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Game changer

Security landscape in West Asia poised to change after Operation 'True Promise'

Ayatollah Khamenei, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, toured an exhibition showing the latest achievements of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Aerospace Force in a visit to the Ashura Aerospace University of Science & Technology on Sunday, November 19, 2023.

Regional Chaos: the Zionist Strategy

By Xavier Villar

MADRID- Iranian authorities have made it clear they would respond to Israel's airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, which resulted in the killing of seven members of the Revolutionary Guard, including Mohammad Reza Zahedi, considered one of the most important commanders within the Al Quds Force structure.

Israeli action, in contravention of all international agreements, has highlighted the Zionist desire to continue expanding the conflict with the intention of creating a scenario of "perpetual war" that traps Iran and the United States in a direct confrontation. In this regard, it must be made clear that the current situation in the region can already be described as a "regional conflict," and the only variable may be the degrees of intensity thereof.

The confrontation between Iran and Israel began at the very moment of the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Since then, supported by its political vision, various groups have emerged in the region, constituting what is now known as the Resistance Axis. Politically, the Resistance Axis can be defined as more than just a simple coalition of non-state actors and states;

Iran has warned U.S. any fresh Israeli military act will face decisive and quick response

TEHRAN- The Iranian Foreign Minister says Tehran has sent a clear warning to the White House emphasizing its readiness to swiftly and decisively respond to any fresh military adventures by Israel that threaten Iran's interests and security.

During a phone conversation with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi late on Monday, Hossein Amir Abdollahian stated, "We have clearly warned the White House that in the event of the Israeli regime's adventurism in repeating terrorist attacks against Iran's interests and security, Tehran's next response and action will be decisive, immediate, and extensive."

On April 13, Tehran carried out an operation against Israel which involved dozens of drones and missiles. Iran's military officials announced that certain Israeli military bases from the occupied Golan Heights to the Negev desert had been targeted and destroyed.

The military operation was in response to Israel's deadly air raid on the Iranian consulate in Damascus, Syria, on April 1 in which seven Iranian military commanders were assassinated.

Iran vows to react 'within seconds' to each new mistake made by Israel

TEHRAN- The Islamic Republic will react "within seconds" to any new Israeli "mistake" against the nation, the deputy foreign minister of Iran has threatened.

In a Monday broadcast interview, Ali Bagheri Kani, the deputy foreign minister for political affairs, stated as much.

He stated, "They should anticipate a harsher, quicker, and more immediate response in the event that they repeat the same mistake."

"This time, the Zionists should know this that they will not have a 12-day-long timespace," the official noted, adding, "The response that they are going to receive [this time around] cannot be measured by [such time standards as] days or hours, but [will come in a matter of] seconds."

"If there is any [measure of] rationality within the Zionist regime, they [will know this that they] must not repeat their strategic mistake with another mistake," Bagheri added.

The diplomat underlined that Iran does not favor tension, but at the same time warned that Tehran will not allow any harm to the country's security and national sovereignty.

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Putin hails "tact and rationality" of Iran's retaliation against Israel

TEHRAN - Russian President Vladimir Putin has told his Iranian counterpart that Tehran's response to Israel's attack on its embassy in Damascus was the best that could be given, especially in the face of international inaction.

"What the Islamic Republic of Iran did in response to this criminal act in the shadow of the inaction of the (UN) Security Council was the best way to punish the aggressor and a manifestation of the tact and rationality of Iran's leaders," Putin stated during a telephone conversation with Ebrahim Raisi on Monday.

The Russian leader also criticized the destabilizing actions of the U.S. and its Western allies, who he said are creating tensions in West Asia. "We believe that the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the main foundations of stability and security in the region".

Raisi, for his part, said Iran aimed to punish Israel through Operation True Promise and that it is not looking for war. "The destructive role of Washington and some Western countries, and the inaction and incompetence of international institutions, including the United Nations and the Security Council, in dealing with the aggressive act of the Zionist regime led the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with exercising its right to self-defense based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, to design and implement an operation against the same centers that had done evil acts against us," he explained.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Sheer barbarism

By Shahrorkh Saei

TEHRAN- Israel has perpetrated cold-blooded massacres in the Gaza Strip since launching war on the Palestinian territory on October 7.

Nearly 34,000 Palestinian people have been killed in Israeli strikes since then, most of whom are women and children.

A rights group has revealed that 13,000 Palestinians are believed to be missing amid Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

According to Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, the disappeared Palestinians could be trapped under the rubble of leveled buildings, forcibly disappeared, executed, or buried in unmarked mass graves.

Israel also stands accused of starving Palestinians to force them to leave the coastal enclave and make room for Jews to establish settlements in the Palestinian territory.

These atrocities are just the tip of the iceberg.

Earlier this month, a report published by the Israeli-Palestinian publication +972 Magazine and the Hebrew-language outlet Local Call, revealed that Israeli military officials permitted large numbers of Palestinian civilians to be killed particularly during the early weeks and months of the Gaza war. ▸ Page **5**

Chilling discovery of mass graves in Gaza

By Ali Karbalaei

Hamas has hit out at the "shameful" silence of the international community after two mass graves were discovered in Gaza, including one with 20 members of the same family.

The resistance group says that the horrifying scenes of a new mass grave discovered on Monday (April 15) in one of the courtyards of the al-Shifa Medical Complex "confirm once again that there are no limits to this repugnant Zionist fascism and its continuous practices."

Hamas added in a statement that the Israeli occupation regime "exploited the shameful international silence with its heinous violations of international law and a genocidal war against our people in the Gaza Strip." ▸ Page **5**



Pro-Palestinian protests close the Golden Gate Bridge

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators shut down the Golden Gate Bridge and some of the US's biggest airports and major highways amid growing backlash over Israel's genocidal war on Gaza.

Traffic in the San Francisco Bay Area was snarled for hours as demonstrators shut down all vehicle, pedestrian and bike traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge and chained themselves to 55-gallon drums filled with cement across Interstate 880 in Oakland, The Telegraph reported.

About 20 protesters were arrested at the demonstration on the bridge and traffic resumed shortly after noon on Monday, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Half of the world's population can travel to Iran without visas, tourism minister says

TEHRAN - According to the tourism minister of the Islamic Republic, Iran grants visa-free access to approximately half of the world's population, totaling around four billion people.

"Currently, half of the world's population can travel to Iran without visas," Ezzatollah Zarghami said on Monday.

"Fortunately, considering the special attention that the government pays to the tourism sector, in the latest move, the government agreed to abolish visas for citizens of 33 countries, which is a significant step for the tourism sector," the minister explained. ▸ Page **6**

TEHRAN PAPERS

Equations that changed forever

In the following column, we take a look at some important contents and views in yesterday's Iranian newspapers.

In an interview with Farshid Bagherian, a senior expert in the international field, Shargh explained Iran's missile attack on Israel. It wrote: After Iran's missile response to Israel on Sunday morning, two different and conflicting narratives were presented in the media and expert circles.

Some with a reductionist view evaluate it as a not very extensive operation. On the other hand, some analysts and media emphasize that Iran's attack will be a new page in the balance of power and a turning point in the equations of the Middle East. Tehran's action is to change the equations of the region forever because both the United States of America and Israel have been in the best condition to respond to this Iranian attack for nearly two weeks.

Nevertheless, Iran's projectiles reached their targets. Also, the most important feature is the passage of Iranian missiles and drones through the multiple layers of defense of America, Israel, and its allies such as Jordan in the region.

Regardless of how many missiles and drones have reached the occupied territories and how much damage, deaths, or injuries have resulted, the arrival of Iran's projectiles is a turning point in changing the equations of the Middle East region.

Kayhan: Iran humiliated Israel with its supporters

In an analysis, Kayhan dealt with the retaliatory, historic, and decisive "Truthful Promise" operation and said: The retaliatory drone and missile operation of the Islamic Republic did not face an insurmountable obstacle despite Iran's challenges with the Western governments united with Israel.

In the Sunday morning operation, according to the official admission of their leaders, these governments [the U.S., the UK, France, and Jordan] have been involved in the conflict in favor of Israel, but this intervention has not resulted in a major blow to Iran's operation against the usurping regime, and this is a real challenge for the usurping regime and has no solution.

Israel's confrontation with Iran's government is a very difficult decision because Iran, in addition to using its huge military capacity, has other capacities, including the possibility of accompanying governments and neutralizing other governments in its region, and this happened in the operation of the " Truthful Promise ".

The passage of Iranian drones and missiles from the borders of the Islamic Republic to occupied Palestine has occurred in the space of regional interaction with the Iranian government.

Etemad: Strengthening Iran's geopolitical position

In a commentary, Etemad focused on strengthening Iran's position in the region. It wrote: Iran's response to Israel made the geopolitical weight of our country prominent more than in the past. Since Iran and Israel have experienced confrontations in the shadows over the years, naturally at this point, Iran's response caused Iran's geopolitical weight to be highlighted and versus Israel to be in a weak position.

Also, Iran's authority was exposed more than in the past. During these years, Tehran followed strategic patience against the interactions of some neighboring actors. Now, due to Iran's powerful response, our country's regional rivals have understood the strength and power of our country.

Moreover, an important point from a geopolitical point of view, the mistrust of the United States has increased. Iran's response was so authoritative that during the meeting of the Security Council and even the meeting of the members of the Group of Seven, none of the actors present took any action regardless of the rhetoric. This statement can be considered another victory for Iran.

Hamshahri: The difficult challenges of the Zionist regime in response to Iran

In an interview with Ali Abdi, an expert on Zionist issues, Hamshahri discussed the difficult challenges of this regime.

The paper said: The Zionist regime's direct response to Iranian soil could lead to the start of a regional war.

But if the Israeli coalition and its Western and Arab supporters did not exist, this regime would have suffered more serious and irreparable damages.

Therefore, this dependence does not allow the Zionist regime to start a regional war without the permission of the United States. On the other hand, if this war happens, Israel will need the air defense of the United States and therefore will need the Americans again.

The United States has also clearly warned Israel to avoid a direct attack on Iran and not to start a regional war. The warnings of Iran and international institutions, including the Security Council, should not be forgotten. These warnings will well warn the Zionist regime of a direct attack or an action at its level. Of course,

Israel's getting stuck in the swamp of war and public hatred is an issue that previously caused this regime to take irrational and hasty actions.

Iran vows to react 'within seconds' to each new mistake by Israel

From page 1 "It is a basic principle and all other frameworks are based on this principle," he noted.

The Zionists, the official stated, should know that if their mistake concerning the Iranian consulate warrants such a crushing retaliation, then their likely malign intentions against the Iranian soil would "principally entail a much more vehement response."

Senior Iranian political and military figures, such as President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, have issued warnings of a harsher and more forceful reaction amid rumors of an impending Israeli invasion.

An act of terrorism against Iran's diplomatic buildings in Damascus, the capital of Syria, was carried out by the Israeli regime on April 1.

General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a commander of the Quds Force



of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Iran, together with his deputy, General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, and five other accompanying officers, were all martyred as a consequence of the Israeli strike.

The IRGC launched a volley of missiles and drones into the seized regions late on Saturday in response. Operation Truthful Promise, the name of the retaliatory strikes, has caused damage to Israeli military sites located throughout the Palestinian controlled areas.

The Iranian Parliament Speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, declared on Sunday that the response of Tehran to the Zionist regime was "resolute and enlightening."

He also emphasized that the Iranian people's unified stance against the Zionist enemy, which had targeted the Iranian consulate, a symbol of the nation's sovereignty, was "resolute and enlightening."

"The decisive and powerful response of those defending our beloved country's sovereignty has brought satisfaction to every Iranian who values the dignity and security of our esteemed nation," he asserted.

Ghalibaf stressed that Iran's military action in response to the Zionist regime's aggression against our diplomatic premises was consistent with the United Nations Charter.

Additionally, he warned that if the Zionist regime or its allies make another mistake, Iran's response will be more severe.

"The desire for retaliation against this usurping and oppressive regime has sparked a wave of joy and pride among Muslims worldwide," Ghalibaf noted.

