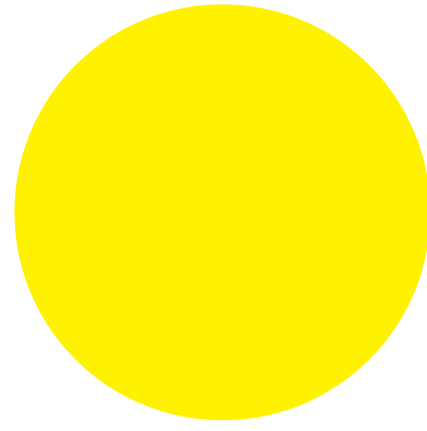


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After more than three months, Israel's onslaught on the Palestinian territory has now reached the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where South Africa has become the first country in the world to file a suit against the regime for the crimes it has committed in Gaza. The International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, is set to hold hearings on January 11 and 12 on the case, which has accused Israel of genocide in Gaza.

Tehran-Ankara nine-month trade hits \$8.5b: **IRICA**



The total value of trade between Iran and Turkey in the first nine months of the current Iranian year (started March 21, 2023) topped \$8.5 billion, announced the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA).

Iran exported 6.4 million tons of non-oil goods, valued at \$3.3 billion, to the neighboring country from March 21 to December 22, 2023, registering a 12.5 percent hike in volume terms and 15 percent decline in value terms compared to 2022's corresponding period, IRNA reported.

Iran imported three million tons of commodities worth \$5.3 billion, from Turkey in the nine-month period, showing a 12 and a 17 percent rise in volume and value terms, respectively, compared to the corresponding figure of the preceding year, Mohammad Rezvaniyar added.

He noted that Iran exported natural gas, aluminum, iron ingot, and bitumen to the neighboring country.

In return, Iran imported sunflower oil, gold ingots and animal corn from Turkey during the period.

The deputy minister of economy pointed to the volume of transit of goods exchanged between the two countries and noted that 1.6 million tons of products were exchanged between the two countries from March 21 to December 22, 2023.

World Bank puts Iran's economic growth in 2023 at 4.2%

The World Bank (WB) in its latest report put Iran's economic growth in 2023 at 4.2 percent, which is two times more than that of the average economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to the estimate of the international body, Iran's economy has registered a hike in 2023 compared to a year earlier, IRNA reported. The World Bank had put Iran's economic growth in 2022 at 3.8 percent, as it expects that the country's economy will grow by 3.7 percent in 2024.

The average economic growth in the Middle East and North Africa stood at over 1.9 percent in 2023.

Saudi Arabia's economic growth was -0.5 percent in 2023 as the country experienced an economic recession in this period.

The average economic growth rate of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the region stood at only 1.6 % in 2023. Among the 19 countries of the Middle East and North Africa region, Iran ranked 3rd in 2023 in terms of economic growth.



Africa Iran's first option for developing extraterritorial cultivation

Iran's Ministry of Agriculture plans to select an African country, Tanzania, as the first option for extraterritorial cultivation.

Expansion of relations with African countries is the agricultural diplomacy in the administration of President Ebrahim Raisi and for this reason, a coordination meeting of the Iran-Tanzania Joint Economic Cooperation Commission was held at the venue of Iran's ministry of agriculture with the participation

of the concerned officials of the two countries, IRNA reported.

The meeting aimed to prepare the necessary platforms for negotiations in the upcoming meetings between senior officials of the two countries.

The First Specialized Exhibition of Export Potentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran was held in Tanzania on November 21-24 as licensed by the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPOI).

Over 370k tons of pistachio expected to be produced by yearend: **Official**

The director general of the dried fruits affairs department at Iran's Ministry of Agriculture said more than 370,000 tons of fresh pistachio are expected to be produced in the country by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024).

Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting held at the venue of the ministry, Dariush Salempour said unlike the previous year, the export of pistachio products is

on an upward trajectory in the country in the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2023), IRNA reported.

