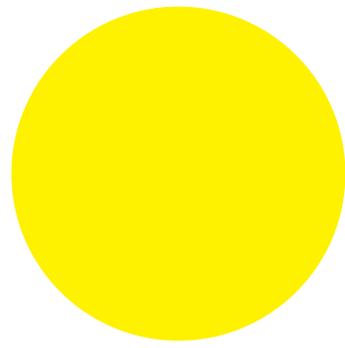




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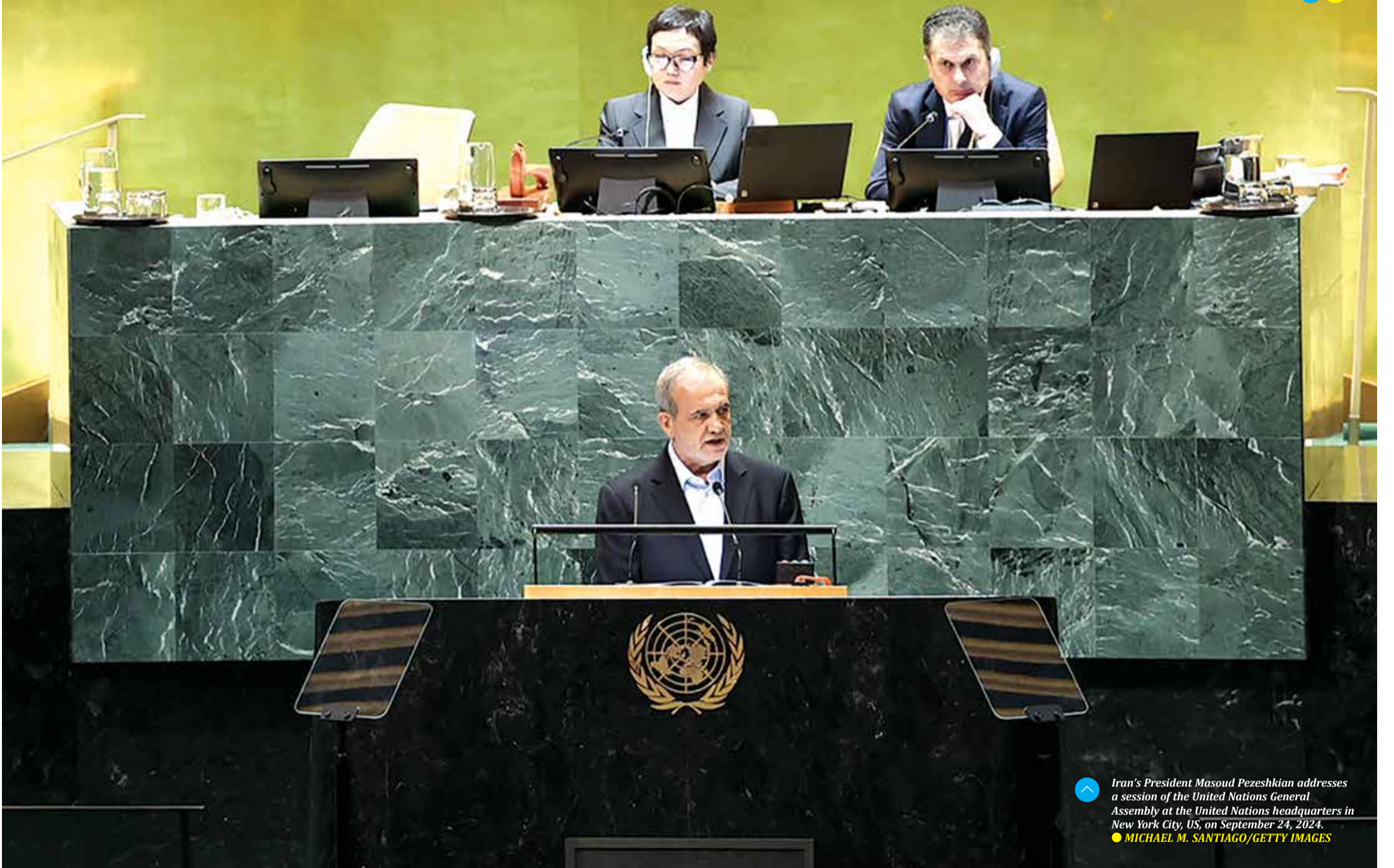


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Iran Aims to Play 'Constructive Role' in World Affairs: **Pezeshkian** **7 >**



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a session of the United Nations General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, US, on September 24, 2024. **MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES**

Myth of unilateral power shattered after Hezbollah attack on Tel Aviv

By Syed Ali Hassan
 Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

PERSPECTIVE

Hezbollah says the Lebanese resistance movement has targeted the headquarters of Israel's spying agency, Mossad, with an advanced ballistic missile in response to recent bombings and the assassination of senior commanders. In a statement on Wednesday, Hezbollah announced that it had struck Mossad's headquarters in the suburbs of Tel Aviv with a "Qader-1 ballistic missile." The statement further explained that Hezbollah launched the missile at 6:30 AM on Wednesday, September 25, 2024, in support of Palestinian resistance against Israel in Gaza and in defense of the Lebanese people. According to Hezbollah's security media, Israel should expect more such surprises. Hezbollah sources stated that while they are against the escalation of war, no significant Israeli figure is beyond their reach. The targeted Mossad office was reportedly responsible for the assassination of Hezbollah leaders and attacks using pagers and wireless devices. Independent media sources reported that sirens were activated in Tel Aviv and other central areas under Israeli control at the time of Hezbollah's missile strike. Israeli media, however, refused to provide details on the extent of the damage or the number of casualties. **Page 8 >**

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Gazprom delegation visits Iran to boost cooperation



A Gazprom delegation headed by Alexey Miller, chairman of the company's Management Committee, paid a working visit to Iran on Tuesday. In the course of the visit, a working meeting was held in Tehran between Miller and Mohsen Paknejad, Iran's Minister of Oil, according to gazprom.com. The meeting addressed matters pertaining to the cooperation in the gas sector. In June 2024, the strategic memorandum on the elaboration of arrangements for supplies of Russian natural gas to Iran was signed with the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) during the visit of Miller to Iran.

Local media reports at the time suggested that Gazprom would supply some 300 million cubic meters per day of gas to Iran under the deal to enable the country to increase its exports via pipelines to Iraq and Turkey.

Russia has been facing an oversupply of natural gas since early 2022 when its exports to Europe came under sanctions due to the war in Ukraine.

Experts say the agreement between the NIGC and Gazprom could turn Iran into a major gas transfer hub in the region once it is fully implemented. Miller also met with Ali Akbar Ahmadian, who serves as the Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) on Tuesday, according to IRNA.

It said Miller had traveled to Tehran to follow up on negotiations earlier this month in St. Petersburg between Ahmadian and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Miller also briefed Ahmadian on agreements he had reached with senior Iranian energy sector officials, it said.

Ahmadian said in the meeting that the leaders of Iran and Russia seek closer energy ties and that the SNSC will work toward the full implementation of contracts between the two countries. Miller is the third senior Russian government official to visit Tehran after Ahmadian's visit to Russia in early September to attend a meeting of top security officials of the BRICS grouping of developing countries.

Putin's aide Igor Levitin and Russia's Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu were in Tehran last week to meet with Ahmadian and other senior Iranian government officials.

