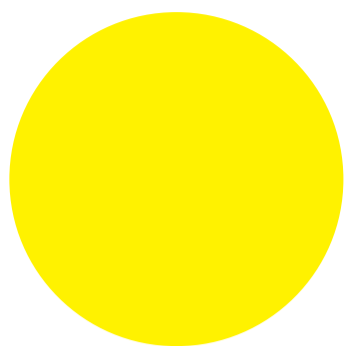


Iranian shooter Javanmardi pockets gold in Paris Paralympics 6 >

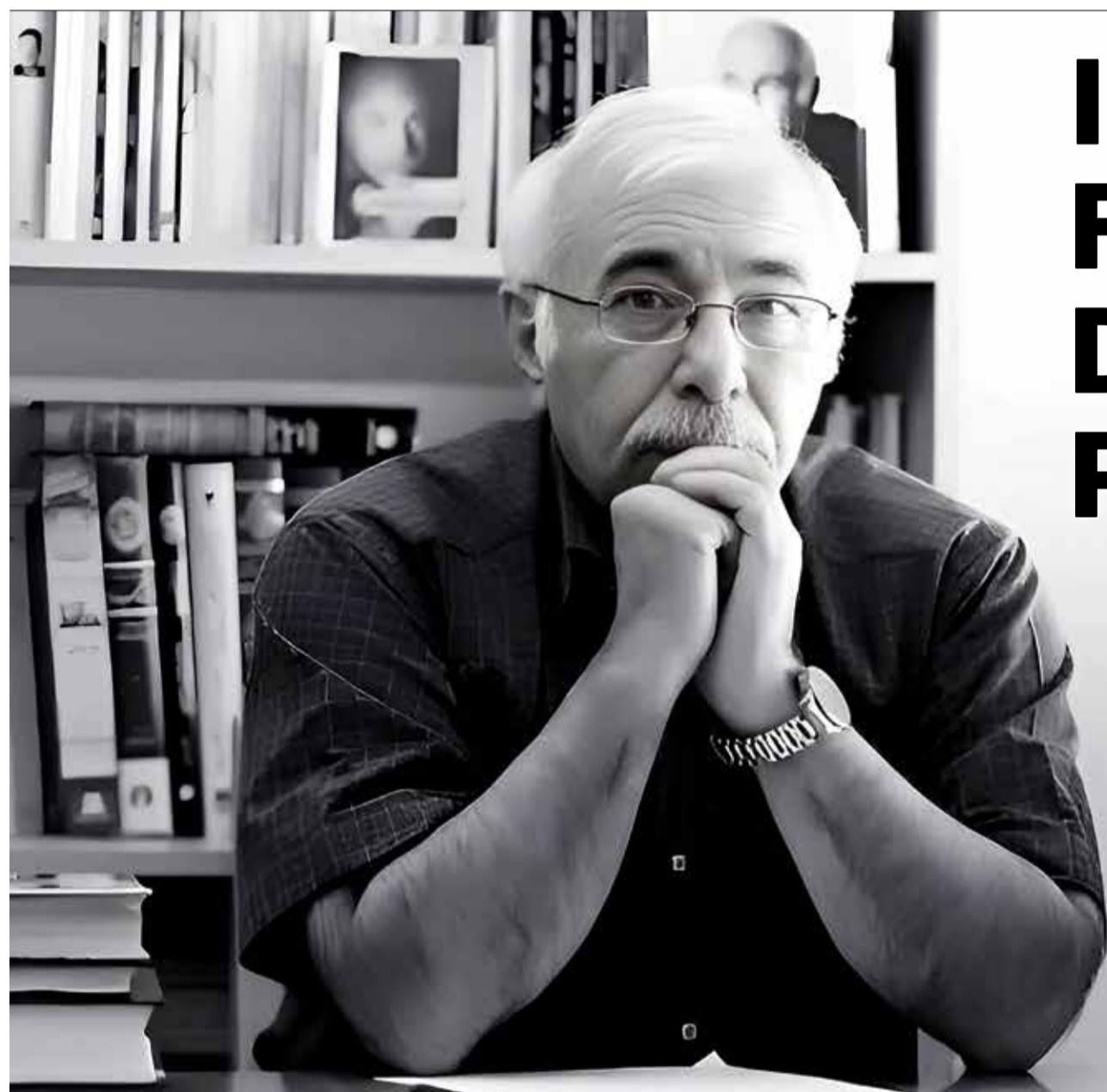


Iran Daily

Vol. 7640 • Sunday, September 1, 2024 • Shahrivar 11, 1403 • Safar 27, 1446 • 100,000 rials • 8 pages

irandaily.ir | newspaper.irandaily.ir | IranDailyWeb

Israel's barbaric onslaught shifts to high gear in West Bank 7 >



Iran to Bid Farewell to Distinguished Poet

Mohammad Ali Bahmani passed away at the age of 82 in Tehran on Friday after suffering a brain stroke. 8 >

Pezeshkian's cabinet welcomes Hosseinzadeh, a Sunni man from Kurdistan



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

OPINION

For the first time in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a Sunni Kurd has been appointed to the cabinet. President Masoud Pezeshkian has selected Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh as the Vice President for Rural Development and Underprivileged Areas. The appointment is significant in several ways. Perhaps the most important aspect is the selection of a Sunni Kurd for the cabinet. While Sunnis have held mid-level positions in the past, including the current commander of the Iranian Navy, they have not had a seat at the cabinet until now, with Hosseinzadeh being the first Sunni to hold the highest executive responsibility. It is estimated that Sunnis make up about 10% of Iran's population.

During his election campaign, Pezeshkian repeatedly emphasized, under the principle of justice and meritocracy, that he would utilize the managerial capabilities of religious minorities and women in his cabinet based on their qualifications. This promise was made in line with his main slogan of national unity, where all capabilities within the country, regardless of political leanings, ethnicities, minorities, and genders, have the right to hold responsible positions. With this appointment, Pezeshkian has fulfilled his promise. The appointment has also been widely welcomed, with many considering it a significant step towards strengthening national cohesion. Page 8 >

US war raised birth defects in Iraq; Gaza next? 4-5 >

SPECIAL ISSUE



Iran FM: Israel root cause of regional tensions 7 >

Kamala Harris's rise in polls and its implications for Iran



By Ali Nazifpour
US domestic politics expert

EXCLUSIVE OPINION

It's been more than a month since Joe Biden dropped out of the presidential race in favor of his vice president, Kamala Harris. Few people can claim to have remembered a more sudden and massive shift in the mood of a party. Looking down the barrel of certain defeat after Biden's disastrous debate performance, the Democrats are jubilant as their nominee is now ahead in the polls and their base is united and enthusiastic.

Harris is ahead of Trump for one simple reason: she's only 59 years old. The American electorate strongly disliked both Trump and Biden. Trump was detested for a myriad of reasons as he's perceived to be an extremist, a threat to American democracy, and crass and un-presidential. Additionally, he's now a convicted felon. Biden was losing to Trump only because he was very old and most American voters believed he was incapable of serving another term, which would mean that he'd be 86 years old at the end of his presidency. People were concerned that Biden was not up to the challenges of presidency, one of the most demanding jobs in the world. Maybe the median American voter believed that even a corrupt and extreme but capable politician is a better option than someone who was not up to the job. Page 7 >

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mehran border crossing resumes trade after two-week hiatus

The Director General of Customs of Ilam Province announced that the Mehran border crossing has resumed its commercial activities and export of goods after two weeks. After a short break after Arbaeen rituals, the commercial activities of Mehran customs resumed on Saturday, Sohrab Kamari told IRNA. Businessmen of the province and other parts of the country can export their commercial goods as of Saturday from the Mehran border crossing to Iraq. The commercial activities of the border crossing were stopped to facilitate the visitors' transportation, he added. On average, 700 trucks and trailers carrying export goods pass through the Mehran border crossing every day.