He said that the document of Technical Cooperation Program (TCP) between Iran and FAO is considered an important, applied and strategic document, according to which, all the production processes, processing and health supervisions are updated efficiently.

South Africa's ICJ case against Israel

After more than three months, Israel's onslaught on the Palestinian territory has now reached the International Court of Justice (ICJ), where South Africa has become the first country in the world to file a suit against the regime for the crimes it has committed in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, is set to hold hearings on January 11 and 12 on the case, which has accused Israel of genocide in Gaza. In the first step, South Africa seeks an emergency suspension of Israel's military operation which has so far claimed the lives of more than 23,000 Palestinians in the besieged territory and caused widespread destruction there.



Humanitarian crisis

The UN has recently said that the Palestinian territory has been "uninhabitable" due to the destruction caused by the Israeli strikes.

The UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths warned that famine was looming and a public health disaster unfolding.

In a grim assessment of the devastating impact of Israel's military operation, Griffiths said that Gaza's 2.3 million people face "daily threats to their very existence" while the world just watches.

He said tens of thousands of people, mostly women and children, have been killed or injured, families are sleeping in the open

as temperatures plummet and areas where Palestinians were told to relocate have been bombed.

Griffiths said, "People are facing the highest levels of food insecurity ever recorded [and] famine is around the corner". The few partly functioning hospitals are overwhelmed and critically short of supplies, medical facilities are under relentless attack, infectious diseases are spreading and amid the chaos about 180 Palestinian women are giving birth every day.

South Africa's 84-page filing has described Israel's actions as "genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group".

"The acts in question include killing Palestin-

ians in Gaza, causing them serious bodily and mental harm, and inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction," the application said.

"The acts are all attributable to Israel, which has failed to prevent genocide and is committing genocide in manifest violation of the [United Nations'] Genocide Convention," the filing says, adding that Israel also failed to curb incitement to genocide by its own officials in violation of the convention.

Call for emergency measures

The request for emergency measures is a first step in the case. South Africa has requested the ICJ to indicate provisional measures to "protect further, severe and irreparable

harm to the rights of the Palestinian people" under the UN convention.

Provisional measures are meant as a kind of restraining order to prevent a dispute from getting worse while the court looks at the full case.

They're legally binding but not always followed. In 2022, in a genocide case filed by Ukraine against Russia, the court ordered Moscow to immediately suspend its invasion. The order was ignored, and strikes continue.

"At the provisional measures stage, the court would not be making a determination that a genocide is unfolding in Gaza," said Cecily Rose, assistant professor of public international law at Leiden University.

"Instead, the court would only be evaluating whether there is a risk of irreparable prejudice to rights held under the UN Genocide Convention, in particular the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts that threaten their existence as a group," Rose told AFP.

After the court decides whether or not to apply emergency measures, it will then look at the broader case "on the merits" – South Africa's charge that Israel is in breach of the Genocide Convention. The decisions of the ICJ are binding upon countries and cannot be appealed.

Israel's stance

Israel, which has so far ignored global calls for the establishment of a permanent cease-fire in Gaza, has rejected the accusations leveled by South Africa. Israel has called them baseless and the regime's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lior Haiat accused the African country of "absurd blood libel," or baseless allegations of Jewish perfidy intended to stir up lethal hatred of Jews.

Haiat claimed that Israel has made it clear that the residents of the Gaza Strip are not the enemy and that the regime is trying to limit harm to the non-involved and to allow humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.

Despite its ire, the regime, which has a history of ignoring international tribunals, has decided to send a legal team to the court. It will be represented at the

court by the British barrister Malcolm Shaw.

Also, there are reports that indicate the regime is exerting pressure on other countries to oppose South Africa's move.

According to a copy of an urgent cable obtained by Axios, the Israeli Foreign Ministry has instructed its embassies to press diplomats and politicians in their host countries to issue statements against South Africa's case in order to prevent a ruling that would suspend its military operation in Gaza.

