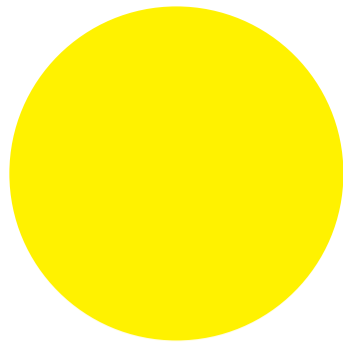


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# Iran Daily

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No 'positive signals' yet from cease-fire talks: **Hamas** 7 >

A woman carries a child as Palestinians flee with their belongings from Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on August 16, 2024.

### People expect Parliament to cooperate with new government

**By Ebrahim Beheshti**  
Staff writer

#### OPINION

The ball is now in Parliament's court as it gears up to review and vote on the proposed ministers of Iran's new government. In the wake of the unveiling of President Masoud Pezeshkian's 19-member cabinet, a mix of reactions from supporters and critics has given way to anticipation ahead of the crucial parliamentary votes, likely to take place next Wednesday. With the proposed cabinet's diverse composition and the president's emphasis on national cooperation to tackle domestic and foreign challeng-

es, there's a palpable sense of public expectation for Parliament to set aside partisan politics and facilitate a smooth vote of confidence for the incoming ministers.

Right from the outset of his election campaign, Pezeshkian championed an interactive approach, both domestically and on the global stage. He has consistently argued that the root of many longstanding issues lies in political discord and the absence of a national consensus on critical matters. As such, he believes that resolving these deep-seated problems and propelling Iran toward progress hinges on forging consensus among political factions and pillars of power in the Islamic Republic. Page 7 >

### Iranian, Russian artists awarded at 'Patterns of Friendship' festival

The winners of the first joint painting festival between Iranian and Russian artists, titled 'Patterns of Friendship,' were awarded in a ceremony at the Academy of Watercolor and Fine Arts of Sergey Andriyaka in Moscow on Wednesday. 8 >

### Iranian clubs learn draw in Asian competitions

Persian Gulf Pro League clubs Persepolis and Esteghlal discovered which teams they will face in the inaugural AFC Champions League Elite group stage, while Sepahan and Tractor learned about their opponents in the AFC Champions League Two group stage. 6 >

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**SPECIAL ISSUE**

### US hopes Gaza cease-fire could prevent Iran's retaliation

**By Syed Ali Hassan**  
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

#### PERSPECTIVE

Qatar-hosted negotiations started on Thursday with the aim of achieving a cease-fire in Gaza—a goal that has so far remained elusive. The US hopes that such an agreement could prevent Iran from launching attacks on Israel and potentially avoid a broader conflict. The US, along with Qatari and Egyptian mediators, has invited Israel and Hamas to engage in talks with the goal of ending the conflict, which has resulted in over 40,000

deaths, according to Gaza's Ministry of Health. Earlier negotiations stalled after Israel, ignoring Iran's national security concerns, assassinated Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's political bureau in Tehran. Following the targeted killings of Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah commander Fuad al-Shukri by Israel, resistance groups carried out several attacks on key Israeli military and non-military installations, causing damage to infrastructure in multiple Israeli cities. Meanwhile, Iran has been closely monitoring Israel's aggressive behavior and is assessing the possibility of launching an attack on Israel. Page 8 >

## Parl-gov't collaboration helps resolve agricultural issues:

### President

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said collaboration between the Parliament and government is among the most effective measures to solve problems of the agricultural sector of the country.

Speaking in a meeting with the members of the Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Environment Committee of the Parliament on Wednesday evening, Pezeshkian noted that the improper implementation of the Vision 2025 plan and macro-policies of the country is among the reasons for failing in achieving the goals in this area, according to president.ir.

The main problems of agriculture, water, natural resources and environment at the national and regional levels were discussed in the meeting.

Efforts to modify the management of existing water resources, planning to prevent power outages of agricultural wells in the next crop year, allocating adequate resources for the guaranteed purchase of agricultural products (particularly wheat) in the next year, were among the issues raised by the lawmakers.

Appropriate distribution of agricultural inputs at a reasonable price, paying more attention to healthy cultivation considering its importance in promoting public health, watchful monitoring of the performance of the Farm Product Pricing Council as well as more attention to the environment along with increasing the share of the agricultural sector from budget resources and bank facilities were other issues discussed in the meeting.

President Pezeshkian has unveiled his cabinet nominees in a list presented to the Iranian Parliament for approval as Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljeh is proposed for the Agriculture Ministry.

Nouri-Qezeljeh, a representative from Bostanabad in the Iranian Parliament, holds a Master's degree in Agricultural Engineering and is pursuing a PhD in Agricultural Policy and Development.

The Iranian Parliament's specialized committees completed deliberations on Pezeshkian's cabinet lineup on Wednesday after four days of discussions.

The proposed ministers are also slated to be discussed in the Parliament's plenary sessions as of August 17. Pezeshkian was elected as the new Iranian president in a runoff election on July 5 after late president Ebrahim Raisi lost his life in a tragic helicopter crash in May.

# Envoy: Improved economic bonds 'effective catalysts' for better India-Iran ties

## Chabahar deal signifies boost

### in Tehran-New Delhi relations: *Iran's acting FM*



Indian Ambassador in Iran Rudra Gaurav Shresth (R) delivers his speech in a ceremony to mark the 78th Independence Day of the Republic of India in Tehran on August 15, 2024, as Iranian Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani looks on. **IRAN DAILY**

By Reza Abesh Ahmadlou & Zohreh Qanadi

Staff writers

Improved economic inter-linkages are effective catalysts for better political relations between India and Iran, said Indian Ambassador to Iran Rudra Gaurav Shresth.

Speaking at a ceremony to celebrate the 78th Independence Day of the Republic of India in Tehran on Thursday evening, Ambassador Shresth noted that, "As we commence work on enhancing the capacity of Chabahar Port, we hope that this project will lead to progressive increase in economic exchanges between South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia, and also with the wider Eurasian region."

Every year, 15th of August is celebrated as the day of inde-

pendence from the British rule in India that lasted for an official 100 years.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the envoy stated that, "Our leadership looks forward to working constructively with the newly elected Iranian administration for advancing our bilateral relations and contributing to regional prosperity, connectivity, and stability."