China, Iraq main buyers of Iranian goods in four months

China and Iraq were the main importers of Iranian goods in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 to July 22, 2024).

In this period, over 65 percent of Iran's non-oil goods were exported to five countries: China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Turkey and Afghanistan, Mehr news agency said in a report.

Iran exported 47,978 tons of non-oil goods (with crude oil, kerosene, and fuel oil excluded), valued at \$17.436 billion, in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year, showing a 4.5 and an 8.15 percent growth in volume and value, respectively compared to the same period last year.

Iran exported \$4.778 billion of products to China, the report said, adding that Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Afghanistan imported \$3.622 billion, \$2.365 billion, \$1.679 billion and \$701 million of products from Iran in this period respectively. Meanwhile, Iran imported 12,592 tons of goods, valued at \$19.949 billion, in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year, showing a 5.75 and a 1.53 percent growth in weight and value, respectively, compared to the last year's corresponding period, the report added.

Russia 'first destination' for Iranian vegetables exports: *Lawmaker*

By Sadeq Dehqan & Reza Abesh Ahmadlou
Staff writers

Russian market is the first destination for Iran's exported vegetables and summer crops, said a member of the Agriculture Commission of the Parliament adding that neighboring countries are interested in vegetable products of Iran. Nadergholi Ebrahimi told Iran Daily that Iran's vegetables and summer crops enjoy high quality, delicious taste and fair, stating that Iran has a good opportunity in terms of the sustainability of the export of vegetables and summer crops.

"Currently, Persian Gulf countries, CIS states, and especially Russia are highly interested in buying Iran's vegetable and summer crops, as every day many containers send Iran's export products to export destinations of the countries."

In addition to CIS states and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Iraq and the Kurdistan region, as well as Afghanistan, are among the important markets for the export of Iranian agricultural products, the MP said. "Iran's agricultural products are exported to almost all of Iran's 15 neighboring countries, and the Arab countries surrounding Iran are keen on Iran's meat and livestock products." Stating that the main added-value



of our products for export belongs to processing sector, he noted that if we sell our products unprocessed, the country won't have so much benefit.

"Our profit in export will be doubled by processing agricultural products, for example, in a condition where apple is sold 5,000 to 6,000 toman (10 cent) per kilo, but if it is sold in the form of canned, the price of each apple will hit 100,000 toman (\$2)," the lawmaker explained.

Attractive markets have been opened for Iran's agricultural products, so if the work flow in the field of export is handed over to unions and cooperatives, we will definitely face an increase in exports and further expansion of export markets, Ebrahimi noted. "Many of these cooperatives and unions have shown good performance in the export field by using the existing capacities and opportunities in order to continue the export, fetching forex and new

methods that they have in finding new target markets as most of our exports are now carried out by these unions and cooperatives." Referring to the approaches and plans of Gholamreza Nouri Qezeljah, the minister of agriculture of the 14th government, the MP said the minister enjoys successful experiences in the field of agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture, while Nouri Qezeljah has served for three terms as an MP. "Nouri Qezeljah is familiar with

all the issues and challenges of the country's agricultural sector as he is aware of the details of the seventh development plan in the agricultural sector," Ebrahimi said. "Accordingly, as it has been covered and emphasized in Nouri Qezeljah's plans, if we want to save the country's agricultural sector, we need capital and financing. One of his solutions for implementing this goal is that he can use different financing methods to prepare capital in this sector," he concluded.

Russia's Solyanka Port ready to expand cooperation with Iranian traders: *IRISL*

Russia's Solyanka Port is ready to develop and expand cooperation with the main traders of grains and Iranian private sector owners of vessels, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) Group. More than 1.6 million tons of grains have been exported from Astrakhan ports to the northern ports of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 20, 2024), the director of Solyanka Port has said, reported Tasnim News Agency. Solyanka Port embarked

on investing and purchasing the grain terminal with a silo capacity of 33,000 tons and loading capacity of 150 tons/hour in line with increasing its strategic role in the trade transactions between Iran and Russia. Solyanka Port is located northwest of the Caspian Sea and is one of the ports in the Russian Federation. In 2010, the IRISL Group bought a part of the shares of the Russian port so that Iranian vessels can enter Russia without delay. Now 53% of the ownership of Solyanka Port belongs to Iran.

Why are the possibilities of a Gaza cease-fire diminishing?

By Syed Ali Hassan
Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

PERSPECTIVE

A cursory look at the situation in the Middle East suggests that the likelihood of an immediate cease-fire in Gaza seems increasingly remote. Although the United States appears to be actively engaged in cease-fire efforts, its actions run counter to preventing both the cease-fire and the Israeli plans for genocide. When US President Joe Biden proposed conditional, phased cease-fire terms in May 2024, the US administration did not anticipate that Hamas would immediately accept these terms on June 1st. This acceptance by Hamas had already gained United Nations approval. If President Biden had been informed that Hamas would agree to these cease-fire proposals, the US administration might not have pursued it at all.

However, Israel's traditionally duplicitous actions shielded President Biden from any backlash, while a new Pandora's box was opened by the assassination of senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukur and Hamas's chief negotiator Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Cunnings Israel, in line with its set objectives, aims to seize Palestinian lands in Gaza and the West Bank by continuing the genocide and repeatedly forcing Palestinians to migrate, so it can expand illegal Jewish settlements.

The Israeli aggression in Gaza has two clear objectives: First, to continue the series of land grabs that began in 1948 and push Palestin-

ians towards the deserts of Jordan and Egypt's Sinai. At this juncture, the leadership of Egypt and Jordan deserves praise for blocking Israel's malicious goals by preventing Palestinians from entering their countries. Israel's second insidious objective is to significantly weaken the resistance forces in the region, and the US appears to be standing alongside Israel in achieving both of these aims. It is impossible for the US to take any real action against Israel because America still needs Israel.

Over the past decade, as the West has gradually reduced its dependence on oil, it was assumed that Israel's significance in intimidating the Arabs had diminished compared to the last seven decades. Experts monitoring US and Western foreign relations suggested that Israel was gradually slipping down the priority list of America and the West. However, in 2018, Russia emerged as a powerful force in the Middle East and quickly established a strong foothold in the region, leaving the US and the West astonished. Then, during the same period, China began to make significant investments in the Middle East, positioning itself as a major stakeholder in the region. This compelled the US to continue supporting Israel's genocide and human rights violations. The US's provision of additional military aid to Israel, the supply of dangerous bombs, avoidance of UN peace efforts, and pushing displaced Palestinians toward famine all indicate that America respects Israel's desires more than it values a Gaza cease-fire. US mediation efforts regarding a Gaza cease-fire appear not only dubious but also malicious. On Sunday, the New York Times reported that, like Israel, the US is also

deploying significant resources to locate Hamas's newly elected leader Yahya Sinwar. In this effort, the US is supplying Israel with underground search radars in large quantities, while American intelligence agencies have been tasked with restricting Yahya Sinwar's communications. It is clear that the U.S. and Israel are not only aligned in their desire to harm Hamas but are also competing to outdo each other. Given this situation, cease-fire efforts in Gaza can be seen as mere political posturing, misleading the resistance forces under the guise of peace. Hamas and other resistance groups, along with Iran, which is ready to retaliate for violations of its security, must take immediate action. Without creating existential threats for Israel and American bases in the Middle East, the war against humanity in Gaza cannot be stopped. On July 21, 2006, nine days into Israel's 34-day war on Lebanon, when over 1,200 people had already been martyred, former US

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that an immediate cease-fire would be meaningless without first weakening Hezbollah's strength. At that time, both the US and Israel were on the same page in opposing the existence of Islamic resistance forces in the region. The US not only delayed the cease-fire but also accelerated the supply of precision-guided bombs to assist Israel in large-scale massacres. It has been 15 years since Israel's direct genocide in the Gaza Strip began, yet America, rather than showing any seriousness toward its own proposed two-state solution, has been focusing on maintaining the status quo. In the current Gaza war, too, the US is attempting to enforce the status quo by any means necessary, exerting every possible pressure on the Palestinians. Meanwhile, resistance remains the only viable path to compelling Israel to agree to a just cease-fire.