Global support

South Africa's move in the World Court has been welcomed by many countries in the world. Bolivia was the latest country to back South Africa's application. Bolivia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on Monday that it was joining the case as a signatory to the Genocide Convention.

Turkey and Malaysia have also voiced their support for the case, while Jordan's foreign minister also said Amman will back South Africa.

Meanwhile, 30 Kuwaiti associations, leagues, unions, and parties have called on

their government to join the ICJ case.

Nearly 100 Chilean lawyers have also filed a complaint before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The allegations include crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes committed in Gaza.

ICJ and ICC

What is the difference between the ICJ and the ICC? The city of The Hague in the Netherlands calls itself the international city of peace and justice. It is home not only to the ICJ, but to the ICC, based just a few kilometers away.

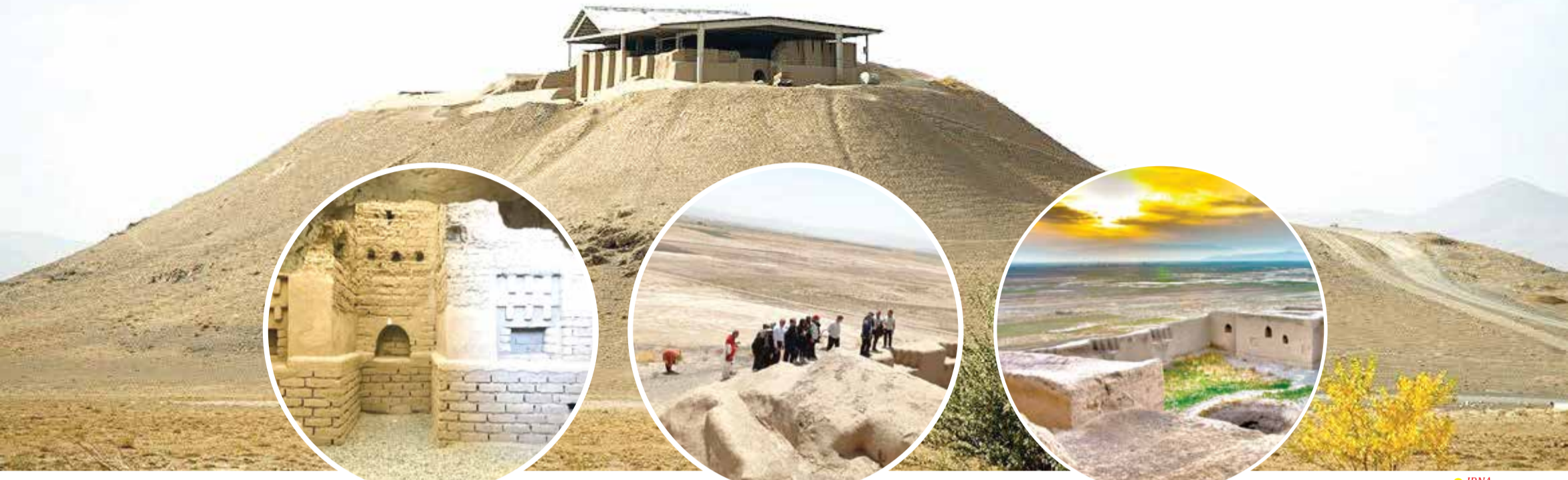
The two courts have different mandates.

The ICJ is the highest United Nations legal body, established in 1945, to deal with disputes between states. It should not be confused with the treaty-based ICC which handles war crimes cases against individuals.

The ICJ's 15-judge panel – which will be expanded by an additional judge from each side in the Israel case – deals with border disputes and increasingly cases brought by states accusing others of breaking UN treaty obligations.

