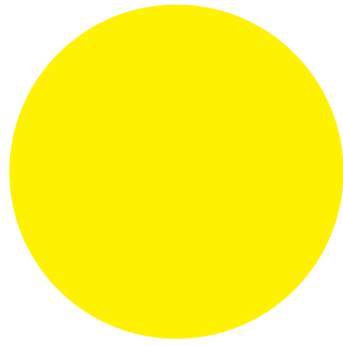


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Fireworks light up the midnight sky over Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Opera House during 2025 New Year's Day celebrations in Sydney on January 1, 2025.
 • SAEED KHAN/AFP

People paying for Iran's failure to join FATF

By Hadi Haqshenas
 Gilan Province governor general

OPINION

In a world increasingly resembling a small global village, where trade and economic interactions are closely monitored by numerous international organizations, only three countries have been named by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) as high-risk jurisdictions, with Iran being among them. The FATF comprises four conventions, all of which approved by Iran's Parliament but two are on hold in the Expediency Council [a legislative body with supervisory powers over all branches of government]. Even many countries that are allies of Iran and share economic interests with it in regional and international agreements such as Eurasia, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), etc., have advised

that if the remaining two FATF bills are not passed, they will be unable to establish close economic relations with Iran. Or, if such relations do develop, Iran will have to bear very high costs for them. It seems that over the past few years, failure to approve these two remaining conventions has piled up significant costs for our country. Staying out of the FATF has not completely deprived Iran of banking transfers and the like; rather, the issue is that the costs associated with Iran's economic ties have soared significantly. These costs are borne by the people and have resulted in financial pressure on them. Globally, money and goods are exchanged at minimal costs, whereas, in Iran, these transactions occur at the highest costs. Due to these exchange costs, the people of Iran are forced to pay several times the global rates for their consumables.

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Industry minister proposes package to cushion impact of outages

Economy Desk

Iran's Minister of Industry, Mine, and Trade Mohammad Atabak introduced a special support package aimed at mitigating the impact of electricity and gas outages on industries. According to the minister, the proposal, which seeks to address energy shortages and their effects on production, is expected to be approved and implemented soon, Tasnim News Agency reported.

In recent weeks, Atabak has taken significant steps to persuade the government to reduce the adverse effects of power and gas shortages, as well as diesel insufficiency, on industrial output.

His efforts have reportedly convinced key government officials to back the proposed energy imbalance compensation plan for industries.

According to reports from government commissions, the package has received the support of President Masoud Pezeshkian and is set to be approved and announced shortly.

The development comes against the backdrop of significant energy challenges facing Iran's industrial sector in recent years as these challenges have not only slowed industrial production but also impacted Iran's export revenues and economic stability, particularly in non-oil sectors.

The government has set ambitious goals for economic growth, including Leader Ayatollah Khomeini's call for a "Production Leap with Public Participation" in the current Iranian year. The government has emphasized the critical role of industries like petrochemicals, steel, and cement in achieving these objectives.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade has sought to implement measures to safeguard industrial operations.

Earlier initiatives included prioritizing energy allocation to strategic industries and encouraging private-sector partnerships to expand infrastructure capacity. The newly proposed support package reflects a more comprehensive approach, addressing not only immediate financial losses but also the structural issues undermining the industrial sector's resilience.

In a report presented to the government, Atabak revealed that the electricity supplied to industries in the first half of this year dropped by 40% compared to the same period last year. Consequently, production downtime increased from 14% last year to 22% this year.



Pezeshkian: FATF case to be revisited by Expediency Council

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian announced during a meeting with members of the Iran Chamber of Commerce that the Expediency Council would once again review the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) bill.

Responding to concerns from business leaders about reducing barriers for economic activities, he expressed hope for fostering economic ease through collaborative efforts, according to president.ir.

Speaking on Tuesday, Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of joint meetings between the government and the private sector to address economic challenges and reduce pressures on the public.

He underscored the government's commitment to creating a favorable environment for private sector activities, expressing confidence that cooperative efforts could overcome existing obstacles.

Pezeshkian urged businesspeople to participate in international trips alongside government delegations to expand economic ties with other nations.

He noted, "In every foreign visit, representatives from the Iran Chamber of Commerce and the private sector should accompany us, as their presence is critical for achieving considerable outcomes for our economy."

The president also reflected on the challenges faced by his administration, citing both domestic and international pressures, including energy shortages, explaining that the government is actively working on solutions in collaboration with academic and private sector experts to address these issues and prevent future crises in summer and winter.

Regarding recent electricity outages, Pezeshkian praised the public's patience and solidarity, which he said were key to managing energy deficits.

He also reaffirmed the administration's determination to com-

bat fuel smuggling, describing it as a priority for preserving the country's resources.

Pezeshkian highlighted the necessity of transitioning state-owned enterprises to private ownership, announcing plans to complete many privatizations by the end of the year.

He also stressed the importance of science-based approaches to economic challenges, warning against interventions without proper foresight.

Addressing environmental concerns, the president called for prioritizing blue economy to prevent water crises in major cities.

He criticized reliance on desalination and water transfer projects, advocating instead for the development of industries near coastal areas.

In closing, Pezeshkian emphasized national unity in tackling inherited crises, saying, "This country belongs to all its people, regardless of group, ethnicity, gender, or political affiliation.

Together, we can overcome the challenges."

He directed the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Abdolnaser Hemmati to follow up on the concerns and proposals raised during the meeting. Earlier in the day, Hemmati announced that the Leader had agreed that Iran's position toward joining two key conventions of the FATF could be reviewed by Iran's Expediency Council.

"I heard from the revered president [Masoud Pezeshkian] that the Supreme Leader had agreed on a renewed discussion in the Expediency Council on the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions as part of the issue of the FATF," Hemmati announced on his X in a Farsi note on Tuesday.

