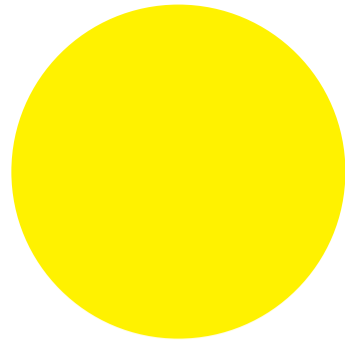
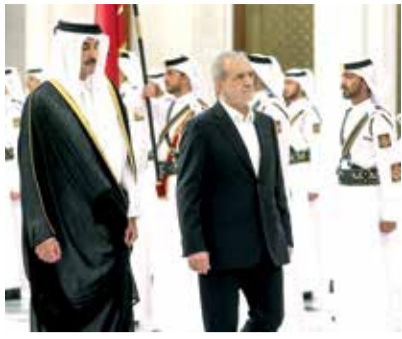


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Legitimate defense rather than warmongering



By Emad Abshenas
Regional affairs analyst

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu openly threatened Iran at the United Nations General Assembly meeting, while simultaneously ordering the assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and several high-ranking commanders of Hezbollah from the same organization. This blatant directive sent a clear message: Netanyahu feels unimpeded in his pursuit of crimes, with no one being able to hold him accountable for his actions.

Earlier, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian revealed that following the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's political bureau in Tehran, American and European delegations had urged Iran to exercise restraint in response to Israel's aggression in order to prevent jeopardizing the ceasefire negotiations. Iran, seeking to halt Israel's killing machine, chose to hold back, hoping that the ceasefire talks would yield results. However, the developments took a different turn. Netanyahu not only rejected the ceasefire and peace but also intensified his attacks on southern Lebanon, assassinating several commanders of the movement. Ultimately, he even went so far as to kill Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and one of Iran's military advisors in Lebanon. **Page 2** >



Iran's Patience Snapped After **Assassinations**

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Israeli rescue force members inspect the site where a missile fired from Iran hit a building in central Israel on October 1, 2024. ● REUTERS



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Literature serves as asset in calligraphy: Iranian virtuoso

Arts & Culture Desk



A senior Iranian calligrapher believes that Persian literature is an integral part of calligraphy in a way that if the art is taken away, it will lose all its value.

Alireza Zandi, a virtuoso at the Iran Calligraphers Association, has told IRNA that literature and calligraphy are like two inseparable wings that enable the art to fly. "Calligraphy has a unique sanctity among other forms of art due to its connection with the writing of the Qur'an and exquisite Persian poetry. If we separate literature from calligraphy, we will have taken away its entire value," Zandi explains.

Zandi, who holds a badge of honor for his art from the Iranian Culture Ministry, emphasizes that "patience in learning and teaching" is one of the most distinct features of calligraphy. "Without patience, no results will be achieved, and only those who exercise patience will become successful in this art."

He considers calligraphy "sacred" because it has flourished through the writing of Islam's holy book and Persian poetry. "Inscribing the Qur'an, exquisite poetry, and ancient Persian texts has given this art an unparalleled sanctity, dressing it in the attire of conceptualism, which can, alongside the artist's patience, add a fresh dimension to the elegance and dignity of the calligrapher." According to Zandi, in art forms like music, some masters believe that an artist cannot play their instrument to "perfection" unless they have reached "unity" with it. "In visual arts, especially calligraphy, the artist's tool is the medium between their hand and emotions, and it is obvious that a form of unity must be established between the visual artist and their tool to ease the transmission of the artist's emotions to the audience."

"The calligrapher sees himself as committed to conveying the moral, social, and philosophical messages of sages, mystics, and religious scholars, and this mission is an inseparable link between these two concepts."

Zandi considers Nastaliq to be the "spring" of Iranian calligraphic hands. "Nastaliq is the most authentic Iranian calligraphic hands, which, in addition to adhering to the principles of ancient artists, has elevated into a new form in contemporary times, symbolizing its freshness and novelty, like spring."

The artist touches on the relationship between calligram – a set of words arranged in such a way that it forms a thematically related image – and the social and mental changes that an artist undergoes, saying, "Every era has its own unique circumstances, and it is the responsibility of every artist to respect tradition while catering to the needs of their audience, essentially being a product of their time and speaking the language of their generation. This mindset drives contemporary artists to come up with innovative approaches."

Zandi says described calligram as a style that has been shaped by the skilled hands and creative minds of renowned Iranian artists such as Reza Mafi and Farahmarz Pilaram, and continues to thrive to this day.

"These masters have made groundbreaking innovations in their work, which can be seen as a collection of bold departures from traditional forms and content."

According to Zandi, talented calligram artists have emerged in the present day, producing thought-provoking works that hopefully will follow in the footsteps of their predecessors and carry the torch forward.

Iran, Qatar ink deals as Pezeshkian visits Doha for Asian summit

Economy Desk

Iran and Qatar on Wednesday inked six agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoU), paving the way for cooperation in various fields, including economy and culture.

The deals and MoUs were signed in a ceremony in the Qatari capital Doha, by the Iranian ministers of energy, foreign affairs, and sport and youth with their Qa-

tari counterparts, IRNA reported.

They covered such areas as collaboration on the development of Iran's Bandar-e Dayyer on the Persian Gulf coast, bilateral trade, cooperation in the health and welfare sectors as well as a joint cultural cooperation program by the end of March 2027 and a sports cooperation scheme that will go on until 2026.

The deals were

clinched shortly after President Masoud Pezeshkian's arrival in Doha, where he was welcomed by Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. Pezeshkian is visiting Qatar for bilateral talks, followed by a private meeting between the two leaders.