Ommolkorm Island, a sanctuary for migratory birds and nature lovers



Iranica Desk

Ommolkorm Island, also known as Ommolgorm Island, in Bushehr Province, has a shape similar to a boomerang. This uninhabited coral island is one of the attractions of Bushehr and the islands of Dayyer-Nakhilo National Park. With an area of 79 hectares, Om-

olkorm serves as a sanctuary for migratory birds, offering a safe haven for their survival. During spring, migrants from around the world arrive at this island to nest on its warm shores, where their chicks hatch amidst the sounds of the Persian Gulf waters. They learn to walk on the sandy beaches and eventually return to the same point they came from by

late September, according to IRNA. Ommolkorm Island not only provides a refuge for animals but also serves as a sanctuary for small vessels, particularly fishing boats. The birds show no aversion to boats and fishermen; it's almost as if they consider them part of this enigmatic island. However, this friendship is not entirely reciprocal; both the coast and the island suffer from the presence of boats, with plastic bottles and oil cans posing a threat to these.

It is astonishing that Ommolkorm Island, located just 80 kilometers from the rapidly industrializing city of Bushehr, serves as a paradise for migratory birds, providing a safe haven for around 10,000 birds that have sought refuge there after their long journeys. The air is filled with a symphony of birdsong, heightening the anticipation of witnessing these creatures up close. Among the bushes, saw-scaled vipers, some of the most poisonous snakes in Iran, also make their home.

The nesting sites of birds' eggs are scattered along the shores of Ommolkorm Island. Visitors must tread carefully, as a bird's egg could easily be crushed underfoot. The eggs and newly hatched chicks are the island's most vulnerable inhabitants. As the birds mature, they develop vibrant plumage. One must be a bird expert to identify the bridled tern, a strikingly colorful bird with a black head and dark back. Its slender wings enable it to perform beautiful aerial displays. These birds often hover in place before darting to catch fish, navigating with remarkable agility. Both male and female bridled terns share similar appearances and typically build their nests on sandy islands or seashores.

If you encounter western reef herons, you will notice that they come in two distinctive colors: black and white. In this area, the majority of these coastal birds are black. They typically inhabit muddy estuaries, marshes, and brackish wetlands along rocky shores and coral reefs. Flamingos, known for their calm nature, can be observed standing by the water and repeatedly dipping their bills into it. This behavior allows them to collect algae and small crustaceans on the filter inside their bills, serving as their daily food source. Interestingly, flamingos require a running start on the water to take off for flight, which may ex-

plain why they are seen flying less frequently.

The crab-plover is another species that hunts with a beak and long gray legs. This type of bird has males and females that resemble each other. In early spring, the island undergoes a transformation as thousands of crab-plovers gather by the shore to lay eggs. In the second half of the season, the hatchlings emerge from the eggs. Crab-plovers and other migratory birds that have come to this island for the winter begin their journey in early September.

Ommolkorm Island is characterized by a warm and humid climate during the hot seasons of the year due to its geographical location. Therefore, the best time to visit the island is from September to April, allowing visitors to enjoy the pristine nature of the area in peace.

Visiting Ommolkorm Island is not permitted without approval from the Department of Environment. Keep in mind that this small island has very limited capacity; therefore, try to limit the group size to no more than 10 people to preserve this natural heritage for the future.

The island does not offer any overnight accommodations; thus, you should look for eco-lodges in the surrounding villages and towns. The island has no facilities, so be sure to bring drinking water and dry food with you.



Jaghoor baghoor, Zanjan Province's culinary delight

Jaghoor baghoor is a cherished culinary gem from the Zanjan Province of Iran, renowned for its rich flavors and cultural significance. This traditional dish has not only captured the hearts of locals but has also gained immense popularity among tourists seeking an authentic taste of Iranian cuisine. The preparation of jaghoor baghoor reflects the simplicity and resourcefulness of traditional cooking methods, making it a nourishing meal that resonates with the essence of the region.

At its core, jaghoor baghoor is a delightful combination of lamb offal and liver, harmoniously blended with a variety of ingredi-

ents that enhance its flavor profile. The dish typically includes onions, oil, and a selection of spices such as salt, pepper, and turmeric. Additionally, it may be enriched with tomato sauce, water, and either pomegranate sauce or lemon juice, allowing for a personalized touch based on individual preferences. For those who appreciate a richer taste, cooking the dish with clarified butter elevates its flavor, making it even more delectable.

A crucial aspect of preparing this Zanjani delicacy is the meticulous cleaning of the liver, which is essential to mitigate any undesirable flavors that could affect the overall taste of the dish.

While lamb offal is the traditional choice, some cooks opt for lung, adding a unique twist to the rec-

ipe. The cooking process begins with slicing onions thinly and frying them in oil until they achieve a

golden brown and crispy texture. Following this, the liver pieces are introduced, seasoned with salt, pepper, and tomato sauce, along with sour grape juice. For those who prefer a hint of sweetness, a half spoon of pomegranate sauce or lemon juice can be added.

In cases where lung is used, the preparation involves adding the lung pieces to the fried onions, covering them, and allowing them to cook until all moisture evaporates. Turmeric is then lightly fried before incorporating the necessary amount of water. Once the mixture reaches a boil, additional seasonings such as salt, pepper, tomato sauce, and sour grape juice are added, along

with the optional pomegranate sauce or lemon juice, tailored to the cook's taste.

While some may choose to serve jaghoor baghoor with French-fried potatoes for an added crunch, it is traditionally enjoyed without them, allowing the dish's authentic flavors to shine through. If you find yourself traveling to Zanjan, indulging in jaghoor baghoor at one of the local traditional restaurants is an experience not to be missed. This dish not only offers a taste of Zanjan's culinary heritage but also provides a glimpse into the region's rich cultural tapestry, making it a must-try for any food enthusiast.



US war raised birth defects in Iraq; Gaza next?

By Mozghan Savabieasfahani
Award-winning environmental toxicologist

**OPINION
EXCLUSIVE**

Pollution caused by imperialist wars has contaminated much of the world for decades (i.e. Korea, Japan, and Vietnam) and it continues today. Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, and Palestine are but a few examples of countries that the United States has most recently militarily invaded, occupied, and has left a massive legacy of environmental contamination. The ongoing US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza is staring us in the face as we discuss war contamination by toxic pollutants. US-backed Israeli genocide has slaughtered approximately 200,000 people in only nine months, releasing unimaginable volumes of toxic pollutants in this small strip of land.

Since October 2023, the US has shamelessly provided Israel with \$18 billion in military aid. It is clear that this genocide, with its human and environmental cost, is a more severe re-play of what the world witnessed in Iraq. Without a doubt, after the dust settles and the immediate bombing and slaughter of innocent Palestinians stop, the world will see environmental devastation the scope and size of which has never been seen.



Boys play with a ball in front of burning oilfields in Qayyara, south of Mosul, Iraq, in November 2016.
GORAN TOMASEVIC/REUTERS

Western scientists are less inclined to investigate war-created contamination because that line of inquiry would implicate their funders and their financial backers. Even the US-based “non-governmental” organizations that offer research funding to Western academicians must not question or appear to be at odds with US global policies. Therefore, such organizations are in the habit of soft-pedaling or simply keeping silent about massacres that the US perpetuates, long before the one US has been committing in the Middle East.