View of the Peace Palace which houses World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, on Sept. 19, 2023.
● PETER DEJONG/AP

Nushijan excavations unearth ancient treasures



● poopaktravel.com

● IRNA

● karnaval.ir

● IRNA

Iranica Desk

In the expansive Shoushab plain, which occasionally transforms into a vast lake during spring rains, lies Nushijan Hill. Situated 20 kilometers from Malayer and 60 kilometers from Hamedan in Hamedan Province, it overlooks the village of Qalehno and boasts a history spanning about 2,800 years.

Nushijan Hill is widely regarded by many archaeologists as a historically significant temple fortress, serving both defensive and religious purposes. Known to many as the Nushijan Fire Temple, this structure is considered one of the oldest adobe worship sites globally, dating back to the first millennium CE. Perched on a hill, it stands as a prominent attraction for both domestic and international tourists, representing one of the lesser-known architectural marvels of the country.

The discovery of this ancient site dates back to 1964. In 1967, an English archaeologist, David Stronach, and his team embarked on a nearly decade-long

exploration of the area. Subsequently, around 1977, approximately six seasons of archaeological excavations were conducted leading to an extraordinary find. Within the core of the hill, a three-story adobe structure was unveiled, with each level belonging to a distinct historical period: the Median, the Achaemenid, and the Parthian era.

This remarkable discovery not only positioned Nushijan Hill and the fire temple as the oldest and only intact historical relic from the Median period but also established the fire temple as the oldest adobe worship site in the world. Despite its seemingly modest appearance, this adobe structure is recognized as the earliest example of ancient Persian architecture, influencing subsequent periods such as the Achaemenids and leaving a lasting imprint on Iranian culture and Islamic architecture. Many experts attribute the architectural leap during this period to the Medes' interactions with diverse peoples and various ruling powers.

The remnants of the first temple are situated on the western side of Nushijan Hill. This temple was constructed in a north-south orientation, and three cavities are visible on the northern wall. On the southern side of the temple, archaeologists believe there is a platform that once housed the temple's columns.

Apadana Hall

The term Apadana refers to columned halls from ancient times. A slightly smaller hall than the first temple is located there, consisting of 12 columns arranged in three rows of four. These columns supported the weight of the hall's ceiling, but no remnants of their wooden or stone bases remain. Interestingly, it appears that during the Achaemenid period, the stone bases of the columns were still present.

This rectangular hall is thought by some to date back to the Achaemenid period and was likely of a religious nature rather than ceremonial. Similar columned halls have been observed in other locations, and these halls

typically contained deep wells where offerings, such as wheat, were made to Anahita, the goddess of fertility. It seems that with the arrival of Darius, the Achaemenid, and the official establishment of the Zoroastrian religion, along with the closure of temples, this hall was repurposed for the worship of Anahita.

The central temple is the most captivating feature of the brick complex, being the second fire temple constructed on the site. These fire temples are among the earliest enclosed fire temples and hold significant historical and cultural value. Situated in the center of the expansive brick structure, the central temple is in close proximity to the Apadana hall.

Comprising various sections, the fire temple originally housed a fire pit on its northern side, which regrettably was removed by an English archaeologist and transferred to another country. Adjacent to the fire temple, a room with a small door leads to a staircase accessing the second floor, where the fire pit was posi-

tioned approximately one meter above the ground.

A channel was installed next to the fire pit to facilitate the transfer of materials resulting from the fire, preventing ash from spilling inside the temple. A vestibule, featuring arches on pedestals, is situated between the entrance and the main space of the central temple. These arches, constructed on two brick pedestals in the form of half-arches, are commonly observed in Achaemenid, Sassanid, and Islamic architectural periods. The vestibule provided access to the temple space, the room under the staircase, and the staircase to the second floor.

The artistic use of arches is also evident in the staircase, and the blind windows in the structure represent the initial foundations of muqarnas. An intriguing aspect of this temple is the meticulous covering of these structures with six meters of gravel, followed by layers of stone, clay, and mud in a conical shape.

