates to be attacked by another country, Cameron replied that it would take "very strong action".

In contrast to the G7, Cuba struck a more reflective pose: First, it said that the silence of the UNSC "served as an incentive for the Iranian response".

Secondly, that de-escalating the ongoing violence, requires an immediate and permanent cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. Thirdly, that peace and stability in the Middle East are impossible, "unless a comprehensive, just, and permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is reached".

But, why would Israel violate the territorial space of Syria and attack the diplomatic mission of Iran, conscious of the fact that it was technically attacking two countries? It could be a continuation of its policy of spreading terror in the region. Secondly, it might be an attempt to divert attention from its ongoing genocide in Gaza. Thirdly, it could be an attempt to suck in the US and its allies into its war in the region and widen the conflicts. Fourthly, it might be a move to draw out Iran which, after its peace deals with Saudi Arabia, is enjoying unprecedented support across the Muslim world.

Conscious of Russia's presence in Syria and Moscow's commitment to supporting Damascus, Israel's attacks can also be an attempt to provoke a Russian response and exacerbate the conflicts in the region. This way, the conflict in the region can be linked with that in Ukraine. If this were to be the case, then Israel would be playing the same proxy role as Ukraine, which is essentially a cannon fodder.

In taking on various countries simultaneously, Israel reminds me of the African saying that if a dog has human backing, it can kill a monkey. The powerful countries using Israel as a hunter's dog also have a duty to put it on a leash so it does not constitute a danger to society.

On the other hand, the Israeli dog may have been long gone into the wilderness and can no longer hear the hunter's whistle. It is like "The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats's famous poem: "Turning and turning in the widening gyre; The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart; The centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world; ... And what rough beast, its hour come round at last; Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

The article first appeared on Vanguard News.

Asian OG Qualifier: Kavianinejad, Mohmadi through as Iran secures full GR squad for Paris

Sports Desk

Iran became the first country to complete a full set of six Greco-Roman wrestling quotas for the Paris Olympics.

Amin Kavianinejad and Alireza Mohmadi secured the remaining two slots for the country thanks to last-four victories in their respective weight classes in the Asian qualification event in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

In a repeat of a semifinal clash in last October's Asian Games, Kavianinejad – a silver winner in Hangzhou – came from behind to defeat China's Rui Liu 6-5 in a thrilling 77kg contest.

Liu got off to a flying start in the bid to avenge a criteria loss on home soil last year, as he completed a roll from par terre and was then awarded two points following the Iranian's leg blocking, but Kavianinejad cut the gap with a counter takedown before the break.

"Everything was under control, but unfortunately I got a two-point warning," Kavianinejad said, adding: "I believe there was no fault on my part but it made it more difficult for me."

Kavianinejad received a passivity point after the break, though Liu popped out from par terre, leaving the Iranian trailing 5-3.

The three-time Asian medalist still kept his nerve and launched several stepouts to march to victory.

"I won the match in the Asian Games on criteria but today I was able to score more technical points despite being under a bit of pressure," added Kavianinejad, who is yet to be guaranteed a trip to Paris as Mohammad-Ali Geraei is back in fray for the 77kg slot after the three-time world bronze medalist had a one-year ban over an incident in last September's World Championships lifted by the international governing body of the sport.

Later on Sunday, world 82kg silver winner Mohmadi had to dig deep to beat Asian Games champion Jalgasbay Berdimuratov of Uzbekistan 3-2 in a cagy 87kg contest.

Berdimuratov could only manage a one-point stepout from a throw attempt out of par terre in the first period, while

Mohmadi bagged two from a throw in the same position after the interval.

"I'm so grateful to win the Olympic quota one year after the World Championships, especially when I had to go from 82kg to 87kg," Mohmadi said. "I'm confident that I could keep this weight and I hope I can defeat my opponents in the Olympics."

The Iranian added: "I'll be looking to fix my flaws and add some new techniques so I can deliver some perfect performances and excel in the Olympics."

