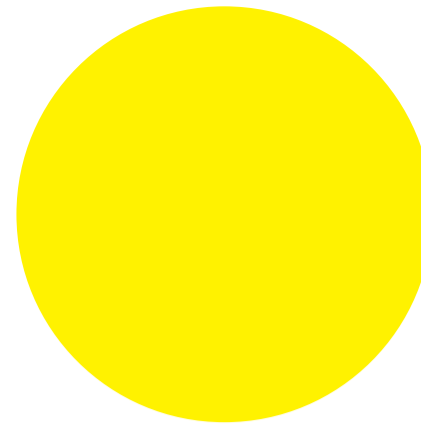




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Iran Daily



irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Vol. 7558 • Wednesday, May 15, 2024 • Ordibehesht 26, 1403 • Dhu al-Qadah 6, 1445 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

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Obstacles to ceasing Gaza war **Israel seeks a temporary truce, Hamas a lasting one**

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Several attempts at negotiating a cease-fire to stop the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip have proven fruitless. In the latest round of talks, Hamas agreed to the cease-fire terms while Israel did not comply. The ongoing impasse begs the question: what is the primary barrier to halting the war in the Palestinian enclave? Furthermore, does the failure of the recent negotiations imply that a cease-fire is off the table? To shed light on this matter, we've spoken with Mansour Barati, an expert on Middle East affairs.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran unveils first indigenized locomotive diesel engine



Iran has unveiled its first domestically-manufactured locomotive diesel engine with 4,000 horsepower, placing itself among the countries enjoying such high-level technology.

The diesel engine, going by the name of MP610, was unveiled in an official ceremony attended by Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Abbas Aliabadi and the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways, in Alborz Province, west of the capital Tehran, Press TV wrote.

Indigenized by Iranian experts and engineers, the 4,000-horsepower engine was designed and manufactured by the MAPNA Group, a leading holding company founded in 1993 with more than 70 subsidiaries that has established itself as Iran's largest contractor of power plant projects and a key player in rail transportation and oil and gas projects within the country.

Tehran calls for Kuwait to return to negotiations over Arash gas field

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani called for Kuwait to re-engage in technical discussions to resolve the ownership dispute over the Arash gas field in the Persian Gulf. During a weekly press briefing in Tehran, Kanaani emphasized the necessity for technical and legal negotiations over media discourse to determine the respective shares of the Arash gas field, referred to as Durra by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The spokesman said that maritime boundaries between Iran and Kuwait remain undefined, making it premature to discuss the allocation of the field's resources.

Kanaani reiterated Iran's stance on resolving the matter through formal negotiations and expressed Iran's rejection of any one-sided measures disregarding its interests.

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait signed a development agreement in March 2022, claiming the field in its entirety, while Iran has condemned the accord as "illegal" and contrary to earlier negotiations.



President Raisi inaugurates ICT projects

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi participated in the ceremony of inaugurating six information and communications technology projects as well as the signing of contracts for purchasing equipment from domestic manufacturers active in telecommunications industry. Concurrent with the World Communication Day, the infrastructure projects were inaugurated

in the presence of the president at the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in Tehran on Tuesday. The seven projects are as follows: the fiber-optic project for homes and businesses in 20 cities, the connection of the 7,500th village with more than 20 households to Iran's communi-

cation network, the national IP network development project in 6 new locations, the 1,800th site equipped with 5th generation of cellular network technology, the transmission network using domestic production capabilities, and the 5th generation of cell phones. In the ceremony, 11 contracts for were signed in to purchase network equipment from do-

mestic knowledge-based companies by telecommunications operators.

Upon his arrival at the inauguration ceremony, President Raisi was briefed on the latest achievements of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

The World Telecommunication Day (WTD) is celebrated annually on May 17.



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (R) is being briefed on the latest achievements of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in Tehran on May 14, 2024. president.ir

Exports by Iranian NTBFs top \$2.5b: **IRICA**

Iran's new technology-based firms exported over 3.6 million tons of products, valued at \$2.506 billion in the previous Iranian year (ended March 19, 2024), according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA). IRICA said 1.158 million tons of goods, valued at \$5.141 billion, were imported by the NTBFs into the country from March 21, 2023, to March 19, 2024, Mehr News Agency reported.

About 85 percent of the goods imported by the knowledge-based companies came from China, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Tur-

key, Germany and India, it added. The domestic NTBFs exported their products to China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Russia in the period, IRICA said. Also, the NTBFs accounted for 2.6 and 5 percent of the country's total exports in weight and value respectively. IRICA added that advanced materials and products based on chemical technologies accounted for about 80 percent of the export value of these companies.

China was Iran's first buyer of NTBFs products during the period.

Iran's deposits with foreign banks over \$13b: **BIS**

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) put Iran's total deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions at more than \$13 billion.

The BIS said Iran's financial transactions with foreign banks in the 4th quarter of 2023 registered a 10 percent growth, reported Tasnim News Agency.

In its latest report, the bank put the amount of Iran's deposits with foreign financial institutions and banks at the

end of 4th quarter of 2023 at \$13.143 billion.

Iran's deposits with foreign banks and financial institutions increased by \$1.148 billion in the 4th quarter of 2023, showing a nine percent hike compared to the same period in 2022, the report added.

It said Iran's total financial transactions with foreign banks and financial institutions in the 4th quarter of 2023 exceeded \$14.140 billion, showing a 10% growth

compared to the 3rd quarter of the same year.

Iran's total foreign transactions with foreign banks and financial institutions in the 3rd quarter of 2023 hit \$12.832 billion, the report added.

The Bank for International Settlements is headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, and its reports are released four times a year entitled "International Banking and Financial Market Developments".