Iran has warned U.S. any fresh Israeli military act will face decisive and quick response

From page 1 For his part, China's top diplomat announced that he has informed the U.S Secretary of State about Beijing's commitment to Iran's "principled positions".

"We have always supported the Islamic Republic of Iran's fair demands in the Security Council, despite the obstacles posed by the U.S. administration and the double standards of Western Security Council members in condemning the actions of the Israeli regime," Wang stated.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned since Saturday that any further provocations by the Israeli regime against Iranian assets or personnel will be met with significantly greater force than witnessed on April 13.

Wang also underscored the strategic partnership between China and Iran, emphasizing Beijing's respect for Tehran's positions and status across all domains.

Iran denounces UK for astonishing backing of Israeli atrocities in Gaza

In another phone conversation with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron on Monday, Amir Abdollahian attacked Britain for its heavy hand in defending Israel, even as the regime is still murdering innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

"What good is it for the British government to provide this amount of irresponsible support to Israel?" Amir Abdollahian asked.

He went on to add that it is peculiar that the British government is worried about Iran's reaction to Israel's violent assault on the Islamic Republic's diplomatic facilities in Damascus, but is unconcerned about the thousands of bombs that the Tel Aviv regime has dropped on Palestinian homes during the previous six months.

He underlined that Iran's Operation Truthful Promise against Israel was conducted in accordance with the UN Charter's recognized right to lawful self-defense.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran does not welcome the escalation of tension in the region but if the Israeli regime is after adventurism, our next response will be immediate, stronger and more extensive," the top Iranian diplomat underscored.

Amir Abdollahian stated that the operation against Israel was carried out as retaliation for the regime's April 1 attacks on the consular section of Iran's embassy in Damascus, which resulted in the deaths of five officers who accompanied Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, as well as General Mohammad Hadi Haji Rahimi, the deputy commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), and Brigadier General Reza Zahedi.

In retaliation, the IRGC launched a flurry of drones and missiles into the Israeli-occupied areas on Saturday night. Israeli military installations throughout the occupied territories suffered damage as a result of the retaliatory attacks.

It is unknown how much damage has been done to Israeli military sites located across the occupied areas.

For his part, the foreign minister of Britain voiced alarm about the rising tensions in the region following Iran's retaliatory move against Israel.

Iran's military action against Israel, according to Cameron, is extremely concerning and will increase tensions in the region.

He did, however, add that Britain would simultaneously request that Israel refrain from taking any further action as it would worsen the situation.

"Regional issues happened due to Israel genocide in Gaza"

During a phone conversation on Monday with Austria's Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg, Amir Abdollahian stated that the main reasons of the problem in the region are Israel's war crimes, genocide, and hybrid war in the Gaza Strip.

He restated that Iran has never aimed to raise regional tensions, but that Tehran's moderation has seemingly been misunderstood by the Israeli regime.

For his part, the foreign minister of Austria stated that the ongoing hostilities would be detrimental to all of the surrounding nations.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel will get stronger response in case of new aggression: commander

TEHRAN – In a recent statement, the Commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Force has issued a stern warning that any further acts of aggression by Israel will be met with an even stronger response from Tehran.

Brigadier General Kioumars Heidari declared that Iran's retaliatory operation against Israel has demonstrated that the Tel Aviv regime is not invincible.

Heidari emphasized the readiness of the Iranian Armed Forces for combat and their ability to counter Israeli aggression with a new strategic approach.

Highlighting the successful launch of missiles and drones in retaliation for Israel's attack on Iran's consulate in Syria, Heidari described it as a significant blow to the Zionist regime.

He stressed that the demolition of Israeli military installations aligns with Tehran's effective measures in countering and nullifying the support provided by the U.S. administration and its allies in West Asia and globally.

"The Iranian Armed Forces are now capable of tackling any form of threat and preempting it, thanks to constant vigilance," Heidari remarked.

"The bold and resolute action of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran resonated with millions of freedom-loving Muslims, grieving Gazans, and fighters from the Resistance factions, fulfilling the promise of truth prevailing over falsehood," he added.

Furthermore, Heidari emphasized that Iran's retaliatory strike precisely targeted the most strategically significant base and surveillance site of the Israeli military at the Jabal al-Sheikh Heights, situated on the border between the occupied Palestinian territories and Syria.

The General asserted that Iran's constant vigilance and watchfulness enable them to confront any threats effectively, as demonstrated by their recent attack on Israel showcasing their military prowess.

"Armed Forces decisively responded to the nation's request. Our forces proved that the Zionist regime is weaker than a spider's web," Haydari stated.

Heidari concluded his statement with a stark warning to Israel, stating that any further strategic mistakes will result in a much harsher response from Iran.

The escalating tensions between Iran and Israel underscore the volatile situation in the region, with both sides prepared for potential conflict.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

'Swift and comprehensive' response awaits Zionist adventurism, says ambassador

TEHRAN- Iranian ambassador to Turkey, Mohammad Hassan Habibollah Zadeh, has said that Tehran does not seek escalation, yet its reaction to any Israeli aggression will be "swift and comprehensive."

Habibollah Zadeh, in an interview with Turkish newspaper Aydinlik, stated that the Zionist regime's terror attack against the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus, Syria on April 1, 2024, is evaluated as a strong violation of international law and the UN Charter especially its article 2 (4) regarding the immunity of diplomatic buildings and embassies.

"To avoid increasing regional tensions, the Islamic Republic of Iran firstly focused on the legal, international and diplomatic path and later demanded from the United Nations Security Council to condemn this criminal terror attack and to take decided and appropriate measures to prosecute those responsible for it and to prevent such acts from happening again," Iranian diplomat stated.

According to the Iranian ambassador, due to the approach of the three Western permanent members, the Council failed in condemning this act and allowed the Israeli regime to violate basic principles of international law.

The diplomat reiterated that since the murders in the Gaza Strip started seven months ago, no serious step has been taken to stop the crimes of the Israeli regime against the Palestinian people.

"Facing the fact that the UN Security Council did not make any statement to condemn the recent criminal act, the Islamic Republic of Iran had no other choice but to punish the Israeli regime within the right of self-defense in accordance with UN Charter Article 51," he said, stressing that the Islamic Republic of Iran has acted with great restraint but reached a final position where the Zionist regime had to pay for its acts. The Israeli regime's current policy follows the objective of maintaining power and escaping justice by widening and intensifying the conflict.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Israel will be weakened if it attacks Iran

By Dr. Mohammadali Senobari

TEHRAN - The U.S. says it doesn't want to get involved in the Israel-Iran conflict. Really? What about Russia?

Russia has been on the defensive for a long time since 2014, defending Syrian sovereignty from Israeli attacks. Russia will participate in seizing the Golan heights, waiting for the momentum for Israeli military aggression. The more Israel engages and supports Ukraine, the more Eastern European NATO and Middle Eastern NATO will become connected.

Israel's advantage is that it unites the classic forces that won World War II. Once Israel decides to attack Iran alone, its real strength will automatically weaken, the Sykes–Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration will gradually collapse and all its supporting infrastructure.

If Israel and the USA do not decide to attack Iran, in fact there will be a significant decline in military and political technological hegemony. Aircraft carriers, fighter planes, deploy troops, old war technology designs. This old technology cannot control the Bab El Mandeb strait and the Strait of Hormuz, key to the trade war. Long wars require large funds. Colonial countries will not go to war if they suffer economic losses.

Iran has worked hard to design its military technology since 1979, only in 2024 will it be able to prove that it has broken through Iron Dome, David's Sling, Thad, Patriot and NATO's most advanced air defense technology. Iran fooled the air defense systems, alarms of British, French, U.S., Israeli and Jordanian warships and aircraft with hundreds of drones, after which the missiles followed with precise calculations.

There is no need for complicated verification to prove Israel's claim that 99% of projectiles were intercepted, or that more than half of the missiles and drones can escape and exceed Iran's targets. Verification can be seen from the next war policy decision, Iran is ready to attack 10 times more if Israel retaliates, the question is, did Israel and NATO retaliate apart from shooting missiles and drones coming from Iran at the time of the attack? Why not respond immediately and ensure that we will respond later, just like the demonstration and display of the colonial version of the war of genocide (Public Punishment and Self-defense) in Gaza?

Let's pay attention, distinguish between missile and drone squadron attacks, without the roar of airplanes competing with the F5 and Merkava. Distinguish between targets for Israeli military objects and targets for 15,000 babies and small children without air defense. From here the quality of the "man behind the gun" can be distinguished.

The race for sophistication of weapons and war is not always bad; it makes believers smart. And you have to be smarter, so that the world is ruled by good and smart people. Science and faith determine political diplomacy.

Game changer

Security landscape in West Asia poised to change after Operation 'True Promise'

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN – All eyes are now on West Asia after Iran carried out a large-scale and sophisticated operation against the occupied territories in response to Israel's attack on its embassy in Damascus.

Iranian officials said they wanted to teach Israel a lesson and demonstrate that a new chapter has begun in the country's fight against the Zionist regime. "From now on, Iran will respond from its own soil to any attack by Israel on Iranian interests, assets, notable people, and citizens in any part of the world," Major General Hossein Salami, The IRGC 's Chief Commander, said during an interview with Iranian media.

While Western states, which have been backing Israel in its genocidal attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip, condemned Iran for escalating tensions to "unprecedented levels", analysts believe Tehran was forced to take the action, partly due to the West's own conduct.

"Israel has been violating every international law and convention in the past 6 months. The West allowed that to happen by establishing that the regime is above the law. Israel broke another law by attacking our embassy and the West did nothing to condemn the act," said Hassan Hani Zadeh, an expert on international affairs. "What was Iran supposed to do? Sit back and watch another one



of its embassies get bombed? Iran had no other option but to create deterrence on its own. For two whole weeks, Tehran tried to get the West and the UN Security Council to do something but they all decided to stay silent," he added.

What will the future look like after Iran's retaliation?

It is widely believed that Iran's attack on the occupied territories has changed West Asia forever. Israel will either act more sensibly from now on or take the entire region down with it. A situation in between is also imaginable, but that depends on how the regime decides to respond to Operation True Promise.

Ali Abdi, an expert on Israel and Palestine, believes there are five possible scenarios the regime might try to execute as it weighs a response to Iran's retaliation:

1. Launching a direct assault on Iranian territory

2. Resurrecting the "shadow war" tactics

3. Carrying out attacks on one or two regional nations aligned with Iran

4. Targeting Rafah

5. Implementing a combination of options 2, 3, and 4

"I don't think Israel will directly strike Iranian soil because chances that such an attack would be successful is quite low or it might come with a high cost. The regime's main tool to carry out airstrikes is F35 fighter jets. It would be very difficult to fly to Iran's airspace, bomb a place, and then return unscathed" Abdi explained.

Israel's rogue nature means regional war is possible

Western officials have been asking Israel to refrain from responding to Iran and count the successful "downing of 99% of Iranian projectiles" as a victory. The fact that several of the missiles Iran fired still managed to hit their targets while the U.S., UK, France, and Jordan were working alongside Israel, might also demotivate the regime from further provoking Iran. However, some fear that Netanyahu might still decide to respond to Iran and eventually wage a regional war to save himself from losing his political career or ending in jail.

"It is quite evident by Iranian officials' remarks that they have not rolled out the possibility of Netanyahu making another idiotic mistake. They have vowed to hit Israel harder if Iranian soil or assets are harmed, and I believe they mean that. Iran will not stop until the regime backs down. This could easily lead to a large-scale war with regional and international consequences," Senior analyst on West Asia, Seyyed Hadi Afghahi, told the Tehran Times adding that Western states are to blame for the volatile situation of West Asia. "The West let Israel do whatever it wants and now it has to deal with an uncontrollable entity that is willing to sacrifice everyone for its own sake. Israel has been losing since October 7th, it needs something big to get itself out of the Gaza predicament and a regional war is perfect for that."

Regional chaos: the Zionist strategy

From Page 1 ▶ it is better understood as an anti-colonial ideology that shares non-negotiable objectives but allows for different strategies to achieve them. In this sense, the Resistance Axis differs completely from classical Western military coalitions, which are created ad hoc by like-minded states to combat a common threat without long-term commitments.