Iran had already won four Paris quotas courtesy of top-five finishes across different weight classes at the World Championships.

Superheavyweight sensation Ali Mirzazadeh will be the Iranian gold hopeful after defeating Turkish great in the 130kg final in Belgrade, while reigning Olympic champion Mohammadreza Geraei (67kg) and Mohammad-Hadi Saravi (97kg) bagged a couple of bronzes and will be chasing a second medal in the Games in the French capital.

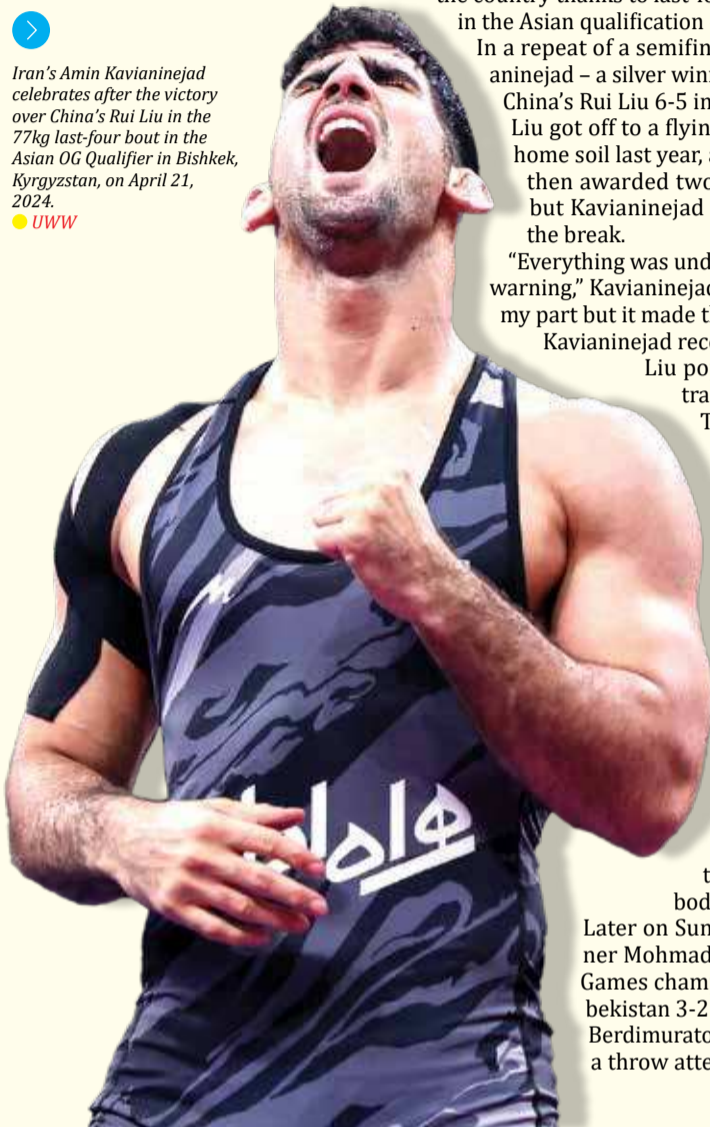
Mahdi Mohsennejad also booked his berth with a fifth-place finish in the 60kg contests. Sunday's triumphs came two days after Younes Emami (74kg) and rising star Amir-Ali Azarpira (97kg) took Iran's freestyle quotas to five in Bishkek.

Ahmad Mohammadnejad failed to reach the 57kg last four but Iran will still have a last chance for a complete six-man squad when the 2021 world silver winner Alireza Sarlak gets his campaign underway at the World OG Qualifier in Istanbul next month.



Iran's Amin Kavianinejad celebrates after the victory over China's Rui Liu in the 77kg last-four bout in the Asian OG Qualifier in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on April 21, 2024.

UWW



Iran's Alireza Mohmadi celebrates after winning the Olympic 87kg quota in the Asian OG Qualifier in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on April 21, 2024.