Iran, China stress implementation of cooperation plan

Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati and his Chinese counterpart Lan Fo'an emphasized the importance of implementing a comprehensive cooperation plan between the two countries.

Hemmati held a meeting with Fo'an on Wednesday to discuss banking cooperation and other important issues related to bilateral relations, especially the follow-up of the results of previous agreements, IRNA reported.

They also focused on the upcoming joint economic commission meeting of the two countries.

Both ministers emphasized the need for a more serious and in-depth implementation of the long-term comprehensive strategic plan between Iran and China, and they are committed to continuing this path until practical achievements are gained in the official interactions between the two countries.

The "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement" between Tehran and Beijing heralds opportunities for Iran's economic diplomacy, but the road to its implementation is riddled with challenges.

The economic opportunities include the potential

to facilitate communication and information infrastructure, expand trade and investment as well as financial and banking cooperation, and allow Iran to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative and reduce sanctions pressure. However, the disparity of expectations from the agreement, the inconsistency of the two countries' theoretical and practical policy-making, their distinct commercial structures, sanction-related snags in financial and banking convergence, and the dearth of economic and commercial diplomats in Iran mean the two countries have an uphill task to implement the agreement.

The most important of these challenges is the heavy shadow of sanctions, which severely limits Iran's room for maneuver, but also a reason for the two countries to cooperate.

The changing structural conditions and the flux of the international system marked by the decline of the US hegemony exert pressures on emerging powers such as China and regional powers such as Iran.

Under structural pressures, Iran and China are

faced with certain requirements and contingencies that lead them to convergence. This is the basis for the initiation of the comprehensive strategic partnership agreement which is based on mutual requirements and necessities.

One of the most important manifestations of the hegemonic power's confrontationalism is the use of sanctions, which have been widely used in the United States' foreign policy in recent years in such a way that the number of countries targeted by sanctions has increased. Although the degree of being impacted by sanctions is a function of the size and strength of economies and hence, it is different from country to country, the imperative to face off the hegemon is common. Under the pressure of several decades of sanctions, which have intensified in recent years due to the nuclear standoff, Iran has pursued a "look east" policy.

Iran's expectations of economic opening after submitting to a nuclear agreement in 2015 were met with former president Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the accord and his imposition



of new sanctions under Washington's "maximum pressure" campaign.

Amid the exponential pressure of sanctions, Iran took on the path of Asia to break the tightening web of sanctions and turned its attention to China more than before.

A glance at Iran's trade relations shows China is Iran's first economic partner, with a distant 30% share of the country's foreign trade compared to other countries.

China is the most important source for Iran's technological and industrial needs, the most important buyer of Iranian oil and the only country that has chosen the policy of keep-

ing its economy open to Iran at a time of mounting sanctions pressure.

Moreover, under the guiding principle of "China's peaceful rise," the Chinese government pursues a policy of economic activism in various regions, especially strategic regions such as the Persian Gulf. Given the enormity of energy intensive industries in China, the imperative to guarantee energy security is one of the key pillars of the country's economic development strategy.

This per se explains Beijing's endeavors to strengthen economic relations with the oil-rich countries of the region such as Iran and Saudi



Iranian Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati (l) shakes hands with his Chinese counterpart Lan Fo'an in Samarqand, Uzbekistan on September 25, 2024.
● IRNA

Arabia.

However, it should be noted that the role of Iran is more important and the Chinese are well aware of Iran's capacity and ability to influence the stability and security of the region. Hence, they are keen to strengthen Iran's stabilizing role in the region in order to guarantee energy security, and the 25-year strategic partnership agreement fulfills this part of China's intentions.



Iran stands as world's 5th tile, ceramic producer

Iran ranks fifth in the world with the annual production of 500 million square meters of all kinds of tile and ceramic products, as announced by the head of the Iran Ceramic Producers Syndicate on Wednesday. Speaking at a presser on the 29th International Tile, Ceramic & Sanitary Ware Exhibition in Tehran, Behnam Azizzadeh added that Iranian-made tile and ceramic products are comparable with similar foreign prod-

ucts, IRNA reported. He added the tile and ceramic production is a leading industry in the field of mining industry, which has created employment for 450,000 people along with creating a significant investment capacity for the country.

Stating that more than 145 production units in the field of tiles and ceramics are active across the country, Azizzadeh said the output capacity of the units

stands at about 750 million square meters. He put the current annual production at 500 million square meters, of which 200 million square meters were exported last year.

Iran exports its tile and ceramic products to 50 countries as Iraq with imports of 140 million square meters was the first destination for Iranian products during the year to March 19. "In terms of produc-

tion, the industry has met domestic needs and has fetched a considerable figure of forex through exports."

If export conditions are not facilitated, there is a possibility of losing global markets, he warned.

Azizzadeh laid emphasis on finding new export markets and said, "Although Russia has a high demand for tile and ceramic products, we do not have a share of exports to the country."

West Asia's first geothermal plant to be launched in Iran by yearend

The first geothermal power plant in West Asia, with a production capacity of five megawatts, will come on stream in Meshginshahr, in the northwestern province of Ardebil, by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2025).

Deputy Head of Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH) Mehran Golabkesh stated that the project is under construction as a pilot project on a reservoir of geothermal energy with a total production capacity of about 250 megawatts

of electricity, Tasnim News Agency reported. The project has progressed by 93 percent, he said, adding that several wells as deep as about 3,000 meters have been drilled to explore and extract the geothermal resources.

Iran's first geothermal power plant is being constructed in an area 25 kilometers south of Meshginshahr by Iran's Thermal Power Plants Holding Company (TPPH). Geothermal power is electrical power generated from geothermal en-



ergy. Technologies in use include dry steam power stations, flash steam power stations and binary cycle power stations. Geothermal electricity generation is currently used in 26 countries, while geothermal heating is in use in 70 countries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Allure of Aqazadeh Mansion in Ardebil

Iranica Desk

The Aqazadeh Mansion is one of the historical houses located in Ardebil, the capital city of Ardebil Province. Renowned for its exquisite architecture, the mansion attracts numerous tourists and is considered one of the region's prime attractions. The building showcases some of the most modern designs of its era, with prominent decorations evident throughout its various sections.

Over the years, the Aqazadeh Mansion has preserved its splendor and beauty. Dating back to the Qajar era, it belonged to Haji Esmaeil Aqayev, a prominent merchant from Ardebil. The mansion was one of seven luxurious houses owned by Aqayev. During a business trip to Russia, he commissioned the blueprints for this building, making it one of the most modern structures in Ardebil at the time. Covering an area of approximately 1,400 square meters, the mansion is two stories high, with part of the second floor featuring a ceiling that gives the building a distinctive two-roof appearance.



● safarbazi.com



● kojaro.com



● kojaro.com



● safarbazi.com

Construction of the Aqazadeh Mansion occurred during the reign of Nasereddin Shah. Its proximity to the city center and Aali Qapu Square has further enhanced its fame. The mansion's modern architecture has come to symbolize construction in Ardebil.

While parts of the mansion have been restored and renovated in recent years, significant damage occurred in the past due to unauthorized excavations by opportunists. Many elements of the Aqazadeh Mansion, including entrance doors, windows, and foundation stones, have been lost or stolen. In 1963, some portions of the mansion were destroyed to widen the surrounding streets due to negligence towards this historical site; however, the western part of the building, where the main structure is located, remains largely intact.