The ACD is an inter-governmental organization created on June 18, 2002 to promote Asian cooperation at a continental level and to



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani inspect a guard of honor in Doha on October 2, 2024. [president.ir](https://www.president.ir)



ensure coordination among different regional organizations such as the ASEAN, the Persian Gulf Co-

operation Council, the Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

and the SAARC. It is the first international organization to cover the whole of Asia.

Iran, Armenia sign barter trade deal, open major trade center

Iran and Armenia on Tuesday signed a barter trade deal after opening a large Iranian trade center in the Armenian capital Yerevan. Under the deal, which the two sides agreed to assign companies as their operators in three months which will put forward a list of items to be bartered, ISNA reported.

The agreement was signed in a ceremony in Yerevan attended by Iranian Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mohammad Atabak and Armenian Economy Minister Gevorg Papoyan. Iran views barter agreements as a major tool to avoid US sanctions that restrict its access to international trade, Press TV wrote.

The signing of the deal came after Iran opened its trade center in Yerevan. The center, built over an area of 18,000-square meters, has 107 booths and stalls

that sell Iranian-made consumer goods, chemicals and other industrial products. Armenian businesses have also a share in the retail and wholesale facility.

Iranian ambassador in Yerevan Mehdi Sobhani described the facility as the "largest Iranian trade center in the world", saying it will lead to a major increase in trade ties between Iran and Armenia.

Iran and Armenia seek to increase the value of their trade ties to \$3 billion per year. Iran also views Armenia as a gateway to trade with members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Iran and the EAEU, which includes Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, are currently in a preferential trade arrangement but they will enforce a free trade deal signed in December last year once parliaments of the two sides ratify the agreement.

Minister: No plan to push up gas prices

State distributor to maximize fuel output ahead of winter

Economy Desk

Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad on Wednesday ruled out rumors about a government plan to hike gasoline prices.

"The government have no such plans on the table," Paknejad told reporters Paknejad after a cabinet meeting in Tehran IRNA reported.

The minister said that the Oil Ministry's priority was not to raise gasoline prices but rather to "manage fuel demand" and curb consumption. He added that any decision to increase gasoline prices would need to be taken by the all branches of power, rather than being made unilaterally by the Oil Ministry.

His comments came after lawmaker Ali-Asghar Nakhaei-Rad revealed last month that the government might push up gasoline prices by 20% next year, following a six-year hiatus.

Currently, gasoline is sold under a rationing system in which each car gets a monthly quota of 60 liters, priced at 15,000 rials per liter (around \$0.025), that is dispensed through dedicated fuel cards at the pump. For additional gasoline, drivers pay



double the price of subsidized fuel while still using their fuel cards.

With a 20% rise, the new rates would be 18,000 rials per liter (around \$0.03) and 18,000 rials per liter (around \$0.06).

The last time gasoline prices were raised, which was by 200%, deadly street protests erupted in some Iranian cities.

Iran cranks out around 110 million liters of gasoline per day, while daily consumption hovers above 120 million liters.

To plug the deficit, the country has been forced to import fuel since 2021. Estimates suggest that it will bring in around \$3 billion worth of gasoline this year.

Fuel output to increase

President Masoud Pezeshkian has on several occasions criticized the allocation of such a large budget for gasoline

imports, describing it as "irrational" to buy gasoline at free market dollar prices only to sell it at the pump with massive subsidies.

Meanwhile, the state fuel distributor said on Tuesday that it would "maximize" gasoline and diesel fuel production for the winter season.

Keramat Veis-Karami, the head of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Co. (NIOPDC), said that ramping up fuel output was a "top priority" and the company was fully ready to meet fuel demand during the coming cold months, Shana reported.

Veis-Karami also said that the delivery of liquid fuel to thermal power plants had surged by around 40% this year.

Iran's power plants, which rely on alternative fuels such as mazut and diesel fuel during the cold season due to

skyrocketing gas consumption, have seen a significant spike in mazut burning.

According to a senior official at the Iranian Energy Ministry, the use of mazut in thermal power plants has almost doubled compared to last year, largely due to a gas shortage.

Veis-Karami went on to say that daily gasoline usage in the first half of the year averaged 124.5 million liters, suggesting a 7.3% increase in the same period last year when it was 116 million liters.

Regarding diesel, he noted that the NIOPDC had distributed an average of around 110 million liters since the beginning of the current Persian calendar year which started on March 20. According to Veis-Karami the volume was up by 4.3% on the 104 million liters recorded last year.

Legitimate defense rather...

Iran's president, by nature, is a peace-loving individual, and accordingly, his primary foreign policy slogan is "constructive engagement with the world." On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, European delegations even asked Tehran to cooperate in advancing the peace negotiations in Gaza.

Iran spared no effort in working towards a ceasefire. However, despite these efforts and European wishes, Netanyahu, drunk on the blood of Palestinian and Lebanese victims,

paid no heed to the ceasefire and instead escalated his threats against Iran, seeking to redraw the Middle East's geographical map.

It was, therefore, necessary for someone to stand up to his excessive demands. When Iran's restraint failed to prompt serious action from the US and Europe to pressure Israel into a ceasefire, Tehran had no choice but to deliver a firm slap to the killer, shattering his illusions and making him and his supporters understand that Iran is a key player in West Asia, serious

about defending its national dignity. Thus, Iran's missile operation does not contradict the peaceful nature of Iranians and their president. Iran's response does not signify warmongering but rather legitimate self-defense. Sometimes, military might must intervene to advance diplomacy. The Iranian president had previously emphasized in a press conference that Iran will strike back should Israel strike.