UWW



'It's a disgrace': Xavi rebukes La Liga for not having goal-line tech

AFP – Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez blasted La Liga for not employing goal-line technology after his team's 3-2 Clásico defeat on Sunday left Real Madrid on the brink of the title.

The coach was furious after Lamine Yamal had a shot which Barcelona said crossed the line not given as a goal after officials could not prove that it had using VAR.

With the score level at 1-1 Yamal cleverly flicked a corner towards goal and Real Madrid goalkeeper Andriy Lunin

pushed the ball to safety, potentially after it had crossed the line.

"It's a disgrace," said Xavi, complaining that the technology used in other top flights including the Premier League is not available in La Liga.

"If we want to be the best league in the world we have to advance in this sense, you have to put in the technology," Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen agreed with his coach.

"It's shameful for football, I don't have the words," said the Germa-

ny international.

"There's so much money in this world and there's no money for what's most important."

Jude Bellingham's late winner left champions Barcelona 11 points behind Real Madrid with six matches remaining.

"(Madrid) have had an extraordinary league, they have lost just one game, they've almost wrapped it up," admitted Xavi.

"I feel that with the game we played the normal thing would be that we would win.

"We competed very well,

I think we deserved the three points."

Xavi's counterpart Carlo Ancelotti said he was delighted with his Madrid side after they beat Manchester City on Wednesday on penalties to reach the Champions League semi-finals and then produced a late Clásico winner.

"I'm very proud, because they were two very demanding games," said the coach.

"Now we have to prepare for the final part of the season, but we are very well positioned."



Real Madrid keeper Andriy Lunin makes a save during a 3-2 victory over Barcelona in La Liga at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium, Madrid, Spain, on April 21, 2024.

THOMAS COEX/AFP

'It smells really bad': Vafaei criticises Crucible after crashing out to Trump

PA – Hossein Vafaei strongly criticised the conditions at the Crucible after crashing out of the World Snooker Championship in a 10-5 defeat by former champion Judd Trump.

The Iranian described the Sheffield venue as "smelly", compared its practice facilities to "like playing in a garage", and questioned the treatment of players in the course of the marathon 17-day event.

"Everything's so bad – if you ask me if I want to come back here, I would tell you no way," said Vafaei, who is no stranger to Crucible controversy after playing a rash break-off shot in his defeat by Ronnie O'Sullivan last year. "Forget the history, you want to go somewhere really nice as a player. You walk round the Crucible and it smells really bad. You go to other countries, and everything is shiny. But here it's completely different.

"The practice room – do you see anything special? I feel like I'm practising in a garage."

Speculation over the future of the Crucible, which has staged the tourna-



RICHARD SELLERS/PA

ment since 1977, has been heightened since world No1 O'Sullivan suggested it should be moved to Saudi Arabia or China when the existing deal expires in 2027.

Vafaei, who made his debut in 2022, is clearly no fan and continued: "Look at the China venues, how fantastic they treat the players, a red carpet and an opening ceremony. The players are treated like stars. But here no one looks after the players, before and after the match

no one cares who you are. "If they don't want to lose the Crucible invest some money, make it shinier, make it nicer, make it more luxury for the people. If they make it cleaner and nicer, people will enjoy it." World Snooker Tour responded in a statement: "The Crucible is a historic venue and there are limitations given the size of the backstage areas. We work with the Crucible to make it as welcoming as possible for players."