After Haji Esmaeil's death, the Aqazadeh Mansion was inherited by his son, Mohammad Hashem. Until the early 2000s, the historical house was still occupied by the family's descendants. However, over the years, portions of the mansion were transferred or lost. To protect this historical site, it was placed under the supervision of the province's Cultural

Heritage Organization, which was entrusted with its management.

On September 9, 2007, after extensive renovations and restorations, the Aqazadeh Mansion was added to Iran's National Heritage List. Unfortunately, many parts of its doors, windows, and wooden decorations have been removed over time. Following its restoration, individuals seeking profit excavated in the mansion's garden and basement. Ultimately, in 2012, after further reconstruction, the complex was transformed into a traditional restaurant and opened for public visits.

The Aqazadeh Mansion features stunning architecture that harmoniously combines elements of Iranian and Western design. The complex consists of various sections, including the main building, basement, wind catchers, courtyard, and gardens. The main building boasts a symmetrical shape and contains an entrance hall, main hall, safe room, kitchen, bathroom, and living areas, divided into outer and inner sections. In the outer section of the mansion, the main *shahneshin* hall is prominently displayed, along with interlocking rooms. Situated between the entrance corridors, this hall

overlooks the outer courtyard. The most exquisite architectural decorations of this historical house can be seen here, where the hall is also taller than other parts of the building. Haji Esmaeil brought 15 Russian artists to Iran specifically to decorate the doors and windows in the *shahneshin*. These artists dedicated three years to creating the windows, wooden doors, and other decorative elements.

The windows of the main hall are double-layered and feature a combination of colored glass and wood. A significant aspect of the window decorations includes paisley motifs and the calligraphy of Qur'anic verses in Thuluth script, which contribute to the Iranian identity of the architecture.

At the center of the main courtyard, there is a stone pond with a tall fountain, surrounded by elegantly carved stones. The gardens encircling the pond also exhibit similar stone borders. While the inner building, basement, and rooftops of the Aqazadeh Mansion have undergone renovations in recent years, the most stunning sections remain the main *shahneshin* hall and the courtyard that overlooks it.

Kalmakareh Cave and its ancient secrets

Kalmakareh Cave is a historically significant site located in Poldokhtar of Lorestan Province in western Iran. The name *kalmakareh* in the Lori language translates to 'place of the wild goat and fig'. This cave, dating back to the first millennium BCE, served as a royal treasury for the Samatura dynasty of the Elamite civilization. Inside, archaeologists have uncovered valuable artifacts from ancient Iran, including almond-shaped fish bowls and exquisite rhytons. Kalmakareh Cave was accidentally discovered in 1989 by a hunter pursuing a wild goat. He stumbled upon a coin at

the cave's entrance, which led to the revelation of a vast treasure. Numerous ancient artifacts, including coins and silver figurines, were found within the cave. Unfortunately, many of these treasures were taken by locals and smugglers before Iran's Cultural Heritage Organization could secure the site, surfiran.com wrote.

Nestled in the Zagros Mountains, the cave features numerous halls and winding paths, making it a popular destination for visitors. Its stunning stalactites and stalagmites, formed over millions of years, leave every visitor in awe.

Kalmakareh Cave is situated in a picturesque natural area that offers breathtaking views of the Zagros Mountains, making it an ideal spot for nature lovers and hikers. The nearby springs and small rivers enhance the area's beauty, attracting those seeking peace and tranquility in nature.

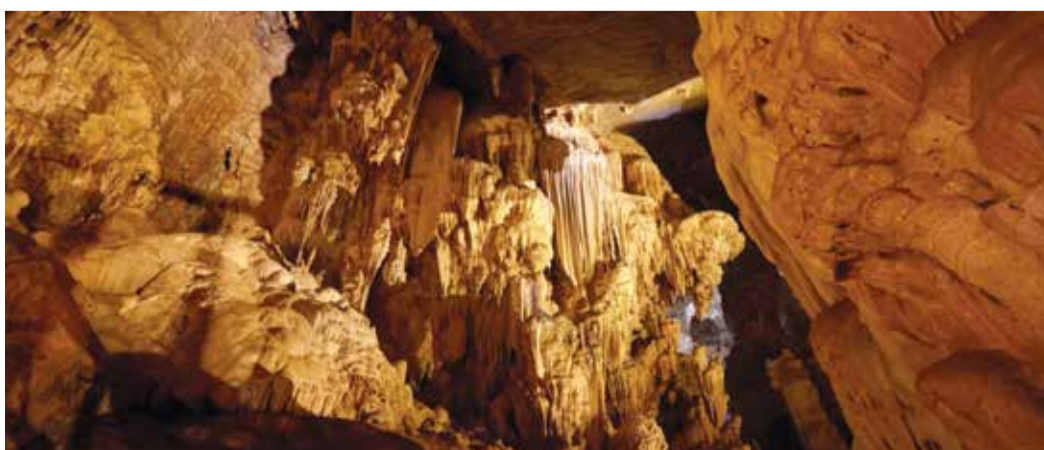
Kalmakareh is not only a beautiful location but also holds great significance for history enthusiasts. The ancient treasures and valuable artifacts discovered there testify to the existence of ancient civilizations and the rich cultural heritage of the region.

For those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of urban life, the pristine surroundings of the cave provide a peaceful retreat where one can relax and enjoy the beauty of nature. Visiting Kalmakareh Cave is a unique experience that beautifully combines history and nature, leaving a lasting impression on all who explore it.

Some accounts suggest that the cave dates back to the Achaemenid period or even earlier, to the Elamite era. Others believe that the Kalmakareh treasure represents the inheritance or gifts of various kings throughout history. It is said

that after Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon and Mesopotamia, treasures from Babylon's temple were transported from Susa to a cave. During Alexander's invasion of Iran, the Kalmakareh treasure was hidden in the mountains near Poldokhtar.

Due to its location within the Zagros Mountains, Kalmakareh Cave enjoys a mountainous climate. During spring and summer, the weather is cool and pleasant, surrounded by lush greenery. However, before planning a trip to the cave in spring, it is advisable to check the local weather to ensure it is not rainy.



● delgarm.com

Every accusation a confession: Israel and double lie of 'human shields'



By Craig Mokhiber
An American former
UN human rights
official

OPINION

Among the most frequently deployed weapons in Israel's hasbara arsenal is the so-called "human shields" ruse.

For decades now, Israel has systematically used this propaganda device as a trick to justify war crimes, to shift the blame for its crimes to others, to overcome the principle of distinction in humanitarian law, to dehumanize Palestinian victims, and to arm its Western proxies and complicit media companies with ammunition to protect Israeli impunity.

But a chain of international investigations reveals two clear conclusions about these charges: First, Palestinian combatants generally do not use human shields. And, secondly, Israel does.



Palestinians look at the destruction after an Israeli airstrike on a crowded tent camp housing Palestinians displaced by the war in Muwasi, Gaza Strip, on Sept. 10, 2024.

ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

International law

"Human shields" is common parlance for a particular violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. It is strictly prohibited in all circumstances.

As summarized by the authoritative commentary of the ICRC, it refers to the "intentional co-location of military objectives and civilians or persons hors de combat with the specific intent of trying to prevent the targeting of those military objectives." ("Persons hors de combat" include fighters who have laid down their arms, prisoners, the sick and wounded, etc.).

The classic case is when a group of soldiers force civilians from the other side to march ahead of them into a battle zone or into an unsecured structure, in hopes that the enemy will not shoot at the soldiers for fear of hitting the civilians.

