

Jordan FM in Tehran amid heightened tensions



Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani (l) shakes hands with top Jordanian diplomat Ayman al-Safadi ahead of their meeting in Tehran on August 4, 2024.
● ALI HADDADI ASL/MEHR

International Desk

Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi visited Tehran on Sunday amid growing fears over Iran's retaliation against Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in the capital. Top Jordanian diplomat held talks with Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani, during which they discussed latest regional and international devel-

opments as well as relations between the two countries. The Jordanian foreign minister told Al Jazeera that he did not come to Iran to convey a message from the Israeli regime to Tehran or vice versa. Safadi underlined that the purpose of his trip is to resolve the differences between Amman and Tehran in a clear and transparent manner. The Jordanian foreign minister

also emphasized that the first step to prevent the escalation of tension in the region is to stop Israel's aggression in Gaza. The Jordanian foreign minister's rare visit came a day after he held two phone calls with his Iranian and Egyptian counterparts about the consequences of the Israeli regime's assassination of Haniyeh. Safadi is the first senior Jordanian official to pay an official visit

to Iran in over 20 years. Jordan is a close Western ally and helped intercept scores of missiles and drones fired by Iran toward Israel in April in retaliation for the killing of its generals in an Israeli strike in Syria. The Jordanian Foreign Ministry earlier said Safadi would deliver a message from King Abdullah II to the Iranian president on "the situation in the region and bilateral relations." The political head of Hamas was killed early on Wednesday in Tehran where he was attending the inauguration of Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian. Iran's Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Saturday that Haniyeh was killed by a "short-range projectile" launched from outside his accommodation in northern Tehran. Iran and the Hamas have vowed to retaliate and blamed the strike on Israel, which has declined to comment. Tehran repeatedly reaffirmed its "inherent right" to take action against Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the regime is at "a very high level" of preparedness for any scenario -- "defensive and offensive." Haniyeh's killing came hours after Israel killed a senior commander of the Lebanese Hez-

bollah movement, Fuad Shukur. Hezbollah has also vowed to avenge the assassination of its commander. The tense situation in the region following the assassination of Haniyeh has prompted many countries, especially European ones and the United States, to urge their nationals to leave Lebanon, Iran and the occupied territories. Many international airlines have also suspended their flights to Lebanon and Israel. The United States, Israel's closest ally, has also said it is moving warships and fighter jets to the Middle East to protect US personnel and defend Israel. The US claims its military build-up in the region is a defensive measure with a goal of de-escalating tensions in the region, a White House official said on Sunday. "The overall goal is to turn the temperature down in the region, deter and defend against those attacks, and avoid regional conflict," Jonathan Finer, White House National Security Council deputy adviser, said on the CBS program "Face the Nation." US President Joe Biden on Saturday expressed hope that Iran would stand down despite its threat to avenge Haniyeh's killing.

Israel pounds schools, hospital in deadly strikes on Gaza



Palestinians mourn a member of their family in the aftermath of an overnight Israeli strike that hit tents used as temporary shelters by displaced people in the courtyard of the al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir el-Balah in the Gaza Strip, on August 4, 2024.
● AFP

International Desk

An Israeli airstrike hit two schools in Gaza City on Sunday, killing at least 30 people, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said. Gaza's Government Media Office said that since Israel's war on Gaza began, Israeli forces have targeted 172 shelters hosting internally displaced persons (IDPs), of which 152 were schools. It said at least 1,040 people have been killed inside those shelters. Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) official Nebal Farsakh, who was at the scene of the Israeli strikes on the two schools said that its ambulance teams managed to evacuate several Palestinians who were wounded but "many are still missing under the rubble." Farsakh described "horrific scenes" with "women screaming" as they looked for their children in the debris. "This attack is again another proof that there is no safe place in Gaza. These two schools are housing displaced civilians who have been forced to leave multiple times, and now even they have been forced to flee another time after this attack," she said. "Israel has been systematically targeting civilians." Earlier on Sunday, Israeli forces also bombed tents housing displaced Palestinians in the yard of al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir el-Balah, killing at least five and wounding 18 others. Gaza health officials said at least 44 Palestinians were killed on Sunday. The Health Ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that at least 39,583 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched its devastating war on Gaza on October 7. Up to 91,398 others have been injured in the 10 months of war, the ministry said in a statement. A 34-year-old Palestinian killed two Israeli settlers and wounded three others in an alleged stabbing attack on Sunday before being shot dead by police, Israeli authorities said. The stabbings took place during morning rush hour in the city of Holon, near Tel Aviv. The attacker stabbed people near a gas station and a park. The Hamas group said in a statement that the stabbing attack was a "natural response" to Israeli attacks on Palestinians and to the assassination of the group's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, last week in Tehran. Hamas says it has initiated a broad consultation process to select a new leader following the assassination of its political chief in the Iranian capital. Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said Haniyeh was killed by a "short-range projectile" and threatened Israel with a "severe" response.