In perfect coordination between various branches, including military and

non-military, and based on the legitimate right to self-defense, the Islamic Republic of Iran launched Operation True Promise 2 in response to the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and the assassination of Hezbollah's leader and Iran's military advisor in Lebanon. This operation was more successful than its predecessor and will undoubtedly have positive effects in various domains, including the global Islamic public opinion and the battlefield. It will boost the morale of resistance forces against Israeli aggres-

sion. It was announced on Tuesday that the Israeli army had penetrated 400 meters into Lebanese territory but faced fierce resistance from Hezbollah, forcing them to retreat and incur losses. This morale boost will gradually manifest itself in occupied territories as well, with predicted increases in martyrdom operations against Israelis and insecurity in occupied lands.

It is advisable for Israel's supporters to rein in Netanyahu and Israel to protect their own interests.

Unique combination of cultural and natural attractions in Zanzan Province



Katalah Khor Cave

Katalah Khor Cave is located 165 kilometers southwest of Zanzan Province along the Zanzan-Soltanieh-Katalah Khor and Hamedan tourist route. This cave is one of the most beautiful in the world, boasting limestone stalactites that date back millions of years. In Turkish, *katalah* means the ups and downs and irregularities inside the cave, while *khoreh* signifies comfort and ease. Thus, the name Katalah Khor may derive from the comfortable and cozy elevations within the cave.

Katalah Khor is considered one of the most important tourist attractions in Zanzan Province. The topography of this area features rolling hills and high mountains adorned with lush forests and pastures, lending it a unique beauty. This extraordinary cave plays a prominent role in attracting nature enthusiasts and tourists to Zanzan Province. Every year, visitors from various parts of the world come to explore the wonders of this beautiful cave in all seasons. The implementation of various investment projects in this area has been a priority for investments in the province's tourism sector, with initiatives to attract both domestic and foreign investors for profitable projects in the region being strongly encouraged and supported.



Anguran

Anguran is one of the oldest protected areas in Iran, situated at the borders of Zanzan, West Azarbaijan, and Kurdistan provinces. The Anguran region spans approximately 125,000 hectares, with nearly 30,000 hectares designated as a wildlife refuge and the remainder classified as a protected area. Anguran is characterized by its mountainous landscape, with cold winters and cool summers, located in Mahneshan in the western part of Zanzan Province.

Iranica Desk

The development of tourism is regarded as one of the most important strategies for sustainable development planning. Today, it is recognized as a progressive economic activity and a growing industry, serving as an influential tool for increasing revenue at various levels within countries.

An exemplary tourism area is a region with defined boundaries and a specific size, established and managed by the private sector, and located adjacent to the country's historical, cultural, religious, natural, and tourism attractions, with the aim of providing services to tourists, as reported by chn.ir.

Exemplary tourism areas are designated zones that, due

to the presence of significant tourist attractions and development potential, can accommodate a range of tourism facilities. These areas are designed to offer all necessary services and goods for tourists, including accommodation, dining, recreational, cultural, and sports services, all in a single location. Such tourism areas represent attractive investment opportunities for both domestic and foreign investors.

One effective way to harness the tourism potential of any region is by creating exemplary tourism areas aimed at attracting visitors and developing the tourism industry, which directly generates employment and economic benefits for the local population.

In the Chehrabad Salt Mine

of Zanzan, six mummies were discovered dating back to the Achaemenid and Sassanid eras, indicating the antiquity of this land. According to Hamdollah Mostofi — a historian, geographer, poet, and Iranian writer of the 8th century AH — the city was founded by Ardeshir Babakan, the founder of the Sassanid dynasty. Due to its strategic location on the trade route from Rey to Azerbaijan, Zanzan enjoyed a special significance, contributing to its prosperity in ancient times.

Currently, Zanzan Province is home to numerous metallic and non-metallic mineral mines and is recognized as one of the wealthiest provinces in the country. The mines in this region account for a significant share of Iran's non-oil exports.



Shit Village

Shit village is located in Tarom, approximately 60 kilometers from the center of the province. The flow of the important Qezel Ozan River, with its riverine wetland ecosystem, along with the diversity of climates, numerous heights and peaks, vegetation, and wildlife in protected areas, combine to create a unique array of natural and historical sites. Some of these include natural glaciers, local handicrafts, and agricultural capacities, all of which position this region favorably for investment. Noteworthy attractions in the village include springs, Shit Castle, and a four-season river.



Golabar Dam

The area surrounding Golabar Dam is another exemplary tourism region in the province, located on the outskirts of a village with the same name. The beautiful lake of Golabar Dam enhances the area's appeal in all seasons. The presence of surface and groundwater resources, the region's fertility, rock formations resembling walls, flat and sloped lands, and hilly terrain, combined with the necessary infrastructure, create favorable conditions for attracting investment aimed at establishing recreational and accommodation services in the area.



Taham Dam

Located about 10 kilometers north of Zanzan on the Zanzan-Tarom-Masuleh route, adjacent to the beautiful Taham Dam Lake, this area offers stunning views of the lake and the surrounding scenery. This region is often a focal point for tourists and those interested in fishing and water sports. The availability of suitable infrastructure, including access roads, proximity to the provincial center, and energy transmission lines, provides a strong basis for investments in establishing recreational and accommodation services.



Soltanieh

Soltanieh is an exemplary tourism region located 35 kilometers from the city of Zanzan in a vast plain that boasts a unique position. The favorable and pleasant climate of the region throughout the seasons provides an appropriate environment for leisure activities, tourism, and recreation. This area has suitable infrastructure, including access roads, electricity, gas networks, and a drinking water supply. It also features significant tourist attractions and historical sites.