War contamination, despite being the single most devastating source of world pollution, has received little attention from Western Academia, an academia that professes to be “concerned” about world health and human well-being. Western academics’ concern for public health and human well-being has never stopped them from accepting large sums of research funding from sources like the US Department of Defense and other industries that are closely connected to the war industry. For that reason, Western scientists are less inclined to investigate war-created contamination because that line of inquiry would implicate their funders and their financial backers. Even the US-based “non-governmental” organizations that offer research funding to Western academicians must not question or appear to be at odds with US global policies. Therefore, such organizations are in the habit of soft-pedaling or simply keeping silent about massacres that the US perpetuates, long before the one US has been committing in the Middle East.

We see in real life that Western academics rarely, if ever, articulate scientific questions that have the potential to scrutinize US-created war pollution. These are some of the most blatant reasons why in the West little attention is paid to war contamination and how such pollution harms the local population.

Independent research is hard to finance and even harder to conduct. But since 2011, we focused on the public health consequences of the US war in Iraq. We and some other independent investigators have established that since 2004, Iraq has been suffering from epidemics of cancers and congenital anomalies (birth defects). In addition, a few studies have linked exposure of Iraqis to war contamination to these cancers and congenital anomalies in children.

Since 2011, our team has conducted research in five Iraqi cities (Baghdad, Basra, Fallujah, Hawija, and Nasiriyah). In every city, we have found elevated levels of toxic metals in the bodies of children who were born with defects. We have found metals, like neurotoxic lead and mercury in children’s hair. These neurotoxic metals

damage the developing nervous system. Radioactive metals, like uranium and thorium that emit ionizing radiation are also elevated in children with birth defects. Exposure to ionizing radiation has been linked to birth defects in many studies.

Military/war pollution in Iraq has many sources. They include more than 100 bases that have burnt military trash, 24 hours a day, since 2004. These “burn pits” are large areas (some as large as 10 US football stadiums). In these burn pits, jet fuel was used to burn huge amounts of trash continuously in the open air for decades. The smoke from these pits can pollute the air, water, and soil. People living near or around military bases that burnt trash in pits are exposed to toxic fumes that are packed with toxic metals, including those we found in deformed babies in Iraq. Another source of military pollution in Iraq is “tank graveyards”. Today, many miles of Iraqi landscape are covered with hundreds and thousands of discarded armored vehicles, unexploded explosives, rusty trucks, cars, machinery, and corroding weapons. These military graveyards were created and abandoned by the United States Army. They continue to leach toxic metals into the Iraqi environment. The leaking of metals into the environment pollutes water, soil, and foodstuff that is planted and grows in polluted soil. Consumption of metal-contaminated food by the local population poisons that population.

One of our most significant findings in Iraq was in Nasiriyah. In Nasiriyah, we have shown that proximity to an active US military base is linked to increased incidents of birth defects. In fact, the closer a family lives to the military base, the higher the levels of some toxic metal in the children’s bodies and the higher the chances of having children with birth defects are.

With the hard work of many anti-war organizations, the United States has finally recognized burn-pit emissions as a significant source of human toxic exposure. In the summer of 2022, legislation was enacted to provide lifetime healthcare and disability benefits to US military personnel who became sick as a result of exposure to trash-burning pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a rare and welcome achievement in the US that favors and pro-

protects human health.

However, Iraqi and Afghan people are every bit, if not more, deserving of such protection against the harmful effects of war contamination since Iraqi and Afghan populations are more vulnerable to toxic emissions. That is because, in a war zone, the local population is more heterogeneous consisting of developing fetuses, growing children, pregnant women, and the elderly, who are more susceptible to toxic exposure. In addition, compared to occupation forces, locals are exposed to toxic emissions for longer periods. Occupation soldiers, who are primarily young healthy adults, spend a limited time during their deployment in polluted areas. Meanwhile, the local population is immersed in the polluted environment often from their inception and for a much longer time during their most sensitive life stages.

We propose that similar provisions should be provided to citizens of Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States government should provide lifetime healthcare and disability benefits to Iraqi and Afghan citizens who have been exposed to toxic emissions, many of them for longer periods than US soldiers deployed there and during the most sensitive stages of their lives.

Furthermore, the cleanup of war pollution is the responsibility of the US and UK, which were the main forces behind the invasion and occupation of Iraq. We propose the US and the UK start decontamination of the Iraqi and Afghan landscapes by cleaning and disposing of the toxic material in burn pits and in military graveyards. Cleanup actions such as these will reduce public exposure to harmful war contaminants and save lives in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

It is our duty, as members of the international community, to first, demand an immediate and permanent cease-fire in Gaza and second, demand a US/UK cleanup of the toxic materials they left behind in Iraq and Afghanistan. That will save future generations of children from birth defects and other adverse birth outcomes, and it will set a precedent for environmental cleanup of war contaminants by those who instigate wars.



A doctor cares for children at Fallujah General Hospital in the city of Falluja west of Baghdad, Iraq, on November 12, 2009. A study linked the elevated rate of birth defects to US warfare in a paper published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.
MUHANNAD FALAAH/GETTY IMAGES



US Marines with 1st Marine Logistics Group view burn pit at Al Taqaddum Air Base, Iraq, on September 22, 2008.
● JASON W. FUDGE/US MARINES



Destroyed vehicles are seen on the shoulder of the Highway of Death, a six-lane highway from Kuwait City to the Iraqi city of Basra, in 1991. The road was used by Iraqi armored divisions for the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.
● JOLE COLEMAN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



The photo shows the Basra-Kuwait Highway near Kuwait City after the retreat of Iraqi forces during Operation Desert Storm.
● PHC HOLMES/US NAVY

Silent victim of Israel's war on Gaza



By Saeed Bagheri
Law professor

OPINION

In March 2024, Forensic Architecture reported that more than 2,000 agricultural sites, including farms and greenhouses, have been destroyed in Gaza since October 2023. Months into Israel's war on Gaza, evidence indicates the devastating impacts of the war on the natural environment in Gaza. In particular, it has been reported that farms have been devastated, and nearly half of the trees in Gaza were razed. While this raises numerous issues, the question of whether Israel's large-scale air strikes on Gaza would make a substantial contribution to serious violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) protecting the natural environment during armed conflicts deserves more thought than it gets.

In this article, I will discuss the legal implications of Israel's military operations for establishing its fault and wrongdoing in relation to the environmental destruction going on in Gaza. I wish to bring into the analysis an issue of central importance that legally proportionate but unnecessary damage to the natural environment must be discerned in the context of basic considerations of humanity.

Environmental protections of IHL

IHL prohibits any warfare that may cause "widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment". This imposes obligations on States under two cardinal provisions enshrined in Articles 35(3) and 55(1) of the Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, whereby States undertake not to engage in warfare having widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment. Article 35(3) prohibits the use of "methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected, to cause widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment". Article 55(1) provides that "care shall be taken in warfare to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term, and severe damage. This protection includes a prohibition of the use of methods or means of warfare which are intended or may be expected to cause such damage to the natural environment and thereby to prejudice the health or survival of the population." Both Articles 35(3) and 55(1) are now widely recognised as rules of customary international law applicable in international and non-international armed conflicts. Needless to say, the common base of both articles is the prohibition of "widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment" during armed conflicts. While it remains dubious what the term "widespread" refers to, the term "severe" in Article 35(3) is perceived to imply ecological concerns and limits on methods and means of warfare. Yet, the term "severe" is construed to mean damage prejudicing the health or survival of the population in Article 55(1).