Pezeshkian unveils three new appointments

National Desk

Iran's new President Masoud Pezeshkian made three new appointments on Sunday to complete his inner circle after winning the presidential election on July 5. Pezeshkian has appointed former finance minister Ali Tayebnia as his senior adviser. Tayebnia, as a veteran and decorated economist in Iran, is a graduate of the University of Tehran and the London School of Economics and is known for

reining in the runaway inflation under former president Hassan Rouhani. In another decree, Pezeshkian appointed Hamid Pourmohammadi as his vice president and head of the Planning and Budget Organization. Pourmohammadi, 56, has served as the deputy head of the Central Bank of Iran and deputy chief of Banking Affairs of the Finance Ministry among other posts. Shahram Dabiri was also appointed by the president as

his deputy for parliamentary affairs. Earlier on Thursday, former Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was named as the strategy deputy of the Iranian president. Meanwhile, spokesman of the Parliament's Presiding Board Alireza Salimi said that Pezeshkian and the Parliament's Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf have agreed to postpone the submitting of the list of proposed ministers to the parliament as the government has



yet to complete the final list. Salimi said that the list will be probably sent to the Parliament by the end of the week. The parliament has two weeks to review the proposed ministers.

What is the ...

In the meantime, how Iran responds to this attack is important. Iran's military ca-

pabilities are undisputable, as demonstrated in April this year. Still, everyone knows that the region cannot withstand

a large-scale war, a war whose flames may quickly spread to other countries. Recent political and diplomatic efforts, especially

by regional Arab countries, have aimed to prevent the possibility of a major conflict. While they have condemned Haniyeh's assassination, they are concerned that, given the other regional and global crises, the situation may spiral out of control. This calls for foresight and tact on the part of Iranian statesmen and military officials to respond appropriately to Israel's terrorist attack without creating new problems. Perhaps one point to consider when deciding how to retaliate and, in general, to the approach of the incumbent Israeli government, is that it has become clear to all politicians in the region and the world in the past few weeks

that Netanyahu is fighting for his political life and has no regard for human lives, be they Palestinian or Israeli. In fact, he is primarily to blame for the failure of several rounds of talks between Hamas and Israel representatives in Cairo to secure a cease-fire, exchange captives, and deliver aid to the displaced people in the Gaza Strip. Every time the negotiations have reached a conclusion with the efforts of mediators such as Egypt, he has disrupted the process by taking new measures or making new excuses. This has led political experts and media pundits in Israel itself to come to the conclusion that he has no interest in resolving the crisis and is merely concerned with maintaining his grip on power. If this is accepted, it can

be concluded that any act that leads to a more critical situation and the spillover of conflicts will bring Netanyahu closer to his goal and create favorable conditions for him and Israeli radicals to stay in power. In other words, the antidote to Israel's terrorist act may not be a direct confrontation or attack this time, but rather continue political and diplomatic support for the Palestinians and calm the situation for a cease-fire in Gaza, which will, in fact, cause greater troubles for Netanyahu's cabinet. While this point is bitter, it will eventually bear sweet fruit by improving the catastrophic conditions in Gaza and toppling someone who has caused trouble for the entire region for years in the name of maintaining Israel's security.

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