Referring to developments during the past months, Shresth said we were witness to a remarkable frequency of high-level exchanges and visits.

"In July last year, our Deputy National Security Advisor was in Iran for a trilateral meeting between Iran, India and Russia on operationalizing the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC). In November 2023, our Foreign Secretary visited for bilateral consultations

with his counterpart. In January 2024, External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar held extensive discussions in Tehran with late foreign minister Amir-Abdollahian, with late president Raisi, with Transport Minister Dr. Bazrpash, and with the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Dr. Ahmadian," he noted.

The Indian diplomat went on to say that without doubt, the highlight of our bilateral engagement this year was the visit of our Minister for Shipping and Ports on May 13 for the signature of the long-term contract for joint development of Chabahar Port. "High-level visits are often an indicator of the diplomatic importance and priority accorded by a country to another, and I think you would agree that the frequency and stature of the Indian visitors to Iran over the past year

illustrate how critical a partner we regard the Islamic Republic of Iran," he noted.

The ceremony was also attended by Ali Baqeri, the acting Iranian foreign minister, as well as a number of other ambassadors to Iran.

Speaking at the event, Baqeri expressed his congratulations on the 78th Independence Day of the Republic of India and said cultural and civilizational commonalities are always an important and trust-building support for the promotion of all-round relations between Iran and India. Iran highlights India's important position in its foreign policy and emphasizes its readiness to take steps towards strengthening relations based on mutual respect and interests, the acting FM noted.

The support of the high officials of the two countries for the de-

velopment of bilateral relations is not a secret to anyone, Baqeri stated adding that one of the examples is the Chabahar Port contract, which was signed in May. Iran and India have been making efforts to improve relations in recent years.

In May, the two countries signed a 10-year contract for operation and equipment of the southern Iranian port city of Chabahar as part of plans to further boost their bilateral trade and economic relations.

Under the agreement, Iran's Ports and Maritime Organization will hand over parts of the freight and container terminals of the Shahid Beheshti Port of Chabahar to India for 10 years while India invests \$120 million for the supply of strategic equipment of the port and \$250 million on the transport infrastructure of Chabahar.

## Pezeshkian urges acceleration in installing smart electricity meters



Following the increase in electricity consumption and the challenges caused by the fluctuations of the electricity grid in Iran, President Masoud Pezeshkian called for accelerating the installation of smart electricity meters.

On the sidelines of visiting the National Dispatching Center of the Energy Ministry, Pezeshkian expressed his hope that next year there will be less pressure on the country's electricity network by implementing the project on smart meters, ISNA reported.

He also said smart electricity meters will help the improvement of energy efficiency across the country.

A smart meter is an electronic device that records information such as consumption of electric energy, voltage levels, current, and power factor and communicates the information to the consumer and electricity suppliers.

Such an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) differs from

automatic meter reading (AMR) in that it enables two-way communication between the meter and the supplier.

The development and installation of smart electricity meters in Iran has become one of the priorities of the electricity industry in recent years.

According to statistics, about 1.1 million smart meters have been installed in industrial and commercial sectors of Iran.

In the home sector, the process of installing smart meters has been done slowly as so far nearly one million smart meters have been installed in homes.

One of the main challenges in installing smart meters is their high initial costs, which have been costly for the government and consumers.

In recent years, the Ministry of Energy has made efforts to speed up the installation of meters by allocating special budgets and providing financial facilities. Also, plans are being implemented to encour-

age consumers to install these meters, such as offering special discounts on electricity bills.

Another important challenge is the communication infrastructure required for the optimal performance of these meters. Smart meters need a reliable communication system that can continuously transmit information to control centers. In many rural and remote areas of Iran, these infrastructures have not yet been fully provided, and this can slow down the implementation of smart meter installation projects.

Considering the increase in electricity demand and the need to improve the efficiency of electricity supply networks, the expansion of smart meters in Iran is a necessity. One of the main reasons for this necessity is the increase in population and the growth of electricity consumption, which puts more pressure on the electricity grid. The use of smart meters can help reduce this pressure and prevent extensive blackouts.

# Stone Garden of Sirjan, a tale of resilience and artistry



● borna.news



● mortezafarhadi.ir

## Iranica Desk

The Stone Garden of Sirjan, also known as the Darvish Khan Garden, draws many tourists every year. This remarkable garden is one of the lasting creations located in the remote village of Miandoab in the Sirjan plain of Kerman Province.

### Creator

The mastermind behind this enduring masterpiece is a deaf man named Darvish Khan Esfandiarpour. Born in 1924, he was the son of a local chieftain, Habib Khan. According to local lore, Darvish Khan was a landowner in Sirjan who earned his livelihood through shepherding and gardening, cultivating primarily almond and walnut trees. However, in 1961, the land reform program implemented during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi affected his garden, which gradually dried up, leaving Darvish Khan powerless to stop its decline. In a nearby desert, he set up a tent beside one of his gardens and embarked on an extraordinary project, replanting the with-

ered trees and adorning them with unusual stones.

The Stone Garden spans an area of 1,000 square meters and features 180 trees bearing fruit that resembles stones. This garden is a testament to the passion and artistry of an elderly man who devoted his entire life to its creation. Each tree in the garden holds a story, shrouded in mystery to this day, IRNA wrote.

### Location

To reach this remarkable garden, travel to Kerman Province and head towards the Sirjan-Baft road. After 30 kilometers, you will see a sign for the tourism area. Take the exit and drive about four kilometers on a dirt road until you arrive at the Stone Garden. The journey from Kerman to the garden takes approximately two hours.

### Inspiration

The Stone Garden is an idea that has captivated both Iranian and international tourists over the years, raising the question of how such a concept originated in the mind of a deaf man from a remote village.

Darvish Khan's family recounts that after the land reform, he mourned for a long time before deciding to create the garden. Some suggest that he had a dream about the garden one night, prompting him to bring that vision to life.

Numerous stories surround this garden, including the belief that the stones are fragments of meteorites that fell nearby, or that the concept emerged from the difficulties faced by Iran during World Wars I and II. These anecdotes, while often far-fetched, contribute to the allure and mystique of the garden.

This garden is situated in an area where such large stones do not naturally occur, with the nearest stones found in mountains five to six kilometers away. Transporting these sizable stones from such a distance would have been a formidable task for an elderly man. The stones attached to the trees are meticulously drilled, yet Darvish Khan never possessed any tools for drilling and was never observed engaging in such work. Some of these stones are so immense that

it would take several strong men to lift them.