Cultural and ecological importance of Arasbaran

At dawn, atop the enchanting mountains in Arasbaran, radiant beams of sunlight cut through the mist that spills from the lush jungle below, revealing a magnificent landscape reminiscent of otherworldly postcards. The local nomads find ample grazing for their sheep and goats in the verdant expanse of this area. Arasbaran, also known as Qare

Daq, is a vast mountainous region located to the south of the Aras River in East Azarbaijan Province. It is bordered by the Aras River to the north, Moghan to the east, Sarab to the south, and Marand to the west. The region holds significant cultural and ecological importance, being home to an extraordinarily diverse range of plant

and animal species, as well as several key historical events. For example, Kaleybar, one of the most notable landmarks in Arasbaran, was the stronghold of Babak Khorramdin. More recently, the Arasbaran forests played a crucial role in the Constitutional Revolution of Iran, serving as a base for revolutionary groups led by Sattarkhan.

In recognition of its rich biodiversity, UNESCO designated over 75,000 hectares of Arasbaran as the 9th Biosphere Reserve in Iran in 1976, also establishing it as a wildlife refuge. One distinctive feature of the Arasbaran forests is the abundance of edible wild trees. Hornbeam, sumac, various berries, walnuts, hazelnuts, redcurrants, truffles, and

a variety of medicinal herbs thrive here. The region also serves as a natural habitat for numerous species of birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals, including wild boar, brown bear, wolf, leopard, and the Caspian red deer (Maral), which was once on the brink of extinction but has recently seen a revival. Traveling through the area, the route from Ka-

leybar to Asheqlu is highly recommended, as it leads to many of the region's breathtaking attractions, including Mikandi Valley, Eynali Forests, and Babak Castle. Additionally, hidden gems await exploration, such as the traditional summer camps of local tribes that offer a glimpse into their age-old lifestyles. Each village in Arasbaran boasts its own

landmarks, such as the ancient tree in Kavanaq, Jowshin Fort in Varzaqan, Babak Fort perched on a mountain summit near Kaleybar, Khoda Afarin Bridges near Khomarlou, and the Kordasht Bath, among many others. The area also features plentiful hot springs, some equipped with therapeutic facilities, inviting visitors to relax and rejuvenate.



In an interview with Al Jazeera

US, Europe defending Zionist crimes despite rights advocacy claims: *Pezeshkian*

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian was interviewed by Al Jazeera English to discuss international, and regional developments last week in New York on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly. Pezeshkian gave a comprehensive interview to the news channel, addressing questions on the Zionist regime's escalating crimes in Lebanon, the solution to the Palestinian issue, negotiations to resolve the nuclear dispute, and the expansion of relations with Western countries and cooperation with neighboring states. The partial text of the interview is as follows:



A photographer documents damage in a building that was hit by an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's southern suburb, Lebanon, on Sept. 30, 2024. ● Hassan Ammar/AP

Al Jazeera: How do you see the current tensions between Israel and Hezbollah unfolding, and what are the potential consequences of this escalation? Do you think it will lead to a wider conflict, and if so, what steps could be taken to de-escalate the situation?

Pezeshkian: What the Zionist regime is doing in the region is, in fact, genocide. Unfortunately, European countries and especially the US are defending these crimes committed by the Zionists. They claim to be champions of human rights and international law, but in no law is it permissible to kill children, women, the elderly, and the young, or to destroy hospitals. These laws are meant to ensure that those who engage in warfare do so with those who are also fighting, not with innocent civilians. The world sees that the US and some European countries are supporting the Zionist regime's crimes, and it's truly heartbreaking for me to accept that we live in a world where innocent lives can be taken with impunity.

The Zionists want to expand the war in the Middle East to ensure their own survival, given that they failed to achieve their objectives in Gaza. They thought they could destroy Hamas in a week, but it's been a year now, and they've failed to achieve any of their goals. The Zionist regime has only achieved one thing: destroying an entire city and its people, cutting off their access to water, food, and medicine, while the self-proclaimed defenders of human rights remain silent.

As Muslims, we feel a sense of responsibility towards this issue, and Islamic countries must take a united stance against these crimes and not allow the Zionist regime's atrocities to continue in Lebanon.

How will Iran balance its support for regional allies with avoiding direct confrontation with Israel and the US?

I think that if Islamic countries were united in their condemnation of the crimes against Muslims in the region, and if they refused to allow American and Zionist bases to carry out these attacks with impunity, the US wouldn't be able to support the regime so easily and provide it with weapons.

We Islamic countries are to blame for our lack of unity and cohesion. We're to blame for not standing up for the rights of Muslims in the region and instead fighting among ourselves. This is a major problem. We need to resolve our differences, and regional peace and stability can be achieved through our cooperation and solidarity. We don't need Americans or other countries to come and create peace in the region. Why should we fear each other and take sides against each other? This is a problem we have, and we need to resolve it among ourselves, with Muslims and Islamic countries, and reassure each other that we'll support each other. We'll work together, and the growth and development of each country will guarantee the growth and development of other countries. If we establish these connections correctly, outsiders will leave the region, and we can create peace and security ourselves.

How do you assess the issue of Israel's infiltration into Iran's security infrastructure, which led to the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran?

It's not difficult to evaluate. Given their infiltration and the tools at their disposal, it's unlikely that

they haven't created the groundwork for such incidents in all our countries. It's unclear whether they haven't done the same in other Islamic countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, or Turkey, to be used at a later time.