More than 280 bodies retrieved from mass graves

OIC seeks probe into 'war crime' over Khan Younis mass graves



responsibilities in this regard". Health workers in Gaza have uncovered at least 283 bodies of people from a mass grave at the Nasser Hospital, Gaza's civil defense agency said. "Civil defense crews retrieved 73 more bodies from a mass grave, bringing the total figure to 283 bodies since Saturday," the agency said in a statement. Civil defense crews are still searching for more bodies. A mass grave was found in the hospital's courtyard on Saturday after the Israeli

Palestinian health workers stand next to unearthed bodies buried by Israeli forces in Nasser hospital compound in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on April 21, 2024.
● AFP

army withdrew from the city on April 7 following a 4-month ground offensive. "We believe that there are hundreds of bodies still missing after being executed by the Israeli occupation and buried in mass graves," the agency said. According to security sources, the majority of the victims who had been buried in mass graves were women and children. Associated Press reported the burial area in the Nasser hospital was built when Israeli forces were besieging the facility last month. At the time, people were not able to bury the dead in a cemetery and dug graves in the hospital yard, the civil defense group said. It said some of the bodies were of people killed during the hospital siege. Others were killed when Israeli forces raided the hospital, also last month. After the military withdrew from Khan Younis earlier this month, residents have been returning to the site in search of the bodies of their loved ones with the aim of burying them in permanent graves elsewhere.

Sanctions won't dampen Iran's defense capacity

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

OPINION

The West, spearheaded by the United States, has an insatiable appetite for sanctioning Iran. Regardless of whether the numerous sanctions they have slapped on Iran over the years have borne fruit in terms of achieving their desired outcome, namely a shift in Tehran's conduct, they persist in beating the drum for mounting pressure on the Islamic Republic. Over the weekend, the US House of Representatives passed new sanctions targeting Iran as part of the foreign aid package to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan. If the bill is greenlit by the Senate and signed into law by President Joe Biden, Iran will face fresh sanctions. During a meeting yesterday, EU foreign ministers deliberated on the prospect of imposing further sanctions on Iran in response to Tehran's recent military strike on Israel. In a previous instance following an online meeting of the Group of 7 leaders to assess Iran's retaliatory attack against Israel, the foreign ministers of the group voiced their readiness to collectively impose more sanctions on Iran. Despite already imposing the harshest sanctions on Iran, Western nations are gearing up to apply even more pressure, hoping that these measures will prompt a shift in the Islamic Republic's policies. US sanctions imposed by former president Donald Trump as part of his "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, as highlighted in a report by Alena Douhan, the UN special rapporteur, have resulted in human rights violations and significant harm, particularly affecting patients suffering from certain diseases. However, these sanctions have not succeeded in influencing Iran's policies. This was evident in Iran's recent military action in retaliation against Israel, showcasing that not only has the deterrence capability of the Islamic Republic remained intact but has also been bolstered. Addressing possible European sanctions, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said, "If they proceed with such actions, they are rewarding an aggressive regime and engaging in illegal actions against a state that is solely operating within the bounds of international law to establish deterrence against an aggressive regime that flouts international regulations." He added, "Should the European Union take such a step, it will be deemed illegal and a shameful blot on the EU's history. Any country endorsing these sanctions will be remembered for supporting and adhering to sanctions lacking legal and legitimate grounds from an international perspective."

International Desk
The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) condemned "the horrific massacres" committed by Israel following the uncov-

ering of mass graves in the courtyard of Nasser Medical Complex in the city of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. The organization said in a statement that "hundreds

of displaced, wounded, sick people and medical teams have been subjected to torture and abuse before being executed and buried collectively". It called for a probe into "a

war crime, a crime against humanity, and organized state terrorism", stressing the need for the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice "to assume their

Potential EU sanctions against Iran 'reward to aggressor'

International Desk
Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said a plan announced recently by the European Union to impose more sanctions on Iran over its retaliatory strikes against Israel would be "rewarding the aggressor". "Should they take [such] measure, it would go down in Europe's history as a shameful action," Kanaani said. The official expressed surprise that Brussels could go ahead with sanctioning Tehran over its legitimate retaliation

against Israel, but had so far stopped short of levying any punitive measures against Tel Aviv over the latter's unspeakable atrocities in the Gaza Strip. Kanaani, meanwhile, reminded the EU that its previous sanctions against the Islamic Republic had failed to hinder the country's progress. "The policy of sanctions is a failed policy," Kanaani said, advising the bloc to "learn from the past." European Union leaders decided on Wednesday to step up sanctions against Iran after Tehran's attack