For years, the confrontation between the Resistance Axis and Israel has been kept within certain bounds by Iran, which has always sought to prevent the conflict from escalating into a total confrontation that deeply threatens the foundations of regional coexistence. It is important to remember that both for the Islamic Republic in general and for the current government led by President Raisi, the region is approached from the perspective of good neighborliness. This entails stabilizing the region through building relationships among neighbors and the absence of any extra-regional presence, especially from the United States.

On the other hand, Israel neither has the will nor the strategic need to stabilize the region; quite the opposite. It can be argued that Israel's political will is to prevent such stabilization, as it believes Iran would benefit from it.

Israel's need to prevent regional stabilization explains the new phase of the conflict we find ourselves in. This stage began in December 2023 when Israel attacked a building in the Zainabiyah neighborhood of Damascus, killing Seyed Razi Mousavi, one of the main leaders of the Revolutionary Guard in Syria. This is compounded by the situation in Gaza, where the Zionist colonial army has failed to eliminate Hamas after more than 6 months of genocide. Israel's strategy of total chaos stems from its lack of strategic vision beyond mere elimination of the Palestinian population.

Meanwhile, Iran has become the primary regional actor in political terms due to a series of key factors in recent decades, such as the invasion of Iraq and the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, as well as Saudi Arabia's defeat in Yemen. In recent months, joint operations by Hezbollah from Lebanon and the Yemeni group Ansarallah, along with Palestinian resistance in Gaza, have put Israel in an extremely difficult situation. Additionally, Jordan, although not part of the Resistance Axis, faces a threat to its stability due to massive protests in support of Palestine and against the Jordanian authorities, whom protesters perceive as unsupportive of the Palestinian cause. From a geopolitical and strategic perspective, Jordanian cooperation is crucial for maintaining occupation in Palestine, especially in the West Bank.

In summary, the inability to dismantle Hamas, along with the actions of the Resistance Axis, has forced Israel to escalate its campaign of regional destabilization and total war.

Iran has made it clear on multiple occasions that it does not seek to escalate hostilities. In this regard, it is worth mentioning Iran's doctrine of strategic patience, which implies a certain moderation by Iran in responding to Israeli attacks and provocations. However, this doctrine should not be interpreted as passivity or defeatism in the face of the Zionist Entity's presence. Iran recognizes the liberation of Palestine as an irrevocable objective, but also understands the need to approach this objective with caution. In no case does this imply a departure from support for the Palestinian cause, which is fundamental in the founding discourse of the Islamic Republic.

But due to recent actions, especially the attack on the consulate in Damascus, it is perceived that Israel has exhausted Iran's strategic patience. It seems that the previous strategy of responses is no longer effective as a deterrent measure. At this moment, decision-makers in Iran are faced with a dilemma: escalation could lead to a larger conflict, but containment policy could also trigger war by weakening Iran's deterrent capability and strengthening Israel's impunity.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

We do not seek conflict with Iran: U.S.

TEHRAN- In a press briefing Monday, Pat Ryder, the Press Secretary of the United States Department of Defense, asserted that Washington is not seeking escalation in its relations with Iran.

When queried about the potential Israeli response to Iran's recent strike on occupied territories, General Ryder refrained from speculating on behalf of Israel, emphasizing that such decisions are theirs to make.

He reiterated the U.S.'s steadfast focus on defending Israel and safeguarding U.S. forces in the region while emphasizing a commitment to preventing a broader regional conflict through ongoing consultations with partners and allies.

Addressing the defense of Israel, General Ryder underscored the robust support of the United States and highlighted the longstanding security cooperation with Israel and other regional nations in addressing shared threats, emphasizing the significance of these relationships in saving lives.

Responding to inquiries about statements from Israeli Chief of the General Staff, General Halevi, regarding potential Israeli retaliation, Ryder clarified that no response had been confirmed at that time, reiterating the U.S.'s dedication to close consultation with Israeli partners to prevent regional escalation.

Regarding discussions with regional states like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan in anticipation of Israeli retaliation, Ryder emphasized the current focus on defending Israel and protecting U.S. forces in the region.

When asked about potential U.S. military support for Israel, Ryder declined to engage in hypothetical scenarios, instead highlighting recent collaborative efforts between the U.S., Israel, and coalition partners in defending Israel and reiterating the U.S.'s stance against wider regional conflict.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin's statement on April 13 revealed that the U.S. intercepted dozens of missiles and UAVs en route to Israel, originating from Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

Defense minister hails army's contribution to national security

TEHRAN – The Iranian defense minister has highlighted the army's transformation into a symbol of self-reliance and confidence in defense and security, attributing this state of progress to technological advancements and notable achievements.

Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani issued a statement on the occasion of the National Army Day, which is celebrated annually on April 18, emphasizing the significant progress of the Iranian army during the decades after the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979.

The statement paid homage to the heroic establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's army under the visionary leadership of Imam Khomeini during critical moments of the Islamic Revolution and the nation's history.

Reflecting on the army's integral role since the inception of the Islamic Revolution, the statement acknowledged its unwavering commitment during the years of Iran-Iraq war, emphasizing its continuous efforts in safeguarding the nation's prosperity and aiding those affected by natural disasters.

Highlighting the army's capabilities, the message underscored its pivotal role in maintaining the Islamic Republic's deterrent power regionally and globally. It attributed much of this success to the tireless dedication of soldiers across various branches, who have defended the nation's territorial integrity against adversaries.

Moreover, Ashtiani recognized the collaborative efforts between the Iranian army and other armed forces, particularly the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), which have yielded remarkable achievements, including the successful execution of operations such as "Truthful Promise."

In conclusion, General Ashtiani extended heartfelt congratulations on the National Army Day to all soldiers and citizens of Iran, expressing hopes for continued military progress and enhanced deterrent capabilities under the leadership of Ayatollah Khamenei.

Shortly before midnight Sunday, Iran launched a swarm of drones and missiles at the occupied Palestinian territories in response to the Zionist regime's cowardly strike on Iran's consulate in Damascus on April 1.

SPORTS

Foreign coaches face uphill battle in Iran football

TEHRAN - Paco Jemez's departure from Tractor football team highlights the ongoing struggles of foreign coaches in Iran's top football league, the Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL).

Under Jemez's stewardship, Tractor narrowly missed out on their maiden Iran league title. A crushing 4-1 defeat to Zob Ahan last week left them 10 points adrift of leaders Esteghlal, a result that proved costly for the Spanish coach.

According to the media reports, Jemez asked to leave the Tabriz-based club, and his request was approved. The 54-year-old had been in charge since December 2022 but failed to deliver any silverware during his tenure.

Sepahan, another big Iranian team with a foreign coach, Portuguese José Morais, have also fallen short of expectations. Despite being title favorites and spending heavily on big-name players, Sepahan's championship hopes have been dashed due to their poor recent form, including only earning two points in their last matches.

Marinos Ouzounidis, Greek coach of Gol Gohar Sirjan, has similarly failed to meet expectations, leaving the team languishing in mid-table, far from the top-four finish fans had anticipated.

The 2023/24 PGPL season has seen further foreign coaches' departure, with Spanish managers Juan Ignacio Martínez and Lucas Alcaraz departing Foolad and Nassaji respectively before the season's end, unable to deliver the desired results.

Several factors contribute to the struggles of foreign coaches in Iran. One is a lack of familiarity with the Iranian football culture and conditions. The foreign coaches need time to adapt, which can hinder their performance.

Another factor is managerial instability. The Iranian clubs frequently experience managerial changes, creating instability and disrupting long-term plans.

Supporters' pressure also plays a role. The Iranian fans are passionate about their teams and demand immediate success. The foreign coaches face intense scrutiny and are quickly scapegoated when results falter.

"The Iranian football is a world of its own," said former Iran national team coach Carlos Queiroz. "The foreign coaches must adapt to these unique circumstances to succeed."

Until these challenges are adequately addressed, the foreign coaches are likely to continue facing an uphill battle in Iran.

Ghafour called up to Iran national volleyball team

TEHRAN - A key player of Iran's golden generation, 32-year-old opposite Amir Ghafour, has been called up to the National Team.

The 2.02m-tall striker bade farewell to the national team last year but head coach Mauricio Motta Paes has called up to Team Melli.

The opposite helped Iran qualify for the Olympic Games for the first time in history and represented Iran at both Rio 2016, where they took fifth place, and Tokyo 2020 where they finished ninth.

Ghafour is going to represent Iran in the 2024 Volleyball Nations League (VNL) to push Team Melli for Paris 2024.

He was invited to national team in 2011 and made his debut in the adult Iranian national team and participated in the Asian Championship, when Iran won inaugural gold medals.

Ghafour debuted national game as a fix player in 2012 Summer Olympics qualification with invitations Julio Velasco. Ghafour helped the Iran national team win the second gold medal Asian Championship in 2013 and was named Best Spiker in the tournament.

Farhad Majidi a candidate to lead Tractor: IPL

TEHRAN - Ittihad Kalba coach Farhad Majidi is a candidate to take charge for Tractor football team.

Tractor and Spanish coach Paco Jemez parted company by mutual consent on Monday.

The Tabriz-based team has almost missed the chance of winning the Iran football league for the first time.

Tractor lost to Zob Ahan 4-1 on Friday and is now 10 points behind leader Esteghlal.

With seven weeks remaining, Tractor sit third in the 2023-24 Iran Professional League (IPL) table with 40 points.

The local media reports suggest Majidi has shown interest in taking charge of Tractor.

Yahya Golmohammadi, Rasoul Khatibi and Firouz Karimi are also among the candidates to lead the top-flight team.

Tractor will face Nassaji in Matchweek 24 on Friday.

Jemez, 54, was appointed as Tractor coach in December 2022 but didn't win a trophy with the club.

Iran runners-up at AVC Beach Tour 23rd Samila Open

TEHRAN – Iran's Abbas Pourasgari/Alireza Aghajani came second in the AVC Beach Tour 23rd Samila Open on Tuesday.

Australian fifth seeds Paul Burnett/Jack Pearse, who won their first Beach Pro Tour Futures event together last November in Geelong, overcame Pourasgari/ Aghajani 21-17, 21-18 in the final.

The competition was held in Songkhla, Thailand from April 13 to 16.

It was Iran's third medal in volleyball in the recent weeks. Team Melli won a silver medal at the 2024 China International Snow Volleyball Invitational Tournament in late March.

Iran also won the gold medal of the "Smart" AVC Beach Tour Nuvali Open in Philippines' City of Santa Rosa on April 7.

Greco-Roman wrestlers win golds at Asian championships

TEHRAN – Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers Naser Alizadeh and Amin Mirzazadeh claimed two gold medal in the 2024 Asian Wrestling Championships on Monday in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Mirzazadeh showed once again how unstoppable he is from par terre, as he rolled Minseok Kim (KOR) two times for all the points he needed in a 5-0 victory in the 130kg final.

"I really practiced hard for this and tried a lot to be able to create a significant difference with the other competitors and it makes me happy," Mirzazadeh said.

It was the first time in three matches that the Iranian didn't end it with enough gut wrenches from par terre, but it still got the job done, UWW.org reported.

Mirzazadeh had beaten Kim previously in the first round of the Tokyo Olympics, where he ended up taking a disappointing fifth by losing to the legendary Riza Kayaalp (TUR) in the bronze-medal match.

Mirzazadeh lost to Kayaalp again in the final of the 2022 worlds, but gained his revenge and his first world title in the gold-medal match last September in Belgrade. That makes him a leading candidate to end the hopes of Mijain Lopez (CUB) for an unprecedented fifth Olympic gold in Paris.

"I think it was a really great start for further preparation for the Olympics," Mirzazadeh said. "From tomorrow, when the competition ends, I have to start training and trying to make my people happy with the title in the Olympics."

At 87kg, Alizadeh maintained his dominance of Nursultan Tursynov (KAZ), beating him at the Asian Championships for the fourth year in a row and in a second consecutive final.

Alizadeh was never really challenged and clinched a 5-0 victory with a 2-point throw from par terre at the edge in the second period.

Alizadeh had beaten Tursynov in the first round in both 2021 and 2022 before defeating him 8-0 in last year's final in Astana. The 33-year-old Tursynov does have an Asian gold medal, won back in 2014.