The Iranian Parliament has approved Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsible for vetting Parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for

some amendments.

Iran has ratified other conventions and regulations of the FATF.

In his first press conference after taking office in mid-September, Pezeshkian pledged his government's commitment to resolve disputes surrounding the FATF.

In late September, Iranian government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani affirmed that Tehran would pursue FATF based on its national interests.

Established in 1989, the FATF is an inter-governmental body aimed at setting standards and promoting effective implementation of legal, regulatory, and operational measures to combat money laundering, terrorism financing, and other threats to the international financial system. The FATF describes itself as a "policy-making body" that generates the necessary political will to effect national legislative and regulatory reforms in these areas.

Iran's pistachio exports expected to reach \$2b: Association head

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

The chairman of the Iran Pistachio Association, Mohammad Salehi, announced a significant increase in pistachio exports this Iranian year (started March 20), predicting that the hard currency revenue generated from these exports could reach \$2 billion.

In an interview with Iran Daily, Salehi stated that pistachio export revenues in the last Iranian year were approximately \$1.5 billion as he expects this figure to rise based on the current export trends.

Salehi elaborated on the status of pistachio production and exports, noting that frost damage in recent years had reduced output and exports.

However, this year, favorable weather conditions led to a robust harvest, which has resulted in increased export levels so far. During September 22-November 20, a total of 56,000 tons of pis-

tachios were exported, accounting for about 25% of the country's total pistachio production within just two months, he said. Salehi further explained that, typically, 20% of pistachio production is stored annually, while the remaining 180,000 tons are either exported or consumed domestically.

"This year, an estimated 150,000 tons will be exported, with 30,000 tons allocated for domestic consumption," he noted. Despite the increase in exports, Salehi warned that Iran has lost some of its international markets due to insufficient efforts in the past two to three years. He added that the United States, Iran's main competitor in pistachio production, has taken over some of these markets.

Currently, Iran ranks third globally in pistachio production, with an output of approximately 200,000 tons, representing 20% of global production. The US leads with 420,000 tons (46%), followed by Turkey with

277,000 tons (30%).

"About a decade ago, Iran controlled nearly 90% of the global pistachio market," Salehi said. "However, challenges in production and exports have reduced our share of the market."

Regarding export destinations, Salehi stated that East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf littoral countries, and the European Union are key markets for Iranian pistachios as a significant portion of the exports is shipped to China, India, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates.

He also explained that pistachio production and export statistics are calculated annually from late September to the following September. In the last agricultural year (ended September 21), Iran's pistachio production was approximately 200,000 tons.

It is too early to predict next year's production levels, Salehi noted, as the yield largely depends on weather conditions during the spring blossoming



period in between late April and late June. Harsh winter frosts could also impact production. "Iran has significant potential to expand pistachio orchards and increase production," Salehi said. "However, water shortages in summer and frost damage in winter remain major challenges for farmers."

He urged the government to recognize pistachios as a key non-oil export commodity and

provide more support to the industry. "The government's agricultural and economic teams must work together to create better conditions for pistachio production and export."

Salehi concluded by noting that the pistachio harvest begins in late September and early October. This year's harvest was better than previous years, and production is expected to exceed 200,000 tons.



Amin al-Islami Mansion in the heart of Neyshabur

Iranica Desk

Neyshabur, as the most populous city in Khorasan Razavi Province, is full of unique natural and historical attractions, each making the city more desirable and charming. The Amin al-Islami Mansion in Neyshabur is one of these historical beauties.

The summers in this beautiful city are dry and hot, while the winters are cold and short. Agriculture and animal husbandry thrive in Neyshabur, with famous products including broad beans, rhubarb, plums, apples, and various vegetables. Now that we've mentioned nature and greenery, we arrive at Amin al-Islami Garden and Mansion, one of Neyshabur's sightseeing spots.

The garden of the Amin al-Islami Mansion dates back to the second Pahlavi era. At that time, this building was the private residence of Abolhassan Amin al-Islami, a notable figure from the Pahlavi period. However, the mansion itself resembles the style of first Pahlavi-era houses and was surrounded by a beautiful garden that enhanced its appearance.

Years passed, and the children of Abolhassan Amin al-Islami sold the building to the municipality. Now, its lovely 32,000 square meter garden has been transformed into a park, complete with paved paths and sidewalks. In this area,



one can find tall trees such as plane, pine, mulberry, and walnut. At the park's entrance, a statue of two large jars stands. The magnificent Amin al-Islami Mansion rests in the park, now without any specific function.

This mansion, like other buildings of its time, is made of brick, covers an area of about 1,300 square meters, and is built over two floors. The interior architecture is charming, featuring a central hall, several rooms, and a basement.

The entrance, or lobby, of the mansion is adorned with beautiful columns that still stand firm. The Amin al-Islami Mansion, with its beauty and architectural sophistication, ranks alongside its contemporaries. When you visit the

famous city of Neyshabur, be sure to stop by this garden and inquire about its beautiful brick mansion, located on Imam Khomeini Street, opposite the National Garden.

In addition to the Amin al-Islami Mansion, Neyshabur boasts several other attractions that reflect its rich history and cultural significance. The city is home to the tomb of the renowned Persian poet Omar Khayyam, whose contributions to literature and science are celebrated worldwide. Visitors often pay homage at his beautifully designed mausoleum, which is surrounded by lush gardens, providing a serene atmosphere for reflection.

Moreover, Neyshabur is famous for its exquisite turquoise pottery and tile work, with local artisans continuing the age-old traditions of craftsmanship. The Neyshabur Museum showcases these artistic treasures, along with artifacts that tell the story of the region's past, from ancient times to the present day. Nature lovers can also explore the nearby Binalud Mountains, where hiking trails offer breathtaking views of the landscape, especially during the spring when wildflowers bloom. The combination of historical sites, cultural richness, and stunning natural beauty makes Neyshabur a captivating destination for travelers seeking to experience the heart of Iran's heritage.