I have engaged with these in detail elsewhere and to avoid reiteration, I would accentuate the uncertainty and ambiguity on the threshold at which damage to the natural environment would lead to a violation of IHL within the meaning of Articles 35(3) and 55(1). This is in great part because of the disputed nature of the phrase "widespread, long-term, and severe damage," especially the term "long-term," which is referred to as "a period of decades" in the ICRC Commentary on Article 35 (1987, para. 1452), while under Article 1 of the 1976 UN Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Use of Environmental Modification Techniques (ENMOD), it is understood as a matter of "months or approximately a season".

Environmental destruction as evidence of wrongdoing in Gaza

It should come as no surprise if the Israeli officials keep justifying the environmental destruction, especially the devastation of farms and agricultural land in Gaza, under two basic scenarios: destruction required by imperative military necessity to achieve a defined military objective; and the fact that there appears to be little evidence of "widespread, long-term, and severe environmental damage" from Israel's air strikes on the heavily civilian-populated Gaza. The scenario of the destruction of the natural environment required by imperative military necessity will substantially be overruled if the attacker fails to strike a reasonable balance between necessity and the principle of humanity, which explicitly prohibits unnecessary suffering and destruction during armed conflicts. On this wise, none of the parties to armed conflicts can target, destroy, or render useless any objects

"indispensable to the survival of civilians". As such, the natural environment is a system of unified ecosystems and sequences that has its own life, but it is indispensable for sustaining human life and for its development. Viewed from this perspective, the destruction of agricultural land that undeniably contributes to the sustenance of civilian populations in Gaza is conceivably an inhumane means of warfare conducted by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). The second scenario derived from the lack of evidence on "widespread, long-term, and severe environmental damage" to the Gazan environment remains questionable. This scenario would be the case only if the present and long-term environmental impacts of the lethal weapons and explosions used by the IDF in Gaza are not known at present, and measuring them will be tricky and complex, if not impossible. There is no denying that determining pollution levels and assessing the risks to the civilian population and their environment in Gaza will depend on precise studies and scientific certainty, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of air, water, and soil, as we have seen in case of the 1991 Gulf War, where a permanent UN body was required to investigate and decide with scientific certainty on alleged environmental damage. On the facts, however, while there is inescapable evidence of real risk and destructive impacts of more than 65,000 tonnes of bombs dropped on the Gaza Strip, which has made the area unlivable, taking advantage of the uncertainty and imprecision in the exact meaning of the phrase "widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment" is a misconception and speculative behaviour given that it could be invoked to manipulate the obligation to protect the

natural environment in armed conflicts and that destruction of environment may not be used as a weapon. Yet again, this is a pure situation of risk, I would submit, where the principle of 'humanity' would come into play to hinder inflicting unnecessary suffering, injury, and destruction. On the assumption that the law is either uncertain or dubious, the Martens Clause is illustrative enough to obviate this terminological confusion in the furtherance of civilian protection and human security as the overriding objective of IHL. Thus, in cases of uncertainty and ambiguity of the relevant laws or cases not covered by IHL treaties, States are required to respect a minimum standard as established by the principle of 'humanity' and the 'public conscience'. While on the subject, this would remain applicable as the core principle protecting the environment due to the ambiguous and perhaps disputed nature of "widespread, long-term, and severe damage to the natural environment". It bears reiterating yet, "widespread, long-term, and severe" damage to the natural environment constitutes serious violations of the laws and customs of war and thus can be considered war crimes under Article 8(2)(iv) of the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). There is no question whatsoever that IHL is a system of protection endeavouring to minimize harm and suffering during armed conflicts. Against this backdrop, the uncertain and almost disputed nature of the prohibition of "widespread, long-term, and severe" damage to the natural environment has nothing to do with the ICC investigations into disproportionate and intentional attacks and explosions that could produce damage to the natural environment not only for decades but

also for several months in so far as that the health or survival of the Palestinian population is concerned. Importantly for our purposes, the ecocide and agricultural land devastation that occurred "collaterally" by way of either proportionate or necessary military operations in Gaza, would require respect to a minimum humanitarian standard established by the principle of humanity, as I have touched upon above. This leads us to what is, in my estimation, the main conclusion that the legally proportionate collateral but unnecessary damage to the natural environment caused by the IDF's large-scale offensive on Gaza must be observed within the limits of the principle of humanity. It is beyond dispute that the UNSC Resolution 2728 (2024) demanding an immediate cease-fire in Gaza during Ramadan and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of captives should be considered a measure of progressive development by the international community in an effort to reduce civilian harm in Gaza. Having said this, even the UNSC resolution contained no mandate on the growing risk of environmental damage in Gaza. Yet, nothing would dissimulate the fact that even the UNSC resolution did not cease Israel's cycle of violence against Palestinians and their natural environment. That being so, the natural environment remains the silent victim of Israel's war on Gaza. This implies that the UN, in general, and the ICC in particular, should have done more to attenuate the substantial risk of mistreatment of the natural environment, concerning more particularly the ecology, health, and survival of Palestinians.

The article first appeared on Verfassungsblog.



Palestinians inspect a farm after an Israeli air strike. One farmer described the land as returning to desert.
● AFP



Men use their hands to drink rainwater dripping from the roof of a tent at a UN-run school in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on November 14, 2023.
● Said Khatib/AFP



People work in a field next to buildings destroyed during Israeli bombardment at al-Bureij refugee camp, the central Gaza Strip, on June 24, 2024.
● AFP



Iranian shooter Javanmardi pockets gold in Paris Paralympics

Iranian shooter Sareh Javanmardi has staged a stunning performance by winning a gold medal in women's 10 air pistol SH1 at the Paris Paralympics 2024.

Javanmardi scored 236.8 points and climbed to the first podium on Saturday, leaving behind Turkey's Aysel Ozgan with 231.1 points and Indian shooter Rubina Francis with 211.1. The 39-year-old athlete's medal was the first gold and fourth medal for Iran at the marquee sports event in

the French capital. Taekwondo practitioner Zahra Rahimi, club thrower Parastoo Habibi and shot putter Zafar Zaker bagged three silver medals.

It was Javanmardi's fifth medal in Paralympics as she had won a bronze medal in 2012 London in the 10m air pistol SH1 and two gold medals in Rio 2016 in the mixed 50m pistol SH1 and 10m air pistol SH1. She also claimed a gold medal in the 10m air pistol SH1 in 2020 Tokyo.

Iran's Habibi, Zaker collect athletics silvers

Sports Desk

Iran's Parastoo Habibi and Zafar Zaker won a couple of silver medals in the athletics event of the Paris Paralympics on Friday to take the country's medal haul to three silvers by the end of the second day of the Games.

Zahra Rahimi, 15, had bagged a first medal for Iran in Paris on Day 1 when she suffered a final defeat in the women's taekwondo -52kg K44 contests. Representing Iran in the women's club throw F32 event, Habibi, 21, set a new Asian record of 26.29m in her third attempt to finish behind Tunisian Marou Ibrahim, who shattered the world record with 29.00m for the ultimate prize.

Giovanna Boscolo Goncalv of Brazil took the bronze medal with 26.01m. The Iranian girl had initially finished third in the table but her medal was upgraded after Poland's Roza Kozakowska, who had broken her own world record with a 31.30m throw,

was stripped of the gold due to improper equipment parameters.

Elsewhere in the Stade de France, Zaker thought he had finished his men's shot put F55 campaign empty-handed as his best throw of 11.88m was two centimeters adrift of third-place Polish Lech Stoltman.

However, the Iranian delegation lodged a protest to the Organizing Committee over the attempts by Stoltman and Serbia's gold winner Nebojsa Duric, and, as a result, the Serbian was disqualified while Stoltman's bronze-winning throw was declared invalid, meaning Zaker, a double silver winner in last year's Asian Games, moved up to the second podium.