Iran's monthly PMI hits 10-month high

TEHRAN - Iran's new Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data for the fiscal month of Esfand (February 20 – March 19, 2024), released by the Iran Chamber of Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), has marked a 10-month high.

The new PMI rose by a slight 0.74 points in the month under review to settle at 55.79, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Although the PMI was on an upward trajectory, it saw a slighter increase in comparison to the same month of last year largely due to the growing forex rate and concurrence with the fasting month of Ramadan.

The findings of this survey suggest that the growing forex rate has increased the cost of raw material supplies, forcing companies to increase the prices of their products.

Heightened political and economic uncertainty has made it difficult for companies to predict future conditions and make plans.

The Statistics and Economic Analysis Center of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the sponsor and coordinator of the survey, announces the whole economy PMI data in a report every month.

The headline PMI is a number from 0 to 100, such that over 50 shows an expansion of the economy when compared with the previous month. A PMI reading under 50 indicates contraction and a reading of 50 implies no change.

PMI is an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends, aiming to provide information about business conditions to company directors, analysts, and purchasing managers.

Iran, Russia finalizing agreement for constructing Rasht-Astara railway

TEHRAN - Tehran and Moscow are finalizing the draft of a contract for the implementation of the agreement to construct the Rasht-Astara Railway.

In a meeting held between Deputy Minister of Russian Railways Sergey Pavlov and Iran's Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali, the two sides emphasized compiling the contract for the implementation of the agreement to construct the Rasht-Astara Railway.

During the meeting, the two sides explored avenues for the development of transportation within the framework of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

In addition, the two sides examined the trend of bilateral cooperation regarding the construction of the Rasht-Astara Railway with the framework of the INSTC, according to the website of Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.

The Deputy Minister of Russian Railways acknowledged during the meeting that transporting containerized cargo from the eastern side of the INSTC registered a 400 percent growth through 'Sarakhs' and 'Incheh boroun' customs in the first quarter of the current year (January-March) compared to the same period last year.

Talks are ongoing between Tehran and Moscow to determine the tariff for transporting chemical fertilizer and coal from Russia to Iran, the United Arab Emirates and India, Pavlov added.

Iran and Russia, both under harsh Western sanctions, on May 17 inked an agreement on the long-stalled construction of a railway connecting the northern Iranian cities of Rasht and Astara.

بانک ملی ایران

Bank Melli Iran capital increased by 25 thousand Tomans

Using the legal authority of the government in the 1402 budget, the National Bank of Iran increases its capital by 250 trillion rials through the issuance of bonds.

According to BMI public relations, these bonds were issued for an amount equal to 250 trillion Rials through Iran Fara Bourse Co. on the 28th of Esfand, 1402 (March 18, 2024).

This capital increase will play an effective role in improving the financial and supervisory ratios of the bank, including enhancing the capital adequacy ratio and increasing the capacity for lending and providing loans to help people solve problems and provide financial support to businesses, all of which have been facilitated in the thirteenth government.

TPO inks 30 deals to export technical engineering services

TEHRAN – The Director General of the Export Office of Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO) has said his organization has signed 30 deals with foreign partners to export technical and engineering services.

Mohammadreza Karimzadeh said the country has also dispatched several groups of engineers and technical contractors to Iraq, Russia, and China, IRNA reported.

"There is a prospect of growth in the country's service exports this year, and so far, in addition to 30 technical and engineering contracts with different countries, delegations have been sent to China, Russia, and Iraq," Karimzadeh said.



The official put the value of the exports of technical and engineering services in the previous Iranian calendar year at $1.292 billion, saying that Iran currently exports such services to more than 20 countries across the globe.

Referring to the serious will of the government to facilitate the export of technical and engineering services, Karimzadeh said: "To support cross-border activities in the field of exporting technical and engineering services, last year measures such as amending the executive regulations for supporting exporters of technical and engineering services (approved by the Cabinet of Ministers)), the drafting of the support package for exporters of engineering and technical services and the drafting of the market development plan for engineering services in export target countries have been carried out."

Emphasizing the support of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization for the exporters of technical and engineering services, he added: "Last year, we sent various trade delegations to Iraq, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia."

Annual non-oil exports to Afghanistan up 13%

TEHRAN - Iran exported over $1.8 billion of non-oil products to the neighboring country in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 19, 2024), registering a 13.6 percent growth compared to a year earlier, an official at the Iranian Embassy in Afghanistan said.

Iran's Commercial Attaché in Afghanistan Hossein Roustaei said the country exported 3,414 tons of non-oil products worth $1.871 billion to Afghanistan in the previous year, Mehr News Agency reported.

According to the official, Iran's annual non-oil exports to Afghanistan also rose by 28 percent in terms of weight compared to the same period last year.

Increasing the number of trade and business delegations, facilitating the activities at border crossings, increasing working hours at the customs offices, holding joint economic commission meetings between the two countries in Tehran, holding business conferences in Kabul, Herat, Tehran, and Mashhad, and holding an exhibition of the export potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Herat were among the most important factors in the rise in the export of non-oil goods from Iran to Afghanistan, he emphasized.

Oil products, iron and steel ingots, natural gas, light and heavy hydrocarbons, iron, steel, foodstuff, types of polyethylene, fresh fruits and vegetables, and cement were among the main products exported from Iran to Afghanistan in this period, Roustaei added.

TEDPIX falls nearly 5,000 points on Tuesday

TEHRAN – TEDPIX, the main index of the Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 4,998 points to 2,201,908 on Tuesday, which is the fourth day of the Iranian calendar week.

TSE is one of the four Iranian stock exchanges, and the most important one. The other three ones are the Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

SEO determined to support shareholders: Eshqi

Head of Iran's Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) Majid Eshghi has said the organization is determined to support shareholders in the stock market, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a meeting attended by economic operators from financial institutions, analysts, and capital market media, Eshqi said "Political, social, and economic debates have created some high expectations from the stock market."

As IRNA reported, the official referred to the complexity of the prevailing conditions in the market, announcing the serious determination of this organization to support the rights of shareholders.

"The mistrust among the shareholders under the influence of various factors caused the creation of difficult conditions in the market, and now we need empathy given such a problem and to overcome these conditions," he said.

Eshqi further said when the condition of the capital market is not very suitable, naturally, private sector companies are not very willing to offer their shares in the stock market and they believe that there is not much value for the companies in this market.

Previous experiences, however, indicate that the current conditions governing the market cannot be continued in the long term, the official added.

Iran's oil output hits 3.25m bpd in March: EIA

TEHRAN - The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) has announced in its latest report that Iran produced 3.25 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil in March 2024, 20,000 bpd more than the previous month.

According to the EIA report, Iran's oil production in February stood at 3.23 million bpd.

Iran has produced an average of 3.2 million barrels of oil per day in the first quarter of this year, based on the report.

Iran's oil production in the first quarter of this year has increased by 50,000 bpd compared to the fourth quarter of the previous year and by 630,000 barrels per day compared to the first quarter of 2023.

Iran produced 2.6 million bpd of oil in the first quarter of the previous year and 3.18 million bpd in the fourth quarter of the mentioned year.

With an increase of 630,000 barrels in oil production over the past year, Iran had the highest production rise among OPEC members, according to EIA.

Gabon, Nigeria, and Venezuela have been the only OPEC members to increase production over the past year. The production of Gabon increased by 10,000 bpd, Nigeria by 40,000 bpd, and Venezuela by 90,000 bpd.

OPEC oil production in the first quarter of last year was 27.380 million bpd, which has decreased by 720,000 barrels to 26.660 million in the first quarter of 2024.

Based on the EIA report, Iran maintained its position as the organization's third oil producer in March.

Foreign journalists pay visit to China's International Horticultural Exhibition site

By Mahnaz Abdi

BEIJING- Foreign journalists from around the world paid a visit to the site of China's International Horticultural Exhibition 2019 in Yanqing District, in the northwest of Beijing, on Sunday (April 14).

The International Horticultural Exhibition 2019, Beijing, China (Expo 2019 Beijing), with the approval of the International Association of Horticultural Producers (AIPH) and the recognition of Bureau of International Expositions (BIE), was the largest international horticultural exposition of the highest level (category A1) hosted by the People's Government of Beijing Municipality and organized by the Chinese Government.

The Expo was also named as "the International Horticultural Exhibition at the Foot of the Great Wall".

Expo 2019 Beijing was successfully held in Yanqing District, Beijing from April 29, 2019 to October 7, 2019 as an important part of China's major diplomatic events in 2019 and the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

At the opening ceremony on April 28, XI Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, delivered a speech entitled "Pursuing a Green Life and Building a Beautiful Home", and at the closing ceremony on October 9, Premier LI Keqiang expressed the vision of "promoting the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and creating a better future for mankind".

With the theme of "Live Green, Live Better", Expo 2019 Beijing attracted 110 countries and international organizations.

The indoor floricultural displays and competitions and more than 3,200 cultural activities held at more than 100 outdoor exhibition gardens and the China Pavilion, the International Pavilion, the Botanical Pavilion, the Life Experience Pavilion, fully demonstrated the achievements of China and the world in horticulture and green ecology development, as well as the colorful and unique cultures of the Chinese nation and the participating countries, attracting 9.34 million tourists.

The 2019 Beijing International Expo was the second A1 International Horticultural Exhibition hosted by China after the 1999 Kunming International Horticultural Exposition. 1.2 Site Expo 2019 Beijing was held in Yanqing District, Beijing.

The park covers an area of 503 hectares, with a land area of 307 hectares and a water area of 196 hectares.

Yanqing District, which is in the northwest of Beijing and blessed with an excellent ecological environment and a unique climate that is cold in winter and cool in summer, is known as the "summer capital" and an important ecological conservation belt of Beijing.

Theme and concept

The theme of the Beijing Expo was "Live Green, Live Better".

"Live Green" meant to make people respect, protect and integrate into nature, and deeply plant the life concept of green, low-carbon and environmentally friendly into people's heart relying on horticulture.

"Live Better" showed the idea of accelerating the development of a resource-conserving and environment-friendly society, promoting the development and prosperity of global horticulture, and working together to build a colorful and beautiful home.

The concept of the Beijing Expo was "make horticulture part of nature; let nature touch the soul".

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Sheer barbarism

Israel is under fire for killing Palestinian civilians, using AI to commit 'domicide' in Gaza

From page 1 ▶ Citing testimony from several Israeli intelligence sources, the report said Israel has used artificial intelligence (AI) systems to pursue Hamas and Islamic Jihad members.

Two sources said the killing of up to 20 civilians were permitted during airstrikes on low-ranking members of the resistance groups in the early weeks of the war.

They also said Israel judged it permissible to kill more than 100 civilians in attacks on top-ranking Hamas officials.

The sources noted that unguided munitions known as "dumb bombs" were typically used in attacks on such targets.

Israel's use of dumb bombs with the assistance of AI to flatten Palestinian homes in Gaza over their alleged links to resistance groups could help explain the shockingly high death toll in the territory.

Israel's use of powerful AI systems in its Gaza onslaught has entered uncharted territory for advanced warfare. The move has also raised a host of legal and moral questions.

UN rights experts have condemned the purported use of artificial intelligence by Israel in Gaza which resulted in an unprecedented



toll on the civilian population.

"We are especially concerned about the alleged use of AI to target 'family homes' of suspected Hamas operatives, typically at night when they sleep, with unguided munitions known as 'dumb' bombs, with little regard for civilians who may be in or around that home," they said.

The experts added, "If proven true, the shocking revelations of the use of AI systems by the Israeli military such as 'Gospel', 'Lavender' and 'Where's Daddy?', combined with lowered human due diligence to avoid or minimize civilian casualties and infrastructure, contribute to explaining the extent of the death toll and home destruction in Gaza," the experts said.

They stressed that the deliberate demolition of Palestinian homes in Gaza amounts to war crimes.

"The systematic and widespread destruction of housing, services and civilian infrastructure represents a crime against humanity, a domicide, as well as numerous war crimes and acts of genocide as described by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory in her recent report to the Human Rights Council," they said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly said the war declared on Gaza aims to "destroy" Hamas, a dream which has so far remained elusive due to growing support for the Palestinian resistance.