Each tree carries its own story, and Darvish Khan's deafness has left many of these tales shrouded in mystery. For instance, one stone resembles the bald head of a man, which Darvish Khan placed after his grandson went to military service. This elderly man planted a tree for every birth or death of a loved one, and he visited these trees in memory of the deceased instead of a gravestone.

In addition to the stones, various other items are hung from some trees, including exhaust pipes, worn-out gears, punctured tires, tin cans, oil lamps, broken mirrors, cooler floats, telegraph poles, and broken hookahs, among others. It's evident that this elderly man could never have envisioned that this garden would eventually become one of Iran's most unique tourist attractions. The garden is open to the public 24 hours a day and is free of charge, but it is advisable to visit during the day to fully appreciate its charm, as it can be quite eerie at night.



● eligasht.com



● mortezafarhadi.ir

## Evolution of macaroni in Iranian cuisine

Macaroni, a staple in many Iranian households, is one of the most popular dishes in Iran. Due to its convenience, macaroni is often cooked quickly and is a common choice for family gatherings. Traditionally, Iranian macaroni is made with tomato sauce and ground meat and is known locally as "Iranian macaroni."

The history of macaroni consumption in Iran dates back to the early 20th century. The first macaroni production work-

shop in Iran, named Lobel, started in 1934, producing 20 to 30 kilograms daily, primarily for foreign embassies and consulates. This exclusivity led to the term "foreign noodles." At that time, macaroni was considered a fancy food item, as noted by surfiran.com.

### Popularity of macaroni

Macaroni has become a top choice for many Iranian families due to its ease of preparation, variety of flavors, and

adaptability to different tastes. Children and teenagers particularly enjoy macaroni, making it a staple in school and university cafeterias. Recently, with the growth of modern restaurants and fast-food outlets in Iran, various Italian macaroni dishes have gained popularity, reflecting the Iranian love for this pasta type and their desire to try new flavors. Overall, macaroni is not only a favorite dish but also a significant part of Iranian food culture.

### Different types of macaroni

In the 1990s, the need for local macaroni production in Iran became evident. Before the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the country relied heavily on macaroni imports. The early 1990s saw the establishment of pasta brands. The delay in Iran's macaroni production was due to a lack of advanced technology, imported machinery, and high-quality durum wheat. However, with the Ministry of Industry and Mines' support,



local macaroni production improved, leading to the creation of various shapes made from enriched semolina flour.

Iranians, like many Eastern cultures, have long been familiar with wheat-based foods. Traditional dishes resembling modern macaroni existed in the Safavid court's cuisine. However, macaroni as an independent dish was not common in Iranian cuisine until recently. Over time,

Iranians adapted macaroni to their tastes, creating a unique style of cooking and serving that differs significantly from the Italian method.

### Iranian-style macaroni preparation

In Iran, macaroni is typically cooked like rice and steamed, with a crispy layer known as *tahdig*, which is the golden crust that forms at the bottom. Ingredients such as fried

onions, ground meat, chicken, sausages, mushrooms, and various vegetables are commonly used. Iranians have developed numerous macaroni dishes, including macaroni with soy, simple macaroni, and macaroni with chicken.

Through these adaptations, macaroni has not only become a favorite dish in Iranian households but also a vibrant reflection of the country's evolving culinary landscape.



# Al-Taba'een school massacre part of Zionist script



By Iqbal Jassat  
Executive member of  
Media Review Network

## OPINION

As the world awoke early Saturday morning to the devastating news that yet again a school — designated as a “safe shelter” for Palestinian civilians — had been bombed by the Israeli military, anger coupled with grief and sorrow began to dominate news coverage.

Al-Tab'een school in Gaza City, where more than a thousand Palestinians had sought refuge from Israel's barbaric onslaught now entering the 11th month of relentless savagery, bears witness to the inhumanity of Zionist terrorism.

The building, which also has a mosque, was struck at dawn while many people were engaged in Fajr (dawn) prayers. Estimates of casualties point to more than a hundred martyred and many more severely injured.

That the majority of people killed are women, children, and the elderly, exposes the lie of Netanyahu, whose occupation thugs justified the massacre on the grounds that the school was a Hamas and Islamic Jihad “military facility”.

To their credit, both BBC and CNN were careful to report that the IDF had failed to provide proof of their fake allegation. It speaks volumes for media platforms, perceived to be biased against Palestinians, that are supposed to question and interrogate the integrity of the Netanyahu regime. Most media platforms that are denied access to Gaza by the IDF have relied on footage taken by relief aid workers, showing gruesome pics of wounded children as well as scenes of the bloody carnage.



Displaced Palestinians watch as first responders prepare to transport the corpses of people killed in an Israeli strike on the Al-Taba'een school in Gaza City on August 10, 2024.  
● AFP



The photo shows the aftermath of an Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City on August 10, 2024.  
● ABED SABAH/REUTERS



People transport the body of a family member from the al-Maamadani hospital for burial, following an Israeli strike on the Al-Taba'een school in Gaza City on August 10, 2024.  
● AFP



People gather in the yard of a school used by displaced Palestinians as a temporary shelter after it was hit by an Israeli strike.  
● OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP

Journalists at Al Jazeera described the aftermath of the massacre and provided accounts by witnesses who spoke about the tragic task of collecting body parts of victims in pieces.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) Francesca Albanese reminded the world that Gaza is the largest and most shameful concentration camp of the 21st century.

“Israel is genociding the Palestinians one neighborhood at the time, one hospital at the time, one school at the time,

one refugee camp at the time, one ‘safe zone’ at the time. With US and European weapons. And amid the indifference of all ‘civilised nations’”, she tweeted.

EU Chief Josep Borell said he is horrified by images from a sheltering school in Gaza hit by an Israeli strike. “At least 10 schools were targeted in the last weeks. There's no justification for these massacres”.

Indeed, there cannot be any justification for the uncivilized gruesome savagery inflicted upon Gaza's innocent population.

If Gaza is a tragedy, it is also America's tragedy. The war of annihilation conducted by the apartheid colonial regime is possible only with the military, political, and financial support of the United States. So, notwithstanding the fake propaganda emanating from the corridors of power at the White House, none can deny US complicity in the targeted killings of Palestinian mothers and infants at tent encampments, schools, mosques, and hospitals.

