

Iran calls EU sanctions for Israel attack 'regrettable'



Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian
● AFP

Iran described as "regrettable" Tuesday a decision by the European Union to expand the bloc's sanctions against Iran in response to the Islamic Republic's recent unprecedented strikes on Israel. "It is regrettable to see the EU deciding quickly to apply more unlawful restrictions against Iran

just because Iran exercised its right to self-defense in the face of Israel's reckless aggression," Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a post on X. "The EU should not follow Washington's advice to satisfy the criminal Israeli regime." On Monday, EU foreign policy chief

Josep Borrell said the bloc had agreed in principle to expand its existing sanctions against Iran's drone program to cover missiles and their potential transfer to resistance movements in region or to Russia. Borrell's remarks came nearly 10 days after Iran launched its

first-ever direct drone and missile attack against Israel. The barrage was in response to a deadly April 1 air strike, widely blamed on Israel, that levelled Iran's consulate in Damascus and killed seven members of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, two of them generals.

UN calls for int'l probe into Gaza mass graves



● AFP

The UN called on Tuesday for an international investigation into reports of mass graves at two Gaza hospitals destroyed in Israeli sieges, saying war crimes may have been committed. The United Nations rights office said it was "horrified" by the destruction of Gaza's biggest hospital, Al-Shifa in Gaza City, and its second largest, the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, AFP reported.

On Monday, the Palestinian territory's Civil Defense agency said health workers had uncovered more than 280 bodies of people killed and buried at Nasser hospital, which was besieged by Israeli troops last month.

In early April the World Health Organization said Al-Shifa had been destroyed by an Israeli siege, leaving an "empty shell" containing many bodies.

The UN rights office on Tuesday demanded "independent, effective and transparent investigations into the deaths".

"Given the prevailing climate of impunity, this should include international investigators," UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

Hospitals, which are protected under international law, have repeatedly come under Israeli bombardment over more than six months of war in Gaza. Israel has accused Palestinian resistance group Hamas of using Gazan medical facilities as command centers. Hamas has denied those claims. "Hospitals are entitled to very special protection under international humanitarian law," Turk pointed out.

"And the intentional killing of civilians, detainees and others who are hors de combat is a war crime."

Mass arrests as US campus protests over Gaza spread



Police arrest protesters outside of New York University on April 22, 2024.
● ADAM GRAY/THE NEW YORK TIMES

US police have arrested scores of pro-Palestinian protesters at a handful of elite US universities. Police moved to break up an encampment at New York University (NYU) on Monday night, making a number of arrests, BBC reported. Dozens of students were arrested at Yale earlier in the day, while Columbia University cancelled in-person classes.

Demonstrations and heated debates about the Israel's war on Gaza and free speech have rocked US campuses since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza on 7 October. The protest movement was thrust into the spotlight last week after New York City police were called out to Columbia's campus and arrested more than 100 demonstrators. Rallies have spread since then.

In addition to NYU and Yale, encampments have been set up at the University of California at Berkeley, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the University of Michigan, Emerson College and Tufts. Like their peers, the NYU protesters are calling on their institution to discontinue and divest its "finances and endowments from weapons manufacturers and companies with an interest in the Israeli occupation". One student, Alejandro Tanon told the AFP news agency that the US was at a "critical moment", likening the protests to historic demonstrations over the Vietnam War and apartheid in South Africa.

Erdogan compares Netanyahu to Hitler

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan compared Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler, likening Israel's onslaught on Gaza to Nazi Germany's killing of Jews. In remarks at an awards ceremony in capital Ankara on Wednesday, Erdogan asked what difference there was between Netanyahu and Hitler, Al Jazeera reported. Netanyahu later responded by pointing to Turkey's own history of alleged rights abuses. "They used to speak ill of Hitler. What difference do you have from Hitler? They are going to make us miss Hitler. Is what this Netanyahu is doing any less than what Hitler did? It is not," Erdogan said.

"He is richer than Hitler, he gets the support from the West. All sorts of support comes from the United States. And what did they do with all this support? he said. Erdogan added that they have killed more than 34,000 Gazans. Erdogan's remarks came as Turkey ratchets up criticism of Israel, reversing a trend of growing ties with Israel before the regime's assault on Gaza took a devastating humanitarian toll that has sparked outrage across the region. The Turkish leader has previously levelled harsh criticism at Netanyahu and Israel, calling Israel a "terror state" with "unlimited" Western support in November. Under Hitler's rule, Nazi Germa-

ny embarked on an effort to systematically eliminate European Jews, killing six million through death and labor camps, mass shootings, and a variety of other methods. The Israeli prime minister later hit back at Erdogan, criticizing Turkey for its own record of alleged rights abuses at home and in its conflict with Kurdish armed groups. "Erdogan, who commits genocide against the Kurds, who holds a world record for imprisoning journalists who oppose his rule, is the last person who can preach morality to us," Netanyahu said in a statement. Israel's war on Gaza has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians since October 7.