Netanyahu has also said the Israeli army will continue the war until "total victory" over Hamas.

But, Israel's war aims have been called into doubt.

"With Israeli public officials joining calls for Palestinians to leave Gaza, to take back Gaza to build settlements again, and ostensible enthusiasm expressed by prominent former US government officials for Gaza beachfront properties, there is little doubt that Israel's intent goes far beyond the purposes of military defeat of Hamas," the UN experts have said.

Western countries, in particular the U.S., have thrown their full weight behind Israel's war of genocide on Gaza. They claim that Israel has the right to defend itself against attacks launched by Palestinian resistance groups.

But, these countries which consider themselves as leading human rights advocates have turned a blind eye to the massacres carried out by Israel in Gaza.

Chilling discovery of mass graves in Gaza

Israel "exploited shameful international silence"

From page 1 ▶ The statement emphasized that this endless series of atrocities, discovered in the al-Shifa Medical Complex and its surroundings, including mass graves, signs of executions, and hundreds of bodies still under the rubble, as well as the massive destruction that befell the complex and its sections, are "a charge against the international community and its political, humanitarian, and judicial institutions, foremost among them the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, as described and documented war crimes."

Hamas reiterated its demand that international institutions "fulfill their role by holding the leaders of this rogue entity accountable immediately."

The Gaza Media Office announced the retrieval of the bodies of nine patients, (including an elderly man and a woman who were identified by family members) from the mass grave discovered at the al-Shifa hospital, noting that the search operations for the bodies of the remaining people "were temporarily halted due to the occupation's aircraft flying over the medical complex."

Another mass grave has been discovered in northern Gaza by the Health Ministry and the Civil Defense Forces.

Reports say it contained 20 members of the same family killed in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip. Residents said all 20 bodies were members of the al-Assaf family that had been killed in an Israeli military offensive in the area four months ago.

The Gaza Media Office had announced earlier this month that the occupation regime committed a massacre resulting in the deaths of 400 people in the al-Shifa Medical Complex, adding that "the occupation committed a shocking crime against humanity by destroying, burning, and bulldozing the al-Shifa complex, and by killing and arresting more than 700 Palestinian civilians." It called for establishing field hospitals to save the health sector.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) says, "No hospitals in Gaza are fully functioning any longer. IRC staff and partners in Gaza continue to witness devastation in the health facilities that are left.

With Gaza's health system decimated by Israel, diseases once easily controlled are now spreading, and children, especially malnourished children, are the most susceptible .... Patients as young as four months old are dying from preventable or easily treatable diseases like pneumonia and gastroenteritis.

Many patients arrive either dead on arrival or too sick to warrant resuscitation due to delaying their care."

Search operations for the bodies of civilians continue in the al-Shifa Medical Complex after dozens of bodies were discovered following the second invasion of the hospital by the occupation forces, which besieged the health center for about two weeks.

Hundreds of Israeli army soldiers, armed with weapons and police dogs, as well as dozens of tanks, drones, and helicopters, participated in the second invasion of al-Shifa hospital, firing bullets, shells, and missiles heavily inside the complex towards patients, displaced persons, and civilians.

The assault, which constitutes a war crime, resulted in the death and injury of hundreds of civilians while some facilities inside the hospital were set on fire.

Survivors of the Israeli military's raid on the hospital said they witnessed the summary execution of Palestinians, including children at point-blank range, by Israeli troops during the assault, which started in mid-March.

Gaza's Ministry of Health has also appealed to relevant institutions to "establish field hospitals in Gaza City and northern Gaza Strip" to provide health services, at least minimally, after the al-Shifa medical facility and several hospitals went out of service completely.

Meanwhile, Malak Haniyeh, the granddaughter of Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the Hamas political bureau, succumbed to her wounds, joining her father and members of her family who were assassinated in an Israeli airstrike targeting a vehicle they were traveling in the Shati refugee camp.

The assassination of Hamas leader's family members has not held the group back from offering any concessions in negotiations with the Israelis.

Hamas leader Ezzat al-Reshq says a permanent ceasefire is the only guarantee to protect Palestinians and "stop the waterfall of blood and massacres".

"There will be no concessions to the complete withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from the Gaza Strip and the free return of all the displaced Palestinians to return to their homes after being forcibly removed," he pointed out.

The senior Hamas official says the Israeli occupation regime wants a temporary agreement to release its captives, after which the war and genocide will resume.

Al-Reshq also says attempts by Netanyahu and his government to release the Israeli captives being held in the Gaza Strip by force have failed, and there is no alternative to releasing the captives without a credible deal with the Palestinian resistance movement.

He went on to say that after more than six months the occupation regime is still floundering and has not and will not achieve any victory, highlighting the regime's targeting of civilians and all aspects of civilian life "are signs of defeat, not preludes to victory".

Sudan war: What a year of conflict has done to the country in numbers

With thousands dead and millions more facing starvation, the UN is calling for emergency aid

One year on from the beginning of Sudan's civil war, much of the country has been left in ruins and the death toll continues to rise.

The war between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemeti, and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, began on 15 April last year.

The statistics are stark behind the images and stories of conflict.

According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which the United Nations cites, there have been more than 15,550 "reported fatalities" in Sudan over a year of war. However, that is considered to be much lower than the true death toll.

Most of the violence, ACLED said, was recorded in Khartoum. "Targeted violence in Darfur was twice as likely to be deadly for civilians than targeted violence in other states in Sudan," it said, adding that 32 percent of all reported civilian deaths were recorded in the restive western region.

In fact, UN experts in January said 10,000 to 15,000 people were killed in West Darfur's state capital el-Geneina alone. In June and November, Middle East Eye reported on mass killings in the city when the RSF and allied Arab militias targeted members of the Black African Masalit community.

Meanwhile, the war has displaced 10.7 million people, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council, the second highest number this century after the Syrian war. Around 1.7 million of those are in neighbouring countries, particularly Chad and Egypt.

The fighting has also left 25 million Sudanese suffering from hunger or malnutrition, with children dying of starvation across the country.

'Disaster' for children

On Monday, the United Nations's children's agency, UNICEF, released a set of statistics about the scale of the disaster in Sudan, particularly its impact on children.

The organisation said an estimated 8.9 million children are currently grappling with acute food insecurity, with 4.9 million now having reached emergency levels.

Just under four million children under five are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition this year.

Around 730,000 children are expected to suffer from life-threatening severe acute malnutrition, while more than 90 percent of the country's 19 million school-age children have no access to formal education.

"This brutal war and potential famine is creating an ominous environment for a catastrophic loss of children's lives," UNICEF deputy executive director Ted Chaiban said on Monday.

"Almost half of the children suffering from severe acute malnutrition are in areas that are hard to access, where there is ongoing fighting, making their conditions all the more dire."

UNICEF also said it is urgently asking for $240m for the next six months to prevent famine in the 93 most vulnerable places in Sudan, which are home to 3.5 million children under five.

For its part, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said at least one child dies every two hours at North Darfur's Zamzam displacement camp alone.

The UN has warned that "222,000 children could die of starvation within a few weeks or months" and "more than 700,000 this year".

(See full text at www.tehrantimes.com)

WORLD HEADLINES

UN: Israel must stop settler attacks

The United Nations has voiced grave concern over escalating violence in the West Bank, demanding that Israeli security forces "immediately" stop supporting settler attacks on Palestinians in the occupied territory.

The statement from the UN's human rights office was issued hours after two Palestinian men were killed by Israeli settlers in a northern village south of Nablus, in the latest violent attack involving settlers in the increasingly tense West Bank, the Guardian reported.

Monday's violence brought to eight the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces or armed settlers since Friday, as Palestinian authorities reported an increasing number of attacks by settlers across the West Bank.

"From devastating injuries sustained in airstrikes, to the trauma of being caught in violent clashes, their stories paint a harrowing picture of the human consequences of conflict," UNICEF communications specialist Tess Ingram – who left Gaza on Monday after spending two weeks there – told a UN press briefing in Geneva, according to Al Arabiya news agency.

More than 12,000 children have been injured in Gaza since October 7, 2023, she said, adding this is "almost certainly an underestimate."

With at least 70 children injured in Gaza every day, often left to "languish in pain," according to Ingram, there is an urgent need to increase the number of medical evacuations to facilitate access to proper care.

"With one child killed or injured every 10 minutes, above anything else we need a ceasefire," Ingram said.

She added: "Imagine being strip-searched, left naked and questioned for hours. Told that you are safe and you can leave, you quickly walk away down the street, praying. But then, you are shot at. Your father is killed and a bullet penetrates your naked pelvis causing serious internal and external injuries that will require reconstructive surgery."

Unexploded 1,000-pound bombs found in Gaza schools

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees said Tuesday it had found unexploded 1,000-pound bombs inside schools after Israel pulled troops out of southern Gaza's main city Khan Yunis, AFP reported.

The Israeli army has carried out relentless air strikes and bombardments in Gaza since October 7.

UN agencies led an "assessment mission" in Khan Yunis after Israeli forces withdrew from the embattled city last week, UNRWA said.

It found "significant challenges in operating safely due to the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXOs), including 1,000-pound bombs inside schools and on roads".

"Thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) require a range of lifesaving assistance, including health, water and sanitation, and food," it said.

Earlier this month, the United Nations said it would take "millions of dollars and many years to decontaminate the (Gaza) Strip from unexploded munitions".

"We work off the rule of thumb that 10 percent of ordnance doesn't function as designed," UN Mine Action Service chief Charles Birch said in a statement earlier this month.

"We estimate that, to begin the clearance of Gaza, we need around $45 million."

IRC: Gaza vulnerable to epidemic-era infectious diseases

Gaza's "once-vibrant health system" and aid efforts have been decimated by Israel, and the population faces "famine, malnutrition, and infectious disease outbreaks", the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and its partners warned in a statement.

Projections by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Johns Hopkins Center for Humanitarian Health indicate that even with an immediate ceasefire, up to nearly 12,000 people would die in Gaza as a result of disease, the statement also read, Al Jazeera reported.

"No hospitals in Gaza are fully functioning any longer. IRC staff and partners in Gaza continue to witness devastation in the health facilities that are left," said Dr Seema Jilani, IRC's senior health technical adviser for emergencies.

"While there have not been large-scale epidemics in Gaza for over a decade, the population has now been left vulnerable to infectious diseases such as flu, COVID, pneumonia, bacterial dysentery, cholera, polio, measles and meningitis," she added.

The IRC reiterated its call for an immediate ceasefire and unfettered aid access to prevent the total collapse of public health in the besieged Gaza Strip.

One Gaza child 'killed or injured every 10 minutes': UNICEF

Children in Gaza have become the faces of the ongoing war painting a "harrowing picture" of the conflict, a UNICEF official said on Tuesday.

Gaza war takes toll on Israel's 2023 GDP

Israel's war against Gaza has taken a larger toll on economic growth in the final three months of 2023 than previously thought.

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics said on Tuesday that gross domestic product decreased an annualized 21.0% in the fourth quarter over the third quarter, decreasing 5.7% at a quarterly rate, according to the Jerusalem Post.

This third estimate followed a 19.4% decline in its preliminary estimate, which was revised to a 20.7% contraction last month.

CBS said the fourth-quarter market contraction was directly impacted by the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Ukraine runs out of missiles

Russia was able to destroy a key power plant serving Kyiv because Ukraine ran out of defensive missiles, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has claimed.

Speaking to US news outlet PBS on Tuesday, Zelenskyy's comments follow repeated warnings from his government to its allies about scarce air defenses. Ukraine is desperately calling for ammunition as Russia scales up strikes on its infrastructure.

The Trypilska thermal power plant (TTPP), one of the biggest electricity suppliers to the Kyiv region, was destroyed by Russian missiles on April 11.

"There were 11 missiles flying. We destroyed the first seven, and [the remaining] four destroyed Trypillia," he said, referring to the village in which the power plant is situated. 'Why? Because there were zero missiles. We ran out of missiles to defend Trypillia."

Storms lash Pakistan, Afghanistan

At least 50 people have died in Pakistan in storms that have been lashing the country, officials said on Tuesday, as they urged emergency services to remain on high alert.