Thrills and scenic views await adventure seekers in Sanandaj zip-lining

Iranica Desk

One of the most enjoyable activities you can experience during your trip to Kurdistan Province and the city of Sanandaj is zip-lining. This thrilling adventure connects two points via a cable, allowing you to glide from one location to another using the slope and gravity of the earth. If you are a fan of excitement, make sure to visit the Sanandaj zip-line, which stands out as one of the most popular and exhilarating activities in the area. For thrill-seekers and adventure enthusiasts, zip-lining offers an unparalleled experience, combining adrenaline with stunning views.

Zip-lining is considered a form of adventure tourism, often situated in natural areas that allow participants to relish both the excite-

ment and the breathtaking scenery. Just imagine being suspended in the air, hanging in the air, surrounded by majestic mountains, lush forests, and vibrant greenery. It's a truly thrilling experience!

The Sanandaj zip-line is located in the picturesque Abidar Forest Park, a special natural area within the city. Abidar Park, often referred to as boasts a rich abundance of water that contributes to its lush environment.

The park's moderate climate has fostered a vibrant landscape, making it one of the most extraordinary spots for tourists seeking peace and tranquility. Nestled in the heart of the Abidar Mountains, also known as the Hezar Cheshmeh Mountains, this park features a mix of large and small mountains,

offering a complete view of the city of Sanandaj, which adds to its beauty.

The park is equipped with various facilities, including a unique open-air cinema, restaurants, cafes, camping areas, and the hotel.

The decision to install zip-lines in this forest park was based on its capacity and natural beauty. The Sanandaj zip-line stretches a thrilling 320 meters in length, with a height difference of about 22 meters from Mashahir Park to the back-stage of the Abidar open-air cinema. At its peak, the zip-line reaches a height of 110 meters above the ground, ensuring an exhilarating experience.

After your exciting zip-lining adventure, consider visiting the suspended bridge in Abidar Park. You can also enjoy a movie at the open-air cin-



ema, where you can watch films in a stunning natural setting.

The weather in Sanandaj is particularly pleasant in September and spring, but it can be quite cold during the winter and autumn months. Therefore, the best times to enjoy the zip-line experience are during the moderate

seasons of the year. September and spring are ideal for visiting Abidar Park and taking advantage of the zip-line. Don't let winter deter you; instead, embrace the beauty of early autumn, when the colorful foliage enhances the natural surroundings, adding to the excitement of your zip-lining adventure.



2024: The most war-torn year since World War II

International Desk

Over the past year, more than 92 countries around the globe have faced significant cross-border conflicts, an unprecedented number in the past 80 years after World War II, according to a report by a prominent international organization specializing in war and peace studies.

The 2024 report from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) group shows that this year has witnessed the intensification of conflicts across various parts of the world, alongside the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine and Israel's war in Gaza. The findings of this report show that this year has seen 56 active conflicts globally, an unprecedented number since World War II. Additionally, conflicts or disputes have doubled in the past five years, and one in every eight people has been exposed to conflict. In the list of top disputes for this year, Palestine, Myanmar, Syria, and Mexico lead the way.

Smoke and flames rise during Israeli airstrikes in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, April 7, 2024.
ASHRAF AMRA/REUTERS
LEO CORREA/AP

Data from the non-profit Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) group shows that conflict-related deaths have risen from around 180,000 in 2023 to 234,000 in 2024, marking a 30% increase. According to the latest Global Peace Index 2024 report, the global situation in terms of peace is not favorable and requires urgent and international solidarity to improve it. Here are the key reasons:

- 1 Currently, 97 countries have seen their peace index deteriorate since 2008, when the index was first established.
- 2 Conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine were the primary drivers of the global peace decline.
- 3 At present, 92 countries are embroiled in major cross-border conflicts.
- 4 The economic impact of violence has surged to \$19.1 trillion, or \$2,380 per person, by the end

- 5 of 2023, which is equivalent to 13.5% of the global GDP.
- 5 The trend of militarization has intensified with 108 countries increasing their armaments.
- 6 Due to violent conflicts, 110 million people worldwide have been displaced or become refugees, and 16 countries now each host at least half a million refugees.
- 7 Nearly 56 countries are currently engaged in active conflicts.

- 8 The expenditure on peacekeeping stands at \$49.6 billion, which is less than 0.6% of total military spending.
- 9 Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008, followed by Ireland, Austria, New Zealand, and Singapore. Yemen has replaced Afghanistan as the least peaceful country in the world, with Sudan, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Ukraine follow-

- 10 ing closely.
- 10 The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains the least peaceful in the world. This region is home to four of the ten least peaceful countries globally and the two least peaceful countries, Sudan and Yemen.
- 11 North America has witnessed a significant rise in violent crimes and fear of violence.
- 12 Palestine was the most dangerous and violent place in the world

in 2024. Eighty-one percent of the Palestinian population is exposed to conflict, with 35,000 casualties recorded in the past 12 months. Civilians continue to face daily bombardments and incursions. On average, 52 conflicts occur daily in Palestinian territories. Due to the high level of violence in Palestine, especially in Gaza, and the lack of a cease-fire between the parties, this conflict is likely to persist into 2025.

Potential for domestic disputes to attract external involvement

A key point of concern in this year's conflicts is that inter-

national wars, which remain the predominant form of conflict globally, are increasingly intertwined with the interventions of regional and global powers

pursuing their own strategic interests. According to international institutions, this trend stems from the growing competition among major powers

and the more assertive foreign policies of many emerging powers. While Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022

marked a turning point, the conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Middle East has challenged peace efforts and heightened the threat of vari-

ous inter-state conflicts more than ever before. This is a situation that the world has witnessed in several regions this year.