We must understand that the technological tools available today are in the hands of the powerful, and if they so desire, they can extract information, cause explosions, or wreak havoc on these countries. We must realize that the electronic devices we use, including pagers and mobile phones, can be manipulated and used to control or assassinate us. This is exactly what happened, and it was revealed that the claims of international organizations and individuals who advocated for human rights, humanity, and dignity were lies.

This is what we've come to understand, and now we must be cautious about the tools they provide us, which can be used for espionage and are carried by us ourselves. It was proven that the pager and mobile phone used by martyr Ismail Haniyeh were compromised, and they could easily manipulate them to do as they pleased. From now on, we'll try to minimize the use of these tools in our country, especially among sensitive individuals, and use our own domestically produced devices whenever possible.

You officially accused Israel of assassinating Ismail Haniyeh and considered it a breach of Iran's national security, vowing to respond. Why has there been a delay in this response?

We'll announce the timing of our response when the time is right. It's not as if they can do as they please, whenever and wherever they want. What we will do,

when we will do it, and what measures we will take will not be announced. We'll decide the course of action.

The Zionist regime doesn't mind creating chaos in the region to escape the predicament they're in, but they won't do it alone. They have a strong supporter like the US, which claims to advocate for democracy, human rights, and human dignity.

Many of Netanyahu's actions are aimed at creating war and chaos in the region to escape the disaster that has befallen him. We'll try to thwart their plans through political means, taking action at the right time and place to prevent them from achieving their goals. The Zionists did this because, on the day of my inauguration, my focus was on unity with Islamic countries. My goal was to involve all citizens in governing the country. My approach was not to consider anyone in our country a foreigner. They were upset about this, as they want to create divisions and disputes within our government and the Islamic Republic. Our approach would have foiled their plot, and that's why they did what they did on the day of my inauguration, trying to create a dispute that would prevent us from continuing on our path of peace and security, both domestically and internationally.

That's why I think that on the very first day that the inauguration process was taking shape, they intentionally created a controversy that would prevent us from pursuing a path of peace and security, both within our country and with our neighbors and the world at large, and that we would fall into the trap they had set for us, leading to the very outcome they had anticipated.

Do you think the American and

Israeli goal of cutting off your support for your allies has been achieved?

The problem is not us. Are other Islamic countries satisfied with the situation in Gaza? If they are, then we'll respond. If Muslims in various countries, such as the UAE, Bahrain, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, and others, are satisfied with the existence of Zionists and their crimes, then we'll be alone in our support. If that's the case, we'll fail, as long as Muslims are alone in this struggle.

It's possible that the Zionist regime will attack other countries tomorrow, Lebanon today, and Saudi Arabia tomorrow, or any other place they desire. If we're alone, that's the situation we'll face.

We have no interest in getting involved in this process unless we believe that a Muslim has a duty to defend Muslims and human rights. If a Muslim exists in the region and sees Muslims being massacred, and they remain silent, then their Islam is questionable. So, we're not alone if we're truly Muslims. If Islamic countries have this view, they should remove the name of Islam from themselves, so we and other Muslims can understand our duty.

From your perspective, what is the solution to the Gaza issue?

The first step is for Islamic countries to come together and reach a common language and perspective. We must agree that anyone who attacks the Islamic community is an aggressor and must be held accountable internationally. We must not allow them to easily attack Islamic countries and Muslims, and then sit back and watch, saying "what will Iran do?" As Muslims, when an innocent Muslim is killed, a woman, child, elderly person, or young person,



The Zionists want to expand the war in the Middle East to ensure their own survival, given that they failed to achieve their objectives in Gaza. The regime has only achieved one thing: destroying an entire city and its people, cutting off their access to water, food, and medicine, while the self-proclaimed defenders of human rights remain silent.

Displaced Palestinians walk past tents pitched on the beach, west of Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on Aug. 20, 2024.

● ABDEL KAREEM NANA/AP



president.ir

and hospitals are destroyed in this manner, it's unbearable for any free human being, let alone us, who are Muslims and consider them our brothers.

I firmly believe that the first step towards addressing this issue is for the Islamic countries to unite and collectively condemn the disturbing trend that has emerged in the Middle East, Gaza, and Lebanon. If we all protest together, they won't dare to do this easily. But if they think Iran should respond and others should just watch, the Zionist regime won't mind, and then we'll be at odds with each other.

Are you prepared to support a two-state solution, and do you believe it's a viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue?

That's their responsibility. If the Palestinians who are there have come to the conclusion that they should act in this way, we have no problem with it. In fact, our problem is that we don't want to tolerate the injustice, oppression, and cruelty inflicted on Muslims. They must determine their own fate, and we'll respect whatever decision they make.

The solution we think is right is to hold a referendum, based on the democracy they claim to defend, and let everyone vote. Whatever the outcome, we'll respect it.

To what extent are you prepared to create new grounds for dialogue with the West, based on which sanctions could be lifted, and is this a priority for your government at present?

We have no fight with anyone. We want what is rightfully ours, and we're ready to talk to anyone we

need to in this regard. We're committed to what we signed and agreed upon. We're not seeking nuclear bombs, and we're not looking to develop them. What we're doing is for our own defense, so we can protect ourselves if someone like the Zionist regime comes along and wants to bomb us at will. If those in Gaza and Lebanon had the ability to defend themselves, the Zionist regime wouldn't dare to kill innocent people so easily. Because they have no defensive capabilities, or the tools they have are no match for the Zionist regime's capabilities, the Zionists feel emboldened to kill everyone, cut off their access to water, food, and medicine, and the world just watches, and no one defends them.