The discoveries in Nushijan are not limited to this. Pottery vessels and silver objects, which

were actually the first official form of money in the world, have also been unearthed in this area. Silver hollow rings, known as siglos, are considered the basis of the Achaemenid coins.

Given the tourist appeal of this ancient brick structure, initiatives such as cleaning, beautification, setting up camping facilities, holiday visitor tents, lighting systems, and the presence of tour guides to introduce Nushijan to visitors are part of the plans to enhance the reception of this monument.

Due to its unique significance, the Nushijan archaeological site was designated as a national site in 2015, contributing to the preservation of restored artifacts, development of tourist infrastructure, protection, research, and allocation of funds for tourism infrastructure.

The ancient Nushijan site boasts 10 world firsts and unique techniques, and has been listed as one of the county's tourism attractions for global recognition. During last Nowruz (Iranian New Year holidays), over 3,000 tourists visited this beautiful site.

Historical significance of water in Hamedan

The history of Qasemabad Qanat located in a village with the same name and the history of Hamedan go hand-in-hand, and have always been inseparable. Many historical records highlight Hamedan as one of the oldest cities that Persians have ever founded. The fame of Hamedan is mostly indebted to Medes tribes who came together to form the Median Kingdom in the eighth century BCE.

Hamedan that was called Ecbatana at the time retained its importance as a summer residence under the Achaemenid Persian kings. Nevertheless, Hamedan's history goes back to as early as stone and copper ages, between 6000 and 3100 BCE. During Bronze Age (3100-1500 BCE), Hamedan enjoyed an urban development to which the archeologi-

cal site of Pisa northwest of the present-day Hamedan bears witness. The archeological excavations in Pisa revealed a variety of evidences related to the Bronze Age, and the upper layers were awash with Parthian objects.

Although Hamedan precedes all known historical empires, the oldest written mention of Hamedan has been discovered in the inscription of Nabonidus who was the last king of the Babylonian Empire between 556 and 539 BCE.

The next mention of Hamedan has been found in the Bisotoun inscription where Darius the Great describes his victory in 520 BCE suppressing a Median rebellion in Ecbatana as the rebels' headquarters. The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 BCE) provides us with valuable

information about Hamedan and its development by Deioces as the Medes' capital.

Polybius another Greek historian (208-125 BCE) provides more detail about Hamedan that had risen to fame for horse breeding and grain production. Ctesias the Greek physician and historian who served at the court of Persian kings from 416 to 398 BCE ascribes the foundation of Hamedan to the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis as follows: "When Semiramis arrived in the region of Hamedan, on a flat plain she built a palace more gorgeous than any other palaces she had ever erected. She ordered that a long canal be dug from Alvand Mountain to Hamedan to supply water".

Ctesias's account shows that

even in ancient times the prosperity of Hamedan plain was contingent on the water that had to be transferred from Alvand elevations. What Ctesias says about digging a long canal may be an allusion to the tradition of qanat construction that had long been common in the region. We cannot claim that Ctesias actually means qanat by mentioning such water transfer structures, until we look into the original text to see what word has been translated into "canal".

What we can take for granted is the fact that qanats and their irrigation network have always played a crucial role in Hamedan's agricultural production systems. For example, in Ecbatana the archeological excavations unearthed a network of water canals mean-



Qasemabad Qanat

dering along the streets of an urban fabric that dates back to the Parthian and Sassanian periods. The remains of

those canals are expressive of the important status of water supply systems in the city's socio-economic dynamic.

The above is a lightly edited version of a part of a chapter entitled, "Production and Water Culture", from a book entitled "Cultural Dynamics of Water in Iranian Civilization", written by Majid Labbaf Khaneiki, published by Springer. The photo was taken from the book.