Bandar Abbas Municipality and development of diplomatic Relationships

The head of communications and international affairs Department of Bandar Abbas Municipality has announced the municipality's firm resolves to enhance international interactions to create investment opportunities in urban projects and to apply the experiences of urban management of foreign cities.

According to the report of the Communications and International Affairs Department of Bandar Abbas Municipality, Maryam Pasalar, the head of this department, provided a comprehensive report on the activities of this management in the field of international relations in the year 2023. At the beginning of her speech, Pasalar emphasized on the importance of establishing international relationships with cities in common characteristics, and said: "Today, in the light of the communications revolution and the development of modern communication technologies, and due to the increase of issues and problems of countries at the global scale, and also the increase in international interactions of countries, the role and importance of international cultural communications in establishing global peace and security, and in a sense, globalization, enhancing individual and ethnic identity, and ultimately preserving and sustaining the environment, are evident to everyone. Therefore, every society and country must have a strong presence in this communicative flow, in order to benefit from contemporary knowledge, scientific growth and progress, and to effectively face the various dimensions of these communications also play an active role in powerful international relations."

She continued: "Last year, fortunately, significant steps were taken in the field of international relations by the Bandar Abbas Municipality compared to previous years. Notably, the mayor of Bandar Abbas joined the Assembly of Asian Mayors for the first time and attended the Asian Mayors' Forum in July 2023 in Ahmedabad, India. A comprehensive report of this trip has been presented to the Organization of Municipalities and Rural Administrations. Pasalar added: Since 2019, the membership of Bandar Abbas in the



UNESCO Creative Cities Network has enhanced the international image of Bandar Abbas. In this case, members were invited to participate in the Congress on Culture and Art Education in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, which the mayor and the head of the municipality's Creativity Center attended in February 2024. Additionally, Bandar Abbas Municipality was virtually attended at the annual meeting of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in October 2023." The head of International Relations continued by mentioning the numerous meetings of the mayor and officials of Bandar Abbas Municipality with their foreign counterparts, both online and in person, aimed at expanding the cultural relations of cities. She said: "The Nowruz invitation to the Consul General of China, the Consul of India, and the Consul of Kazakhstan, with the presence of a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bandar Abbas, marked the beginning of last year's communications. She stated: "Participation in the celebration of the 74th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China and the introduction of the new Chinese Consul General, attendance at the celebration of the 77th Independence Day of India, a meeting with the presence of new Chinese Consul General in the last September at the mayor's office, and honoring Negar Gheybi, a student from Bandar Abbas who won third place in the Ningbo Asian Children's Painting

Competition in China, were among other meetings that took place.

Pasalar declared: "Last year, several meetings were held with the Chinese Consul General to create investment opportunities and the cooperation of Chinese companies in urban projects in the fields of tourism and waste management. A video conference with the mayor of Ningbo was also held on this matter, and negotiations continue until a result is achieved."

The head of International Relations, while thanking the esteemed members of the Islamic City Council, mentioned the council's approval and authorization for five sister city requests includes Mumbai, India; Ningbo, China; Aktau, Kazakhstan; Karachi, Pakistan; and Astrakhan, Russia, as a leap and enhancement in the international interactions of Bandar Abbas Municipality with foreign cities. He stated: "The requests and draft agreements for sister city relationships with these cities, after review and legal amendments and obtaining the approval of the Islamic City Council, have been sent to The Ministry of Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran through the governorate to the Organization of Municipalities and Rural Administrations.

Pasalar said: "Based on the custom of sister city relationships with foreign cities, we are pursuing the reciprocal naming of city parks to further acquaint the citizens of the two sister cities, and efforts in this regard are ongoing.

Maryam Pasalar, the head of International Relations of Bandar Abbas Municipality, at the end of her speech again emphasized on the importance of establishing effective communication within the legal framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran with other foreign cities to benefit from their experiences and scientific and managerial achievements in urban affairs. She said: "Last year, with the compassionate support of the members of the Islamic City Council of Bandar Abbas, we were able to take effective steps in developing the municipality's international relations. We hope that in the coming year, with these effective connections, we can take useful steps towards the development, progress, and prosperity of the city and citizens."