But Israel, in its automatic claim of "human shields" each time it kills large numbers of civilians and destroys protected civilian infrastructure, pays no mind to this definition. Instead, it simply extends the phrase to all civilian deaths. On cue and without evidence, complicit Western politicians, their official spokespersons, and media corporations then dutifully repeat Israel's human shield mantra over and over again.

For Israel, refugees going about their daily lives in refugee camps, patients and doctors in hospitals, people praying in churches and mosques, and humanitarian workers delivering food to the hungry are all human shields.

Never mind that they have neither been compelled by Hamas, nor have they volunteered to shield anyone or anything. And never mind that there is often no legitimate (or proportionate) military objective in situations where Israel makes the human shields claim.

If these civilians are killed by Israeli bombs or bullets, according to the Israeli narrative, it is their own fault or that of Hamas, because they both live in the same densely populated places.

But the mere presence of armed forces or members of the enemy in populated civilian areas does not constitute the use of human shields. Indeed, Israel should carefully consider the implications of its repeated claims that it does, given that it maintains its military headquarters in a busy section of the city of Tel Aviv.

Nor does the presence of fighters in a protected civilian location remove the protected status of that location. Israeli soldiers can be seen in every Israeli hospital. Does that render those hospitals a legitimate military target? Of course not. To deny the same protection to Palestinians would be both a grave breach humanitarian law and (Western journalists take note) a blatant act of racism.

Needless to say, that is not how the concept of human shields works in international law.

In pretending that it does, Israel and its Western proxies willfully ignore three inconvenient elements: Logic, facts, and law.

Israel's practice of targeting civilians

First, acceptance of these claims requires Israel's pliable proxies in the West to ignore decades of experience and volumes of collected evidence that Israel often makes no distinction between civilians and combatants in its military activities and, in many other cases, directly targets civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Israel routinely attacks hospitals, schools, shelters, and refugee camps. Its snipers and drones hunt down and execute civilians. And its A.I.-guided weapons, labeled with cruel names like "Where's Daddy," are designed to wait until targets

are home with their families before bombing them. It even guns down civilians, including children and women, waving white flags. These criminal patterns are well known and well documented in the work of successive investigations by the UN and by international, Israeli, and Palestinian human rights organizations. But the very logic of human shields rests on the idea of deterrence; that is, that soldiers will hesitate to shoot if civilians are at risk. No such logic exists with a military force like Israel's that does not distinguish between civilians and combatants and that routinely practices the direct targeting of civilians.

Indeed, Israel's Dahiya Doc-

trine, on the basis of which it has long carried out the intentional massive destruction of civilian areas as a means of terrorizing civilian populations, is proof that Israel cannot be deterred by the use of Palestinian or Lebanese human shields. The current wave of genocide perpetrated by Israel in Gaza has left no doubt about its willingness to kill Palestinian civilians intentionally and without hesitation. And its Hannibal Directive, under which Israel kills its own citizens (soldiers and civilians alike) to prevent them from hindering its military aims means that it may not even be deterred by human shielding with its own citizens.

Multiple human rights reports show that Palestinian combatants do not use human shields, but Israel does. Israel's false claims about Palestinian human shields are just attempts to justify its own targeting of civilians.



Palestinians inspect the damage to a school sheltering displaced people after it was hit by an Israeli strike, amid the Israeli war on Gaza, at Beach refugee camp in Gaza City, on September 22, 2024.

DAWOU ABU ALKAS/REUTERS

Given that the resistance forces challenging Israel are well aware of this, why would they try to use a tactic that they know is futile? The answer is, they don't. Thus, the charge of human shields fails the test of logic. But it also fails the test of law. First, the situations in which Israel claims human shields are used do not qualify as cases of human shields under the international legal definition described above. Simply put, and as this definition makes clear, the mere presence of fighters nearby does not magically transform civilians into human shields.

Accordingly, Israel's charge of human shields usually has no basis in law whatsoever.

Secondly, Israel alleges human shields in an attempt to shift blame and absolve its forces of legal responsibility. But what they miss is that even if human shields were used, this would still not reduce the legal obligations of the attackers.

In fact, claims of the use of human shields do not justify an attack on civilians without the constraints imposed by international humanitarian and human rights law, and the attacker still remains accountable, even if the user of human shields is also accountable.

The attacker must still respect the principles of precaution, distinction, and proportionality to avoid harming non-combatants. In other words, the declaration of human shields is not a "get out of jail free card" under international law.

Therefore, as a matter of law, even where human shields are present, the attempt to shift blame and absolve the shooter of responsibility fails.

Palestinians don't use 'human shields' but Israel does

And then there is the pesky problem of facts.

Israel has produced no credible evidence of the use by Palestinian resistance groups of human shields in the current Israeli attacks on Gaza. It relies instead on the uncritical, rote repetition of the charge by its Western sponsors and proxies and Israel-friendly media corporations. The charge is without evidence, and one wielded not to hold violators to account, but as a justification for Israeli war crimes.

This is not to suggest that no Palestinian combatant has ever in history used human shields. But the charge that they do so regularly or systematically is a charge without evidence, and one regularly wielded not to hold violators to account, but rather as a justification for the commission of Israeli war crimes.

At the same time, we have all seen the video footage of Israeli soldiers using Palestinians as human shields across Gaza (and the West Bank). We have viewed with our own eyes the images of Palestinians (often children) tied to the hood of Israeli military jeeps, forced to walk ahead of a column of Israeli occupation soldiers or to lead the soldiers into buildings or other structures. The practice is as old as the state of Israel itself.

In every successive Israeli attack on Palestinian communities, the pattern has been the same: Israel accuses the Palestinians of using human shields, international organizations, and human rights groups investigate, and the investigations

reveal that the party systematically using human shields is not Palestine, but rather Israel.

Indeed, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has documented the repeated use by Israel of human shields at least since 1967. Investigations by both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch into Israel's "Operation Cast Lead" attacks in Gaza found evidence that Israel used human shields (including children) but found no evidence that Palestinian groups did so.

Similarly, successive UN Commissions of Inquiry that investigated the massive Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2008-2009 and in 2014 looked into Israel's claims and found no evidence of Palestinians using human shields. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child found "the continuous use (by Israel) of Palestinian children as human shields" from 2010 to 2013. The UN's Special Rapporteur on terrorism reported the same finding.

A typical finding is included in Amnesty International's investigation into Israel's Cast Lead attacks:

"In several cases Israeli soldiers also used civilians, including children, as 'human shields' ... However, contrary to repeated allegations by Israeli officials of the use of 'human shields', Amnesty International found no evidence that Hamas or other Palestinian fighters [did so]."

And in the report on the "white flag killings" of Palestinian civilians, Human Rights Watch confirmed that "Israel says Hamas fought from populated areas and used civilians as 'human shields'—that is, deliberately used civilians to deter attacks against Palestinian forces... Human Rights Watch found no evidence that the civilian victims (in its investigation) were used by Palestinian fighters as human shields."

But the Israeli practice of using human shields is a matter of public knowledge inside Israel, having long been the subject of public debate. Israel soldiers, speaking to the Israeli organization Breaking the Silence, have themselves confessed to the widespread practice. It has been reported in Israeli media, most recently in an expose in Haaretz last month. The Israeli military has even publicly defended its "right" to use human shields in successive Israeli court cases. Of course, those instances in which it lost the argument have had little impact on the military, which continues the practice until today.