Zero-flaring project to be implemented by 2027: **Deputy minister**

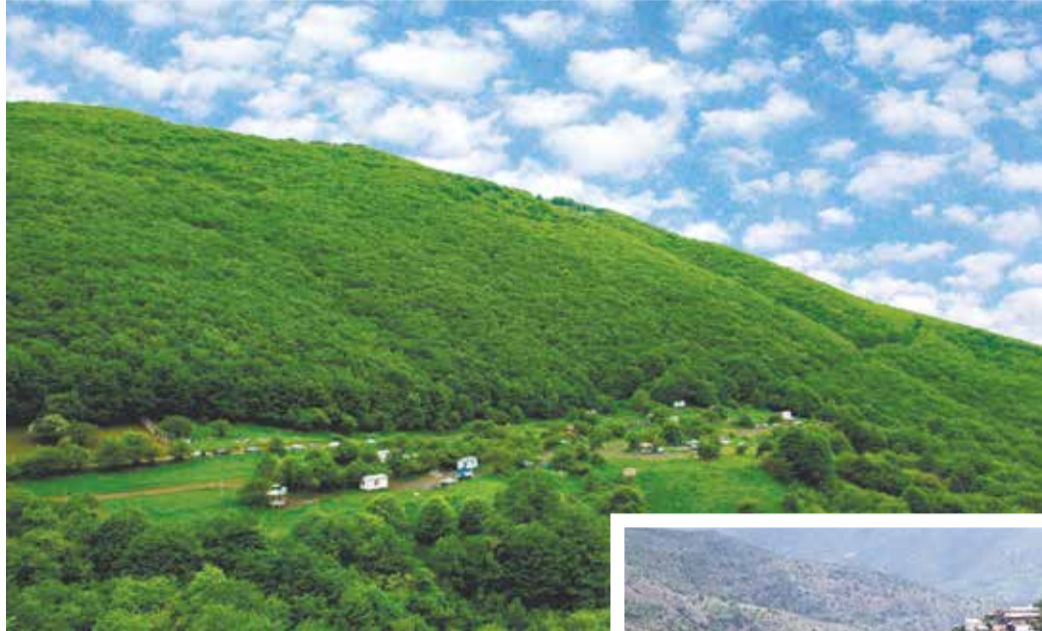
Iran will complete zero-flaring in its oil and gas industry by March 2027, announced the deputy oil minister for planning on Tuesday adding that the figure for collecting associated petroleum gas (APG) will hit 40 million cubic meters (mcm) in less than two years. Talking to IRNA, Houshang Falahatian also said that the daily APG collection of Iran was 15 mcm to 18 mcm

during the last Iranian year which ended on March 19 as the current figure of collecting APG in Iranian oil industry stands at 25 mcm. Contracts worth over \$5 billion were signed for the collection of associated petroleum gas (APG) in the 13th administration for field gas collection of the West Karoun and East Karoun fields of Karun as well as fields in the west of Iran, Iranian Oil

Minister Javad Owji said on May 8.

"Currently, 11.5 mcm of APG are collected, which will reach 30 mcm by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2025). Methane from the processing of these flare gases is injected into the national gas network as heavy compounds are fed to petrochemical complexes in order to create more added value," he noted.

Visit the magnificent scenery of Arasbaran in northern Iran



Arasbaran Mountain
● whc.unesco.org

On top of the enchanting mountains in Arasbaran at dawn, through the radiant beams of sunshine, one could observe how mist spreads out from the jungle. This magnificent scenery recalls other-worldly postcards.

Arasbaran is a high mountainous region with an elevation ranging from 256 meters to 2,896 meters. It is located in northern Iran, at the border with Armenia and Azerbaijan, visitiran.ir wrote.

The nomads aren't obliged

to travel far for their sheep and goats to graze, since the area is utterly green. Arasbaran, or Qareh Daq, is a vast mountainous area, south of Aras River, in East Azarbaijan Province. It is bordered by the Aras River from the north, Moghan in the east, Sarab in the south, and Marand in the west.

The region owes its significance partly to being home to an extremely diverse range of vegetation and animal species, and in part to the occurrence of a number



Kaleybar
● itto.org

of momentous historical events.

Due to the importance of the area in having a rich flora and fauna, and the presence of quite rare species, in 1976, UNESCO registered Arasbaran Protected Area, spreading in an area of 75,000 hectares, as the

9th biosphere reserve in Iran and listed it as a wildlife refuge.

A unique feature of Arasbaran Forest is the ubiquity of edible wild trees. Hornbeam, sumac, a wide range of berries, walnuts, hazelnuts, redcurrants and a variety of herbs with

application in traditional medicine are some of the local flora.

Moreover, the region is a natural habitat to various species of birds, reptiles, fish and mammals, namely, wild boar, brown bear, wolf, leopard and Caspian red deer, which, apparently,



Babak Castle
● IRNA

was in danger of extinction but has recently been revitalized.

While traveling in the area, visiting the road from Kaleybar to Asheqlu is recommended. A large number of magnificent attractions of the region are located in this vicinity, for instance, Mikandi valley, Aynali Forest, and Babak Castle. Nevertheless, there are also some other attractions less frequently visited by tourists, including the traditional lifestyle of the summer camps of the tribes

local to the area.

Hot springs, some of which are equipped with therapeutic facilities, are plentiful in the area and ready to help visitors relax.

Due to the high altitude difference, Arasbaran enjoys a variety of climates. Kaleybar is the closest residential area. The average annual precipitation at the Kaleybar weather station during a period of 20 years was 461mm. Precipitation in this area is relatively high and it snows most of the time.

Roman-Sassanid cultural and trade interaction

A number of processes facilitated or compelled cross-cultural interaction between Rome and Sassanid empires, including forced migrations as a result of war, skilled workers or intellectuals seeking opportunity, mercantile activity, and direct diplomatic contact.

While much of the ideological maneuvering took place at the courtly apex, many interregional — even global — channels and processes outside the emperors' control also facilitated cultural contact and interchange.

This larger world of human and mercantile commerce brought the powers into contact, allowing for the movement of ideas between realms and sometimes providing a venue for competition or (more rarely) cooperation.

When considering these wider processes it is important to keep in mind that the courts expended a considerable amount of energy attempting to conform them to their worldview.

From the perspective of two universal empires, the economic, demographic, and political forces that facilitated Roman-Sassanid interaction also provided the stage and actors for

their dramatic expressions of power. Thus, the courts often portrayed routine embassies as unequivocal expressions of submission, and trade could be tribute and payments of indemnities gifts.