A view of destroyed buildings is shown following Israeli strikes in the southern Gaza Strip on Sept. 13, 2024.
LEO CORREA/AP

Asia

In Asia, tensions between the United States and China over the Taiwan Strait and between Pakistan and India have been on the rise. International bodies have also highlighted conflicts in Kashmir and Afghanistan as two significant disputes in Asia, both of which have resulted in substantial human casualties.

It is estimated that civilian casualties in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2022 amounted to 111,000 people.

The Americas

Even in the Americas, a region that has not experienced a major interstate conflict since the 1930s, bilateral tensions flared up following the presidential election in Venezuela in December 2023. In Guyana, while the crisis was mediated by international efforts, it raised the risk of the first interstate conflict in the region in nearly a century.

Moreover, armed violence linked to illegal economies in the Americas remains widespread, with homicide rates nearly three times the global average. Organized crime in this region has significantly impacted various criminal activities, including human trafficking, environmental crimes, and the smuggling of synthetic drugs.

Middle East

The turmoil and conflict in the Middle East, following Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, has been the most visible and concerning shift in the region. This attack sparked widespread Israeli assaults on Palestinians and the people of Gaza. Subsequently, in Lebanon, Hezbollah re-engaged with Israel, intensifying the violence. Israel targeted many resistance leaders and launched attacks on southern Lebanon from September to October 2024, further escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

At the end of the year, armed groups attacked Damascus and removed Syria from the rule of the Assad family, highlighting that the Middle East witnessed more conflict and strife than almost any other region in the world this year.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its third year. Beyond Ukraine, Russia has also maintained active forces in Africa. However, following the collapse of the Wagner Group (a Russian state-funded private military company (PMC) and the death of its leader, Evgeny Prigozhin, in August 2023, Russia increased its direct intervention in Sub-Saharan Africa through the Africa Battalion, which is under the control of the Russian Ministry of Defense. Moscow deepened its ties with military rulers in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger and intensified its security cooperation with these countries.



During a funeral ceremony in Irpin, the Kyiv region of Ukraine, on Nov. 21, serviceman Roman bids farewell to a comrade from the 47th Brigade-- Serhii Soloviyov -- who was killed during fighting with Russian Forces in Kursk on Nov. 12, 2024.
● EVGENIY MALOLETKA/AP

Sub-Saharan Africa

Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been profoundly impacted by various global conflicts this year, with 14 of the 49 nations in the region caught in war-

fare. In this geographical area, 28 internal conflicts—whether with or without foreign intervention—were recorded last year, marking the highest number since 1991.

Wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, with their potential nuclear ramifications, the friction between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, and between Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as the

standoff between Niger (alongside Mali and Burkina Faso) and the Economic Community of West African States, particularly Nigeria, all pose significant risks for the escalation of interstate conflicts.

Global Peace Outlook

Experts say: "The global outlook for peace remains unclear, given the rise in intractable conflicts driven by an increasing number of parties, overlapping and diverse factors, and the intensification and geopolitical dispersion of tensions. Meanwhile, the severity and human casualties of armed conflicts, with a 37% increase, underscore the gravity of the issue."

The world is experiencing an unprecedented number of conflicts that, due to the growing involvement of internal and external actors, a complex array of underlying drivers, and the intensification of geopolitical tensions, appear increasingly intractable and concerning.

The past two years, marked by the rising importance of geopolitical issues and their human impact, have been the most eventful since World War II, with conflict and armed dispute trends continuing to escalate across the globe. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) report, fatalities from violent incidents during the review period (July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024) saw a 37% increase in armed conflict in 2024, reaching nearly 200,000 people worldwide. While deaths decreased slightly in the Americas (-9%) and

Asia (-3%), they surged by 315% in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

This increase was largely due to ongoing conflicts and violence in Palestine, where fatalities from violent incidents rose from 321 the previous year to nearly 40,000. Additionally, the overall fatality rate per armed conflict increased by almost 17%, indicating the growing intensity and deadliness of these conflicts.

This disheartening situation is particularly evident when the resources available to affected governments and international actors for addressing unprecedented reconstruction and humanitarian needs stemming from ongoing armed violence are increasingly under pressure.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) has estimated in its latest report that:

1. More than 290 million people worldwide have been in need of humanitarian assistance in 2024.
2. \$7.3 billion in humanitarian funding had been raised by the end of April 2024, which represents a 36 percent decrease compared to the previous year. In other words, while conflicts have increased, the level of humanitarian aid has decreased.

3. The financial gap, exacerbated by consecutive external shocks in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, has led to heightened threats to food and energy security.

4. These factors, along with the acceleration of the climate crisis, have also intensified the root causes of conflict. The financial resources needed for the reconstruction of Ukraine and Gaza are prime examples of these challenges.

The World Bank estimates that the reconstruction and revival of Ukraine will cost nearly \$486 billion over the next decade, while the direct damage to Gaza's infrastructure exceeds \$18.5 billion, equivalent to 97% of the total GDP of the Palestinian territories in 2022.

Experts have pinned the primary reasons for the weakening foundations of peace on the world on the United Nations and the Security Council, as this council has so far failed to prevent wars or end disputes around the world using international tools. This shortcoming was particularly evident in Israel's repeated attacks on Palestine last year.

The inability of the international system and global powers to broker cease-fires in conflicts such as those in Gaza and Sudan, or to

mediate in both internal and international disputes, including the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Ethiopia and Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, has been starkly apparent.

Meanwhile, some emerging powers have not only failed to deliver successful mediation efforts but also played a role in stoking conflicts as external factors contributing to the outbreak of disputes.