Thus, Israel's hasbara disinformation tactics have been an important pillar in its strategy for the destruction of Gaza since the current wave of genocide in Gaza began almost a year ago. False charges of human shielding have been key to those tactics.

But that deception crumbles at even the most cursory examination. If Western politicians and journalists exercised even the most basic level of due diligence before parroting Israeli claims, if they subjected them to the tests of law, fact and logic, the truth would be quickly revealed. The party that routinely uses human shields is Israel, not Palestine.

A common refrain in the public discourse on Palestine is that "every Israeli accusation is a confession." The double lie of human shields is a case in point.

The article first appeared on *Mondoweiss*.

Israel's pager bombs have no place in a just war



By Michael Walzer
Author

OPINION

The exploding pagers and walkie-talkies targeting members of Hezbollah in Lebanon were certainly an espionage and technological coup. Few people on the spot or reading about them from far away could fail to be amazed. But the explosions on last Tuesday and Wednesday were also very likely war crimes — terrorist attacks by a regime that has consistently condemned attacks on its own citizens. Yes, the devices most probably were being used by Hezbollah operatives for military purposes. This might make them a legitimate target in the continuous cross-border battles between Israel and Hezbollah. But the attacks, which killed tens of people and wounded thousands of others, came when the operatives were not operating; they had not been mobilized and they were not militarily engaged. Rather, they were at home with their families, sitting in cafes, shopping in food markets — among civilians who were randomly killed and injured. Israel has neither confirmed nor denied responsibility for the attacks but is widely believed to be behind them. If those allegations are true, it is important for friends of Israel to say: This was not right.

The theory of just war depends heavily on the distinction between combatants and civilians. In contemporary warfare, these two groups are often mixed together in the same spaces — often, indeed, deliberately mixed together, because the killing of civilians invites moral condemnation. The war that Hamas designed in Gaza is a grim illustration of the strategy of putting civilians at risk for political gain. Still, a military responding to this strategy has to do everything it can to avoid or minimize civilian casualties. Israel claims to be doing that in Gaza, although serious criticism of its conduct there has appeared in media around the world, not to mention a case brought against Israeli and Hamas officials alike at the International Criminal Court alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity.

No similar claim of minimizing risk to civilians can be made for the decision to explode the devices. They were not distributed by Hezbollah in order to put its people at risk. This was not a plot to force Israel to kill or injure civilians. The plot was Israel's, and the plotters had to know that at least some of the people hurt would be innocent men, women and children.

Israel's recent assassinations of Hamas and Hezbollah leaders requires a more complicated, but still critical, political and moral response. These were men actively supporting attacks on Israel, who certainly knew themselves to be targets — I would say legitimate targets — of assassins who could be operating from close up or far away. But when a government authorizes the killing of men it is directly or indirectly negotiating with, such as the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in July, we have to conclude that it isn't committed to the negotiations' success. That is politically and morally wrong, not only from the standpoint of the large number of Israeli citizens (including my friends in Israel) who are strongly, even desperately, committed to ending the war and bringing the prisoners home, but also from the standpoint of all the victims of the Gaza war.

However, let me make a distinction here. Condemning an act of war is not the same as condemning the war it-



People walk near an ambulance outside American University of Beirut Medical Center in Beirut as people were wounded and killed when the pagers they use to communicate exploded across Lebanon on September 17, 2024.
● MOHAMED AZAKIR/REUTERS

self. Hamas and Hezbollah are fighting against Israel. Long ago, Abba Eban called this the crime of picide. In his day, Israel's enemies were motivated by a nationalist determination to reverse (literally) the nakba, the flight and expulsion of Palestinians in 1948 from what became Israel. Today, the goal is religiously driven and zealously pursued. That this crime has found supporters and apologists in the United States and Europe, often among secular leftists, is even more amazing than the exploding pagers. So, it is important to distinguish the judgments we make about the conduct of war from the judgments we make about the decision to go to war. Hamas's attack on Oct. 7 was meant to start a war,

and Israel's response, though Hamas expected it and wanted it, was nonetheless justified. It is hard to imagine any country responding differently. Hezbollah in Lebanon joined Hamas almost immediately by lobbing rockets into northern Israel continually but also carefully, seemingly intending a limited engagement. In this way it has been supporting its ally without committing itself to full-scale war.

Israel has helped maintain those limits with its own controlled responses, although it has not refrained from targeting Hezbollah commanders. The result has been the forced evacuation of destroyed towns and villages on each side of the Israel-Lebanon border,

without significant damage to the rest of the countries. But the exchanges have become deadlier, and pressure has been building in Israel (which is, unlike Lebanon, a functioning democracy where political pressure is possible) to act in a stronger way to make the northern border communities safe. Perhaps the exploding electronic devices represented an attempt at strong action. I can't believe it will make anyone safer. It invites retribution, and even if retribution is for the moment difficult, the desire for revenge won't go away.

What the attacks demonstrate with blinding clarity is the importance of a political solution to the war in the north, which can only come along with some kind of cease-fire in the south. A catastrophic war with Lebanon is now the greater danger, but what began on Oct. 7 must be dealt with first to avoid it.

At this moment, any political proposal is bound to be called naïve. Leaders on both sides seem to believe that war is the only way forward. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has said as much. Hamas's leader, Yahya Sinwar, and the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, are committed to a policy of doing whatever it takes to destroy Israel, even if what it takes is eternal war.

One war may be just and the other unjust, but today anyone who aims at continuing the fight must be condemned. The victims of the exploding pagers and walkie-talkies, the general amazement at what is possible in war today, the fear of what will come tomorrow — all this proves the necessity of a political solution.



A man holds a walkie-talkie with its battery removed during the funeral of people killed after hundreds of paging devices exploded across Lebanon.
● ANWAR AMRO/AFP

The full article first appeared on *The New York Times*.

New volleyball coach Piazza aiming at 'world's top eight' with Iran

Sports Desk

Roberto Piazza, the newly-appointed head coach of Iran's national volleyball team, says his ultimate goal at the job is to restore the Asian powerhouse to the top eight in the FIVB World Ranking. Former coach of the Netherlands and now in charge of top-flight side Powervolley Milano in his home country, the 56-year-old Italian signed a four-year contract with the Iranian Volleyball Federation earlier this month, replacing Brazilian Mauricio Paes.

Paes was sacked midway through June's Volleyball Nations League after only seven games in charge, with his number two Payman Akbari serving as the interim coach for the remainder of the campaign as Iran finished second from bottom in the 16-team table of the preliminary round.

"I'm so excited to be taking on this new role. This is the position I wanted for a long time," the Italian said in a first interview since his appointment.

"A constant place among the top eight teams in the world is not just a dream for us, but our primary objective, and we will have to remain committed to that goal," added Piazza, who is set to start in the new role ahead of next June's Volleyball Nations League.

"My dream for the Iranian volleyball is to achieve its goal of succeeding at the 2028 Los Angeles



● LVM

Olympics." Sitting 15th in the latest World Ranking, Iran spent the best part of the 2023 season in the top 10, with the previous stint in the top eight coming during the 2022

World Championship, where then-coach Behrouz Ataei's men made it to the last 16 before being knocked out by Brazil. Asked about his approach to preparation for next year's two

major tournaments before he officially begins his work, Piazza said: "I'm in constant communication with my assistant Tomaso Totolo and some of Iranian analysts. We're keeping a close eye on all

players in the [domestic] league and overseas."