Trade

Several systems of intercontinental trade through Central Asia, the Mesopotamian marchlands, and the Indian Ocean bound the two realms together and facilitated communication with the larger late antique world. These channels of cross-continental movement facilitated the fluid passage of technology, ideas, visual motifs, and practices and were indirect modes of communication and competition between the Romans and Sassanids. Over the period in which the majority of Roman-Sassanid interactions occurred these trade routes were divided into three branches. The most traveled land route ran from Han, Sui, or Tang territory across the northern rim of the Tarim Basin in the direction of the Ferghana Valley, then westward to the Sogdian cities of Transoxiana, and Panjikent and the oasis outpost of Bukhara. This

route then proceeded into Sassanid territory through the frontier city of Marv into Iran, and, by way of several designated exchange points, into the Roman Empire. Through a series of peace treaties in the late third and fourth centuries, the two courts established a system of trade regulations that mandated that goods be exchanged only under the control of the two states, at designated trading stations. This policy soon came to be the norm and was accepted in later fifth- and sixth-century treaties. According to an imperial edict dating to 408-409 the designated exchange points were Nisibis and Kallinikos in Mesopotamia, and Artasat in Armenia.

After the Sassanids created a Marzpanate out of eastern Armenia in the fifth century, its capital Duin then took on this role. Apart from this central route, a northern route, which the Romans exploited particularly in the sixth and seventh centuries, led from the Tarim Basin to Lake Issyk-kul largely bypassing Sassanid control before descending to the shores of the Caspian Sea and entering the Roman sphere of influence through the Caucasus and the Black

Sea, where it joined with the northern "fur route" that communicated with northern Europe.

A southern route ran from the Lop Nor to Khotan into Bactria before descending through the Hindukush to the Gandhara region and the Indian Ocean. There it joined trade routes that crisscrossed the Indian Ocean from China to the Persian Gulf and Iran or connected the Arabian Peninsula with Ethiopia and Roman Alexandria.

In the early third century, trade still flourished in semiautonomous mercantile cities such as Hatra and Palmyra that served as middlemen between the two realms. However, as the Roman and Sassanid empires destroyed or incorporated these cities, with Hatra demolished by Shapur in 240 and Palmyra by Aurelian in 272/3, subsequent treaties and regulations confined trade between the two empires to such depots as Nisibis and later Dara.

While the cities of Nisibis and Dara formed the point of direct, official mercantile contact, many offshoots of the silk and spice routes connected the two realms to each other as well as to

the late antique world at large. In an attempt to bypass the Sassanid monopoly of the silk trade, in the sixth century Rome exploited both the northern land routes and the southern sea routes by making treaties with the Turk empire and the Ethiopians, respectively.

These trade routes continued to develop even as the Roman economy declined and collapsed in the sixth and seventh centuries, possibly because they fed the court's still unabating hunger for luxury goods.

To judge from archaeological and numismatic evidence, during the first centuries of Roman-Sassanid interaction, the sea route to India and China still carried much of the trade between Rome and China; however, beginning with Ardashir I's conquests on both sides of the Persian Gulf and peaking with Kosrow I's control of all coastal areas from the Red Sea to the Indus, the Sassanids soon dominated the Indian Ocean sea trade. Under Kosrow I, the Sassanids began to expand into Sri Lanka and even markets in Southeast Asia, a process that greatly facilitated Muslim expansion into this area a century or two later.



A Roman coin



A Sassanid coin

Spain's recognition of state of Palestine can make the difference



By Alon Liel
Former director general
of Israel's Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

OPINION

The 'October 7 War' is a strategic turning point for the Israeli-Palestinian bilateral relations, as well as for Israel's regional and global alliances. The concept marketed by the Israeli cabinet that Hamas was contained and deterred, and that Israel could be integrated into the Middle East region without addressing the Palestinian issue — an idea that had been conveniently adopted by Western leaders — collapsed on that very day. In the midst of so much bloodshed and an enormous magnitude of destruction, talk of the need for a two-state solution has taken centre stage again. It is to be hoped that the international conversation on the 'day after' will dictate a strategic exit to this war that will bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement based on the two-states paradigm. A Spanish recognition of the State of Palestine at this stage can ignite the momentum that might lead to overall European and UN recognition.

Israeli occupation: a personal note

It is not easy at all for me, who served in Israel's diplomatic service for over three decades, to stand out clearly for the instant recognition of Palestine in sharp contradiction with my cabinet's position. It needs some explanation.

I entered the Israeli diplomatic service four years after the 1967 Six-Day War, after fighting as a soldier and as an officer in Israel's armoured divisions. My personal focus was mostly on the Middle East.

From day one of my diplomatic career, I discovered a peace-oriented diplomatic service. Israel already controlled and administered the occupied territories, but the declared aim was to exchange those territories for peace. It was a quite frustrating period as no Arab country even considered recognising Israel. In November 1977 we encountered, for the first time, a dramatic Arab turning point. We hosted the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in Jerusalem, and gradually built our peace with Egypt. I was among the first diplomats officially visiting Cairo in what seemed like a dream come true. The mood in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a result of our agreement with Egypt was euphoric. Simultaneously, outside the government, the emerging pro-peace civil society included many of my student-years personal friends. They named their movement 'Peace Now'. In the early 1980s I was sent as a young diplomat to Ankara, Turkey, the only other Muslim country with which we had diplomatic relations at the time. The aim was to strengthen and further expand our diplomatic representation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, that did not happen during the whole decade. A wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence during 1987-89 slowed down the regional peace efforts.

During my years in Ankara, religious-nationalistic elements inside Israel were forcing the cabinet to allow the establishment of civilian settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

They were highly motivated and well organised. It looked to me, watching the process from a distance, as a historic mistake. However, the Israeli leadership managed to convince us, young diplomats, that those settlements were needed for security reasons, that they were only temporary and would serve as a bargaining chip in due time. The declared plan was to evacuate the settlements when the Israeli-Palestinian peace process would be mature. 'Land for peace' was the diplomatic slogan that we proudly marketed all over the globe. I wholeheartedly believed in it. 'Two states for two peoples' was the declared official policy.

Nothing of this really happened in years to come. Even when we signed the Oslo Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians in September 1993, the settlements were not removed. Instead, they grew in size and population, gradually making a just and lasting agreement with the Palestinians more difficult. In November 1995, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated during his effort to enhance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. As a result, the well-intentioned Oslo Process entered a five-year period of deep freeze. In May 1999 Ehud Barak (heading the Labour Party) won the general election. Shortly after, he asked me to serve as the Foreign Ministry's Director General.