Israel's psychological warfare aimed at insinuating victory

Netanyahu backs down from eliminating Hamas

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW



Rahman Qahremanpour

Israeli officials have reportedly put forth several proposals for governing the Gaza Strip after the war. Some hawkish members of Netanyahu's cabinet advocate for the expulsion of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and their relocation abroad. Meanwhile, the plan presented by Yoav Gallant, Israeli defense minister, focuses on Israel ensuring the survival of Palestinians and controlling Gaza's security. It's important to note that the conflict in the region is ongoing. In light of these developments, Iran Daily conducted an exclusive interview with Rahman Qahremanpour, an expert in strategic affairs, to provide further insight on this matter.

Numerous plans have been formulated within the Israeli cabinet regarding Gaza, some of which have been made public. Notwithstanding the specifics of these plans, does this signify that, in Israel's perspective, the Gaza conflict has concluded? Or could it be a psychological operation aimed at instilling a sense of triumph over Hamas?

The announcement of post-war plans for Gaza is seen as a reaction to internal pressures coming from within the Israeli government against the leadership of Prime Minister Netanyahu. Political parties, former officials, and media outlets have strongly criticized Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza war. Israeli think tanks have also stressed that the absence of a clear post-war plan and strategy beyond the ground war in Gaza would indicate a failure in Israel's approach to the conflict. Therefore, the unveiling of various plans for Gaza, such as the potential expulsion of Palestinians or Israel assuming security control, could be interpreted as a response to these criticisms, asserting that the government and the military have achieved their objectives and have future plans for Gaza. It's import-

ant to note that the war is not over, and Netanyahu has not achieved his objective of dismantling Hamas.

However, many analysts doubt the feasibility of Netanyahu's pledge to eliminate Hamas. They argue that Hamas is not just a military group, but also an ideology and a political and social movement with supporters in Gaza, across Palestine, and in the wider Arab and Islamic world.

Is the plan attributed to Gallant, the Israeli minister of defense, fundamentally feasible, given that it differs from the more hardliner proposals of other cabinet ministers by not including the expulsion or removal of Palestinians from Gaza, and instead emphasizing that Israel will retain control of security in the region?

It appears that there is a growing consensus within the Israeli cabinet that completely eradicating Hamas and the resistance movement in Gaza may not be feasible. Consequently, it seems that Netanyahu is gradually moving away from the promise of destroying Hamas, instead focusing on eliminating significant threats to Israel's security. This suggests a potential shift in his stated objectives.

The inclusion of the provision in the Gallant plan that Israel will retain control over the security of Gaza could indicate an acknowledgment of the reality of the presence of Palestinians in Gaza as well as anti-Israeli sentiments, while aiming to neutralize substantial threats. Essentially, the Israeli perspective seems to be that even if some Hamas members and supporters remain in Gaza, they would not pose an immediate threat to Israel.

What is your assessment of the potential response from the international community to Israel's proposed plans for Gaza, such as the expulsion of Palestinians or Israel's assumption of security responsibilities? Do major global powers appear to endorse these plans?

Diverse viewpoints exist on this matter. While historically, the United States has been supportive of Israel, it has recently adopted a poli-



Palestinians ride on an Israeli military vehicle commandeered by Hamas fighter during Operation Al-Aqsa Storm near the Gaza Strip fence on October 7, 2023, in Gaza City. AP

cy characterized by a series of "no's," including opposition to the annexation of Gaza to Israel and the expulsion of Palestinians. The current stance of the United States is to merely reject certain plans, and it remains uncertain whether it will ultimately align with an Israeli plan regarding Gaza. The Americans were previously opposed to the launch of an Israeli ground assault in Gaza as well, but Israel went through with it nevertheless. It seems that the United States' plan involves delegating the administration of

Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, with the aim of facilitating the establishment of two independent Palestinian and Israeli states.

The positions of European countries, however, are not uniform. France has been critical of Netanyahu, while Germany has consistently supported Israel. As a result, it is unclear whether Europe will ultimately support or oppose Israel's security presence in Gaza.