For Israel, the aid and backing provided by the US are indis-

pensable. In other words, without American support, not only will the Zionist project grind to a standstill, but the entire edifice built on usurped Palestinian land will collapse like a house of cards.

October 7 opened the eyes of the world to the fact that Palestinians have lived under Israeli military occupation and apartheid for decades. And that the US has given and continues to give Israel tens of billions of dollars in military funding.

America's disconnect from the imperatives prescribed by international law is clearly

evident in its unconditional support of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Many commentators have thus concluded that instead of unwavering adherence to international law, the United States remains in defiance of it.

The current massacre at Al-Tab'een, turning Gaza cities into rubble, and starving men, women, and children is a Zionist playbook entirely in sync with the Biden Administration's policy.

“The US & allies are claiming a cease-fire is near. But all Palestinians see is more death, displacement, & despair. The genocide continues,” James Zogby, co-founder and president of the Arab American Institute, wrote on social media.

“It is past time to end the charade. Israel doesn't want peace or a cease-fire. Why are we still sending Israel weapons?”

On Saturday morning, CNN journalist Allegra Goodwin said in a post on X that the US news network had confirmed a “US-made GBU-39 small diameter bomb” was used in the deadly Israeli attack on Al-Tab'een school.

The attack comes as US President Joe Biden has faced months of public pressure to cut off the supply of weapons to Israel amid its war on Gaza, which has killed more than 39,700 Palestinians since early October.

In contrast to the outrage against Israel's ongoing genocide, it is vile that the US has announced an additional \$3.5b to Israel to spend on US-made weapons and military equipment.

The massacre at Al-Tab'een school may have jolted the world and ensured that more and more people see through the lies put out by the war criminals led by Netanyahu, but the widespread military abuses leading to death and destruction continue unabated.

The article first appeared on *The Palestine Chronicle*.

## 75 years after signing of Geneva Conventions Israel's deadly attack on Palestinian school shows their limitations



By Lawrence Hill-Cawthorne  
Law professor

## OPINION

Gaza is reeling after a missile strike launched by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) targeted a building and mosque within a school complex in Gaza City on August 10. The Israeli military said the school was operating as a Hamas command and control post, but the buildings were reportedly also sheltering more than 6,000 displaced people.

Palestinian authorities have stated that the attack killed more than 80 people, a figure disputed by the IDF, which claimed that the strike killed 19 fighters, including senior Hamas commanders.

August 12 marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the four 1949 Geneva Conventions. Those conventions remain the core of “international humanitarian law” (IHL). This represents the body of rules under international law that regulates the conduct of war.



Rescuers search for victims following an Israeli strike that killed more than 100 people at a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza City on August 10, 2024.  
● AFP

Each of the four treaties focuses on the protection of a particular category of war victims. The first three treaties (on wounded and sick soldiers on land; wounded, sick, and shipwrecked soldiers at sea; and prisoners of war) updated earlier treaties signed in 1899, 1907, and 1929, whereas the fourth was a true innovation. It set out for the first time comprehensive protections for civilians.

Those four Geneva Conventions have now been ratified by 196 states, effectively covering the entire world. They have also been updated through three further treaties (or "additional protocols"), and supplemented by a variety of others, such as treaties banning or regulating particular weapons.

But, notwithstanding these significant legal advances, the number of conflicts around the world has steadily increased over the past half-century — and particularly in the past 15 years. Fatalities from organised violence — including war — have risen steadily, particularly over the past 25 years (2023 reportedly had the third-highest annual fatalities from organised violence since the Rwandan genocide in 1994).

Israel's assault on Gaza since last year's October 7 attacks by Hamas has accounted for a significant number of deaths — nearly 40,000. The majority of these were civilians, according to the numbers compiled by the Gaza health ministry, which are all we have to go on. Israel's actions have come under intense scrutiny, with mounting evidence of war crimes and multiple at-

tempts at accountability, including before the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

#### When is a school a lawful target?

A school is a classic example of a civilian object that cannot, as a general rule, be targeted. Where a school is used for military purposes, however, it can potentially become a lawful military objective. This would be the case if its use makes an effective contribution to military action and if its destruction, capture, or neutralisation offers a "definite military advantage". So, if the school building did house a Hamas or Islamic Jihad command centre, as claimed, this may well render it a military objective.

But even military objectives cannot be targeted if doing so may be expected to cause disproportionate harm to the civilian population. Here the test is whether such harm may be expected to be "excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated".

This calls for an assessment to be made before an attack of the likely effects of the strike on the civilian population. Given that this was a building in a school complex that also housed a mosque and was sheltering a large number of displaced people, it is very difficult to see how anything other than a significant number of civilian casualties could result. This makes the legality of the strike much harder to justify. An attack that is knowingly going to



Shrouded bodies are laid down at the al-Maamadani hospital, following an Israeli strike that killed more than 100 people at a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza City on August 10, 2024. AFP

cause clearly excessive civilian harm is a war crime for which the perpetrators can be prosecuted (in certain cases, their commanders/political leaders can be prosecuted as well).

Indeed, in many recent conflicts, militaries have (successfully or not) claimed to pursue "zero civilian casualty" policies, to avoid allegations of disproportionate attacks and to increase their legitimacy.

If Hamas and Islamic Jihad did use the school as a command centre, effectively relying on the civilians inhabiting the school as human shields, this itself

is a violation of IHL and potentially a war crime. Hamas has been accused before of using Palestinian civilians as human shields (as has Israel), and the IDF is not alone in alleging that they have done so during the current conflict. Yet, even in such situations, Israel remains bound by the prohibition of disproportionate harm to civilians when targeting schools that are being used for military purposes by Hamas. It cannot justify any attempt to evade those obligations on the basis of Hamas' wrongdoing. Finally, though the IDF insisted it had tak-

en "numerous steps to mitigate the risk to civilians," it is not clear that they issued any advance warnings to the civilians located in the school. This is required (except in certain circumstances) by IHL.

Warnings are an essential means of complying with a state's international law obligation to spare the civilian population during military operations. The IDF has issued such warnings in relation to other strikes during the current conflict (though some of these have been criticised as being unclear and thus ineffective). It is not clear on what basis they appear not to have done so here.