I saw this as a golden opportunity. I knew Barak personally and saw him as the politician that might U-turn the religious-nationalistic tendencies and lead the public into a just and lasting peace agreement with Yasser Arafat. I was convinced about Barak's sincere intentions. However, the negotiations that took place under US President Bill Clinton's auspices at Camp David in 2000 ultimately failed. As a result, a big wave of devastating violence broke out again (2000-03) and shattered the hopes for peace.

Israel rushed back into a strengthened religious-nationalistic momentum, further expanding the settlements during the following two decades, creating a reality that started to look irreversible. In the early autumn of 2023, already out of Israel's diplomatic service, I found myself in a very strange mood. I stopped believing that a Palestinian State was a viable possibility (in fact, the two-states goal had already disappeared from the official Israeli agenda a long time before), while simultaneously I was 100% sure that Israel's control over five million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (still under siege) was unsustainable. It looked like a tragic and explosive situation. The West Bank settlements kept expanding while the international community practically accepted them, including key countries in the Muslim world. As a professional diplomat, I had to admit on 6 October 2023, one day before the surprise attack on Israel, that Israel's international standing had never been better. All the above has been changing dramatically since 6:30 am on Saturday October 7, when the sirens woke all of us, and rushed us into our home shelters. That morning alarms and their aftermath had already changed our personal lives, as well as Israel's overall situation.

The Israeli-Palestinian global picture

The 'October 7 War' (its temporary name) already constitutes a strategic turning point for Israeli-Palestinian

bilateral relations, as well as for Israel's regional and global alliances. The attack that Hamas launched that day turned out to be the most devastating military chapter in the history of modern-day Israel. It left Israeli society shattered and bewildered and ignited an urge for revenge among many Israelis. Simultaneously, the international community, particularly the US and the West, came to a meaningful awakening. The concept marketed by the Israeli cabinet that Hamas was contained and deterred, and that Israel could be integrated into the Middle East region without addressing the Palestinian issue — an idea that had been conveniently adopted by Western leaders — collapsed on that very day.

The events of October 7 and those that followed exposed how irresponsible it was for the international community to neglect one of the most dangerous and volatile conflict areas on earth. Over the past six months we have seen the principal global players, with the US at the helm, spring into action to contain the fighting and prevent it from spiralling out of control regionally and globally. At the same time, talk of the need for a two-state solution has taken centre stage again. It is to be hoped that the international conversation on the 'day after' will dictate a strategic exit to this war that will bring about an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement based on the two-states paradigm. It is a pity that so much bloodshed and an enormous

magnitude of destruction were needed to bring the international community back to its senses with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Unfortunately, to date there have been no indications from either of the fighting sides that they are prepared to adopt the course of diplomacy to resolve the conflict. On the contrary, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, appears to be concerned with protecting his political domain, while Hamas's leader, Yahya Sinwar, remains insistent on retaining Hamas's control over the civil and military governance of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, continues to rule out Palestinian statehood and has declared that Israel will maintain 'security control' over Gaza in the aftermath of the war. He convinced the Knesset (Israel's parliament) to pass, by a great majority, a decision that rejects any external attempt to impose a Palestinian state on Israel. Furthermore, the political discourse in Israel is inundated with talk of transferring the Palestinian population from the Gaza Strip and re-establishing Jewish settlements in that territory.

This dim picture must not deter the international community from action. On the contrary, it is further evidence of the conclusion drawn by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the EU, Josep Borrell, that 'the solution has to be imposed from the outside'.

When the fighting ends—soon, it is to be hoped — the suffering and devastation in Gaza, where some two-thirds of the population have become internally displaced and where the danger from Israeli bombardment is coupled with rising cases of disease and the threat of famine, will require both immediate and massive humanitarian attention and long-term planning. Gaza reconstruction, however, can no longer be separate from a political strategy designed to resolve



Protestors wave Palestinian flags and light flares in Madrid, Spain, on January 27, 2024, as they demonstrate in support of Gazans.

● AFP

the conflict. In addition to the loss of life and material damage, the hostilities are cementing the animosity and hatred between the two peoples with each passing day, making the need to end the fighting all the more urgent. An urgent need appears to create conditions for a sustainable peace based on the following principles:

The Gaza war should be brought to a halt in the shortest time possible. It should be the last war ever fought between Israel and the Palestinians. To this end, the aim of any peace agreement must be strategic coexistence between the parties, based on the two-state solution, in line with all relevant UN resolutions.

Relations between Israel and Palestine must be conducted within the boundaries of the rule of international law and respect for human rights. These principles are non-negotiable and should be considered the fundamental framework of the political thrust to transform the historical enmity between the Israelis and the Palestinians into viable coexistence. International recognition of the State of Palestine and its acceptance as a full member of the UN should precede and must be separated from the success or failure of the peace process with Israel. The two protagonists in the negotiations should be granted equal international recognition. The State of Palestine should include the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its official capital.

Full Palestinian membership in the UN will be based on compliance with the UN Charter, specifically Chapter II, Articles 4.1 and 4.2, which govern membership. If the Palestinian Authority is deemed to be deficient in meeting the terms, a roadmap with an affixed timetable should be drafted to guide the Palestinian Authority in making the necessary reforms.

The international community must draft a political roadmap that will establish the terms of reference of the negotiations as well as a timetable for their conclusion. Incentives — but also disincentives — should be offered by the international community to the negotiating parties to bolster domestic support for the negotiations.

UN Security Council Resolution 2334 should be revisited and fortified by a new resolution that builds on the principles adopted in December 2016 and reframes them in the context of geopolitical developments since its adoption. Similarly, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative should be updated to reflect regional changes over the past two decades. Together, a new UN Security Council resolution and an updated Arab Peace Initiative should serve as the basis for the diplomatic scheme.

The Spanish position

The Spanish Parliament called upon the government to recognise the State of Palestine on 18 November 2014. This was less than one month after the Swedish centre-left coalition, led by the Labour Party, recognised the State of Palestine, shortly after gaining power. Also, the Spanish decision came a few weeks after the British and the Irish parliaments registered such a call upon their governments.