"Some of them are playing in Italy, some in Poland, and there are also others in France. We're going to assess their progress in all as-

pects of their game, not just their attacking or defensive play. We're also keeping tabs on their physical condition and will be in touch with their fitness coaches to figure out how to bring the best out of the players for [next year's] Nations League and World Championship." Iran is drawn against host nation Philippines, Egypt, and Tunisia in Pool A of the World Championship - starting September 12 next year. Piazza said he was delighted to see Iran is in the same group as the Philippines, rather than seven top-ranked sides in the first pot of the draw, insisting his team will have to "win the pool first and then start thinking about the rest of the way."

Iran will be looking for a fresh start under the Italian, following a dire run of results over the past 16 months - during which the Asian team had dreadful campaigns in back-to-back Nations League events and failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics, while being outclassed by Japan on home soil in last year's Asian Championship final.

Piazza was pleased with the quick progress of the negotiations he had with Milad Taqavi, the head of the national governing body of the sport, saying: "He and I agreed on the deal as soon as he learned about my plans and targets. I want to be in the next Olympics with Iran, and the players, the federation, and I will have to fight to that end."

IWF World Junior Championships: Iran's Abbaspour collects triple medals

Sports Desk

The sixth day of the IWF World Junior Championships saw Iranian weightlifter Alireza Abbaspour bag three medals, including double silvers, in León, Spain.

Representing the country in the men's 89kg contests on Tuesday, Abbaspour had to settle for a bronze medal in the snatch event, courtesy of a sole successful lift of 156kg.

Uzbekistan's Diyorbek Ermatov

bagged the snatch gold with 162kg - four kilograms clear of Colombian silver medalist Jokser Albornoz.

A triple world youth gold winner in 2021, Abbaspour delivered a much-improved performance to win the clear & jerk silver.

The 20-year-old Iranian began his campaign with a 186kg effort and then went on to raise 190kg and 195kg above his head to finish second to Kazakhstan's Yedige Yemberdi,

who ended fifth in the snatch table but tallied 199kg to win the gold in the second event of the weight class.

Albornoz won the bronze, thanks to a 192kg lift on his third attempt.

The top three in the total standings were decided by thin margins as Yemberdi won the ultimate prize with 352kg, with Abbaspour claiming a second silver of the afternoon with 351kg, while Albornoz registered 350kg for the bronze.



Iranian weightlifter Alireza Abbaspour celebrates after a successful lift in the men's 89kg contests at the IWF World Junior Championships in León, Spain, on September 24, 2024. ● IRNA

Futsal World Cup:

FIFA opens probe into match-fixing allegations in Iran-France game

Sports Desk

FIFA said an investigation has been launched into match-fixing allegations following France's 4-1 loss to Iran in the ongoing Futsal World Cup in Uzbekistan.

After a lifeless first half, Iran easily prevailed after France conceded a soft opening goal in the second, triggering angry reactions from other teams, some of whom filed complaints to the international governing body of the sport.

"FIFA is aware of complaints filed by participating teams at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Uzbekistan 2024 regarding the Group F match between France and IR Iran," a FIFA spokesperson said in a statement.

"No further comment will be made while this process is ongoing."

While both teams had already qualified for the round of 16, Sunday's result meant Iran will face African champion Morocco in today's knockout game in Bukhara, ahead of a possible clash against world No. 1 Brazil.

France, meanwhile, will take on Thailand before a potential quarterfinal against Paraguay. Concerns were aired on social media as the match was being played, with the Thailand coach, Miguel Rodrigo, writing on X that his team would play Les Bleus "with open arms", calling both teams "a world disgrace" who had "dishonored my sport."



● ROBERTUS PUDYANTO/GETTY IMAGES

Retired Brazil great Falcao was quoted by French media as saying: "It shows a lack of respect for the World Cup. The match was clearly fixed from the first minute."

France coach Raphael Reynaud said the way the match played out was about avoiding bookings and injuries.

"It was Iran's responsibility to be in charge of the game," he said. "The draw is more open for us but our main goal was not to get booked and to avoid injuries."

The Frenchman's opposite number on Iran's bench, Vahid Shamsaei, was also quick to brush off the tanking accusations after the game, saying it was normal for his men not to

go all out for a victory as "even a draw would be enough for us to go through as the group winners."

"I think the critics should get tough on the team that was after it [tanking]. Several of our players came down with the flu before the game and needed to rest. We also had a couple of players suspended and one injured. Even I was not feeling well for today's game, and, not to mention, we have to be back in action in three days. Everyone is free to make their own decisions," said the Iranian coach, who was without the key trio in Hossein Tayebi, Saeid Ahmad-Abbasi, and Mohammadreza Sangsefidi against France.

Leader: Killing of Hezbollah commanders not to crush Lebanese group



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses a group of war veterans and resistance activists in Tehran on September 25, 2024. [leader.ir](#)

Khamenei said. The organizational strength and human resources of Hezbollah is very strong, he added, and will not be critically hit by the killing of a senior commander, even if that is clearly a loss. «Therefore, they have won until today, and by God's grace, with God's power, the final victory in this battle will belong to the resistance front and the Hezbollah front,» the Leader noted.

Israel's new offensive against Hezbollah has killed 569 people since

Monday according to Lebanon's health minister. The deadliest assault on Lebanon in nearly two decades follows nearly a year of war between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas in Gaza. Since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza nearly a year ago, Hezbollah has been targeting Israel's positions in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Ayatollah Khamenei said Hezbollah and other resistance forces are so far the winners of the war, one reason of which is Israel's massacre of women and children in Palestine and Lebanon. «If the evil Zionist regime had been able to defeat the fighting forces, whether in Gaza, the West Bank, or in Lebanon, it would not

have needed to show its face to the world in such a dark and ugly way through committing crimes against homes, schools, hospitals, children, and women,» the Leader said. «Since the regime has not been able to win over the resistance force, it is forced to pretend to win by hitting women, children, defenseless people and cars on the road, schools and hospitals. So, it has failed so far.» In this war against Lebanon and Palestine, the Leader said, «The infidel and evil enemy has the most equipment and the US is behind him.» «The Americans say they are not involved and have no information, they say the opposite. They both have information and are involved and they need the

victory of the Zionist regime,» he said. «For the upcoming election, the current American government needs to show that it has supported the Zionist regime and had it win the war. Of course, they also need the votes of American Muslims, so they pretend that they are not involved.» Ayatollah Khamenei said the Israeli enemy has money, weapons, facilities, and global propaganda apparatus, while on the opposing side, «the believers and the fighters in the way of Allah do not even have a tenth of those facilities.» «Nevertheless, the one who wins is the side of the fighters in the way of Allah. The Palestinian resistance is victorious. Hezbollah is victorious.»

International Desk

The assassination of Hezbollah commanders will not bring the group to its knees, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatol-

lah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday, after Israel hit senior figures in the resistance movement during days of devastating air strikes across Lebanon. «Some of the effective and

valuable forces of Hezbollah were martyred, which undoubtedly caused damage to Hezbollah, but this was not the sort of damage that could bring the group to its knees,» Ayatollah

Iran aims to play 'constructive role' in world affairs: Pezeshkian

International Desk

Iran's president said he wants to open a «constructive» chapter in his country's international relations even as he made clear that other countries need to do their part.