The United Nations has noted with concern the pattern of Israeli attacks on schools throughout Gaza. The IDF continues to argue that its strikes comply with IHL. There are strong reasons to doubt this.

But it must also be emphasised that IHL establishes an absolute minimum of permissible conduct in wartime. Indeed, much of IHL is extremely permissive as to what militaries can do during war. That we are now celebrating the 75th anniversary of the core IHL treaties is a good reminder that we should not assume its prescriptions reflect contemporary moral standards.

Militaries and armed groups ought not merely to ask whether a particular military operation would be lawful, but also whether it would be just.

The article first appeared on The Conversation.

## In Gaza, education is resistance



By Eman Alhaj Ali  
Journalist

### OPINION

When on July 29, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education announced the results of the Tawjihi high school general matriculation exam, Sara wept. The 18-year-old saw on social media the joyous celebrations of other students in the occupied West Bank who were revelling in their achievements. "I was supposed to be happy at this time, celebrating the completion of my high school," she told me with tearful eyes when I visited her in her family tent in Gaza. "I dreamed of being among the top students and having interviews to celebrate my success." Sara was studying at Zahrat Al-Madain Secondary School in Gaza City and aspired to

become a doctor. The matriculation exam, for which she would have studied hard for months, would have allowed her to apply to study in a medical faculty. The score of the exam is the main criterion for admission to Palestinian universities.

Instead, Sara spends her time despairing — her home and dreams of a better future destroyed by Israeli bombardment.

She is one of 39,000 Palestinian students in Gaza who were supposed to take the matriculation exam this year but could not.

But Sara is one of the "lucky" ones. Of those students who were supposed to finish high school, at least 450 have been killed, according to the Palestinian Education Ministry. More than 5,000 others of various grades have also died in Israel's genocidal aggression on Gaza along with more than 260 teachers.



Palestinian children look at the damage caused by an Israeli attack on a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City on August 10, 2024. MAHMOUD ISSA/REUTERS



People inspect the rubble of the Israeli-hit Al-Taba'een school that sheltered displaced Palestinians. X



People mourn over the shrouded body of a family member following an Israeli strike that killed more than 100 people at a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in Gaza City on August 10, 2024. AFP

Scores of these high school seniors have probably been killed in schools, which have been turned into shelters for displaced Palestinians since the Gaza war began. There is a dark irony here that the places of learning and enlightenment in Gaza have been turned into places of death.

Since July, Israel has bombed schools 21 times with massive casualty numbers. In the latest attack, al-Tabin school in Gaza City became the graveyard of more than 100 people, the majority of them women and children. Horrific reports described parents looking for their children in vain as the bombs had ripped them into small pieces.

According to the United Nations, 93 percent of Gaza's 560 schools have been either destroyed or damaged since October 7. About 340 have been directly bombed by the Israeli army. They include government and private schools as well as those run by the UN itself. By now it is clear that Israel is systematically targeting Gaza's schools, and there is a reason for it.

For Palestinians, educational spaces have historically served as vital hubs for learning, revolutionary activism, cultural conservation, and the preservation of

relations between Palestinian lands cut off from each other by Israeli colonisation. Schools have always played a crucial role in the empowerment and movement for the liberation of the Palestinian people.

In other words, education has been a form of Palestinian resistance to Israeli attempts to erase the Palestinian people since the Nakba of 1948. When Jewish militia forces ethnically cleansed and expelled about 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland, one of the first things they did when they settled down in refugee camps was to open schools for their children. Education was elevated to a national value. This drove the development of the Palestinian education sector to the point where it delivered some of the highest literacy rates in the world.

It is not a coincidence that an impoverished, besieged, and regularly bombed Gaza has traditionally been the home of some of the top scorers on the Tawjihi exam. Tales abound of Gaza students receiving some of the highest scores after studying by the light of oil lamps or mobile phones during regular blackouts or refusing to stop even while Israel bombed the enclave. Excelling in one's studies despite all odds has been a form

of resistance — whether young people in Gaza have been aware of it or not.

What Israel is doing now is trying to destroy this form of Palestinian resistance by committing scholasticide. It is dismantling educational and cultural institutions to eradicate the avenues through which the Palestinians can preserve and share their culture, knowledge, history, identity, and values across generations. Scholasticide is a critical aspect of genocide.

For the students on the receiving end of this genocidal campaign, the destruction of the education sector has had a devastating impact. Education, for many, also gave hope that life could get better for them, that they could pull their families out of poverty through hard work.

I thought of the spread of hopelessness among Gaza's children and youth when I saw 18-year-old Ihsan selling handmade desserts under the scorching sun on a dusty street in Deir el-Balah. I asked him why he was out in the heat. He told me he spends his days selling handmade desserts to earn a small amount of money to help his family survive.

"I have lost my dreams. I dreamed of becoming an engineer, opening my own business, working in a company, but all

of my dreams now have been turned into ashes," he said in despair.

Like Sara, Ihsan too would have taken the Tawjihi exam by now and looked forward to studying at a university.

I see in Gaza so many bright young people like Sara and Ihsan who were meant to celebrate their high school achievements and are now mourning the dreams that have been violently snatched away from them. Those who could have been future doctors and engineers of Gaza now spend their days struggling to find food and water to barely survive as they are surrounded by death and despair.

But the resistance is not all dead. The yearning for education among Palestinians in destroyed Gaza has not disappeared. I was reminded of that when I visited six-year-old Masa and her family in their tent in Deir el-Balah. While I was speaking to her mother, who was telling me how her heart ached every time her daughter cried because she could not go to school, Masa kept pleading: "Mom, I want to go to school. Let's go to the market and buy me a bag and a school uniform."

Masa would have started first grade in September. This month would have

been the time to shop for all the school supplies, a uniform, and a schoolbag, which would have brought her immense joy.

While today Palestinian children's pleas to go to school are leaving many parents heartbroken, this thirst for education will drive the rebuilding of Gaza's education sector tomorrow when this genocidal hell is over.

In a recent open letter, hundreds of scholars and university staff from Gaza emphasised that "the rebuilding of Gaza's academic institutions is not just a matter of education; it is a testament to our resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment to securing a future for generations to come."

Indeed, many Palestinians aspire to reconstruct the educational institutions essential for their communal life and liberation, embodying the principle of sumud, or steadfastness. To paraphrase the concluding sentence of that letter: Many schools in Gaza, especially in its refugee camps, were built from tents, and Palestinians — with the support of their friends — will rebuild them from tents again.