One day before the Madrid vote, two Palestinian fighters attacked an Israeli Jerusalem synagogue and killed four Jews at prayer. As a result of the attack, the original text of the non-binding parliamentary motion was altered. The initial text 'urged' the Spanish government 'to recognise' Palestine, but the then ruling Popular Party (PP), which held an absolute majority in the lower house, proposed an amendment to weaken the wording. The amended resolution appeared less ambitious than the original one and was accepted by an overall majority. The final text said: 'The Spanish Parliament urges the



More than 3,000 people form a human mosaic representing the Palestinian flag in Guernica, Spain, on December 8, 2023.
ANADOLU AGENCY

government to recognise Palestine as a state'. It also added: 'This recognition must be the consequence of a negotiation process between the parties', an addition that watered down the call to a certain extent. The wide media attention to the softened Spanish text was mostly due to the vocal denunciation that followed from Israel.

The Spanish move of 2014, that reflected the mounting frustration in Spain and the EU as a whole at Israel's expanding settlements and the collapse of the US-sponsored peace talks, brought about additional calls of eight more Western European parliaments for the recognition of the State of Palestine. Israel reacted to all these calls very negatively, exposing the growing fear in Israel of the legitimisation of a Palestinian state. It also reflected the eroding support inside Israel for the two-state solution.

The Western European pro-recognition momentum throughout 2014 collapsed on 5 January 2015. The terror attack by ISIS in Paris brought about negative feelings towards the

The recognition issue and sanctions on settlers in 2024

Only four Western European countries have recognised Palestine so far: Iceland, Malta, Cyprus and Sweden. Only three of them (Malta, Cyprus and Sweden) are members of the EU. Only one of them (Sweden) recognised Palestine after joining the EU. Altogether, nine EU member states have recognised Palestine, but the recognition of the Eastern European countries could be seen as only partially valid as it was done long ago, under different international circumstances.

Internationally, 139 countries out of the 193 member-states of the UN have recognised Palestine as a state. Furthermore, in 2012 it was recognised as a state also by the UN General Assembly, but it failed to gain recognition as a full member state. In order to become a full member state, Palestine needs the approval of at least two-thirds of the UN General Assembly's members and of at least nine of the 15 members of the UN Security Council, with no vetoes from

tries are already considering this as an option: Spain is one of them.

For Israel, the recognition of the State of Palestine by friendly countries is very worrying. The last thing this Israeli cabinet wants to see is Palestinian statehood legitimised internationally (I would even say that for today's Israeli leadership this is no less than a nightmare). The levelling of Israel's and Palestine's legal status in the international arena — that is seen internationally as the gate to peace — is viewed in Israel as a diplomatic blow. A Spanish recognition of Palestine at this stage can ignite the momentum that might lead to overall European and UN recognition. Spain's Prime Minister, Pedro Sánchez, recently announced his intention of recognising the State of Palestine before the summer, and to support its full membership of the UN. If the Spanish Council of Ministers approves the recognition of Palestine, Spain would become a meaningful player towards a new diplomatic momentum on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with its previous effort

The author, a former director general of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, lays down the reasons for recognising the State of Palestine in order to create the conditions for a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians.



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (C) shakes hand with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (L) and the Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo at the offices of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, West Bank, on November 23, 2023.
AFP

Muslim world. As a result, the readiness to support the Palestinian cause also faded away. The mood in European parliaments changed as a result of the comparison that Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, drew between ISIS and Hamas. In retrospect, ISIS terrorism inflicted substantial damage on the Palestinian cause.

The 2014 recognition momentum came to a clear halt for almost a full decade until the catastrophic 2023-24 Gaza war.

the five permanent members, which is so far a very high hurdle. As of today, the State of Palestine can sit as an observer at the UN General Assembly meetings but not vote.

The war that broke out on October 7 2023 has changed dramatically Israel's international standing. The world is now more critical of Israel and more vocal in its support for Palestinian self-determination. It seems as if this can bring about the renewal of the Palestinian recognition momentum. Some Western European coun-

tries are already considering this as an option: Spain is one of them.

When it hosted the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East in 1991. Another, though smaller, worry for the Israeli cabinet at the moment are the sanctions imposed on extremist Israeli settlers who have violently attacked or committed human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank. In Israel, this is considered to be related to the issue of Palestinian recognition. Leaders of the Israeli settlers are seen by the nationalistic part of the Israeli so-

ciety as its modern pioneers — in other words, as its national heroes—. Restrictions on travelling to friendly countries or on the ability to register bank accounts by prominent settlers are seen as an international de-legitimation of the settlements and of Israel's control of the West Bank as a whole. Six countries have already taken such measures recently: the US, the UK, Canada, France, New Zealand and Spain. Also, the EU reached a political agreement in March to sanction extremist Israeli settlers. It is hard to tell if this is a beginning of a new international trend, but if it is, it might push forward the Western tendencies in favour of the recognition of Palestine.

Conclusions

The events of October 7 and those that followed exposed how irresponsible it was for the international community to neglect one of the most dangerous and volatile conflict areas on earth. The war that broke out that day has changed dramatically Israel's international standing. The world is now more critical of Israel and more vocal in its support for Palestinian self-determination. It seems as if this can bring about the renewal of the momentum for Palestinian recognition. Some Western European countries are already considering this an option, Spain among them.

The Gaza war should be brought to a halt in the shortest time possible. It should be the last war ever fought between Israel and the Palestinians. To this end, the aim of any peace agreement must be strategic coexistence between the parties, based on the two-state solution, in line with all relevant UN resolutions.

Relations between Israel and Palestine must be conducted within the boundaries of the rule of international law and respect for human rights. These principles are non-negotiable and should be considered the fundamental framework of the political thrust to transform the historical enmity between the Israelis and the Palestinians into a viable coexistence.

International recognition of the State of Palestine and its acceptance as a full member of the UN should precede and must be separated from the success or failure of any peace process with Israel. The two protagonists in the negotiations should be granted equal international recognition. If the Spanish Council of Ministers approves the recognition of Palestine, Spain would become a meaningful player towards a new diplomatic momentum for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in line with its previous effort when it hosted the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East in 1991.

The article first appeared on Real Instituto Elcano.

Persian Gulf Pro League:

Esteghlal edges Foolad to go back on top; Nassaji clear of bottom

Sports Desk

Esteghlal was back on top of the Persian Gulf Pro League table thanks to a 1-0 victory over relegation-threatened Foolad Khuzestan in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

In a game that chances were few and far between, Iman Salimi's smashing set-piece header right before the hour mark was the difference between the two sides but it was still enough for the Blues to restore the one-point lead over their archrival Persepolis – two days after the capital Reds had walked away with a 2-0 win at Havadar.