«I aim to lay strong foundations for my country's entry into a new era, positioning it to play an effective and constructive role in the emerging global order, remove obstacles and challenges and organize my country's relations based on the needs and realities of today's world,» Masoud Pezeshkian said during his first speech at the UN General Assembly's annual gathering of world leaders.

«I entered the election campaign with a program based on reforms, national unity, constructive interaction with the world and economic development and I managed to gain the trust of my compatriots at the elections,» Pezeshkian added.

He also referred to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal from which the United States withdrew in 2018 and reimposed illegal sanctions on Iran. Efforts to revive the pact have failed so far.

«We are ready to engage with participants of the 2015 nuclear deal. If the deal's commitments are implemented fully and in good faith, dialogue on other issues can follow,» Pezeshkian said. Directly addressing the American people, Pezeshkian listed a number of Iranian

grievances — from sanctions to the 2020 killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani in a Trump-era US drone strike — and then urged «all states pursuing a counterproductive strategy towards Iran» to «learn from history.»

«We have the opportunity to transcend these limitations and enter into a new era. This era will commence with the acknowledgement of Iran's security concerns and cooperation on mutual challenges,» he said, appealing anew for sanctions relief.

«I hope that this message from Iran is carefully heard today,» the president concluded.

Iran seeks peace

Pezeshkian also said Iran pursued peace for the entirety of the international community, asserting, «We want peace for all and are not after engaging in war and fighting with anyone.»

«Take a look at the contemporary history of the region. Iran has never acted as an initiator of any war,» the president said, adding that the country had, in all cases, «just heroically defended itself in the face of others' aggression and caused the aggressors to regret [their transgressions].»

Regional unity

«We have spoken about the necessity of regional unity and formation of a strong region,» the president stated. «Our region suffers from war, sectarian tensions, terrorism, extremism, drug smug-



Masoud Pezeshkian

gling, shortage of water resources, refugee crises, environmental destruction, and foreign interference,» Pezeshkian said, adding, «We can address these common challenges towards ensuring a better future for the next generations.» Citing an instance of Iran's advocacy for peace, he mentioned the country's favoring realization of sustainable peace and security for both Ukraine and Russia, which have been engaged in a conflict since 2022.

The Islamic Republic, he said, lays emphasis on the need for expedient cessation of military conflict in Ukraine, supports whatever peaceful resolution, and believes that the crisis can only be resolved through negotiation.

Israel's atrocities

Pezeshkian also touched upon the Israel's actions in the region, Pezeshkian said the Israeli regime has been defeated in its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip and now cannot «repair its myth of invincibility» through resorting to barbarism against Lebanon.

He was referring to the regime's failure in the face of the Gaza-based resistance movement Hamas in the Palestinian territory and the escalation of the regime's attacks against Lebanon since the onset of the war.

As part of the escalation, the regime carried out extensive airstrikes against southern and eastern Lebanon on Monday, killing at least 569 people, including 50 children and 94 women, and wounding 5,000 others.

Pezeshkian said, «The insane Israeli barbarism in Lebanon should be stopped before setting the region and the world on fire.» «Naturally, the blind and terrorist crimes of the past days and the extensive aggression against Lebanon that shed the blood of thousands of innocent people will not remain unanswered,» he added.

«Those governments that stand in the way of cessation of this terrible catastrophe and still call themselves defenders of the human rights, have to bear the consequences [of these atrocities],» the president noted.

President: Iran seeks regional unity, cooperation with Europe

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that his government seeks to bring about unity in Iran and among regional countries, adding that Iran is ready to further cooperate with the European countries as well. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron in a meeting held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Iranian president announced Iran's readiness for negotiation on resolving differences, including Iran's nuclear program.

In a separate meeting with Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic, Pezeshkian described the cooperation between Iran and Serbia as useful and constructive in the bilateral and international arenas, saying that the two countries have good mutual capacities to expand cooperation and improve their relations.

The Serbian president appreciated the constructive positions of Iran in supporting the territorial integrity of his country and said the two countries en-



joy many capacities to improve relations and strengthen cooperation.

'Trustworthy partner'

China's top diplomat Wang Yi pledged to support Iran in safeguarding its security against «external forces» in a meeting with Iranian president, China's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

The top diplomat promised China would «always be a trustworthy partner.»

«China will continue to support Iran in safeguarding its sovereignty, security, territorial integrity, and national dignity,» Wang said on Tuesday, according to a foreign ministry statement. China is a close partner of Iran, its largest trade partner.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (1st R) meets with French President Emmanuel Macron (1st L) on the sidelines of the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, US, on September 24, 2024. [LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP](#)

Pezeshkian described relations between the two countries as deep-rooted and historical and said, «We attach great importance to the relations with China and we want to deepen and develop cooperation in all fields.»

The Iranian president said the two countries should join hands to promote multilateralism in the world and not allow the coercive powers to impose their demands on other nations.

Borrell underscores renewed nuclear diplomacy with Iran

International Desk

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell underlined the importance of renewed nuclear diplomacy with Iran, expressing his continued readiness to facilitate a diplomatic solution that addresses the concerns of different sides.

Former US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the UNSC-endorsed agreement in May 2018, imposing severe economic sanctions against Tehran while Iran was adhering to its commitments under the deal and even continued to do so for a year

after the US withdrawal.

Tehran scaled back its commitments to the JCPOA in a series of pre-announced and clear steps after witnessing the other parties' failure to secure its interest under the agreement.

Since then, especially at the beginning of the presidency of Joe Biden in the United States, there have been efforts to revive the nuclear deal but they have failed so far. Iran has blamed the lack of political will on the part of Biden's administration to undo the damage caused to the multilateral nuclear deal by the previous US administration.

However, the new government



in Iran led by President Masoud Pezeshkian has expressed its willingness to resume talks on the issue.

UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said on Tuesday he had sensed a greater willingness by Iranian officials to engage with the agency in a more meaningful way after talks in New York, and that he hoped to travel to Tehran in October.

Iranian-Swiss film 'Son' scoops triple int'l awards

Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian-Swiss short film 'Son' won three awards at international film festivals in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Argentina, its producers announced Wednesday. 'Son,' directed by Saman Hosseinpour and produced by Philippe Reitler and Hosseinpour, took home the top prize at the third Nomad Film Festival in Kyrgyzstan, Best Director Award at the Buenos Aires International Film Festival in Argentina, and a special mention for best actress for Maryam Boubani at the Moscow Kurdish Film Festival in Russia, ILNA reported.

The film, whose Persian title is 'Kor' meaning "son" in Kurdish, tells the story

of a mother's search for her soldier son in the city and her discovery of a major secret. The movie features a cast of Iranian actors, including Maryam Boubani, Kianoush Farzin, and Mahvash Sheikh. According to a statement from the Buenos Aires festival jury, 'Son' was recognized for its outstanding direction. "The director tackles the conflict between cultural and social constraints and human identity with sensitivity and nuance. With skill, Hosseinpour explores the tension between the norms imposed by society and an individual's need to live authentically, and the unconditional love that is shaped by conditioning. He elicits profound performances from his cast. In a world where our existence is

constantly questioned, the film underscores the value of embracing the new, the different, and the hard, real changes that make us more authentic and happy. The movie is a celebration of the courage to live truthfully and becomes a landmark work in contemporary cinema." According to the statement. The Nomad Film Festival was held in Kyrgyzstan from September 18-22, while the Buenos Aires International Film Festival took place in Argentina from September 4-14. The Moscow Kurdish Film Festival was held in Russia from September 18-22. 'Son' was produced in collaboration with the Swiss company Dynamic Frame.