We don't want to be defenseless in the world, and that's why we're doing what we're doing to increase our defensive capabilities and ensure our security, so they don't dare to attack us so easily. We've never been interested in starting a war with any country, and we never will be. Look at Iran's history 100 or 200 years ago; we've never initiated a war. We believe we should live in peace and security with our neighbors in the region. This is what we're after, to sit down with the world and talk, and for them to be assured that we're not seeking nuclear bombs. Since we don't want to pursue such things, we have no problem with inspection and evaluation. However, it's not that they can dictate what we should do, and then not uphold their own commitments. We'll uphold our commitments, and they should uphold theirs, and then we'll discuss the rest.



We, Islamic countries, are to blame for our lack of unity and cohesion. We're to blame for not standing up for the rights of Muslims in the region and instead fighting among ourselves. This is a major problem. We need to resolve our differences, and regional peace and stability can be achieved through our cooperation and solidarity.

Are you willing to give concessions to make such a dialogue possible?

What concessions? We will engage in dialogue as equals. They should respect us, and we will respect them. If they don't respect us and try to humiliate us, we won't accept humiliation.

Today, even in the UN, the debate on development and peace is ongoing. If they want to humiliate us, we, as Muslims, prefer death over humiliation and won't accept it. However, on an equal basis, within the framework of international norms, we'll sit down and talk, and we'll cooperate on what's beneficial for the world, for us, and for them.

Have there been any direct or indirect talks between you and the US government, aside from the issues related to Gaza, security cooperation, or the nuclear issue?

There have been indirect talks on the nuclear issue, and discussions are ongoing. We're also willing to talk to European countries again. We're not looking for war, we're not looking for insecurity, we're not terrorists. They're the terrorists who come to countries and kill people in front of everyone's eyes, and then say they've killed terrorists.

Do you support talks with the US, regardless of who wins the next election, Kamala Harris or Donald Trump?

We have no problem with dialogue, but those who engaged in dialogue did not adhere to it. Since they intervened in the region, they have always tried to create problems for us, from the behavior on August 19, [1953] against [prime minister] Dr. Mos-

sadegh to the current events. Whenever an issue arises in our country, they start supporting those who want to overthrow the government and attempt to undermine our Islamic government or Islamic Republic. Whenever they want to speak to us honestly and sincerely, we will have no problem with such discussions. However, unfortunately, we have not seen this honesty in the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), and it is the same in other areas as well.

We signed the JCPOA, but they (Americans) ripped it up. We were fulfilling our obligations, and they (IAEA) were monitoring us intensively every day. We didn't obstruct their monitoring efforts. If we had wanted to act differently, we would have blocked their access. But it was the US that unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA. So, how can we trust them if they sign another agreement, only to tear it up again? Nevertheless, indirect talks are currently underway with some Americans, and they are making progress. However, the outcome depends on the other side's commitment to the agreement.

If talks between you and the US and the West take place, what issues do you think are suitable for discussion, aside from the nuclear issue?

We're a country, and there are international laws and the UN. We don't want anything except our rights and to be treated according to the law. If they act according to the law, we won't have a problem with anyone. We don't have any special demands or requests. They imposed sanctions on us, which are against international law, and they use force to prevent other countries from doing business with us. Other countries are afraid of them and don't do busi-

ness with us. That's the reality we face in the world.

The head of the IAEA recently said he wants to meet with you and has requested deeper cooperation with Iran. Do you have a roadmap to address the agency's concerns?

The roadmap is already written and approved in the JCPOA. We signed it, and they signed it. We're committed to it, and they should be committed to it too. We're ready to follow the same path.

After your election victory, you said that your relations with neighboring countries, especially those in the Persian Gulf, are a priority. How do you plan to pursue this, and how will this path be reflected in the security, political, and economic situation?

Before coming to the United States, I visited Iraq and met with the president and the Kurdistan region. I also visited Basra. Here, I've had meetings with the Turkish president and will have meetings with the president of Pakistan. We are interested in holding talks with [officials] from all countries in the region, drafting strategic plans, and exchanging ideas with them. We want to create a win-win situation where we help each other and create a framework for Islamic countries to grow and become self-sufficient, without relying on foreign powers.

We'll continue to pursue this path and try to increase our connections with other countries, in terms of parliamentary cooperation, judicial cooperation, government cooperation, security cooperation, economic cooperation, social cooperation, and cultural cooperation.



Taremi on target to help Inter hammer Red Star

Sports Desk

Iran international striker Mahdi Taremi bagged his first goal in Nerazzurri colors as Inter Milan swept aside Red Star Belgrade 4-0 at the San Siro to claim a first victory in the new UEFA Champions League season.

Taremi, who also provided Marko Arnautovic and Lautaro Martinez with a couple of assists, scored from the spot with nine minutes left on the clock to walk away with the Player of the Match prize in his only third start for the Serie A champion since joining as a free agent from Porto in the summer.

Turkish midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu put Inter in front with a stunning free kick in the 11th minute but the home crowd had to wait until the hour mark for a second goal, when Taremi stole the ball behind the opposition box before teeing up Arnautovic,

who tapped in from 10 yards out.

Taremi's contribution to the third goal came in similar fashion 11 minutes later as the Iranian dispossessed Uros Spajic of the ball and, despite being tripped by the Serbian defender, managed to get up and send Martinez through.

Martinez returned the favor shortly afterwards, with the Argentine skipper winning a penalty and then handing the ball to the Iranian to take the spot kick.

Taremi had to wait long before taking his penalty amid problems with the VAR communication system, but sent Red Star keeper Omri Glazer the wrong way with a cool touch. "I am happy to have scored tonight, I managed to play well thanks to my teammates who helped me," Taremi told Sky after the game.