Authorities in Afghanistan also reported a death toll of 50 the same day.

Most of the deaths in Pakistan were reported in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where torrential rains and flash floods triggered landslides, damaged homes and uprooted trees.

Kandovan village: East Azarbaijan's tourist magnet

TEHRAN - During the Nowruz and Eid al-Fitr holidays, Kandovan, shining in UN Tourism's tentative list of best villages, stood out as a popular tourist spot.

In an interview with IRNA, on Tuesday, East Azarbaijan's director-general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, shed light on the remarkable tourism achievements of the historical village of Kandovan during the recent Nowruz and Eid al-Fitr holidays.

Ahmad Hamzehzadeh highlighted Kandovan's significant position as the fifth most visited village in Iran, which secured its spot after villages, Sohili in Qeshm, Javaherdeh in Ramsar, Palangan in Kurdistan, and Altappeh in Behshahr, showcasing its growing appeal among tourists.

Referring to the significant role and impact of registering the village of Kandovan on the shortlist of the best tourism villages across the world past year, the official stated, "As a result, we have witnessed an increasing number of domestic and foreign tourists to this historical village since the second half of the previous year."

Hamzehzadeh considered the beautiful landscapes and unique views of Kandovan village as one of its most important advantages in becoming a global attraction and noted that the province's Cultural Heritage Department planned various programs to familiarize and increase visits to this precious hamlet.

"The influx of tourists to this village," the director-general added, "during the third wave of travel in the wake of the Eid al-Fitr holidays was very remarkable."

Hamzehzadee also announced a 30% increase in tourist arrivals to East Azarbaijan during the Eid al-Fitr holidays.

"During these days, 1,932,000 entered East Azarbaijan," he added, "which is a significant figure."

Delving deeper into the local tourism landscape, Hamzehzadeh revealed that 692,817 individuals explored the various tourists, showing an 11% surge compared to the same figure of a year earlier.

Moreover, he disclosed a 13% increase in museum visits, with 44,325 enthusiasts.

"Diverse cultural and artistic programs in museums and tourist sites of East Azarbaijan," the director-general noted, "have had a significant impact on the increase in these visits."

Hamzehzadeh also attributed the surge in visits to the global registration of three caravanserais and the recognition of the historical village of Kandovan as one of the best tourist villages in the world.

Despite the surge in tourist traffic, Hamzehzadeh commended the province's efforts in ensuring road safety, reporting a 17% reduction in road accidents during this year's Eid al-Fitr holidays compared to the previous year.



Located some 60 kilometers southwest of Tabriz, Kandovan is celebrated for having a magnificent rocky architecture which is the result of volcanic activities and hand-carved structures. The village was registered on Iran's National Heritage list, and it has a worldwide reputation and is the only rocky village in the world that is still inhabited.

It's known as Kandovan because the rocky houses in this village look like hives. It has been said in the history of Kandovan that the first group to settle in the region were residents of a village called Hilevar, two kilometers away from Kandovan. They migrated to this area escaping from Mongols and started to carve the Karans to build themselves a safe refuge.

The history of this wonderful village dates back to 6000 years ago. Some researchers on archeology have estimated its age up to 7000 years old.

The village architecture is one of its wonders; the thickness of its walls reaches two meters in some places. The rock acts as an energy-efficient material, keeping the house cool during summer and warm during winter. The heights of these rocks are about 40 meters.

There are sharp pyramidal cliffs with holes on their irregular surfaces in this village which have been created due to volcanic eruption in the region of the Sahand Mountain Range. The cliffs have shaped hive cells which are also known as Karan. Generally, most of these Karans are two-story in some cases, three and even four floors and they are not related to each other from the inside.

The inhabitants carved every room of the cliff houses like kitchens, halls, and even pens out of stone to make windows for the rooms and later, to decorate them with colorful glasses.

Since the Kandovan is located on the slopes of the Sahand Mountains, it has a great climate and there is plenty of greenery and landscapes around it. The fruitful plains of the region provide nomads with the possibility to breed honey bees and grow medicinal herbs, both are sources of income for the locals. The people of this village are mostly farmers and ranchers.

Honey is the most famous souvenir of Kandovan. Apricots and sour cherries, dried fruit, rugs, and jajim are other souvenirs of Kandovan.

The best season to visit Kandovan is spring and summer. Visiting this village will take two hours up to one day.

Iran in frames



Anzali Lagoon offers visitors an enchanting sight of beautiful water lilies where delicate pink hues shape a dreamlike ambiance gently swaying with the water's movement. Situated in the northern Gilan province, the lagoon somehow serves as a natural purification system, seamlessly connecting to the Caspian Sea via a shipping channel.

Half of the world's population can travel to Iran without visas, tourism minister says

From Page 1 ▶ He made the remarks in a meeting with the head and members of the cultural fraction of the Iranian parliament held at the National Museum of Iran.

"Of course, our initial proposal was to abolish visas for citizens of 60 countries, but the government agreed to abolish visas for citizens of 33 countries. With this abolition, the possibility of travel to Iran without obtaining visas has been provided for half of the world's population."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the minister addressed concerns over negative portrayals of Iran in foreign media, attributing them to a phenomenon known as "Iranophobia."

"We are facing an issue called Iranophobia, and tourism can counteract this phenomenon," Zarghami said.

"Unfortunately, some foreign media outlets, by pursuing the Iranophobia project, seek to hinder the growth, development, and prosperity of tourism."

The visa-waiver program was approved for India, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Indonesia, Brunei, Japan, Singapore, Cambodia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brazil,



Peru, Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia, Venezuela, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Belarus, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Mauritania, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

Besides, the Islamic Republic had previously had visited cancelations with some countries like Turkey, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Oman, China, Armenia, Lebanon, and Syria, in various forms - unilateral, bilateral, and group visa cancelations, including airport visas, which were implemented in some cases. The privilege has been granted to tourist groups from Russia based on a mutual agreement inked between Tehran and Moscow.

According to avalabale data compiled by the tourism ministry, more than six million foreign tourists arrived by air, road, and sea in the country during the past Iranian calendar year, which came to an end on March 19.

The figure marks a substantial year-on-year increase compared to a year earlier (1401) in which approximately 4.23 million tourists visited the Islamic Republic.

Earlier in January, Zurab Pololikashvili, the Secretary-General of UN Tourism, formerly (UNWTO), warmly welcomed Iran's decision for border easing, expressing optimism about a vibrant future for tourism for the ancient country.

He also underscored Iran's significant role in Asian tourism as he pointed to the country's rich historical and cultural heritage. Pololikashvili expressed hope that the visa waiver policy would usher in a bright and prosperous future for tourism in Iran.

The latest data provided by the tourism ministry suggests the number of foreign arrivals in the country reached 4.4 million during the first eight months of the current Iranian year (started on March 21), which shows 48.5 percent compared to that of last year.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 27 are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Iran heritage sites draw 7m visitors in month

TEHRAN – As per records, more than seven million visitors have explored cultural heritage museums and historical landmarks across Iran, in 30 days covering Nowruz and Eid al-Fitr holidays.

Speaking in a press conference, dedicated to travel services coordination headquarters on Monday, an official in the tourism ministry in charge of the nationally-registered and World Heritage sites provided a comprehensive overview of recorded visits to the historical landmarks within the country, in a month.

"During spring holidays, 212 historical sites welcomed enthusiasts," Reza Same' noted, "surpassing 7,760,216 visits have been recorded from March 14 till April 12."

Mentioning the statistics have been collected in two different time intervals, the official brought to light that also from March 14 till March 13 [Nowruz holidays], 5,003,840 people visited the heritage sites.

Delineating the figures, he highlighted that national and World Heritage sites hosted approximately three million visitors throughout this period.

He also pointed to the setup of Nowruz markets and showcasing handicraft products at 73 national and world heritage sites, along with organizing 300 events with an eye toward appreciating the ancient Nowruz.

"600,000 individuals benefited from free visits and discounts provided by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry," Same' added.

The official further detailed the figure, stating that in some public places where ticketing systems are absent, visitor numbers could increase.

Referring to the maximum participation of honorary tour guides, Same' emphasized that they will be honored during Cultural Heritage Week.

In his concluding remarks, the official commended the extensive cooperation of local communities and public participation which significantly improved the quality of travel services during the spring season countrywide.

Iran, an ancient land steeped in history, boasts one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with settlements dating back to 4000 BC. It is adorned with a wealth of cultural treasures, including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, and diverse natural landscapes, complemented by 27 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

While commonly associated with the first Persian Empire ruled by the Achaemenids (ca. 550–330 BC), under notable sites such as Pasargadae and Persepolis, Iran's historical tapestry is far richer. The country is adorned with numerous prehistorical sites predating the Achaemenid era. These include the Burnt City in Sistan-Baluchestan, Tepe Sialk in Kashan, Susa and Chogha Zanbil in the Khuzestan province, and Ecbatana in Hamedan.

Viewed through a broader lens, Iranian history unfolds in two distinct eras: pre-Islamic and Islamic. The rise of the Medes in 625 BC marked the unification of Iran into a nation and empire. However, it was the Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that signaled a pivotal moment, bringing an end to the powerful Sassanid Empire (224–651) and reshaping the course of the nation's history.

Maymand to enjoy tourism boom if it wins UN Tourism label

TEHRAN – Kerman province's tourism chief has expressed optimism about the potential tourism boom for Maymand Village, a UNESCO-registered site if it secures a prestigious label from the UN Tourism as an exceptional rural tourism destination.

Saeid Shahrokhi on Monday said Maymand as one of the world's best rural tourism destinations would lead to an expansion and better development of tourism in the region.

He made the remarks in a meeting with a meeting of UN evaluators assessing the village's candidacy for the title of the world's best rural tourism village. The official emphasized the importance of Maymand's registration in enhancing and further developing tourism in the area.

He added that the provincial cultural heritage administration is committed to teamwork and completing infrastructural projects to address deficiencies in pursuit of Maymand's global registration.

Shahrokhi highlighted the village's assets in tourism, livestock farming, agriculture, and various aspects of rural and nomadic life, underscoring Maymand's significance.

He further explained that the ongoing livestock production and breeding activities in Maymand are integral to the livelihoods of its residents, contributing significantly to the village's appeal.

Regarding the village's botanical richness, Shahrokhi pointed out that Maymand's treasure trove of medicinal herbs and edible plants greatly enhances its appeal as a tourism destination.

Furthermore, he emphasized that Maymand's unique architecture, recognized as one of the criteria for its global registration, has made it a standout candidate.

The cultural landscape of Maymand was named a UNESCO World Heritage in 2015 as an exemplary system of man-made cave dwellings that is believed to be practiced in the region to cope with its harsh climate.

Sandwiched between a desert and a mountain, Maymand has cold winters and exceedingly hot summers yet abundant with mulberry and blackberry trees. Living conditions in the village are considered severe due to the aridity of the land, high temperatures in the summer, and very cold winters.

Maymand, believed to be one of the earliest human settlements in the region, boasts a history dating back approximately 10,000 years. Many of its natural and manmade caves continue to serve as homes and shelters to this day.

The village's dwellings, carved into the mountainside, resemble caverns, with internal spaces featuring corridors and pillars reflecting rural architectural styles. These houses, stacked four or five stories high, create a unique skyline against the rocky landscape.

Legend has it that the village's early inhabitants utilized a local, pointed stone instead of conventional tools like hammers and chisels to carve intricate designs into the rock faces—a tradition that persists in the region. Some of the stone engravings found in the village date back millennia, providing a glimpse into its ancient past.

Today, Maymand is predominantly inhabited by semi-nomadic shepherds who graze their livestock on the mountain pastures, migrating between temporary settlements during the spring



and autumn seasons.

The community's deep connection with the natural surroundings is evident in their social customs, cultural rituals, and religious practices.

Maymand's local dialect preserves elements of ancient Sassanid and Pahlavi languages, largely unchanged over the centuries due to the village's remote location.

The area supports diverse wildlife, including snakes, lizards, hedgehogs, deer, leopards, wolves, foxes, and various birds of prey. Despite the arid climate, the presence of seasonal springs sustains agriculture in the region, with residents meticulously conserving water resources to sustain their livelihoods, a tradition passed down through generations.