Persepolis faces uncertain future without long-term preservation plan

Social Desk

Iran's ancient sites, including the iconic Persepolis, are facing a growing threat from lichens, experts warn, as the country struggles to find a solution to the problem. Lichens, a symbiotic organism composed of fungi and algae or cyanobacteria, have been growing on Iran's ancient stones for centuries. While they play a crucial role in natural ecosystems, their growth on historical sites poses a significant challenge for conservation efforts. Dr. Mohammad Sohrabi, a renowned lichenologist and founder of the Museum of Iranian Lichens, has been studying the impact of lichens on Iran's ancient sites. He notes that lichens can damage stones by producing acidic substances and infiltrating their pores, causing them to crumble over

time. In Iran, more than 50% of lichens grow on rocks and stones, earning them the nickname "golsang" in Persian, according to Sohrabi, an expert on the subject. "Lichens that grow on stones can cause significant damage, especially in areas with high humidity and sunlight," he explains. Iran's ancient sites, such as Persepolis, Bisotun, and caravanserais, provide an ideal breeding ground for lichens, according to research conducted in Iranian cemeteries. In Iran's climate, any stone with relative stability is susceptible to lichen growth within 10 to 30 years. In some arid regions, this timeframe can stretch to 50 years. When applied to 2,500-year-old historical sites, it's no surprise that these areas are prone to lichen growth due to the presence of moisture, sunlight, and wind.

Persepolis is one such site that has been plagued by lichens over the years. In the northern part of the Apadana Palace, inscriptions have been partially or completely erased due to lichen growth. Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is particularly vulnerable to lichen growth. Sohrabi estimates that the site has been affected by lichens for centuries, with some species growing up to 25 centimeters in diameter. "The growth of lichens on Persepolis is not just a natural phenomenon, but also a sign of the site's age and history," Sohrabi says. "However, it's essential to distinguish between the 'good' lichens that are part of the site's natural ecosystem and the 'bad' ones that can cause damage." Sohrabi attributes the rapid growth of lichens on Persepolis to a combination of factors, including climate change, air pollution, and human activities such as tourism. "Tourists often bring food and drinks to the site, which attracts birds and increases the amount of bird droppings," Sohrabi explains. "These droppings can act as a fertilizer for lichens, promoting their growth." Experts warn that the lack of

funding and support from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts is hindering efforts to combat the lichen problem. "We have the scientific knowledge and technical capabilities to address this issue, but we need the necessary funding and support to implement our plans," Sohrabi says. Sohrabi proposes establishing a long-term monitoring system to track lichen growth on Persepolis and other ancient sites. He also emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach, involving experts from various fields, to develop effective conservation strategies. "Conservation efforts require a long-term commitment and a comprehensive approach," Sohrabi stresses. "We cannot afford to make mistakes or take shortcuts when it comes to preserving our cultural heritage." Experts warn that if left unchecked, the lichen problem could have devastating consequences for Iran's ancient sites. "We need to act now to protect our cultural heritage," Sohrabi urges. "With the right support and funding, we can find a solution to this problem and ensure the long-term preservation of our ancient sites."



World Tourism Day: Iran seeks to boost peace, stability through tourism

Arts & Culture Desk

As the world marks World Tourism Day on September 27, Iranian officials are emphasizing the crucial role of security and cultural exchange in promoting peace and understanding through tourism. This year's theme, "Tourism and Peace," was chosen by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to highlight the industry's potential to foster global peace and stability. Awat Mokari, a tourism expert at the Kurdistan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Department, noted that the UNWTO selects a theme each year based on current global events. "This year's theme is particularly relevant given the increasing tensions and conflicts around the world," Mokari said. Mokari stressed that security is the foundation of tourism, and that without it, the industry cannot develop. "When security increases, dialogue and peace also increase, and tourism can play a significant role in promoting peace and stability," he added. Rahim Khaki, Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts of Alborz Province, echoed Mokari's sentiments, saying that tourism and peace are intricately linked. "The promotion of cultural understanding through tourism can be a new approach to diplomacy and a path to peace," Khaki said.

Khaki acknowledged that the current global situation, particularly in the Middle East and Asia, makes the theme of "Tourism and Peace" challenging to achieve. However, he emphasized that tourism can still play an important role in promoting peace by increasing cultural exchange and understanding between nations. In Iran's Kurdistan Province, officials are highlighting the region's growing tourism industry as a testament to the importance of security and peace. Mokari pointed to the increasing number of tourism infrastructure projects, including hotels, resorts, and cultural festivals, as evidence of the province's commitment to promoting peace and stability. Similarly, in Alborz Province, officials are investing in tourism infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, and agritourism projects, which are expected to come online in the next few years.



Myth of unilateral...

On the other hand, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said that the assassination of senior Hezbollah commanders by Israel has not weakened the resistance movement. Ayatollah Khamenei added that Hezbollah is victorious, and Israel will not be able to defeat this resistance. He further stated that although Hezbollah lost a few key and valuable members, this was not a blow that could destroy the group. On Monday, Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon, using American bombs, were aimed at reminding the resistance axis that the US stands behind Tel Aviv. For the first time

on Wednesday, Hezbollah used a long-range ballistic missile in its fight against the Israeli occupation, reaffirming its commitment to not escalating the war while simultaneously calling for a cease-fire in Gaza. However, driven by arrogance and backed by powerful countries, Israel carried out brutal airstrikes on densely populated areas of Lebanon, resulting in the deaths of 558 civilians, including a Hezbollah commander, over 50 children, and more than 70 women, with the number of injured exceeding 5,000. This was also the first time Hezbollah used a ballistic missile during the ongoing year-long conflict.

Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon's densely populated areas have intensified the flames of war, prompting Hezbollah to use a ballistic missile for the first time. Media reports indicated that after this missile attack, air traffic was suspended at Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, causing panic among Israelis, who confined themselves to areas they believed would be safe from further attacks. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu canceled his trip to New York, scheduled for September 25, choosing instead to remain in a bunker designed to withstand nuclear attacks. Israeli people, eager for a cease-fire in Gaza, have been urging Tel Aviv to

resolve the conflict at the negotiating table, especially after Hamas put forth conditions for a cease-fire. Israel's civil society announced protests against the Netanyahu cabinet on Saturday in Tel Aviv and other areas. The day before, Hezbollah had fired 50 rockets at the Dado Base of the Israeli occupation army's Northern Command headquarters, located 12 kilometers from the Lebanese border, in the northwestern part of the occupied city of Safed. On Wednesday morning, Hezbollah announced the killing of one of its senior commanders and another member of the Lebanese resistance movement in an Israeli airstrike

in the capital, Beirut. The commander was identified as Ibrahim Muhammad Qubaisi, also known as Haj Abu Musa, and Hussein Hani Izz al-Din, known as Haj Faris. Six civilians were also killed, and 18 others were injured in Israeli attacks targeting Commander Ibrahim. There is no doubt that Hezbollah is facing an enemy backed by the US and Europe. However, on Wednesday morning, Hezbollah's ballistic missile strike on Tel Aviv has shattered the perception of a unilateral balance of power. The Israeli army confirmed that this was the first time a Hezbollah missile had reached the Tel Aviv area.