"I am really excited, it took me a while to score but I have always done my best



Inter striker Mahdi Taremi celebrates after scoring from the spot during a 4-0 victory over Red Star Belgrade in the UEFA Champions League at the San Siro, Milan, Italy, on October 1, 2024.
● CLAUDIA GRECO/REUTERS

in training, I fought hard for this and finally managed to score. I thank Lautaro for leaving me the pen-

alty. He is the captain and a team player. We are a family and I am very happy to play for such an important

club," added the Iranian, who was also part of the starting XI when Inter played to a goalless stalemate away to

Manchester City on the opening night of the European elite clubs' competition. Taremi said he expects

another deep run from his club, which made it to the 2022/23 final, in the revamped tournament.

"Our goal as a big club is to reach the final, as Inter must try to win every game. We'll take it step by step."



Iran's Amirmohammad Ashrafi (red) is seen in action against Australian Aiden Stilley in the men's +78kg final at the World Taekwondo Junior Championships in Chuncheon, South Korea, on October 2, 2024.
● WORLD TAEKWONDO

World Taekwondo Junior Championships:

Ashrafi wins third gold for Iran

Sports Desk

The second day of the World Taekwondo Junior Championships saw Amirmohammad Ashrafi claim a third gold medal for Iran in Chuncheon, South Korea.

Ashrafi came out on top against Australian Aiden Stilley in straight rounds to walk away with the ultimate prize in the men's +78kg contests.

The Iranian used his height and leg length to maximum effect

in both rounds, winning the first 11-2 and the second by technical superiority as his 15-point lead secured a richly-deserved triumph for him.

The final victory capped off a dominant run in Chuncheon for the Iranian, who did not concede a single round throughout his campaign, enjoying knockout victories over Canadian Ronan Sinclair and Italian last-four opponent Matteo De Angelis

– courtesy of a powerful spinning head kick just over 30 seconds into the contest. Ashrafi's glory came after Iranian girls Parnian Nouri and Aynaz Nasiri had won a couple of golds on the preceding night. Nouri overcame China's Yinuo Xu in back-to-back rounds (4-1, 15-8) in an intriguing -52kg final, while Nasiri defeated Kazakhstan's Nuray Kaznabek 4-0 and 5-4 in the -59kg showdown. Mahdi Rahmati and

Saina Alipour were the other Iranians in action on Wednesday but finished their campaign empty-handed.

Rahmati fell to a first-round exit in the men's -45kg event after a loss to Wu Yejie of China.

Representing the country in the women's -46kg class, Alipour defeated opponents from Canada, Portugal, and Turkey, before suffering a last-eight loss to Violeta Diaz Arribas of Spain.

Bakhtiarzadeh takes interim role as Esteghlal pursues new coach

Sports Desk

Former Iranian international center-back Sohrab Bakhtiarzadeh was named as the interim coach of Esteghlal as the Tehran Blues seek to appoint "a high-profile foreign manager" in the coming days, the Persian Gulf Pro League club said on Tuesday.

Bakhtiarzadeh, 51, replaces Javad Nekounam, who stepped down from his role after a 2-0 loss to Al Sadd in the AFC Champions League Elite on Monday.

The defeat in Doha was Esteghlal's third in seven outings

in all competitions this season – more than the club conceded across the entire previous campaign (2).

Having seen a significant portion of the Blues faithful turn against him for his defensive approach in the derby defeat against Persepolis last week as well as his never-ending feud with the club hierarchy, Nekounam handed first his resignation last Thursday, only to see his decision rejected with the Al Sadd game looming.

An ex-Esteghlal player in the early 2000s, Bakhtiarzadeh was last in charge of a top-flight team in February, when

he took the role at San'at Naft Abadan but parted ways with the southern Iranian side after just seven games.

The interim coach's first game on the Blues bench will come on Saturday against Havadar, which is yet to win a game in the league this season and sits rock bottom of the table with three points.

Without a league victory since the opening-day win at Shams Azar, Esteghlal will head into the international break after the Saturday game, with tricky tests against Zob Ahan and Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr coming Blues' way in late Oc-

tober.

Rumors keep swirling around the Esteghlal job, with Portuguese Ricardo Sá Pinto headlining a list of candidates in the Iranian media.

In a statement published right after Nekounam's departure on Monday night, Sa Pinto, who has been without a team since leaving APOEL Nicosia in June, expressed his desire to return to Esteghlal for a second spell, having steered the club to a third-place finish in the league as well as the domestic cup final in his previous season-long stint in the 2022/23 campaign.



Presence of US, European states 'root cause' of problems in region: *Leader*



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the root cause of the West Asia region's problems is the presence of the United States and a number of European countries false-

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses a group of elites and scientific talents in Tehran on October 02, 2024. khamenei.ir

ly claiming to advocate peace. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in a meeting with a group of Iranian elites, scientific talents and top ranks at the country's university entrance exam, in the capital Tehran on Wednesday, Press TV reported. The meeting took place after the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) fired a massive barrage of long-range missiles at the Israeli-occupied territories in reprisal for the entity's recent assassination of the top leaders and commanders of the resistance front.

"In our region, the root cause of problems, which leads to conflicts, wars, concerns and hostilities and such like, results from the presence of the same people who claim to advocate peace and tranquility in the region; that is America and some European countries," the Leader said. "If they get themselves out of this region, beyond a shadow of doubt, these conflicts, these wars, these clashes will come to a complete halt, and the countries of the region will be able to govern themselves, govern their region, and live together in peace, blessing and prosperity." The United States and its western allies have been providing Israel with unstinting support in the realms of finance, logistics and intelligence since

October last year, when the occupying regime launched a merciless war on Palestinians in Gaza. As part of its vicious attempts to expand the scope of war to other fronts across the region, Israel embarked on indiscriminate bombings of southern regions in Lebanon and targeted killings of the Hezbollah resistance movement's senior officials and commanders as well as Iranian military advisors in Syria and Lebanon. The IRGC's operation on Tuesday night was carried out in response to the assassination against the leaders of resistance, not least Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and the military commanders of the IRGC and the Lebanese resistance movement.