Amid tourism surge, Oaxaca residents resist 'Disneylandization'

Soaring housing costs and a lack of public resources are making life for locals harder in the Mexican city.

On many weekend afternoons and evenings in Oaxaca, the sound of calendas can be heard parading through the city center. In recent years, these celebrations have become a major draw for visitors to the city.

But on Jan. 27, a different form of calenda called attention to what many Oaxacans are calling a crisis: overtourism and resulting gentrification. Hundreds of protesters took to the streets to decry the soaring cost of living and displacement created by the wave of visitors that has hit the Mexican city in recent years. "Oaxaca is not a commodity," read a common refrain on many signs and banners.

The protest was the most public repudiation to date of the city's transformation from a slow-paced town in one of the most disenfranchised states in Mexico into a coveted travel destination, packed with third-wave coffee shops and influencers posing in front of baroque-style churches and cobblestone streets. Since 2020 alone, the city has seen a staggering 77% rise in the number of national and foreign tourists, according to figures provided by the Center for Social Studies and Public Opinion, an Oaxaca-based research organization.

The booming tourism economy has made life increasingly unaffordable for locals, strained municipal services and created tensions over questions of who belongs in the city famed for its indigenous craft and culinary traditions.

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SIR 2024 includes 197 Iranian institutions

TEHRAN –SCImago Institution Ranking (SIR) 2024 has placed 197 Iranian institutions among the top institutions in the world compared to 194 universities in 2023.

The SIR is a classification of academic and research-related institutions ranked by a composite indicator that combines three different sets of indicators based on research performance, innovation outputs, and societal impact measured by their web visibility.

The research ranking refers to the volume, impact, and quality of the institution's research output.

The innovation ranking is calculated on the number of patent applications of the institution and the citations that its research output receives from patents.

The societal ranking is based on the number of pages on the institution's website and the number of backlinks and mentions from social networks.

SCI Ranking analyzes institutions in five sectors including government, health, universities, companies, and non-profit.

In the latest ranking, Tehran University of Medical Sciences (5) and University of Tehran (10) are among the top ten institutions in West Asia. They were ranked 6th and 11th, respectively, in the 2023 ranking.

The Research rankings of Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the University of Tehran are 175 and 290, respectively, in the world.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences ranking has improved from 486, in 2023, to 452 in 2024 marking it the top university in Iran.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences holds first position in Medicine,



2nd in Dentistry, 5th in pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutics in West Asia. It is also ranked 34th in Dentistry globally.

The University of Tehran is ranked 2nd in the country and 827th worldwide.

The University of Tehran is placed 1st in Business, Management, and Accounting (38th in the world), 3rd in Economics, Econometrics, and Finance, and 4th in Engineering in West Asia.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences; Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, and Tabriz University of Medical Sciences; are placed third to fifth in the country respectively.

These institutions' rankings in West Asia are as follows.

Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences ranks 3rd in Medicine, and 6th in Dentistry.

Mashhad University of Medical Sciences ranks 4th in pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutics.

Tabriz University of Medical Sciences ranks 2nd in pharmacology, Toxicology, and Pharmaceutics (47th worldwide), and 5th in Energy.

For ranking purposes, the calculation is generated each year from the results obtained over a period of five years ending two years before the edition of the ranking. For instance, if the selected year of publication is 2024, the results used are those from the five year period 2018-2022. The only exception is the case of web indicators which have been calculated once in the last year.

QS ranking

The 14th edition of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings by Subject 2024 included 17 Iranian universities in 17 subject entries, compared with 16 universities in 2023.

University of Tehran (346), Sharif University of Technology (401- 450) in Engineering and Technology; Tehran University of Medical Sciences (358), Mashhad University of Medical Sciences (451- 500), University of Tehran (451- 500), and Shiraz university of medical sciences (501 – 550) in Life sciences and Medicine; and University of Tehran (401-450), and Sharif University of Technology (501-550) in Natural Science are the top universities.

A total of 435 Iranian institutions were among 11,989 institutions ranked in Webometrics world ranking 2024.

Tehran University was the top among Iranian institutions. Its ranking had improved from 305 in 2023 to 285 in 2024, Mehr news agency reported.

Tehran University of Medical Sciences (445), Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (606), Sharif University of Technology (639), Amirkabir University of Technology (792), Iran Science and Technology (890), Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (920), Iran Medical Sciences University (940), Ferdowsi University of Mashhad (940), and Shahid Beheshti University (967) were ranked second to tenth, respectively, in the country.

According to this year's ranking, 338 other institutions have been ranked between 4,000 to 31,000.

According to the results of the 2023-2024 edition of the University Ranking by Academic Performance (URAP), 71 Iranian institutions were included in the ranking compared to 64 institutions in the 2022-2023 edition.

URAP World Ranking is based on six academic performance indicators including number of articles, citations, total document, scientific productivity, research impact, and international collaboration.

In the academic performance ranking of 71 universities in Iran, Tehran University was ranked first nationally with a global rank of 231, IRNA reported.

Tehran University of Medical Science (277), and Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Science (436) were ranked second and third, respectively.

Normal rainfall expected for next six weeks

TEHRAN – Normal rainfall is expected for the next six weeks, ending on May 26th, all over the country, according to the National Atmospheric Science and Meteorological Research Center.

In the next three weeks, the air temperature is forecast to be 1 to 5 degrees lower than normal in the southern, central, and eastern regions of the country, but higher than normal in other parts, ISNA reported.

According to the latest rain forecast maps of the country, during the first week from April 15 to 21, precipitation will be concentrated in the south and southeast of the country, and some areas expect over 100 mm of rainfall with a probability of more than 75 percent.

Below-average precipitation is predicted in the northern part of the country and middle Zagros, with normal amounts in other areas.

During the second week, rainfall is projected to be within the normal range. This week, the probability of accumulated rainfall between 20 to 50 mm in the northwest of the country and the middle and northern Zagros regions is predicted to be less than 50 percent.

Above-normal rainfall is expected in the third and fourth weeks. The accumulated rainfall in the third week will be in the range of 50 mm in parts of the middle and northwest Zagros with a 75 percent probability.

The rainfall in the fifth and sixth weeks is estimated to be normal in most parts of the country.

The average air temperature in the first week will be 1 to 5 degrees above normal in Alborz mountains and Zagros.

The most significant increase in temperature (3 to 5 degrees) is expected to occur in the northwest of the country.

Conversely, a decrease of 3 to 5 degrees is forecast for the southeast.

The temperature pattern of the second week is almost similar to that of the first.

In the third week, temperature will be 1 to 3 degrees above normal in the western and northern parts of the country; 1 to 2 degrees below normal in the south and southeast; and normal in other parts.

Normal temperature is predicted for the fourth week, but it is expected to be 1 to 2 degrees above normal in the fifth and sixth weeks.

Since the beginning of autumn which is the start of the current water year, an average of 118 mm of rain has been recorded nationwide, Ahad Vazifeh, head of the national center for drought and crisis management, said on March 11.

The long-term average recorded last year was equal to 141 mm.

Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman, Semnan, Khorasan Razavi, Qazvin, Alborz, Tehran, Lorestan, and Kohgiluyeh–Boyerahmad provinces have had low rainfall.

Kerman, Qazvin, Tehran, and Alborz provinces have received 50, 39, 33, and 34 percent less rainfall than the long-term average.

Mazandaran, Golestan, Kuodestan, and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces have recorded more rainfall compared to the long-term average.

Vazifeh went on to say that the average temperature of the country has been 13.3 °C since the beginning of fall, September 23, which compared to the three-year period figure,11.3 °C, shows the temperature has increased by 2 °C over time.

Since the beginning of winter, the temperature has been 9.1 degrees, while it had been 7.1 degrees in long-term average. The last two months of the fall this year were the hottest months on record in the past 50 years, Vazifeh added.

ENGLISH IN USE

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'Non-repayable loans for e-bikes must increase'

An important strategy to contain Tehran's air pollution is the use of clean energies, Mohsen Hashemi, Tehran City Council chairman, has said.

The scheme on encouraging the citizens to replace carbureted motorcycles with electric ones has started over a few years ago, however, the process has been evolving slowly, he added.

The handouts supporting the residents to purchase the motorbikes has been about 25 million rials (nearly $600), which is not adequate anymore given the current economic condition, he stated, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

وام بلاعوض خرید موتورسیکلت‌های برقی باید افزایش یابد

محسن هاشمی رئیس شورای شهر تهران می گوید یکی از راه‌های کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران استفاده از انرژی‌های پاک است.
وی تصریح کرد: جایگزینی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های برقی به جای موتورسیکلت‌های کاربراتوری از چند سال پیش آغاز شده است اما این کار با کندی پیش رفته است.
به گزارش روز شنبه خبرگزاری تسنیم هاشمی یادآور شد: با توجه به افزایش قیمت خرید موتورسیکلت برقی، رقم ۲ میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار تومان رقم قابل قبولی به‌عنوان وام بلاعوض نیست و باید این رقم افزاش یابد.

Ten tech tours held in a year

TEHRAN –A total of ten technological tours were held in the past Iranian calendar year (March 2023 – March 2024), according to the Vice-Presidency for Science, Technology, and Knowledge-Based Economy.

The main objective of tech tours is to provide the opportunity for more interactions among students, technologists, and technological companies, IRNA reported.

Conducted simultaneously with major exhibitions, the tours also serve to showcase the scientific capabilities of the country and inspire students by enhancing their self-reliance.

During the tours, technologists and advocates from various technological sectors share their knowledge, experiences, and accomplishments with interested experts and students to use academic capacities to tackle technological challenges in the industry. Four lecturers also attend the tours.

Moreover, the tours included visits to Iran's House of Innovation and Technology (iHiT), and other prominent pavilions in the exhibitions.

Iran ranks 75 in innovation, technology

In December 2023, Iran was ranked 75 among 185 countries by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

UNCTAD categorized 17 types of technologies as frontier technologies including artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, big data, 5G, 3D printing, robotics, drone technology, solar photovoltaic, concentrated solar power, biofuels, biogas and biomass, wind energy, green hydrogen, electric vehicles, nanotechnology and gene editing.

The aforementioned capacities, taking into account the five sub-indices of the development of information and communication technology, the number of Internet users and download speed (skills), the expected academic years of highly educated workers (research and development activities (number of publications and patents), industrial activity with High technology and export of digital services and access to financing are measured by the ratio of domestic credit to the private sector.



According to this report, Iran ranks 75th among 158 countries in the index of readiness for advanced technologies in 2022, compared to Turkey (ranked 53), and Saudi Arabia (ranked 47).

Examining the sub-indices of readiness for frontier technologies in 2022 shows that Iran's situation is relatively better in the research and development sub-index (35th in the world) and relatively worse in the industrial activities sub-index (118th in the world).

In other sub-indexes such as financial subsidies (rank 62), skills sub-index (rank 74), and in the sub-index of the establishment of information and communication technology (rank 78), the country has almost a middle position among countries.

In the research and development sub-index, although Iran's rank has improved by 5 places, its growth has been insignificant and it has reached the 40th rank in the world in 2008 to the 35th rank in 2022.

In the sub-index of the establishment of information and communication technology, Iran ranks 10th in West Asia and 78th in the world.

The trend of Iran's rank in this sub-index decreased from 2008 to 2015; it dropped from the 104th rank in 2008 to the 126th rank in 2015.

But since 2016, Iran's ranking in this sub-index has improved and it has been promoted from 126th in the world in 2008 to 78th in 2022.

In the sub-index of skills, Iran ranks 8th in West Asia and 74th in the world.

Budget to support patients with rare diseases to increase

TEHRAN –The health ministry plans to increase the budget allocated to support patients with rare diseases, an official with the health ministry has said.

Amir-Hesam Alirezaei made the remarks on the occasion of World Hemophilia Day, which is commemorated every year on April 17.

Hemophilia is usually an inherited bleeding disorder in which the blood does not clot properly and mostly affects males.

It is estimated to occur in about 1 of every 5,000 male births. People with hemophilia have low levels of proteins called clotting factors that help to stop bleeding.