Another crucial point is that international humanitarian laws, which have taken years to establish, have come under increasing attack, particularly from warmongers. For instance, conflicts in Sudan and Gaza have seen widespread violations and war crimes, as well as the sidelining of humanitarian laws during disputes. In all these conflicts, a blatant disregard for civilian lives has been evident, leading to an increase in displacement, including 90% of Gaza and the registration of 7.7 million internally displaced persons in Sudan.

The blocking of humanitarian aid, the creation of food and medicine insecurity, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and educational centers have starkly revealed the warmongers' true nature and their inhumane behavior.

Concluding

According to reports from international institutions, the geography of conflict in the world has intensified by two-thirds over the past three years. International observers, in light of this reality and given the increasing intensity and number of wars globally, have warned about the widespread impact of these international anomalies on global economic growth and food security.

These reports indicate that the Conflict Intensity Index (CII) has shown that Ukraine, Myanmar, the Middle East, and

certain regions of Africa have been the main hotspots of disputes and unrest, particularly over the past three years, where the intensity of conflict has been high.

The Guardian reported in this context: "Now, 4.6% of the world's land area is affected by conflict and war, compared to 2.8% in 2021. The conflict mortality rate has also increased by 29%."

Angela Rosales, the Director of the Human Rights Group at SOS Children's Villages International, states, "470 million children worldwide are affected by

wars, including those in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza, and Lebanon, with impacts that go far beyond death and injury."

Given that conflicts have historically been one of the primary causes of the destruction of human, economic, and environmental resources, as well as the rise of hunger and poverty, it is essential for peace advocates worldwide—whether they are governments, nations, or international organizations—to intensify their efforts more than ever to ensure that the white flag of peace flies in all conflict-ridden ar-

reas globally.

Overall, it is crucial for all nations, governments, and business leaders to amplify their efforts to resolve minor conflicts before they escalate into larger crises. Now, 80 years have passed since the end of World War II, and current crises highlight the urgent need for substantial and impactful investment to address conflicts.

The article was provided by the Persian service of the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).



By the end of April 2024, \$7.3 billion in humanitarian aid had been collected, a 36% decrease compared to the previous year. In other words, while conflicts have escalated, the amount of humanitarian aid has declined.



A crucial aspect of the conflicts that have emerged this year is that civil wars, which continue to be the primary form of conflict worldwide, are becoming more intertwined with the interventions of regional and global powers pursuing their strategic interests.



Nine-year-old Farzan is seen in the ruins of his house in Ghor Province, western Afghanistan on May 2024.
● UNICEF

Persian Gulf Pro League preview:

Tractor eager to return to winning ways before midseason break

Sports Desk

Tractor will be keen on ending a two-game winless run in the Persian Gulf Pro League when playing at home against Esteghlal Khuzestan in the last round of fixtures before the midseason break on Thursday.

Stunned 1-0 by Shams Azar last time out in Tabriz, Tractor had a Mahdi Torabi's late equalizer to thank for rescuing a point in the 1-1 away draw against Nassaji Mazandaran on Friday.

The result still proved costly for Tractor as it saw the Tabriz-based club drop to second in the Iranian top-flight table, while in-form striker Mahdi Hashamnejad and Croatian head coach Dragan Skocic were sent off in stoppage time and will miss Thursday's game.

Nine-placed Esteghlal Khuzestan will be looking to build on a decent performance against formidable archrival Foolad in a goalless Ahavaz Derby when coming up against the host's prolific frontline.

Meanwhile, a highly-anticipated matchup will see Sepahan, which routed Havadar 5-0 to overtake Tractor on top, visit Tehran's Azadi Stadium to square off against Esteghlal.

Having replaced Portuguese coach Jose Morais in November, Frenchman Patrice Carteron has enjoyed an impressive start to life on Sepahan bench but could still face a demanding test against the Tehran Blues' solid



backline. South African coach Pitso Mosimane has been quick to find a solution to Esteghlal's defensive woes since taking over from Ja-

vad Nekounam last October, as his team has conceded a single goal in the previous six domestic outings across all competitions. Sepahan winger Mahdi Limou-

chi will be the man to watch on the Azadi pitch after he bagged a sensational hat-trick against Havadar to join Iralco's Amin Kazemian on top of the league's

leading marksmen chart with six goals.

Matchday 15 will kick off today with a game in Tehran's Shahr-e Qods Stadium, where defending



Tractor striker Amirhossein Hosseinzadeh (99) is pictured during a 1-1 draw against Nassaji Mazandaran in the Persian Gulf Pro League at the Vatan Stadium, Qaemshahr, Iran, on Dec. 27, 2024.

● FFIRI

champion Persepolis and bottom-side Havadar go head-to-head.

The game could mark the end of interim coach Karim Baqeri's short stint in the Tehran Reds' dugout, with Persepolis reportedly in talks with several foreign candidates for the job ahead of a hectic January schedule.

Persepolis pulled off a 2-1 comeback victory over Khaybar on Friday to put a lid on a two-game losing streak and a second successive win could boost Baqeri's chances for the permanent role until the end of season, though he is believed to have no intention of extending his spell beyond today's encounter.

Elsewhere in the league, Golgozar will host Chadormalou in Sirjan, with fifth-placed Zob Ahan chasing a fourth win in five games when playing Nassaji at home.

Khaybar will face fellow-struggler Mes Rafsanjan in Khorramabad, while relegation-zone side Shams Azar plays away to Iralco. Yahya Golmohammadi's Foolad will be desperate to return to winning ways in the home fixture against Malavan, which has been without a victory in four games.