Eight Israeli soldiers killed in fighting with Hezbollah

The Israeli military said its combat losses in southern Lebanon increased to eight on Wednesday as battles between Hezbollah fighters and Israeli troops in southern Lebanon intensified on Wednesday. The military had announced the death of the first soldier earlier in the day, AFP reported. Hezbollah has said its fighters earlier today were able to repel and inflict losses on Israeli troops in Odaiseh and Yaroun. The Lebanese group said it targeted the Merkava tanks with guided rockets in the village of Maroun al-Ras on the eastern side of the border. Earlier, Hezbollah claimed a deadly ambush against Israeli



troops in the same area. On Tuesday, Israel's attacks on Lebanon killed at least 55 people. The Lebanese Army said Israeli troops had staged two brief incursions before withdrawing, adding one of its soldiers had been wounded in an Israeli drone strike. The Israeli military told residents to evac-

uate more than 20 areas in south Lebanon, a day after issuing a similar call. Lebanon's disaster management agency said 1,873 people have been killed since Israel and Hezbollah began trading cross-border on October 7. The spike in violence has forced hundreds of thousands more to flee their homes.

Iran's patience snapped after assassinations Iranian armed forces warn Israel against retaliation

International Desk

Iranian officials said the country exercised self-restraint after Israel's assassination of Hamas leader in Tehran, but ran out of patience following the continuation of the regime's massacre in the region. On Tuesday, Iran launched a missile attack on Israel's military positions in response to the assassinations of leaders of Hamas, Hezbollah resistance movements, an Iranian top commander as well as the regime's ongoing deadly aggression against Gaza and Lebanon. Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Wednesday that the Americans and Europeans told Tehran that they are trying to establish a cease-fire in Gaza within a week and called on Iran not to take any action against Israel. "We waited for peace, but they (Israelis) expanded their bloodshed and were emboldened," Pezeshkian said upon his arrival in Qatar's capital, where he is scheduled to meet the country's officials and take part in an Asian conference. "We want security and peace, it is Israel that assassinated Haniyeh in Tehran," he added. Chief of General Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major



General Mohammad Baqeri also said the country exercised self-restraint after the regime's assassination of the Hamas leader in Tehran on July 31 but ran out of patience following the assassination of Hezbollah's secretary general and a top Iranian commander. Baqeri said that "the situation was no longer tolerable" after the assassinations of Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Iran's military advisor Brigadier General Abbas Nilforoushan during Israeli airstrikes on the southern suburb of Beirut on Friday.

Military targets

According to Bagheri, the targets of the "heroic" operation that served as a "response to many of the Zionists' crimes" included three of the Israeli regime's main airbases.

He named the bases as the headquarters of the regime's Mossad spy agency, which he identified as the "center for terrorism," the regime's Nevatim airbase that houses its F-35 warplanes, and the Hatzerim base that was used for enabling Nasrallah's assassination. The targets also featured the regime's strategic radars, the centers housing the regime's tanks and personnel carriers, and the center accommodating those of the regime's forces that partake in massacres against Palestinians in Gaza. Israel's military said on Wednesday that several missiles fired by Iran hit inside Israeli air force bases but did not cause any casualties or damage.

'Successful' operation
Iran's Defense Minister Brig-

adier General Aziz Nasirzadeh said the retaliatory operation has been more than 90% successful. He said that no civilian sites were among the targets. During a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Iranian president said the operation against Israel proved that the regime's Iron Dome missile interception system is "more fragile than glass." The Iranian president noted that "Iran does not seek war, yet it is not afraid of it either," emphasizing that the Islamic Republic knows no limits when it comes to protecting the security, authority and dignity of its people and the country. Bagheri also asserted that the Islamic Republic's Armed Forces were completely prepared to respond to the potential repetition of such atrocities on the part of the regime.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Blasts, shooting around Israeli Embassies in Nordic capitals

Police in Denmark and Sweden said on Wednesday they were probing explosions and gunfire around Israeli embassies in their capitals which took place amid spiraling West Asia East tensions. In Denmark, police said three Swedish nationals had been arrested after two

blasts were reported in the "immediate proximity" of the Israeli Embassy in Copenhagen in the early hours of Wednesday, according to AFP. Swedish police said the Israeli Embassy in Stockholm had been targeted in a shooting on Tuesday just before 6:00 pm (1600 GMT).

No injuries were reported from the incidents. "Two explosions occurred at 3:20 am at the Israeli Embassy. It is our preliminary assessment that it was due to two hand grenades," Jens Jespersen of the Copenhagen police told a press conference. Swedish police said in a

statement that information indicated the Israeli Embassy building had been hit by shots on Tuesday evening. Since the outbreak of the Israel's war on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, which has left more than 41,000 dead, several incidents apparently targeting Israeli interests in Sweden have been reported.

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Jubilation over retaliation

The Iranian people celebrated in various cities across the country after the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) targeted with a barrage of missiles the Israeli-occupied territories on October 1, 2024.

Thousands took to the streets after more than 180 long-range ballistic missiles struck several Israeli cities, with at least 90 percent of them hitting the intended targets. The operation came in response to the assassination of top resistance leaders, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas and military advisor Abbas Nilforoushan of the IRGC.