The result means Esteghlal head coach Javad Nekounam, whose defensive and unadventurous brand of football has been criticized by sections of the club faithful throughout the season, is now three victories away from the Iranian top-flight trophy in his first season on the Blues bench. "Our tempo was low in the first half but we created opportunities after the break and could have scored more goals if we had been more clinical in front of the goal. We barely gave away chances and were well-organized in the back. I believe it was a decent result, given the number of absences we had for the game," said the Blues boss, whose team remains unbeaten in the league since the away loss to Sepahan in late August.

in the Iranian league's tightest title race in years, Esteghlal will have to visit Nassaji Mazandaran and Paykan either side of a home fixture against Golgozar Sirjan, with Persepolis hosting Esteghlal Khuzestan and Mes Rafsanjan and playing away to Shams Azar.

Elsewhere on Monday, Nassaji took a giant step towards survival by claiming a massive 4-1 win at Esteghlal Khuzestan in the clash of relegation strugglers.

Vahid Mohammadzadeh headed Nassaji in front with two minutes into the game

before Mohammadreza Azadi doubled the visitors' lead midway through the first half.

Things went from bad to worse for the home side when Ousmane Ndong was shown a straight red for denying the goal-bound Azadi in the box and the Nassaji striker bagged his second from the spot late in the first half.

Javad Aqaiepour netted his seventh goal of the season to give the host a lifeline 17 minutes from normal time but veteran Mohammad Abbaszadeh's 84th-minute strike secured a decisive three points for the northern Iranian club.

A third victory in five matches saw Sabet Elhami's side go three points clear of the relegation zone, while Esteghlal Khuzestan is just outside the bottom two on goal difference.

Sitting rock bottom, San'at Naft Abadan is on course for a place in the second-tier league next season, while the battle for safety between city rivals Esteghlal Khuzestan and Foolad – which have three titles between them since the Iranian Pro League was launched two decades ago – is set to go down the wire. Foolad will be looking to make the most of the back-to-back home games against Zob Ahan and Paykan before the final-day trip to Nassaji.

The Ahvaz Blues, meanwhile, will play away to Mes Rafsanjan following next Tuesday's visit to the capital and will hope to have a chance of survival when they welcome Havadar for the final round of fixtures on May 31.

The other game of the day saw Zob Ahan bounce back from successive defeats against Nassaji and Esteghlal to edge out Paykan 1-0 at home, courtesy of Fariborz Gerami's sensational halfway line strike.



Esteghlal defender Iman Salimi (1) celebrates his goal in a 1-0 victory over Foolad Khuzestan in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Azadi Stadium, Tehran, Iran, on May 13, 2024.
● ALI SHARIFZADEH/IRNA

Iran's Alamian given Olympic boost in latest ITTF World Ranking



Iran's Noshad Alamian is seen in action during a victory over world No. 4 Liang Jingkun from China in the Saudi Smash event in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on May 6, 2024.
● saudismash.com

Sports Desk

Iranian Noshad Alamian was handed a major boost in his quest for a place in the table tennis contests of the Paris Olympics in July after moving up by 17 spots in the ITTF Men's Singles World Ranking, released on Tuesday.

The left-handed Iranian is 51st in the international governing body's latest list with 516 points and remains in contention for an Olympic berth through the World Ranking. Up to 15 players – not already

qualified – will be handed a quota place through the World Ranking of Week 25 on June 18. Alamian's massive surge in the ranking – the second highest in the top 60 – came after the Iranian enjoyed an impressive run during last week's Saudi Smash 2024 in Riyadh, where he came from behind twice to beat world No. 4 Liang Jingkun from China in a thrilling five games, before his campaign came to an end against Chinese teenager Lin Shidong – ranked 11th in the latest list in the round of 16. Should Alamian go all the way

to punch his Paris ticket, it will round off a remarkable 12 months for the Iranian, who ended the country's 65-year drought in the Asian Games last October by grabbing the men's team bronze – alongside his younger brother Nima and Amirhossein Hodaei – before teaming up with his brother for a third-place finish in the men's doubles event in Hangzhou.

Hodaei fell down six places to stand 137th in the ITTF Ranking, while Nima's 172nd place remained unchanged.

Nourollahi at the double as Al Wahda routs UAE league leader

Sports Desk

Iranian midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi bagged a couple of goals to inspire Al Wahda to a 4-1 rout of UAE Pro League leader Al Wasl in Dubai's Zabeel Stadium.

With the game tied at 1-1, courtesy of Omar Khribin's fifth-minute spot-kick for Al Wahda and Soufiane Bouftini's equalizer four minutes later, Nourollahi restored the visiting

side's lead right after the hour mark when goalkeeper Khaled al-Senani made a mess of saving his effort from outside the box. Argentine Facundo Kruspzky put the game to bed with four minutes from normal time before the Iranian netted his second with a sublime strike in the fourth minute of added time.

Former Persepolis midfielder took his tally to 10 goals and nine assists in 30 appearances

across all competitions this season, though he is yet to get an international call-up after a falling-out with Iran head coach Amir Qalenoee ahead of a World Cup qualifier in Uzbekistan back in November.

Despite a first league defeat of the season, Al Wasl remained top of the Emirati top-flight table with 55 points – six clear of Shabab Al-Ahli with five games to spare – with Al Wahda in third on 41 points.



Al Wahda midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi (7) celebrates his second goal in a 4-1 win against Al Wasl in the UAE Pro League in Dubai, UAE, on May 13, 2024.
● uaeleague.ae

450,000 Gazans forcibly displaced from Rafah: UN

Iran: Israel symbol of 'organized terrorism'



Displaced Palestinians evacuate from the Tal al-Zaatar camp for Palestinian refugees in the northern Gaza Strip on May 11, 2024. AFP

Large parts of the city of Rafah are now turned into a "ghost town", with UN humanitarian reporting on Tuesday that some

450,000 Gazans have been forcibly displaced from the southernmost city by Israeli evacuation orders in the last week.

"Empty streets in Rafah as families continue to flee in search of safety... UNRWA estimates that nearly 450,000 people have been

forcibly displaced from Rafah since 6 May," said the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, in a post from western Rafah on X.