Man United face 'really clear' threat of relegation, admits Amorim



● LEE SMITH/ACTION IMAGES

THE GUARDIAN - Ruben Amorim admitted Manchester United need a "shock" and are being dragged into a relegation fight after their 2-0 defeat by Newcastle at Old Trafford on Monday night. It leaves United in 14th place on 22 points at the halfway stage of the Premier League season, seven above the drop zone. The defeat came after first-half goals from Alexander Isak and Joelinton and is United's fourth consecutive loss in all competitions and the first time three consecutive home league matches have been lost since 1978-79.

"Our club needs a shock and we have to understand that," Amorim said. "It is also why I speak of relegation. That is really clear [the possibility] and we have to

fight. It is a really difficult moment, one of the more difficult moments in the history of Manchester United and we have to address it with honesty and to be clear with that, we have to fight [in] the next game."

That next game is the difficult trip to Liverpool, the league leaders, on Sunday. Amorim has endured five defeats in his first eight league matches, the poorest of any United manager for 103 years, but he will have little money to strengthen next month unless major sales are made.

"We don't have that possibility in January if we don't take [sell] some players," Amorim said. "You know the situation better than me. It is not that I am arriv-

ing here and can spend money changing the team."

The squad that Amorim inherited was not built for his 3-4-3 formation. The head coach was asked why he did not wait until the close season to implement it. "When you have a change of coach, especially in this type of club, it is because they were not winning," he said. "They play in the system they were bought for and were losing. So I am going to change to that system? This team was already in trouble."

Marcus Rashford was reinstated to the match squad but remained an unused substitute. Amorim was asked why. "I think about the team, you a lot about Marcus. I just want to win the game," he said.

Westbrook, Jokic star as Nuggets beat Jazz in NBA

BBC - Russell Westbrook and Nikola Jokic both scored triple-doubles in the Denver Nuggets' 132-121 NBA victory against the Utah Jazz. Westbrook finished with 16 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists which included no turnovers, while Jokic added 36 points, 22 rebounds and 11 assists.

The Jazz led 66-64 at the break before the Nuggets pulled away in the third quarter, with Jamal Murray also adding 20 points and 10 assists.

Elsewhere, Joel Embiid scored 37 points and added nine rebounds as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Portland Trail Blazers 125-103.

Tyrese Maxey also had 23 points for the Sixers while Kelly Oubre Jr had 15 points and eight steals.

Josh Hart made his third triple-double of the season to lead the New York Knicks to a 126-106 win over the Washington Wizards.

Hart had 23 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists alongside Karl-Anthony Towns' 32 points and 13 rebounds, helping the Knicks to an eventually comfortable victory after a close first half which resulted in them holding a slender 59-57 lead.

Darius Garland scored 25 points and Donovan Mitchell added 23 as the Cleveland Cavaliers continued their fine run of form with a 113-95 win over the Golden State Warriors.

The Cavaliers are unbeaten in their last seven matches and sit top of the Eastern Conference with a 28-4 record, while the struggling War-

riors have lost four of their last five.

James Harden helped the Los Angeles Clippers to a tight win over the New Orleans Pelicans, scoring four free throws in the final 18 seconds to secure a 116-113 victory.

De'Aaron Fox starred with 33 points as the Sacramento Kings beat the Dallas Mavericks 110-100 to recover from a losing streak of six games in a row.

The Mavericks continued to struggle with injury absences, including Kyrie Irving and Luka Doncic.

The Chicago Bulls edged past the Charlotte Hornets for a 115-108 win in overtime, helped by Coby White scoring 23 points and adding 10 rebounds and nine assists.



● RICK EGAN/AP

Iran's president felicitates Christian countries on New Year

Pezeshkian hopes war, genocide to end in 2025

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in separate messages on the occasion of the New Year and Christmas expressed hope that oppression, violence, war, and genocide will end in 2025.

Pezeshkian extended Christmas and New Year greetings to the leaders and people of the countries celebrating the auspicious occasions.

He expressed hope that peace and tranquility would be established worldwide in 2025.

The Iranian president noted that Jesus Christ is the prophet of light and mercy whose birth is the celebration of peace and morality in human societies.

Like all divine prophets,

Christ's teachings are the solution to eliminating injustice, he added.

In a post on his official X account on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei extended Christmas and New Year greetings to Christians around the globe, including "fellow Christian compatriots" in Iran.

As the world begins new year, people in many countries including Palestine, Ukraine and Sudan, are struggling to survive severe conditions caused by the conflicts in their countries.

In the Gaza Strip where Israel has launched a devastating war since October 2023, more than 45,000 Palestinians have been killed and most of the ter-

ritory's population have been forcibly displaced.

Conflicts in other parts of the world have also caused severe conditions for the people.

Call for solidarity with Palestine

The Hamas resistance group, which has been fighting Israeli military in the Gaza Strip since 2023, has called on "all free people in the world, who celebrate Christmas, to translate these celebrations into a mass movement against the war of genocide" against Gaza.

"Let these celebrations be a global occasion to continue and escalate all forms of demonstrations and marches" against Israel's aggression, a statement said.



Palestinians take shelter from the rain at a makeshift camp housing displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip on December 31, 2024, amid the continuing Israel's strikes.

● BASHAR TALEB/AFP

Bahrain says continues coordination with Iran to restore ties

Bahrain's Foreign Ministry said Manama is continuing coordination with its Iranian counterpart aimed at reconciliation between the two countries and restoration of diplomatic ties.

The ministry announced Bahrain pursues a balanced approach in its foreign policy on the basis of defending its sovereignty and independence, serving the Persian Gulf kingdom's national interests, and enhancing its regional and international standing, Press TV reported. The kingdom also adheres to the principles of good neighborliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and focuses on promoting relations and consolidating cooperation and dialogue through mutual respect and common understanding, the Bahraini Foreign Ministry said.

The ministry said it will continue coordination with its Iranian counterpart in order to establish the necessary legal frameworks to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries, stating that the mutual visits between the two sides have contributed to reaching an agreement on resuming talks aimed at restoring bilateral relations between the two countries.