Bulgarian Ruzhdi Ruzhdi's 12.40m throw brought him the gold medal with Stoltman still walking away with the bronze with 11.81m. Meanwhile, Zaker's fellow-Iranian Hamed Amiri – a silver medalist in Rio 2016 – settled for the six-place finish with 11.36m.



Parastoo Habibi (L) and Zafar Zaker are seen in action in the athletics competitions of the Paris Paralympics on Aug. 30, 2024.

Iran names 26-man squad for World Cup qualifiers



FFIRI

Sports Desk

Head coach Amir Qalenoee named Iran's 26-man squad for the upcoming double header at the World Cup Asian qualifiers.

The Asian powerhouse will begin its Group A campaign with a home game against Kyrgyzstan in Isfahan's Fooladshahr Stadium on September 5.

Qalenoee's side will then visit Al Ain five days later to take on the United Arab Emirates in the third-round qualifying group – also featuring Asian Cup winner Qatar, Uzbekistan, and North Korea.

The top two of the three groups will qualify for the 2026 finals in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, with the third and fourth sides heading into the fourth-round qualifiers, where six teams will be divided into two groups, with the winners progressing to the World Cup.

Esteghlal fullback Ramin Rezaeian has again been overlooked by Qalenoee despite an impressive start to the new Persian Gulf Pro League season – bagging two goals and an assist in three outings.

Midfielders Alireza Jahanbakhsh and Saman Qoddous, yet to sign for a new club after parting ways with Feyenoord and Brentford in the summer respectively, have received a callup by the Iranian manager.

The following is the full Iran's squad: Goalkeepers: Alireza Beiranvand (Tractor), Payam Niazmand (Sepahan), Seyyed Hossein Hosseini (Esteghlal), Arsha Shakouri (Havadar)

Defenders: Shoja Khalilzadeh (Tractor), Hossein Kan'anizadegan (Persepolis), Mohammad-Amin Hazbavi (Sepahan), Ali Ne'mati (Foolad Khuzestan), Arya Yousefi (Sepahan), Saleh Hardani (Sepahan), Abolfazl Jalali (Esteghlal), Milad Mohammadi (Persepolis)

Midfielders: Saeid Ezzatollahi (Shabab Al Ahli), Saman Qoddous (-), Omid Nourafkan (Malavan), Mohammad Karimi (Sepahan), Mohammad Qorbani (FC Orenburg), Mahdi Qayedi (Ittihad Kalba), Mahdi Torabi (Tractor), Alireza Jahanbakhsh (-), Ali Qolizadeh (Lech Poznan), Allahyar Sayyadmanesh (KVC Westerlo) Strikers: Mahdi Taremi (Internazionale), Javad Aqaepour (Sepahan), Shahriar Moghanlou (Ittihad Kalba), Sardar Azmoun (Shabab Al Ahli).

Iran beaten by Kazakhstan in pre-World Cup friendly

Sports Desk

Iran and head coach Vahid Shamsaei were given a wake up ahead of the upcoming Futsal World Cup following a 4-1 friendly defeat against Kazakhstan in Astana on Friday.

Zhakhangir Rashit opened the score for the home side before Akzhol Daribay doubled Kazakhstan's lead.

Hossein Tayyebi pulled one back for the visitors as it finished 2-1 in the first half but Douglas Junior restored the two-goal cushion after the break and Chingiz Yesenamanov also found the net as Brazilian Ricardo Kaka's repeated the 2021 World Cup last-eight win against the Asian powerhouse.

The host also had Brazilian-born goalkeeper Leo Higuita to thank for produc-

ing brilliant saves to keep Shamsaei's side at bay on numerous occasions.

Prolific Tayyebi was joined by Baqer Mohammadi, Mohammad-Hossein Derakhshani, Asian player of the year Salar Aqapour, and Mahdi Karimi in starting the first of the double header for Iran. The two sides will again square off today in the Kazakh capital.

Iran will play Venezuela, Guatemala, and France in Group F of the World Cup – starting September 14 in Uzbekistan.

Venezuela will be making only a second World Cup appearance after reaching the last 16 in Lithuania three years ago, while Guatemala, beaten by Iran in all six previous meetings between the two sides, has failed to go beyond the group stage in five attempts. France, meanwhile, will be a debutant



kff.kz

in Uzbekistan courtesy of an elite-round group win in the European qualifiers. Iran's best World Cup finish came in 2016, courtesy of a shootout victory over Portugal in the third-place match-up.

Olympic exhaustion played a role in early U.S. Open exit, says Djokovic

REUTERS – Novak Djokovic said the pursuit of Olympic gold left him without much in the tank for his U.S. Open title defence, as he crashed out of the Grand Slam in a shock third-round defeat to Australian Alexei Popyrin on

Friday.

The Serb closed out his trophy case with the Olympic title weeks ago in what he described as the biggest achievement of his career, beating young rival Carlos Alcaraz in the Paris finale.

But from that highest of highs came a crushing low in New York as Djokovic suffered his earliest exit from the year's final major since 2006. He will finish

the season without a Grand Slam title for the first time since 2017.

"I spent a lot of energy winning the gold and I did arrive to New York just not feeling fresh," he said. "I didn't have any physical issues. I just felt out of gas, you know, and you could see that with the way I played."

"From the first match, I just didn't find myself at all on this court. It's all I can say," Djokovic told reporters.

On Friday, he produced an astonishing 14 double faults and lost his way trying to slow down the fine performance by Popyrin, losing 6-4 6-4 2-6 6-4 a night after Alcaraz suffered a shock exit of his own in the second round.

It will be the first time since 2002 that none of tennis' "Big Three" – Djokovic, Rafa Nadal and the retired Roger Federer – have picked up a major in a season, the latest sign of a changing of the guard in the men's game.



EDUARDO MUNOZ/REUTERS

Israel's barbaric onslaught shifts to high gear in West Bank



An Israeli army bulldozer digs up a road in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarem with a Palestinian flag fluttering in the foreground on the second day of Israel's military operation in the north of the occupied West Bank on August 29, 2024.
● JAAFAAR ASHTIYEH/AFP

International Desk

The Israeli military claimed the lives of at least 20 Palestinians in the largest West Bank raid in two decades as the regime's atrocities continue to kill more Palestinians both in the Gaza Strip and the occupied territories. Intense gun battles have taken place between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters as the regime's raid on the occupied territories entered its fourth day on Saturday. The Israeli army maintains its goal is to target armed groups in the West Bank and to prevent future attacks. Some neighborhoods have been destroyed and people are running out of food and water. Concrete slabs and sheet metal were piled high alongside streets in central

city of Jenin on Saturday. Bulldozers rumbled through the streets on the first day of the raid, clearing the way for Israeli soldiers while tearing up the asphalt and piercing underground pipes, residents of one neighborhood in east Jenin told AFP. Three days later, with fighting elsewhere in the city continuing, "we are cut off from the world," Taher al-Saadi said. "The water is cut off. The electricity is cut off, the sewage system is no longer working. All the infrastructure is destroyed, we no longer have any services that work." He added, "The bakeries are at a standstill. We can't find milk for the children." Israeli raids are not unusual in Jenin, whose refugee camp is a bastion for resistance groups fighting Israel. The operation launched on Wednesday

was unusually large and long, hitting multiple West Bank cities at once and, in Jenin, showing no sign of letting up. An 82-year-old man was shot dead on Friday by an Israeli sniper, residents said, bringing to 20 the number of Palestinians killed in the raid so far. Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad have said at least 13 of the dead were members of their armed wings.