"Inland in Rafah is now a ghost town. It's hard to believe there were over one million people sheltering here just a week ago," reported UNRWA spokesperson Louise Wateridge. "People face constant exhaustion, hunger and fear. Nowhere is safe. An immediate cease-fire is the only hope," according to the UN official website. The development comes as airstrikes continued to hit northern and southern Gaza, amid reports that the Israeli military said that it had hit 120 targets just in 24 hours. "Ground incursions and heavy fighting continue to be reported in eastern Rafah, as well as Gaza city and the Jabaliya Refugee Camp," the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said in its latest situation update late Monday. Many of those forced to

leave eastern Rafah had already been displaced multiple times in the past seven months, the UN office explained. In the north, evacuation orders were also issued on Saturday "amid ongoing Israeli bombardment there", OCHA said, noting that some 100,000 people have left their homes and shelters so far. "OCHA remains deeply concerned about the lack of protection for civilians - and the lack of safety for humanitarian operations," the UN agency said, noting that one-fifth of Gaza's population had been displaced in just the last week. "Civilians must be protected and have their basic needs met, whether they move or stay. Those who leave must have enough time to do so, as well as a safe route and a safe place to go."

Iran's Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the anniversary of Nakba Day, describing Israel as an embodiment of "organized terrorism" that is engaged in war crimes and genocide against the Palestinian nation in violation of international law. "The fake Zionist regime, which is a clear symbol of organized terrorism in the world, is adding a new page to its record of inhumane international crimes. The discovery of mass graves in Nasser and Al-Shifa hospitals in the Gaza Strip displays a horrible image of the brutal regime's crimes against humanity," the Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday. The statement was issued on the 76th anniversary of the illegal creation of the Israeli regime, known as Nakba Day (the Day of Catastrophe), on May 15, 1948. More than 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly removed from their homeland.

Iran's FM: Tehran considers New Delhi as a reliable partner

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran considers India as a reliable partner with whom Iran is seeking long-term cooperation. Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with the Indian Cabinet Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal in Tehran on Monday. He said that Iran has a strategic approach towards relations with India and is ready to further expand cooperation with New Delhi within the framework of BRICS group of major emerging economies and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Referring to a long-term deal signed between Iran and India on Monday, the Iranian foreign minister described the agreement as a very important opportunity to expand the volume of trade relations between the two countries and the re-



gion. On Monday, the Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and the Port & Maritime Organization of Iran signed a 10-year deal for the development of the port. Sarbananda expressed his satisfaction with the conclusion of the agreement and described it as an important and historic day in relations between the two countries and regional ties. Under the agreement, IPGL will invest about \$120 million with an additional \$250 million in financing, bringing the contract's value to \$370 million, said Iran's Minister of Roads and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (2nd R) talks with Indian Cabinet Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal (2nd L) in a meeting in Tehran on May 13, 2024. mfa.gov.ir

India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar said the deal "will clear the pathway for bigger investments to be made in the port". India had entered an agreement to develop the Chabahar port in 2016. India took over operations of the port at the end of 2018. The port opened a transit route for Indian goods and products to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Second Announcement

N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0140007

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
1	TUBING 3-1/2 IN" API GRAE L-80 SEAMLESS VAM FLUSH JOINT THREAD RANGE 2, 9.3 PPF	4,000 LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 112,647/00 EURO or 45,000,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab.

ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P., NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI, IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D., SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC'S MATERIAL APPROVAL.

NOTE: Based on enactment notified by Nisoc's Tender committee, foreign companies must submit a Bid Bond Guarantee amounting to aforementioned (paragraph 2) Euro amount. Otherwise, their quotations will not be considered.

FOREIGN PURCHASING DEPARTMENT
Bldg. No. 104, Material Procurement Management Complex, Kouy-e-Fadaeian Islam (New Site), Ahvaz, Iran
Tel. No.: 061 34 12 4644
Fax No.: 061 34 45 74 37

PUBLIC RELATIONS
www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://lets.mporg.ir> 1714589

Second Announcement

N.I.S.O.C
NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY
AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO.: 08-21-0140008

National Iranian South Oilfields Company (NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

Items	Material Description	Quantity
1	TUBING 2-7/8 IN" API GRAE L-80 SEAMLESS "HYDRIL CS" THREAD RANGE 2, PSL: 2, 6.5 PPF	1,000 LE

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention To Participate" letter via fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 1, available at: www.nisoc.ir, not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the tender will be disregarded. The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit a bid bond of 19,143/26 EURO or 8,250,000,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC. Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: www.nisoc.ir-material-procurement-management-tab.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS
www.shana.ir www.nisoc.ir <http://lets.mporg.ir> 1714591

Embracing womanhood a wonderful journey

Status of Iranian women through lens of book fair attendees



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

Status of women in Iran through lens of females, as perceived by book fair attendees, offers a unique and insightful perspective.

The 35th Tehran International Book Fair, running from May 8 to 19, brought together more than 2,700 publishers, including around 100 firms from 25 countries, at the capital's iconic mosque the Grand Mosalla (prayer ground) to present 50,000 books running a full gamut of subjects for every age group and taste.

With the motto of "Read and Create", the event draws over 400,000 visitors every day. One of the most notable aspects of the exhibition is the lively participation of women, indicating that this group constitutes a large portion of the audience of the Tehran International Book Fair. A recent survey on "Reading Habits of Iranians" revealed that some 29% of women read non-academic books more than men.

In the bustling hall of the fair, amidst the diverse range of liter-

ary works, the topic of women's status emerges as a focal point of discussion. The issue of Muslim dress code for women, known as hijab has been a hot topic in Iranian society in recent years. From the perspective of female attendees, the narrative unfolds with a range of viewpoints and deep insights into the status of Iranian women.

Among a group of women browsing through purchased books with satisfaction in the courtyard of the exhibition venue, questions arose about the women's position in Iran. Leyla, 23, a mathematics student, says "Embracing womanhood is a wonderful journey, and Iranian women today have found themselves in a position where they can truly appreciate their own worth and presence". On the sidelines of the book fair, the young woman says "The description of the status of women in Iranian society depends on each individual's perspective".