Bahrain followed Saudi Arabia's suit and severed diplomatic relations with Iran on January 4, 2016, after



Iranian protesters, enraged by the execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr by the Saudi government, stormed its diplomatic mission in Iran. Bahrain was among several Persian Gulf states that sided with Riyadh and cut ties with Iran.

However, after the restoration of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia following marathon negotiations mediated by Iraq, Oman and China in March last year, many Persian Gulf countries followed suit and extended an olive branch to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Back on October 21, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and King Hamad of Bahrain met in Manama and discussed relations and the latest developments in the region.

King Hamad expressed hope that he would pay a visit to Tehran.

Both countries agreed in June to start negotiations on the resumption of political after a hiatus of more than eight years.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran rejects US-UK 'baseless claims' on Red Sea tensions

International Desk

Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN Amir Saeed Iravani harshly reacted to the latest rhetoric by the United States and Britain at a UN Security Council meeting, saying the accusations of Iran's involvement in tensions in the Red Sea are "baseless claims" designed to escalate chaos and create an excuse for further instability in the region by the US and its allies.

Regarding the situation in the Red Sea, the envoy said that Iran once again emphasizes its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of international maritime lanes and said, "The baseless accusations made by the Zionist representative, which is supported by its closest ally, the United States, are a clear attempt to shift responsibility from their illegal actions and destructive activities against Iran," according to IRNA.

In separate letters to the UN secretary-general and the president of the Security Council on Monday, Iravani said, "It is the hostile Zionist regime, not

Iran, which has always pursued a policy of provocation and destabilizing activities and is considered a serious threat to peace and security in the region and beyond."

He emphasized that Iran as a responsible UN member has always adhered to its obligations under international law and the UN Charter and has not been involved in any activity inconsistent with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"Therefore, Iran categorically denies any violation of arms embargoes or any involvement in fueling the conflict in Yemen or elsewhere," he stated.

The ambassador described it as both deeply troubling and highly ironic that the US and Britain, instead of upholding their responsibilities as permanent members of the Security Council to maintain international peace and security, persist in providing political cover and military support for Israel's reckless actions and violations while fabricating baseless accusations against Iran. "This blatant complicity has embold-



Amir Saeed Iravani

ened Israel to act with impunity, fueling regional conflicts and undermining any prospects for lasting peace in Yemen under UN leadership," he noted.

Iravani emphasized that Iran's position on Yemen has been consistent and unwavering. From the very onset of the crisis in 2015, Tehran has supported a political resolution to the conflict and called for a comprehensive ceasefire, inclusive dialogue, and a peaceful process that respects the Arab nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, Yemen has been targeting Israeli-owned and -bound shipping in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

People paying for ...

The sanctions and the failure to join the FATF have resulted in Iran being unable to utilize its revenues abroad, making it necessary to incur additional costs for transferring these funds. To leverage the economic opportunities available globally, the only way is to join the FATF and similar conventions.

Lack of engagement with FATF amplifies impact of US sanctions

By Mehdi Hosseini
Former deputy oil minister

The newly elected US President Donald Trump is likely to ratchet up sanctions on Iran, aiming to further disrupt the return of financial resources from oil sales. For this reason, it is anticipated that Iran will face difficult days ahead. In such circumstances, Iran's diplomacy can play a very effective role.

Relations with other countries are of great importance; even the Iranian government's ties with the US should not be overlooked, as utilizing diplomacy to mitigate impending risks is vital and unavoidable.

Iran has made many mistakes in the past that have contributed to the

effectiveness of US sanctions. For example, the failure to engage with the FATF has essentially resulted in a self-imposed sanction, and as a consequence, Iran is now excluded from the global banking system.

This is despite the fact that many of the FATF's recommendations are adhered to in Iran, and measures against money laundering and support for terrorism are actively implemented. It seems that by correcting some mistakes and taking appropriate actions, conditions can be improved to a certain extent, enabling Iran to navigate these challenging circumstances.

Despite delays, losses, Iran will join FATF

By Hamidreza Jalaeipour
Iranian journalist

Those who opposed the FATF were frequently individuals who, over the past two decades, disagreed with Iran's development, viewing it as a Western initiative. However, we now find ourselves in a situation where these individuals are directly witnessing the detrimental effects of opposing development—along with its essential requirements, such as transparent financial relations with the global economy—in Iran. For in-

stance, they observe that over the past decade, an additional ten million people have fallen into poverty; a country that once exported electricity is now struggling to meet the energy demands of its industrial and residential sectors.

One of the reasons for the opposition to the FATF inside the country was that Iran backed the "regional Resistance Front" fighting Israel, leading them to resist accepting this transparency mechanism.

In reality, supporting the Palestinian cause is a regional and global idea that involves interactions between states and flows through cultural, media, and economic spheres. In other words, the opposition to the FATF stemmed from a "militaristic perspective" on the Resistance, but now the shortcomings of this one-dimensional approach are glaringly evident to those who resisted transparency.

These days, ordinary people are also becoming aware that trade ties are tied to many international organizations.

This time, Iran's Leader has also expressed a favorable opinion toward the FATF, and it seems that the number of opponents is diminishing. This issue needs to be resolved without further delay.

Minister calls for embracing diversity to strengthen national identity



braced, not through forced means. Salehi Amiri expressed deep concern about the younger generation's diminishing sense of patriotism and national identity.

He criticized the education system, saying, "Education has not been able to teach this generation that your land is a land of pride, glory, and joy. The university has also failed to educate our youth about the unique and enviable qualities of their homeland." The minister highlighted Iran's historical resilience, stating, "Iran has remained firm, strong, and resistant throughout history, from the Mongol war to Saddam; because Iran and the Iranian belong to this land."