on Israel on April 13. Iran launched extensive missile and drone strikes on Israel in response to the regime's April 1 attack against the Iranian consulate in Syria's capital, Damascus. The Israel's airstrike

killed two senior Iranian military personnel who were on an advisory mission to Syria as well as five of their accompanying officers. "Iran provided a decisive and legitimate response to an illegal action by the [Israeli] regime against [our] diplomatic premises that took place in violation of the international laws," Kanaani said. "But if another mistake takes place, Iran's response will be stronger," he added. The spokesman described the Israeli regime as a "threat to all regional countries," adding that the regime's war on the Gaza Strip showed that "the usurping regime is no partner to peaceful plans, and thinks of nothing other than genocide and forced displacement of Palestinians."

Erdogan visits Iraq after 12 years

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived in Baghdad on Monday for his first state visit to Iraq since 2011. During his meetings with top Iraqi officials, Erdogan discussed water, oil, regional security, and Iraq's Road of Development. "Iraq and Turkey have signed a strategic security pact, as well as another agreement on water sharing between Iraq and Turkey," Iraq's Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani said in a joint press conference with Erdogan in Baghdad. "We will not let anyone launch attacks on the neighboring countries from our territories, and we will not let anyone breach our sovereignty." Sudani also said that a quadrilateral memorandum of understanding between Iraq, Turkey, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates has been signed to establish the necessary frameworks for implementing the Strategic Development Road project. Erdogan stressed that they had signed a strategy security pact against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Gulen Movement with Iraq, emphasizing that Iraq had formally recognized the PKK as a "terrorist" organization. He also said they have established permanent committees to address water issues, Iraq's water scarcity, environmental issues, and the development of the trade, tourism, and education sectors.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iranians make first umrah pilgrimage after nine-year hiatus

International Desk
Iranians travelled on Monday to Saudi Arabia for umrah pilgrimage after a nine-year hiatus following a last year diplomatic rapprochement between the two countries. The first group of pilgrims departed Iran for Saudi Arabia through the Shahid Hashemi Nejad Airport in northeastern city of Mashhad. They are the first Iranians to make the pilgrimage since Tehran and Riyadh agreed in a China-brokered

deal last year to restore ties and reopen their respective embassies after more than seven years. Saudi Arabia and Iran severed ties in 2016 after Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran were stormed during protests over Riyadh's execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr. The Saudi Ambassador to Tehran, Abdullah bin Saud al-Anazi, was present at the Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport, along with several Iranian officials to send off another group of pilgrims. A total of 5,720 Iranian um-

rah pilgrims are expected to head to Saudi Arabia this year for the umrah pilgrimage. Umrah differs from Hajj in that the latter is a lengthier visit which is done once a year and performed once in a lifetime by able-bodied Muslims who can afford it.



● IRNA

US double standards on Palestinian issue



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

PERSPECTIVE

The United States has prevented the United Nations from recognizing a Palestinian state by casting a veto in the Security Council to deny Palestinians full membership in the world body. Twelve council members voted in favor of granting the Palestinians full member status, while the UK and Switzerland abstained.

Washington has long advocated for a two-state solution and the veto once again reveals its contradictory stance and double standard policy. The rejection comes as Israel's war on the Gaza Strip has aroused sympathy toward Palestinians around the world and prompted growing calls for the recognition of the State of Palestine. Since the start of the offensive on October 7, Tel Aviv has killed over 34,000 Palestinians and injured around 77,000 more.

Now, more than ever, Palestinians are subjected to the harshest level of aggression, persecution, and genocide. Despite this, the US unilaterally killed their UN bid in support of Israel.

After the vote, Robert Wood, the US deputy ambassador to the UN, said his country "has worked vigorously and with determination to support Palestinian statehood in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement that would permanently resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".