'Crushing any resistance'

Mustafa Barghouti, secretary-general of the Palestinian National Initiative, has condemned Israel's mass raids as a strategic move to expand control over the territory and displace more Palestinians. "Israel's goal is to break down any form of resistance to their political plan," Barghouti told Al Jazeera. "And their

political plan is nothing but expansion of settlements all over the West Bank, annexation of the West Bank... and destruction of any kind of Palestinian authority."

In effect, Barghouti added, Israel is waging a war on occupied people, which is a violation of international law and represents a "fascist shift".

"Why are they [Israeli authorities] doing it now?" said Barghouti. "Because they saw the weak reaction from the international community to the atrocities, the genocide in Gaza," emboldening them to act violently in the West Bank. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called on Israel to immediately halt its operation, saying it was "fueling an already explosive situation".

Israelis besieging hospitals

Just how dark is still unclear, as Jenin governor Kamal Abu al-Rub told AFP that even he does not know exactly what is happening inside the camp, where the latest fighting appeared to be concentrated.

"The Israelis are besieging the hospitals and cutting off the city from the refugee camp, which has become a military zone with no access," he said.

"Neither the civil defense, nor the ambulances, nor the journalists can go and see what is happening there."

Violence has surged in the West Bank since Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel triggered the war in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's onslaught on Gaza has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians so far.

Britain, France and Spain expressed concerns Friday about the Israeli operation in the West Bank, with the latter denouncing "an outbreak of violence which is clearly unacceptable".

The United Nations said on Wednesday that at least 637 Palestinians had been killed in the territory by Israeli troops or settlers since the Gaza war began.

Pezeshkian stresses ties with neighbors as priority



International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian described expansion of relations with neighboring countries, especially Uzbekistan, as a priority of his administration's foreign policy.

Pezeshkian made the remarks in a message to his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev on Saturday to congratulate him on the Central Asian country's Independence Day. He expressed confidence that the relations between Iran and Uzbekistan will further grow on the basis of mutual respect.

Mirziyoyev took power in Uzbekistan in December 2016, following the death of Islam Karimov, who had ruled the country since independence in 1991.

Kamala Harris's rise ...

In that sense, the fact that Harris is a normal politician means that she's ahead of

Page 1 >

Trump by default. For voters who were mainly concerned with Biden's age, Harris is a capable and mainstream politician who is "the lesser of two evils" for the voters, even those who despise both main parties in the US. Of course, this doesn't mean that Trump is finished. A normal polling error in Trump's direction would tip the election in his favor and he might also manage to beat Harris in the upcoming weeks of campaigning. That being said, undoubtedly, at the moment Harris is the slight favorite to win.

What would Harris's presidency mean for Iran? Most probably more of the same in comparison with Biden. It's been reported by Wall Street Journal that Harris is not satisfied with Biden's foreign policy team and wants to change all the key players including the Secretary of State (Anthony Blinken), Secretary of Defense (Lloyd Austin), and National Security Advisor (Jake Sullivan). However, being dissatisfied with the personnel doesn't necessarily imply being dissatisfied with policy as well. Harris will most likely pursue the same major policies. This includes prioritizing containment of China and alliances with nations in Indo-Pacific region above all other concerns, strong support for Ukraine, and supporting Israel while pursuing a ceasefire and a two-state solution (although Harris might prove incrementally tougher on Israel than Biden).

When it comes to Iran, we expect Harris's administration to prioritize a diplomatic solution with Iran and to avoid unnecessary escalation of tensions both with the US itself and with Israel. Harris certainly won't want war or instability in the Middle East. The same as Biden, Harris will not have a purely punitive approach to sanctions and would mostly consider them as tools of diplomacy and would turn a blind eye to some of Iran's dealings with China. Simultaneous with Pezeshkian's administration in Iran, I'm very hopeful that an agreement will be reached between the two nations and tensions will decrease. Both sides have a realistic approach at the moment; neither is very optimistic at the prospects of reviving the JCPOA and it seems that both in the US and Iran the goal is, as our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abbas Araghchi, has put it, to "manage but not end the enmity". That being said, this very display of sober-minded rationalism from both sides makes me optimistic about the prospects of a deal. There is much to hope for when it comes to a meeting of minds between Kamala Harris and Masoud Pezeshkian.

Iran repudiates allegation of training Russian forces

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani dismissed the allegation that an Iranian serviceman has been training Russian military forces on Ukrainian soil. Kanaani said that such baseless claims are made with specific political motives and objectives, adding that the accusations contradict Iran's principled approach to the conflict in Ukraine, according to Foreign Ministry's official website. Reiterating Iran's opposition to war, Kanaani emphasized the need to halt the conflict and resolve disputes between Russia and Ukraine peacefully. His remarks came after Ukraine's prosecutor general said a case has been opened against a general of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) on suspicion of aiding Russia in war and war crimes against Ukraine. Andriy Kostin also alleged that the investigation revealed that between July and August 2022, Russian military representatives reached an agreement with Iran on the purchase of Shahed-136 and Mohajer-6 attack drones, along with related equipment. Iran has repeatedly and categorically refuted the accusation of involvement in the military conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Iran FM: Israel root cause of regional tensions



Abbas Araghchi

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi blasted the Israeli regime and its incessant atrocities as the main factor behind expansion of tensions and conflict across the West Asia region. The top diplomat made the remarks during a telephone conversation with his Jordanian counterpart Ayman Safadi on Friday. The remarks concerned the regime's genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, escalated deadly attacks in the occupied West Bank, intensified deadly aggression against Lebanon, and assassination of senior resistance figures throughout the region, Press TV reported. As a case in point, Araghchi cited the regime's constituting the biggest obstacle to conclusion of truce agreement that could bring an end to the war on Gaza that has so far claimed the lives of upwards of 40,600 Palestinians, mostly women and children.



Ayman Safadi

In July, the Gaza-based Palestinian resistance movement Hamas agreed to a deal featuring withdrawal of the Israeli forces, return of the displaced people, an end to the siege that has been imposed by Tel Aviv on Gaza, and initiation of the territory's reconstruction process.

The regime, however, rejected the proposal before coming up with "new conditions," including its keeping its forces inside Gaza along the coastal sliver's border with Egypt.

Araghchi said, "The Islamic Republic would support a [truce] agreement that meets the approval of the Palestinian people and resistance."

The director general for International Peace and Security at the Iranian Foreign Ministry also said the occupying Israeli regime is the main obstacle to achieving stability and sustainable development in the Muslim world and the West Asia region.

'Turtle and Snail' to vie at Swiss film festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian movie 'Turtle and Snail' by Reza Hamasi is scheduled to be screened at an international film festival in Switzerland. The movie will compete with works from around the world at the Cluster Film Festival in Switzerland. This film competes at the first films festival in Cluster, alongside works from around the world, IRNA reported.

The Swiss Cluster Festival showcases first films from around the world. It aims to provide a platform for cultural interaction and promote emerging filmmakers. The festival is known for its focus on showcasing diverse voices and perspectives in cinema. Twelve feature films have been selected for the main competition, including 'Turtle and Snail'. These films will compete for the Best Feature Film award.

The Cluster International Film Festival will take place on September 5-8 in the Swiss city. The story is about a 10-year-old boy, Pedram, who lives with his mother, Afsaneh, and faces many challenges with her. Afsaneh intends to get married, but Pedram opposes it, believing that his mother's marriage plans are the source of their problems. Pedram meets a strange young man, and a secret friendship develops between them...