The article first appeared on Al Jazeera.

# Iranian clubs learn draw in Asian competitions

## Sports Desk

Persian Gulf Pro League clubs Persepolis and Esteghlal discovered which teams they will face in the inaugural AFC Champions League Elite group stage, while Sepahan and Tractor learned about their opponents in the AFC Champions League Two group stage.

The draw for the two continental club tournaments took place in the AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, with the rebranded ACL Elite featuring two leagues of 12 teams across the West and East regions, where each side will play four home and away games apiece.

the ACL Two draw, meanwhile, saw 32 clubs separated into eight groups. Iranian football fans will get to see Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo from the stands twice as he and his Saudi Al Nassr club will have to play away to Tehran archrivals Persepolis and Esteghlal.

The top two in the Iranian league last season were handed the same fixtures list in the West region, as both will also have to welcome Uzbekistan Super League champion Pakhtakor FC, Iraqi side Al Shorta, and Al Gharafa, which finished third in the Qatar Stars League last term and defeated Emirati club Shabab Al Ahli 1-0 in Tuesday's playoff for a place in group phase.

The Iranian capital's Reds and Blues will visit Saudi Arabia and Qatar to take on Al Hilal and fellow-Saudi Pro League side Al Ahli, as well as QSL outfits Al Sadd and Al Rayyan.

The league stage will be played between September 16 and February 19 next year, with the full schedule yet to be released.

The top eight finishers of each League progress to next March's round of 16, which will be followed by a unique centralized Finals that sees all matches from the quarterfinals onwards being contested in Saudi Arabia between April 25 and May 4, 2025.

## ACL Two

Meanwhile, Iranian domestic cup champion Sepahan – beaten by Shabab Al Ahli in the ACL Elite preliminary round – was pitted against Emirati Sharjah FC, FC Istiklol of Tajikistan and Jordan's Al Wehdat in ACL Two Group C.

Tractor, which finished fourth in the Iranian top flight last term and has former national team coach Dragan Skocic on the bench for the new campaign, was drawn in Group A, alongside Al Wakrah of Qatar, Indian debutant Mohun Bagan Super Giant, and Tajikistan's FC Ravshan.

The group stage will kick off on September 17, with the top two of each eight West and East groups heading into the knockout round.



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo, pictured in an away game against Persepolis in September 2023, will again visit Iran for the two AFC Champions League Elite fixtures against Persepolis and Esteghlal.  
● PAYAM SANI/IRNA

## Iran confirms kumite lineup for Asian Karate Championships



● AKF

## Sports Desk

Iran confirmed the men's and women's teams for the AKF Senior Championships – starting September 19 in Hangzhou, China.

The national kumite team trials took place in Tehran on Wednesday and Thursday as 11 karatekas (six men and five women) were given a shot at continental glory after coming out on top in their respective weight classes.

Iran is keen to improve on the third place in last year's event in Malacca, Malaysia, where a haul of 12 medals – including three golds – saw the country finish behind Kazakhstan and Japan.

Behnam Dehqanzadeh will

take part in the men's -55kg contests as the defending champion, while Pouria Aqdasi will be looking to add to two Asian bronzes in the -60kg class.

A four-time world team and individual champion, Bahman Askari will aim to grab a fifth Asian gold and make up for last year's final setback in the -75kg event.

Mahdi Khodabakhshi will be the Iranian representative in the -84kg class, with Saleh Abazari going after a second +84kg gold after his 2018 triumph.

Meanwhile, Atousa Golshadnejad will headline the Iranian women's squad as the reigning Asian -61kg champion. She will be joined by Sara

Bahmanyar, who will be eager for a more colorful medal in the -50kg competitions, having settled for back-to-back bronzes in the previous two editions.

Two-time gold medalist, Taravat Khaksar will chase a fifth Asian medal on his return to the national team when participating in the -55kg bouts. The 2021 silver medalist Mobina Heidari and Leila Borj-Ali, who were part of the Iranian silver-winning kumite team in Malacca, will represent the country in the -68kg and +68kg weight classes respectively.

This year's Asian Championships will serve as crucial qualifier for November's Karate World Cup in Pamplona, Spain.

## Pochettino agrees to become United States coach: Sources

ESPN – Mauricio Pochettino has agreed to become the new United States men's national team coach with the responsibility of leading the team into the 2026 World Cup, sources told ESPN on Thursday.

Pochettino, 52, has been out of work since leaving Chelsea by mutual consent earlier this summer after just one season in charge at Stamford Bridge. A source told ESPN that the former Tottenham and Paris Saint-Germain coach agreed to succeed Gregg Berhalter as USMNT head coach following lengthy discussions with Matt Crocker, the USSF technical director.

No final agreement has been signed between the two parties, the sources added, and the USSF board of directors is yet to sign off on any deal. A regular board meeting is scheduled for Aug. 23, though a special meeting could be called before then to finalize the appointment, a source added. No special meeting has yet been scheduled.

Crocker, who previously worked with Premier League team Southampton and the English Football Association, had been charged with recruiting a world-class coach to ensure the USMNT goes into the 2026 World Cup – the U.S. are joint hosts with Canada and Mexico – as a competitive nation, capable of running into the latter stages of the competition.

Efforts to recruit Jürgen Klopp following his summer exit from Liverpool failed to get off the ground, but Pochettino agreeing to take on the role is a major coup for the USSF.

A separate source told ESPN

that Pochettino's situation with Chelsea remains unresolved. He is owed money by the Premier League club and until a resolution is found he cannot sign a contract to take over the USMNT.

Pochettino is expected to be installed in time to take charge of the USMNT game against Canada in Kansas City, Kansas,

on Sept. 7.

Pochettino would be able to keep a European base and not move to the U.S. full time, a source told ESPN, as he could watch bulk of the national team players in major European leagues.

Sources told ESPN that Pochettino had been under consideration as a possible candidate to replace Gareth Southgate as England manager.