He cited the Hamas resistance movement's attack on Israel on Oct. 7 as the complicating factor for the Palestinian application for statehood and referred to President Joe Biden's policy, stating that sustainable peace in the region can only be achieved through a two-state solution with Israel's security guarantee.

This reflects the US support for the two-state solution while protecting the interests of both the US and Israel. As a senior political analyst Marwan Bishara from Al Jazeera said the US move demonstrated that "Palestine could only be a country the way the United States sees it, or Israel sees it, only at the time that it's suitable to the United States and within the geopolitics and the global interest of the United States".

Enthusied with the US move, Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised the decision to block the proposal, saying, "The shameful proposal was rejected. Terrorism will not be rewarded."

The Security Council has consistently called for a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, a result that has failed to materialize during negotiations between the two sides. It is worth noting that the two-state solution, based on pre-1967 borders, would leave out significant Palestinian territories. Nevertheless, Washington impeded the very opportunity for Palestinians to achieve the minimum prerequisites for establishing an independent state, despite the majority of the global community supporting the membership.

The latest veto is not the only instance showcasing its double standard policy. US policy has always been in line with exacerbating the regional crisis stemming from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Washington has barely acted against Israel for its settlement activities in the occupied West Bank, which is illegal under international law, as well as the blockade of Gaza, which has technically turned the coastal enclave into the world's largest open-air prison since 2007.

The US has only confined itself to condemning the settlements in words, turning a blind eye to Israel's atrocities, including crimes against civilians in Gaza and the expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

The US stance on the Palestinian issue appears to be aimed at breaking the Palestinians' will and forcing them into submission to the occupying power, in order to win more concessions from them over the two-state solution. However, the approach has backfired especially in the wake of Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7 which once again raised global awareness and drawn condemnation of Israel's handling of the Palestinian issue.

MP: Iran's missile strike was limited, cautionary to Israel

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

An Iranian parliamentarian stated that Iran employed the minimum level of its offensive missile capability during its recent retaliatory operation against Israel, as the primary goal was "to caution the Zionist regime".

On April 13, Iran launched extensive missile and drone strikes against Israel in response to its attack on the Iranian diplomatic premises in Syria on April 1, during which seven Iranian military advisors were killed. The "punishment" attack was also in response to Israel's repeated aggression against Iran and the UN Security Council's failure to hold the regime accountable for the April 1 attack.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Jalil Rahimi Jah-anabadi said the majority of the missiles and drones used in the operation were from the early generations of Iran's military equipment. The intention behind this operation, he said, "was solely to issue a warning to the Zionist regime that if Iran intends to infiltrate Israel, neither their Iron Dome nor their regional and international allies will be able to stop Iran". He added that if the atrocities of Israel persist, the Islamic



REUTERS

Republic may confront it with its next-generation weapons at any time. The member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said when several relatively unsophisticated missiles easily bypass Israel's defensive barriers and inflict damage on the intended military zone, undoubtedly Iran's hypersonic missiles and next-generation ballistic missiles can easily target any point within the occupied territories. "However, our operations

were carried out in a limited manner, and only bases that had attacked our consulate in Syria were targeted," he emphasized. "Our forces demonstrated the capability to conduct operations of high complexity and scope to overcome defensive barriers such as the Iron Dome as well as the fighter jets and air defense systems of NATO forces and Western countries supporting the Zionist regime."



Jahanabadi expressed hope

that "the Zionist regime receives the messages of this operation and pays attention to the core messages of the operation instead of falling prey to misunderstandings and propaganda."

The lawmaker reiterated that the operation was solely in response to Israel's attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, adding that, "If the Security Council had taken appropriate action following the attack and addressed the Zionist regime's breach of

international rules, Iran's response might have differed". Regarding the involvement of regional countries in tracking the drones and missiles used in the operation, he highlighted Jordan's role, clarifying that no other regional country besides Jordan was involved in such an operation. He concluded that the matter has been investigated, and clear messages have been sent to Jordan and other concerned countries through diplomatic channels, expressing hope for resolution.