"Everyone can arrange their circumstances according to their personality and beliefs to adjust to the current situation in the country," she says, describing women's place in society. While also expressing her belief that "Everyone deserves the freedom to express themselves and act within the boundaries of law and



● REZA MOATTARIAN/IRAN DAILY

their own convictions." The advancement of women's ranking in society was another topic explored on the sidelines of the fair. The progress of women's status in society and giving them leeway to demonstrate their talents in various fields, especially in the scientific, academic, and sports domains, over the past years is undeniable. Women have been able to secure a big majority both at school and on campus over the past four

decades, according to official figures. The percentage of women in the student population has risen from 31% in 1977 to 61% in 2022. Additionally, the number of female students being admitted to universities has seen a 56% growth. In this context, Shima, a psychology student, remarks, "In general, Iranian women and girls have shown remarkable abilities in different areas in recent years." The 25-year-old woman saw



Iranian women as strong and voiced optimism that women from all walks of life can engage collectively in society. Sanaz, 50, highlights the capabilities of the youth, saying that "The younger generation of women today has been able to demonstrate their strength much more than in the past." The university professor adds women have been able to shine in doing jobs once considered as taboos by society.

Books on women are prominently featured in this year's exhibition. Sepideh, 30, lauds this year's event for "its exceptional variety of books" within her preferred field, psychology. Another female participant Marjan, 28, also praises the fair as magnificent and finds the books related to girls and women hopeful. She expresses satisfaction in finding "up-to-date and suitable books in this field."

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Several attempts at negotiating a cease-fire to stop the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip have proven fruitless. In the latest round of talks, Hamas agreed to the cease-fire terms while Israel did not comply. The ongoing impasse begs the question: what is the primary barrier to halting the war in the Palestinian enclave? Furthermore, does the failure of the recent negotiations imply that a cease-fire is off the table? To shed light on this matter, we've spoken with Mansour Barati, an expert on Middle East affairs.



Obstacles to ceasing Gaza war Israel seeks a temporary truce, Hamas a lasting one

Iran Daily: What are the primary obstacles or points of contention between the parties that hinder a cease-fire?

Barati: The main disagreement between the parties involved is essentially the same issue that has plagued previous rounds of negotiations. The Israeli regime is seeking a temporary truce lasting up to 120 days, while Hamas aims for a long-term cease-fire that ultimately ends the war. Hamas had even agreed to a temporary truce for 120 days, provided that negotiations for a permanent cease-fire would continue once the initial agreement came into force. However, Israelis oppose the idea of a long-term cease-fire and declaring an end to the war, as they believe they haven't accomplished their objectives or obtained favorable results, despite a bloody massacre of Palestinians. In fact, Israelis wish to extend the war but limit its scope, enabling them to attack any area as they see fit.

As the war continues and demands within Israel are growing for the release of prisoners, do these requests have no impact on the Israeli cabinet?

Internal disputes within Israel, which coincide with the obstacles to the cease-fire, contribute to the challenges in reaching a deal. While a large portion of Israelis seek to end the war and release prisoners, there is a hard-right faction within the cabinet, led by Security Minister Itamar

Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, that opposes these measures. This extremist right-wing group, making up about 20% of the cabinet, has threatened to leave if a cease-fire agreement is reached before a massive attack on Rafah. Their departure would destabilize the cabinet and potentially lead to early elections. Consequently, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the sporadic attacks on Rafah to appease the far-rights within the cabinet, potentially mitigating their objections to future cease-fire negotiations.

Recently, US President Joe Biden stated that the cease-fire was contingent upon the release of Israeli prisoners. Do you believe that such a stance will help achieve a cease-fire or hinder it?

Fundamentally, such a demand is illogical. Israel's primary declared motive for attacking Gaza is to release prisoners and take out Hamas. If Hamas were to free the prisoners, the Israeli military would no longer have any reason to end the war, leaving Hamas without any bargaining power. In previous cease-fire agreements, a substantial number of Palestinian inmates were released from Israeli prisons in exchange for a smaller number of Israeli captives. Consequently, Biden's stance is unlikely to help hammer out a cease-fire deal.

In the past, Hamas had agreed to a cease-fire deal, but Israel with-

draw. Were their disagreements about the terms, or does Israel fundamentally oppose a cease-fire?

Hamas is in favor of a cease-fire, and Israel also needs it to secure the release of some of its captives and claim an accomplishment. The disagreements primarily revolved around the agreement's specifics. Israel demands the release of all prisoners, but Hamas opposes this, as it would leave it without any bargaining power for future negotiations. Another bone of contention was the number of Palestinian inmates to be freed in exchange for Israeli prisoners. Israel proposed a 1:30 ratio, whereas Hamas sought a 1:40 ratio. Essentially, Israel aims to pressure Hamas into freeing all prisoners.

Does the unsuccessful outcome of this round of negotiations imply that the cease-fire is off the table, and the war will persist indefinitely?

No, because Israel also needs a cease-fire. Although this round of talks proved fruitless, causing the delegations to leave Cairo, there remains a possibility for a new round of talks to commence soon. Both parties acknowledge the importance of a cease-fire. Israel aims to claim success by securing the release of all prisoners or at least some, potentially reducing internal opposition and alleviating pressure on its cabinet. Netanyahu believes that by freeing more prisoners, internal protests will diminish, as the release of prisoners has become a public demand.

Therefore, a cease-fire remains a viable option.

In such circumstances and despite global warnings about a large-scale ground invasion on Rafah, do you think Israel's threat to attack Rafah will take place? In case of an attack, what will happen to the cease-fire?

On one hand, Israelis may feel the need to attack Rafah to accomplish its declared objectives. However, their actions so far indicate that they have refrained from launching a full-scale ground assault, opting instead for aerial bombings and targeted strikes. As mentioned earlier, these limited operations could be a means of appeasing the extreme right-wing faction within the cabinet.

Israel appears to be downplaying the significance of Rafah to both the public and the US government by conducting periodic attacks and forcing residents to evacuate. This tactic could potentially weaken opposition if Israel decides to launch a large-scale offensive in the area. At present, Israel is in need of a tangible accomplishment, particularly the release of prisoners. As a result, we might witness a new round of negotiations and a potential cease-fire agreement following limited attacks on Rafah. If Israelis had planned a massive assault on Rafah, their approach would likely have been different. Current indications suggest that they are leaning toward sporadic and targeted attacks.