The disease can result in spontaneous bleeding within joints leading to chronic joint disease and pain, bleeding in the skin, head, and brain which can cause seizures and paralysis. It can also lead to excessive bleeding following injuries or surgery.

Death can occur if the bleeding cannot be stopped or if it occurs in a vital organ such as the brain.

This year it is celebrated under the theme of 'Equitable access for all: recognizing all bleeding disorders'.

It stresses treatment for all, a world where all people with inherited bleeding disorders have access to care, regardless of their type of bleeding disorder, gender, age, or where they live.

Currently, some 14,000 hemophilia patients are registered in the country, 5,500 of them have hemophilia A, characterized by deficiency in factor VIII; 1,892 have von Willebrand disease (VWD), and 1,200 have hemophilia B resulting from deficiency of clotting factor IX, ISNA quoted Alirezaei as saying.

The disease is mostly prevalent in Tehran, Mashhad, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ahvaz, Zahedan and Alborz provinces.

Fortunately, there are enough domestically-made medicines for hemophilia A and B, the quality of which is approved by the Food and Drug Administration.



Clotting factors are 100 percent covered by insurance. The coverage of HEMLIBRA, used for treating severe hemophilia A patients, through insurance is on the agenda, Alirezaei added.

Currently, 78 blood transfusion departments in state hospitals are providing factor injection services and other routine services such as specialized tests such as factor level and inhibitor; rehabilitation; and dentistry in special departments, to improve the life quality of the patients, he further noted.

442 rare diseases identified in Iran

A total of 442 rare diseases have been identified in the country according to a recent report by the Rare Disease Foundation.

The incidence of rare diseases is very low to the extent that maybe one or two people with a certain rare disease are present in the country. Some rare diseases such as 'butterfly skin or EB', 'Spinal muscular atrophy (SMA)', 'Metabolic diseases', 'Autism', and 'Dystrophies' are among the most common cases in the country. A sum of 50 trillion rials (about $100 million) was allocated in the past Iranian calendar year that ended on March 20, 2023, IRNA reported, adding that the figure rose to 70 trillion rials this year.

Considering the number of patients identified, the needed medicines, and medical tools, a sum of 150 to 180 thousand trillion (about $300 million) is expected to be allocated for the current Iranian calendar year, beginning on March 21.

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GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When two persons are together, two of them must not whisper to each other, without letting the third hear; because it would hurt him.

Prophet Muhammad (S)

Prayer Times » Noon:12:04 Evening: 18:57 Dawn: 4:00 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 5:29 (tomorrow)

Movie on Iran's missile power's founding father being produced



Iranian actor Hamid Ebrahimi acts in a scene from "Endless".

TEHRAN- The filming of "Endless," a movie portraying the life of Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, the founding father of Iran's missile power, has commenced in Tehran.

Sasan Fallahfar directs this unique narrative, which brings one of the most significant chapters of Martyr Tehrani Moghaddam's life to the big screen, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

In this production, Hamid Ebrahimi takes on the role of Martyr Tehrani Moghaddam, the report added.

"Endless" is a loose adaptation of a true story related to one of the crucial projects of the late Commander Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam.

The film offers a distinctive account of Iran's missile science father, with filming taking place within the vicinity where he attained martyrdom in Tehran.

Iran owes its missile power to Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, a general who dedicated his life to advancing Iran's missile program. Tragically, he was martyred on November 12, 2012.

Tehrani Moghaddam began laying the foundations of Iran's missile program during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), a period that underscored the importance of a robust defense mechanism. His efforts have contributed significantly to Iran's self-sufficiency and progress in missile technology.

Earning a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from Khajeh Nasir al-Din Toosi University after the Islamic Revolution, he joined the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in 1980. He played a pivotal role in establishing the IRGC artillery and eventually led the IRGC missile unit during the war.

In 1985, Tehrani Moghaddam's forces successfully fired Iran's first missile at Kirkuk, marking a significant milestone. He was appointed as the IRGC Air Force commander in 1986. Under his leadership, Iran managed to acquire Scud missiles from Libya, further enhancing its missile capabilities.

Tehrani Moghaddam's expertise and dedication to Iran's missile program were acknowledged by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, who stated that every woman traveling across Lebanon owes her safety to Hajj Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam. His work with missiles such as Sejjil and Shahab contributed to Iran's deterrence capabilities.

On November 12, 2011, Tehrani Moghaddam and some of his comrades were martyred during a missile test in Bid Ganeh, highlighting the sacrifices made for Iran's missile program.

Two Iranian animations at Poland's 13th Animocje



Scenes from "Being 10" (L) and "Our Uniform"

TEHRAN-Two animations from Iran are present in the 13th International Animated Film Festival Animocje, which is underway in Bydgoszcz, Poland.

"Being 10" by Fatemeh Jafari and "Our Unform" by Yeganeh Moqaddam are the Iranian animations participating in the event, Mehr reported.

Produced by the Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Jafari's short animation is about a father and his ten-year-old son who live in a lonely cottage in the middle of a dense wood. The father, a hunter, spares one of his catches and brings it home as a present for his son. What, at first, was just a plaything will change the young boy's life forever.

The 18-minute animation recently won the third prize of the 11th international festival Constantine's Gold Coin in Serbia.

Jafari, 46, graduated from Tarbiat Modares University with an M.A. in animation. She has been active as an animator, script writer and director since 2005.

The seven-minute "Our Uniform" was one of the five nominees in the category of Best Animated Short at the Oscars 2024.

In the short flick, an Iranian girl recalls school-age memories through the wrinkles and fabrics of her old uniform, quite literally. Rather than using paper, canvas, or a digital medium, Moghaddam painted directly on the cloth used for making school uniforms to tell the story of a character who dreams of a better future.

Moghaddam's self-produced animation won the Grand Jury prize at Spain's Animayo Festival and the Best Short Animation award at France's Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

The short film stands out for its ability to combine different techniques and media, in what is known as mixed media, creating a visually captivating experience through a unique and creative approach.

The 2022 production explores the footprints of childhood uniforms as they are more than just a piece of clothing and can affect the way people present themselves in public.

Moghaddam is an animator and illustrator who has a strong passion for nature, culture, and the reality she lives in. In her films, she tries to find a voice for beings who usually don't have a voice.

Animocje is a film festival focused on animated cinema that is ambitious and searches for its own artistic expression forms.

Its priority is to present daring, surprising and innovative solutions, outstanding applications of a traditional techniques and interesting subjects that can evoke a variety of emotions.

Animocje organizes workshops and meetings with artists, and other forms that bring the world of animation closer and make it possible to look at it from a different angle than from in front of the screen.

Having started on April 14, the festival will conclude on April 20.

Italian university to pay tribute to late Iranian filmmaker Dariush Mehrjui

TEHRAN- The Palazzo Corigliano Universita Orientale in the Italian city of Naples will host a screening of the film "La Minor," the final work of the late Dariush Mehrjui, in tribute of the renowned Iranian filmmaker.

Scheduled for Thursday, the event is part of the Iranian Cinema session at this Italian university, focusing on themes of solitude and identity in contemporary Iranian cinema, with the attendance of Iranian film critic Antonia Shoraka.

During the session, University lecturer Natalia Tornesello will also deliver a speech.

"La Minor", also known as "A Minor", follows Nadi, who loves music but her traditional father wants no music in his house and forces her to abandon it.

He is a carpet salesman and would like his daughter to study business and help him with his shop bookkeeping but Nadi disagrees. Nadi's mother is torn between her husband and daughter but condones her husband's strict conduct with Nadi. Fortunately for Nadi, her grandfather supports her. Nadi learns to play the guitar, and discovers that she can compose too.



Born in 1939 in Tehran, Mehrjui was a renowned Iranian filmmaker who was known for introducing realism, symbolism, and the sensibilities of art cinema.

"Sara" (1993), "Pari" (1995), "Leila" (1996), "Mom's Guest" (2004), and "The Orange Suit" (2012) are among his credits. His most recent film, "La Minor," was released in 2020.

Throughout his career, Mehrjui has received numerous accolades and awards for his contributions to Iranian cinema. His films have been showcased at prestigious film festivals globally, earning him a dedicated following of cinephiles and critical acclaim.

Mehrjui was stabbed to death in October 2023 alongside his wife Vahideh Mohammadifar at their home in Karaj, Alborz Province. His tragic murder was met with widespread reactions.

Several writers decline recognition from PEN America in protest over its Israel-Hamas war stance

Several authors have turned down awards and awards nominations from PEN America, citing unhappiness with the literary and free expression organization's stance on the war in Gaza.

This week, PEN announced its long lists in categories ranging from the $75,000 Jean Stein Award for best book to the $10,000 PEN/Hemingway award for first novel. Authors who have asked for their names to be withdrawn include Jean Stein nominee Camonghne Felix, poetry finalist Eugenia Leigh and short story nominee Ghassan Zeineddine, AP reported.

"I decided to decline this recognition and asked to be removed from the long list in solidarity with the ongoing protest of PEN's continued normalization and denial of genocide," Felix, author of the memoir "Dyscalculia," wrote on X.

The awards are scheduled to be handed out during an April 29 ceremony in Manhattan, hosted by writer-comedian Jena Friedman. A PEN spokesperson said that nine out of 60 nominated authors had asked for their names to be withdrawn. PEN also confirmed that Esther Allen had declined the PEN/Ralph Manheim Award for translation and added that it would soon announce a new winner.

"We respect their decision and we will celebrate these writers in other ways," said Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf, who oversees PEN's literary programming.

PEN's response to Israel's invasion of Gaza, following the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, has been widely criticized by writers who believe the organization has failed to fully condemn the war that has left tens of thousands of Palestinians dead, including hundreds of writers, academics and journalists.

An open letter published in March and signed by Naomi Klein, Lorrie Moore and dozens of others contends that PEN had not "launched any substantial coordinated support" for Palestinians and was not upholding its mission to "dispel all hatreds and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace and equality in one world." The letter's endorsers contrasted PEN's forceful protests against the Russian invasion of Ukraine and alleged that PEN had done little to "mobilize" members against the Gaza war.

"Palestine's poets, scholars, novelists and journalists and essayists have risked everything, including their lives and the lives of their families, to share their words with the world," the letter reads in part. "Yet PEN America appears unwilling to stand with them firmly against the powers that have oppressed and dispossessed them for the last 75 years."

A PEN spokesperson noted that the organization has issued numerous statements calling for a ceasefire and mourning the destruction of museums, libraries and mosques in Gaza, and has helped set up a $100,000 emergency fund for Palestinian writers. PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel said in a statement that PEN shared with many the "sorrow and anguish at the horrific costs of the Israel-Hamas war, including for writers, poets, artists and journalists.

"We approach every conflict — Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Gaza — on its own terms, mindful of complexities, what we can contribute, our constituencies, our partners and our principles," she added. "When we take positions, we do not align with states, armies or political groups but with freedom of expression and the preconditions to enable it."

The criticisms come before PEN's high-profile spring events, including the PEN literary awards and a key May 16 fund-raising gala at the American Museum of Natural History in Manhattan. Klein and the letter's other signers have said they will be boycotting PEN's "World Voices" festival next month in Los Angeles and New York, an international gathering featuring panel discussions and lectures.

On Friday, PEN announced that playwright-screenwriter Tony Kushner was this year's winner of the PEN/Mike Nichols Writing for Performance Award, previously given to Tina Fey, Kenneth Lonergan and Elaine May among others.

Kushner, who is Jewish, has long criticized Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and recently told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that the country's invasion of Gaza "looks like ethnic cleansing to me." He added that the history of Jewish suffering should not be used "as an excuse for a project of dehumanizing or slaughtering other people."

Tensions over the Gaza war have extended throughout the arts community. Kushner was among the defenders of last month's Oscar acceptance speech by "Zone of Interest" director Jonathan Glazer, who warned against "dehumanization" — as depicted in his Holocaust drama, winner for best international film — and stated, "Whether the victims of October the 7th in Israel, or the ongoing attack on Gaza, all the victims, this dehumanization, how do we resist?"

Cartoon of Day



Swimming Time

Cartoonist: Amir Hossein Hemmati from Iran