GETTY IMAGES

# UNRWA: Gazans have 'nowhere to go'

No 'positive signals' yet from cease-fire talks: **Hammas**



A child sits atop a donkey-pulled cart as Palestinians flee with their belongings from Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on August 16, 2024.  
● EYAD BABA/AFP

**International Desk**

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) said Israel's latest evacuation orders in Gaza are contributing to an "endless nightmare of death and destruction" in the war-battered territory. "Once again, fear spreads as fam-

ilies have nowhere to go," said the UNRWA in a post on X. "People remain trapped in an endless nightmare of death and destruction on a staggering scale." The Israeli army ordered people in south and central Gaza areas it had previously designated humanitarian safe zones to leave on Friday, claiming Hamas had

used the areas to fire mortars and rockets at Israel. Residents in Deir al-Balah, a last area still not entered by Israeli forces since the war began more than 10 months ago, said shelling had intensified and tanks had crossed a perimeter fence into the city. Israel said warning flyers and

**New cease-fire talks**

Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan earlier said the resistance group, which is not directly participating in the talks, does not yet have a clear picture of where the negotiations stand, but that its officials have no reason to believe Israel is sending any positive signals. "Mediators are still talking about bridging the gaps, but it is clear that the Israeli side is adding more conditions, talking about new issues," said Hamdan. "I believe they are trying to undermine the process." Specifically, Hamdan pushed back on the prospect of Israel maintaining security control over Gaza's Philadelphi Corridor, saying Hamas continued to demand a "complete withdrawal" from the Strip, which it had previously received assurances from mediators. If Israel relays any "positive signals", Hamas would be willing to participate in the talks, but that has not happened yet, said Hamdan. Since October, Israel's strikes have killed more than 40,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, and wounded 92,401, according to Palestinian health authorities. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million population has been displaced multiple times since the start of the Israeli campaign in Gaza, launched

following the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7. Even in areas designated safe zones there have been regular reports of casualties from Israeli strikes. Elsewhere in the occupied territory, a Palestinian man was shot dead as dozens of Israeli settlers attacked a village in the north of the occupied West Bank overnight, setting fire to houses and cars, Palestinian officials said. The settlers - some wearing masks - also threw rocks and Molotov cocktails in the village of Jit. It is the latest in the series of attacks by extremist settlers on Palestinian villages in the West Bank, where there has been a spike in violence since Hamas's attack on the occupied territories in October. Echoing widespread condemnation internationally of the attack, Office of the United Nations high commissioner for Human Rights spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani described the incident as "horrific". She noted that the killing "was not an isolated attack", in reference to years of violence directed at Palestinian communities by Israeli settlers, maintaining that it was "the direct consequence" of Israel's policy of occupation. Many countries, including France and the UK, also condemned the attack by settlers.

## President to defend cabinet picks at Parliament today

**National Desk**

Iran's president will attend a Parliament session today to defend his proposed ministers as lawmakers will begin work on reviewing the ministers' qualifications. According to the spokesman of the Parliament's Presiding Board Alireza Salimi, President Masoud Pezeshkian will have two and half hours to defend his cabinet. Then, five opponents and five supporters of the proposed ministers will deliver speech during the session. Pezeshkian submitted the list of his new cabinet members to the Parliament on Sunday, less than two weeks after he was sworn in before the country's legislators.

Abbas Araqchi and Abdolnaser Hemmati are the most well-known figures in his list. Pezeshkian has chosen Araqchi for the Foreign Ministry, who joined the ministry in 1989. The senior diplomat worked as the former political deputy at the Foreign Ministry from 2017 to 2021, also serving as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator in talks with world powers under former President Hassan Rouhani's government. The Iranian president has also picked Abdolnaser Hemmati for the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. Hemmati served as the Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) from 2018 to 2021. Pezeshkian's cabinet lineup has ruffled the feathers of a number



of individuals in Reformist camp. The president, however, has defended his proposed ministers and has called on critics to "wait for the cabinet to start work and criticize it based on its performance."

## Enhanced Iran-Indonesia ties to fortify global peace: **Pezeshkian**



**International Desk**

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the expansion of relations between Iran and Indonesia would help promote unity among Muslims and strengthen international peace and stability. He made the remarks in a congratulatory message to his Indonesian counterpart Joko Widodo on Indonesia Independence Day. Referring to the historical bonds between Iran and Indonesia and the two countries' common interests and numerous capacities for cooperation, the Iranian president expressed hope for further cooperation between the two nations. Every year on August 17th, Indonesia celebrates its Independence Day, locally known as Hari Kemerdekaan RI, with

great enthusiasm and national pride. On August 17, 1945, two days after Japan surrendered to the Allies in World War II that also brought an end to the war in Asia, Indonesia declared independence from Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch fought to prolong colonial rule, often through barbaric means, before ceding on December 27, 1949.

great enthusiasm and national pride. On August 17, 1945, two days after Japan surrendered to the Allies in World War II that also brought an end to the war in Asia, Indonesia declared independence from Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch fought to prolong colonial rule, often through barbaric means, before ceding on December 27, 1949.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## People expect Parliament ...

Pezeshkian backed up his words with a pledge to tap into the managerial talents of Iranians from across the political spectrum in his government. Naturally, these individuals would need to align with the president's plans and work in harmony with the government's stated policies. Now, with the proposed cabinet in the spotlight, reactions have been mixed. While some are taken aback by the inclusion of non-reformist figures and even ministers from the previous conservative administration, others applaud Pezeshkian for making good on his promise of an inclusive cabinet. The list presented to Parliament boasts reformist, moderate, and centrist conservative politicians, with an unexpected twist: three members of Ebrahim Raisi's government are also part of Pezeshkian's proposed team.

Thus far, Pezeshkian has stayed true to his word about forming an inclusive government that employs the capabilities of various political parties. This not only reflects the president's good will and sincerity in striving for a government of national accord but also lays the groundwork for much-needed national cooperation. Such cooperation entails political groups and powerhouses in Iran setting aside their differences to unite around shared goals that include reforming flawed systems, tackling economic challenges like inflation and stagnant growth, working toward lifting sanctions, and restoring public trust between citizens and the Establishment. They should work together synergistically and help each other along this path. As such, the onus is now on Parliament

to demonstrate its commitment to national cooperation, as espoused by the Leader of the Revolution, who advocates for interaction between the branches of power. Despite his reformist leanings and support base, Pezeshkian has consistently prioritized national interests over partisan politics, both in his stance and his plans, including the cabinet selection. The reformist president has taken a bold first step toward fostering internal accord and interaction, and all eyes are now on the conservative Parliament. Will they heed the Leader's repeated calls to support the government and embrace a national approach that strengthens unity and cooperation by granting a vote of confidence to the proposed cabinet, or will they opt for confrontation with the new administration from the outset?