Iranian short animation wins two awards in US festival



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short animation 'In the Shadow of the Cypress,' co-directed by Shirin Sohani and Hossein Molayemi, won two awards at the 12th Portland International Film

and Animation Festival in the United States. The short animation, a production of Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, won two awards for Best 2D Animated Film and Best Short Animation

Music at the Portland International Film and Animation Festival in the US, Mehr reported. According to festival organizers, their focus and goal are to find the best short, feature, documentary, animation, experimental films, and TV series. Over the years, the festival has screened hundreds of amazing works by top talents from around the world on the screen. 'In the Shadow of the Cypress,' the successful short animation by the institute, has so far been selected to compete in the competition section of dozens of prestigious international film festivals and has won three awards from Oscar-qualifying festivals. The 12th Portland International Film and Animation Festival in the US was held from August 21 to 25, 2024.

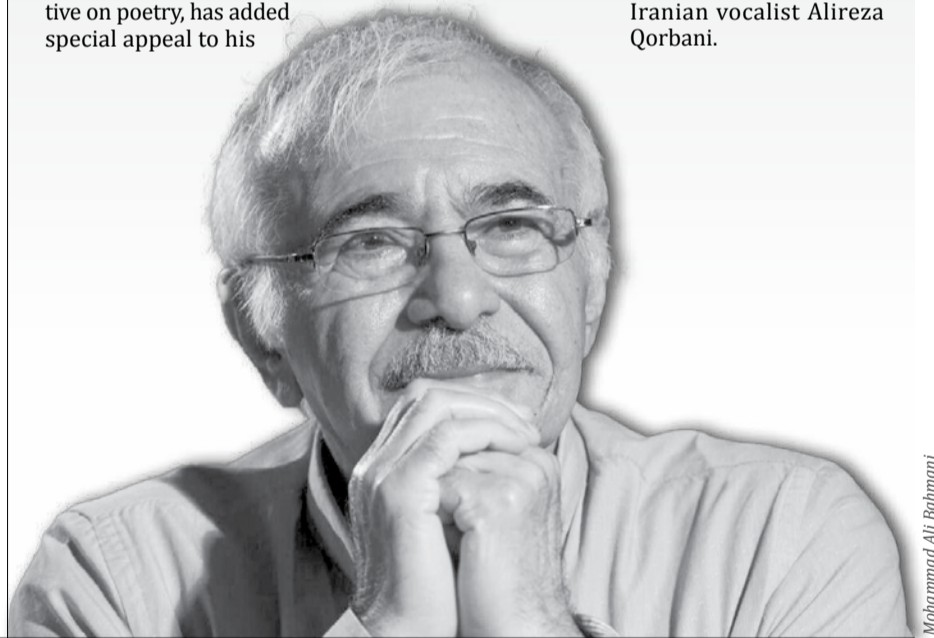
Iran to bid farewell to distinguished poet

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian poet and songwriter Mohammad Ali Bahmani passed away at the age of 82 in Tehran on Friday after suffering a brain stroke. The ceremony for the farewell of the poet will take place today in front of the Vahdat Hall. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a message, expressed his condolences on the passing of "the well-known and talented poet" to the country, to the cultural and artistic community, all sympathizers and especially the esteemed family of the deceased. The talented poet "with a unique style, artistic flair, and a creative, humanistic, and popular perspective on poetry, has added special appeal to his

verses and great richness to national literature, leaving behind a lasting name and memory," a part of the condolence message read. Abbas Sajadi, a poet, cultural manager and spokesperson for the Committee for Honoring Mohammad Ali Bahmani, said the body of this influential poet would be buried in a special tomb in one of the cultural centers of the southern city of Bandar Abbas, Hormuzgan Province. Bahmani lived in Bandar Abbas for several decades and was the founder of important literary and artistic events there. Born in 1942 in Dezful, Khuzestan Province, the late Bahmani wrote his

first poem for his mother at age 10, and 'Roshan Fekar' magazine published it in 1952. Bahmani started cooperation with National Iranian Radio in 1966 and presented 'Poetry Page' program in cooperation with the Persian Gulf Mohammad Ali Bahmani Provincial Network. He lived in Bandar Abbas since 1973 and after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, returned to Tehran and left for Bandar Abbas again in 1984. Bahmani was one of the most renowned poets and songwriters and has collaborated with many musicians and singers so far, among them Iranian singers Naser Abdollahi and Homayoun Shajarian, and Iranian vocalist Alireza Qorbani.



Mohammad Ali Bahmani

Pezeshkian's cabinet welcomes ...

However, this is just the beginning of a journey that can be further strengthened in the future, leading to the presence of more minorities in various positions of power. The continuation of these hopes now rests partly on Hosseinzadeh's shoulders. He has a heavy responsibility and must demonstrate his capabilities as the vice president to pave the way for the utilization of the potential of Sunnis and other religious minorities. Another aspect of Hosseinzadeh's selection reflects the president's focus on the necessity of developing rural and underprivileged areas. In his decree, Pezeshkian emphasized, "It is advisable to improve the living conditions of villagers and upgrade rural development indicators by emphasizing the role of villagers in achieving economic resilience, while coordinating with relevant

executive bodies within the framework of the approved job description of that deputy." The Deputy for Rural Development and Underprivileged Areas was previously one of the deputies under the First Vice President, but Pezeshkian has elevated this position to be directly under the president, thus granting the Vice President the right to attend cabinet meetings. This initiative also highlights the president's concern for addressing the issues of deprived areas and villages. Over the past decades, the composition of Iran's rural and urban population has undergone significant changes. Moreover, the existence of diverse problems in villages has led to the migration of villagers to cities, gradually creating the phenomenon of urban marginalization, which, in turn, has brought about various social and economic challenges.

In October 2021, the "House of Rural and Nomadic Development" published a report on the problems faced by villagers and nomads, which stated, "Villagers and nomads currently face numerous challenges, including a lack of resilient housing, insufficient income from farming to support their livelihoods, the absence of an efficient and swift system to deliver their products to the market, a lack of a specific support program to compensate for losses due to droughts and other natural disasters, which have caused significant damage to production and reduced cultivation areas, and even the loss of livestock." Addressing or alleviating these issues requires scientific planning that is tailored to the specific conditions of each region, taking into account its unique advantages. Therefore, the elevation of this deputy position

indicates the president's serious attention to scientifically addressing this situation. In his first meeting with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Pezeshkian identified "addressing the underprivileged areas," and "paying attention to those who are neglected" as two important functions of his government. During his election campaign, Pezeshkian had criticized the injustice in resource distribution and emphasized allocating a share of resources to deprived areas. He had also stated that before implementing certain economic reform programs, measures should be considered to compensate for the economic impacts of these programs on deprived areas. He said, "In every tough decision we make, we must not allow the weak and underprivileged to be trampled. I cannot accept that my decision

will cause a group of people to be trampled under the feet of development. We must see the people, not just economic growth. I cannot pursue economic growth at any cost." The appointment of Abdolkarim Hosseinzadeh as the Vice President for the Development of Rural and Underprivileged Areas is a significant step towards addressing the needs of deprived and rural areas in Iran, as well as incorporating the capabilities of young reformist figures into the government. Hosseinzadeh, with his background as a member of the Iranian Parliament and the Civil Commission, is well-positioned to scientifically plan and execute strategies that will harness the potential and advantages of deprived areas, while also considering the potential negative impacts of economic reforms on these vulnerable communities and devising

solutions to mitigate them. Hosseinzadeh, a native of Naqadeh in West Azerbaijan Province, had served as a member of the Iranian Parliament for three terms prior to his appointment, representing his constituency of Naqadeh. He was also a member of the Civil Commission and a potential candidate for the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development. At just 44 years of age, he is one of the younger members of the government and a prominent reformist figure. During his time in the ninth and tenth Parliaments, he chaired the Citizenship Rights Faction and served as the Vice President of the Civil Commission and the Reformist Faction (Hope Faction). Hosseinzadeh also played a pivotal role in the election campaign of Pezeshkian, particularly among the Kurdish and Sunni communities.