He emphasized the importance of the Persian language in preserving Iran's identity, saying, "All languages in history have faced crises, but Persian has resisted. Islam was embraced by the monotheistic people of this land, and their culture absorbed it without disappearing."

In a powerful call to action, Salehi Amiri urged, "Use the concept of Iran in your writing and engage with the youth and teenagers to foster a sense of belonging to this land."

He emphasized the need to educate the younger generation about the country's rich heritage and the importance of national identity in a diverse and pluralistic society.

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, addressed the critical issue of national unity and identity.

He made the statements during a meeting held on December 31 at the Iran International Conference Center, highlighting the country's rich history and the challenges it has faced, IRNA reported.

Salehi Amiri began by asserting, "No one has been able to implement a project of uniformity in society; cohesion is directly related to plurality, and unity is formed in a society where diversity is recognized."

He referenced the Pahlavi era, where attempts to impose uniformity through forced migration and language restrictions failed, stating, "Pahlavi I, due to a lack of political literacy, thought that if Azerbaijanis were relocated to North Khorasan, the country's security issues would be resolved."

The minister drew a comparison with other nations, questioning, "How is it that in Canada, Australia, and other countries, over 200 nationalities, races, religions, and colors live together without issues? This shows that cohesion is directly related to plurality." He emphasized that unity is fostered when diversity is em-

IRNA opens office on Bu Musa Island

CEO: Iran's friendship with neighbors long-standing policy



Hossein Jaberi Ansari, CEO of Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), opens a new office on southern Iran's Bu Musa Island during a ceremony on December 31, 2024. ● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) inaugurated a new office on Bu Musa Island, a strategic island in the Persian Gulf, marking a significant step in Iran's commitment to the development of this region.

During the opening ceremony on Tuesday, IRNA's CEO, Hossein Jaberi Ansari, emphasized that the establishment of the office is a reaffirmation of Iran's longstanding policy of friendship and cooperation with its neighbors, IRNA reported.

"Iran, as one of the great powers of the world, has had deep ties with its neighbors throughout history, and after the Islamic Revolution, the fundamental policy of Iran has been to expand cooperation and solidarity with its neighbors as the first ring of its foreign policy," said Ansari.

The new office will provide real-time coverage of events and news from Bu Musa Island, ensuring that the world is kept informed about Iran's initiatives in this region.

"Previously, Bu Musa Island's news was covered by IRNA's central office in Bandar Abbas, but given the island's importance and its transformation into a significant hub for cultural, social, political, economic, and construction activities, it was essential to establish an IRNA office there to cover the news with greater seriousness, discipline, and speed," added Jaberi Ansari.

The opening of the Bu Musa Island office is part of IRNA's broader strategy to strengthen its provincial offices and expand its presence across Iran.

"The approach that IRNA is pursuing is to explain the position of this media for the government and people and to strengthen the bridge of connection between different strata of society, and the expansion of IRNA offices is an important step to realize this strategy," Jaberi Ansari explained.

The Bu Musa Island office is the third provincial office in the Persian Gulf, joining existing offices in Qeshm and Kish Islands. The Iranian islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Bu Musa are strategically located near the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean.

Given the Hormozgan province's extensive coastline and unique potential, establishing IRNA offices in this region is of great significance, ensuring comprehensive coverage of events and developments in these critical areas.

During his four-day visit to Hormozgan, Hossein Jaberi Ansari will also explore the province's blue economy opportunities, as highlighted by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Eva; Iran's first smart travel assistant unveiled

Eva, a groundbreaking AI-powered travel assistant platform, was unveiled at the 6th annual IRSA Group's best platforms. Eva is designed to assist Iranian travelers in finding flight tickets, planning trips, and discovering tourist attractions. In addition, Eva provides financial advice for investment and savings, IRNA reported.

The event, which was the largest gathering of private sector tourism professionals in Iran, was attended by over 1,500 representatives from more than 700 travel agencies and tour operators.

During the ceremony, Eva was demonstrated through a live conversation, where questions were asked and the answers were confirmed.

Eva will be available on Iranian app stores from January 20, with additional services such as hotel and ecotourism accommodation reservations, as well as tour bookings across the country, to be added soon.

Mehdi Najafi, the founder and CEO of IRSA Group, addressed the challenges facing the tourism industry and potential solutions.



Najafi stressed that the most crucial solution to the tourism industry's challenges is enhancing global engagement, lifting sanctions, and attracting tourists. Lifting sanctions would also help prevent pessimistic scenarios regarding currency exchange rate hikes, which would improve citizens' purchasing power for both domestic and international travel.

Najafi highlighted the significant role of lifting sanctions in boosting Iran's economic growth, stating that research shows a 1.5-unit growth in tourism for every unit of economic growth in developed countries and up to 8 units in developing countries.

Intended invitations for prequalification: Vacuum Oxygen Decarburization (VOD) Unit

Invitation No. (F-1403019)

South Kaveh Steel Company (SKS) intends to establish a Vacuum Oxygen Decarburization (VOD) unit for producing high-quality steel. All qualified international companies with proven experience in the design, supply, and construction same equipment, utilizing modern technology and capable of handling a production capacity of 170 tons per melt, are invited to submit their documentation and relevant evidence and reference.

Deadline for submission of documents:

Interested applicants are requested to visit the company's website at www.skSCO.ir to complete the Supplier Information Form attached to the announcement. Required documents and information should be sent to the following email address no later than the end of the day on Tuesday, January 7, 2025

Email: Vodplant.tender@skSCO.ir

For further information, applicants may contact Mr. Khosravi at:

Phone: +98 76 31917172

Note:

This invitation prequalification is only for the purpose of evaluating the qualifications of contractors and does not make any right to participate in the tender on the applicants.