Pakistan, Iran must foster trust



By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi arrived in Pakistan, at the head of political and economic delegation, on a three-day official visit. His visit to Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi will further strengthen Iran-Pakistan relations in various sectors including agriculture, trade, energy, among others. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan has stated that Pakistan and Iran have decided to sign a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in workforce and cinema. Both countries will take steps for the exchange of skilled individuals. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, there was a surge in relations between both countries, reaching its peak during the tenure of General Zia-ul-Haq, when Iran's then-president Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei visited Islamabad and Lahore. Subsequently, Pakistan and Iran started strategic cooperation, but these relations gradually decreased after the death of Zia-ul-Haq. Pakistan supported Iran significantly during the war imposed by Saddam Hussein on Iran, providing Tehran with missiles.

Pakistan is currently facing a severe energy crisis, and to some extent, completing the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project has become inevitable for Pakistan to control it. And only this project is immediately feasible for Pakistan, or else if Pakistan discovers a large amount of natural gas, the present government has expressed determination to complete this project until it reaches completion. While American authorities have clearly expressed their reservations about this project, the current Pakistani Energy Minister Masood Malik has called on the US to exclude the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project from US sanctions.

Pakistan's attention and priority should be the completion of the gas pipeline project, which is in Pakistan's best interest. This project was initiated in 1996, and despite 28 years, it has only reached Iran's border due to Pakistan's lack of interest. Pakistan should complete the work of laying the gas pipeline within its territorial boundaries and arrange access to affordable energy for the Pakistani people. Although, there are many obstacles to the promotion of trade between Pakistan and Iran, smuggling is the biggest obstacle. A mechanism for trade in local currencies between Pakistan and Iran should also be established soon, which will benefit both countries.

US-Israeli scenario ...

Washington views Israel as the linchpin of its regional policies in West Asia, with negotiations with Saudi Arabia primarily aimed at safeguarding Israel's security and influence in the region. However, the underlying objective is evident: US plans entail Israel's dominance in West Asia, a move intended to bolster its global standing in geopolitical rivalries and the restructuring of the global order. Given this context, the failure of Arab-US negotiations to broker a Gaza cease-fire comes as no surprise. Arab leaders often overlook the fact that all Islamic nations of the region are viewed as adversaries by the US due to their opposition to Israel. As a result, they pose a threat to US interests. The scope of such enmity varies, but the common thread is clear. If the Palestinian resistance groups, Iran, and the axis of resistance are at the forefront of

the American-Israeli tug-of-war, it will trickle down to weaken other Arab countries in the region. This could involve exerting economic pressure, limiting access to new technologies, sparking internal unrest, fomenting regime change, and even leading to the disintegration of these nations in favor of Israel, thereby shaping the new Middle East. This blueprint for a new Middle East, favoring Israel and the West, is underway, with the Gaza conflict serving as a pivotal piece. The cessation of hostilities in Gaza will not halt this agenda. US talks for political and security pacts between Arab states and Israel are a tactic to buy time to advance pro-Israel policies in the region gradually. The surge in US military aid to Israel underscores this strategy. Regional Arab players must resist the incremental implementation of the US-Israeli agenda. Elevating the Palestinian cause to a collective

regional concern can act as a deterrent to the envisioned American-Israeli Middle East. Making the Gaza conflict a proxy war between Iran and Israel is a calculated move to sideline the Palestinian plight, enabling America to pursue its agenda in West Asia with Arab states as tactical pawns. Organizing a new Islamic summit can reinforce the primacy of the Palestinian issue in the Islamic world. Iran and influential Arab stakeholders should persist in diplomatic efforts for peace in the Gaza Strip. Collective political initiatives supported by all Islamic nations can pave the way for progress. Leveraging global public opinion can serve as a barrier against potential American and Israeli attempts to obscure the Gaza conflict and fully occupy Palestinian territories. This shared Islamic goal should unite both Arab and non-Arab nations in safeguarding the Palestinian cause.