# Iranian, Russian artists awarded at 'Patterns of Friendship' festival



Russian artist Maria Zhenkova stands next to her portrait of late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi at the 'Patterns of Friendship' festival in Moscow, Russia. ● IRNA



The winners of the first joint painting festival between Iranian and Russian artists, titled 'Patterns of Friendship,' were awarded in a ceremony at the Academy of Watercolor and Fine Arts of Sergey Andriyaka in Moscow on Wednesday.

The festival, organized by the Iranian Embassy's Cultural Center and the Moscow academy, featured 100 works by Iranian artists and 100 works by Russian artists, as well as 40 works by prominent artists. The exhibition was held in the presence of

Russian artist Svetlana Zubareva (R) holds a certificate as she stands by her painting of the shrine of Lady Masoumeh (PBUH), with Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali (C) and Masoud Ahmadvand, Cultural Attaché of the Iranian Embassy in Russia, in Moscow, Russia. ● IRNA

Kazem Jalali, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and some cultural figures and artists from both countries, IRNA wrote. According to the Cultural Attaché of the Iranian Embassy in Russia, Masoud Ahmad-

vand, more than 600 works were submitted to the festival's secretariat in Tehran and Moscow. Ahmadvand said the exhibition of the selected works will remain open in Moscow for a month, and then they will be displayed in the cities of St. Petersburg and Kazan for a month. The works will then be sent to Iran and will be displayed for art lovers in the cities of Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz for a month. The head of the Moscow the Academy of Watercolor and Fine Arts of Sergey Andriya-

ka, Vyacheslav Zhivakov, said the festival was a new beginning to strengthen the ties between the people of the two great countries of Russia and Iran. "Before, we hosted exhibitions of artists' works that introduced the audience to the history and culture of Russia, but today we have this honor and it is our pleasure that in this academy we see and observe the works of Iranian painters," Zhivakov said. The paintings displayed in the exhibition showed that Iran

and Russia have outstanding painters, Zhivakov added. The festival's winners were also awarded cash and non-cash prizes, including trips to Iran and Russia. The top prize winners were Fatemeh Ashtiani from Iran, who painted a scene of St. Petersburg, and Svetlana Zubareva from Russia, who painted a scene of the shrine of Lady Masoumeh (PBUH). Both winners received a 2,000-euro prize. Other winners included Pourya Zarshenas and Masoud Asadi-Karam from Iran,

who won a one-week tour of Moscow, and Olga Mikhaseva who won a one-week tour of Iran. The festival was also addressed by the Iranian ambassador, who presented a special award to Maria Zhenkova, a Russian artist who painted a portrait of Ebrahim Raisi, the late Iranian president. The Council of Muftis of Russia also honored an Iranian artist who painted a scene of the Moscow Mosque, and presented a gift to the artist from Ravil Gainutdin, the Grand Mufti of Russia.

## Environmental challenges on display at UN art exhibition in Iran



### Arts & Culture Desk

An art exhibition in Iran is raising awareness about global environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The exhibition, titled 'Beyond the Canvas: Eyes on the Work of Nature,' features 36 artworks by 18 artists and is organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Information Centre (UNIC) in Iran,

in partnership with Ech Art Gallery and Artunity, IRNA wrote. The exhibition aims to encourage viewers to think about their relationship with nature and their role in protecting it. The artworks are not only visually striking but also a call to action, urging visitors to become more aware of environmental challenges and work collectively towards sustainable solutions. At the exhibition's opening ceremony, UN Resident Coordinator Stefan Priesner said the goal is to

raise public awareness about the severe environmental pressure on the planet. Priesner noted that while the scope of environmental challenges is alarming, there are solutions to address the triple crises. He emphasized the need for stronger commitment and more resources to guide humanity towards a sustainable future. The exhibition runs from August 9 to 17 at the Ech Art Gallery in Tehran and is open daily.

## US hopes Gaza ...

In Tehran and other Iranian cities, daily activities continue as normal, indicating that despite a possible Iranian attack on Israel, a major war is not expected to break out. Mehdi Rouhani, a businessman in Tehran, mentioned that business activities are proceeding without fear, and there is a general consensus among the public that Haniyeh was a respected guest of Iran, and Israel committed a war crime by targeting him—one that necessitates a response. Prominent human rights activist, Niloufar Taqvai, stated that had the international community imposed sanctions on Israel for its crimes, the Iranian public might have had differing opinions on retaliating against Israel. However, the United Nations and Western powers' leniency toward Israeli aggression against Iran has closed the door on avoiding conflict. Before the Doha negotiations began on Thursday, Hamas had rejected some Israeli proposals regarding the practical implementation of the cease-fire and insisted

on including its own proposals in the agreement. Since the Israeli aggression in Gaza, there has only been a week-long cease-fire in November 2023, after which mediation efforts have repeatedly stalled. At that time, Hamas had released dozens of Israeli prisoners in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned in Israeli jails. A Hamas official stated that they continue consultations with mediators, having previously demanded the implementation of a proposal put forward by US President Joe Biden on May 31, rather than holding further talks. President Biden had suggested a phased plan that would begin with a six-week complete cease-fire, the release of some Israeli prisoners from Gaza, and an increase in humanitarian aid to the besieged area, followed by talks on a permanent end to the fighting. Secretary of State Tony Blinken had recently informed several Middle Eastern counterparts that a cease-fire agreement in Gaza was of utmost importance

and that efforts must be made as continued tension is in no one's interest. This latest mediation attempt comes at a time that Hamas's leader and cease-fire negotiator Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran, escalating regional tensions. Western leaders have urged Tehran to refrain from attacking Israel in response to Haniyeh's assassination. This incident occurred just hours after the assassination of a senior Hezbollah commander, an ally of Hamas, in an Israeli attack in Beirut. A question arises: Will progress in the Gaza cease-fire talks reduce the intensity of Iran's retaliatory attacks? Biden hopes that the prospects of a cease-fire will temper Iran's anger. However, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani has stated that Tehran rejects Western demands to refrain from taking strong action against Israel, which violated its sovereignty. Last week, Iran's mission to the United Nations expressed hope that retaliatory actions would not undermine a potential cease-fire in Gaza.