Currently, China and Russia do not favor such a plan. However, Russia may make a deal with European nations regarding the Ukraine conflict. Recent statements by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, drawing parallels between Israel's goals in Gaza and Russia's goals in Ukraine, suggest that Russia is open to negotiating with Europe.

Is the Arab world capable of playing a significant role and exerting influence in this matter?

The Arab world is characterized by internal divisions. Qatar serves as a key

focal point for negotiations between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia form a closely aligned axis with each other, while Egypt and Jordan represent yet another axis.

Among these, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia have more influential roles. Israel seeks to exert influence over the UAE and Saudi Arabia, whereas Iran and Turkey support strengthening Qatar's role. The United States also aims to involve all three countries. Consequently, the Arab world lacks a unified stance and is unable to uniformly oppose Israel's plan for Gaza, for instance.

Iran is the primary supporter of the resistance front, while the United States is the main supporter of Israel. It appears that in recent months, Iran and the United States have been attempting to manage tensions between themselves. There are concerns that the Gaza conflict may impact the adjusted ties between Tehran and Washington.

This is a significant matter. In recent months, the United States has sought to prevent Iran from entering into direct conflict with Israel. Iran, for its part, also aims to avoid direct confrontation with Israel. Thus far, Washington has successfully averted the Gaza conflict from escalating into a regional war. However, the potential impact of the Gaza conflict on Iran-US relations remains uncertain.

Prolonging the Gaza conflict raises the risk of unforeseen or uncontrollable events, particularly as the proxy war between Iran and Israel persists. Consequently, there is a possibility that the proxy war between Israel and Iran could inadvertently escalate and draw in the United States. Therefore, a protracted Gaza conflict may have adverse effects on Iran-US relations.



Israeli soldiers work on a tank at the Israel-Gaza border on October 9, 2023. ILLA YEFIMOVICH/GETTY IMAGES



Israeli soldiers prepare to go to the Gaza Strip on December 13, 2023, amid ongoing battles with the Palestinian resistance group Hamas.
● JACK GUEZ/AFP

Is Israel losing the war against Hamas?

By Leila Nezirovic
Analyst

PERSPECTIVE

In a complete departure from the Israeli narrative, Dan Halutz, a former Israeli military chief, has suggested that Israel has lost the war against the Palestinian resistance group Hamas in the besieged Gaza Strip. He criticized the current Israeli military and political strategy, expressing concerns over the future of Israel in an interview aired on local broadcaster Channel 7. Israel can only win this war if it succeeds in destroying Hamas. However, so far, it is proving very “difficult” to even dislodge it. Hamas is much more than a movement; it is an idea, and the fundamental problem is that one cannot destroy an idea, according to Paul Rogers, an emeritus professor of peace studies at the University of Bradford. Destroying Hamas would not solve the problem for Israel, as even if they appear to destroy it, then “it will just rise in a different form in maybe two or three years’ time, maybe a little bit more, but it doesn’t solve the underlying problem of the position of Palestinians. And they are not going to go away,” Rogers told Anadolu.

The professor argued that the war between the Israeli military and Hamas is a battle of time, as the Israelis only have a certain amount of time in which they can defeat Hamas because otherwise, the pressure from the international community, and particularly from the United States, will force Israel to bring the war to an end. The sheer loss of life on the Palestinian side is causing “huge problems” internationally for Tel Aviv, said Rogers, pointing out that Israel is slowly but steadily losing support, possibly even in the US, as since the beginning of the war on Gaza, Israeli forces have in their brutal military campaign killed over 22,000 Palestinians and wounded over 56,000. “So, the issue is that you can’t defeat a group like Hamas in the first place. But you can’t keep on trying, either, as the patience of even the closest ally would run out.” “This is why the whole issue is, in a sense of time, urgent, and time is against the Israelis on this,” said Rogers, who is also a global security consultant at Oxford Research Group (ORG).

Israel spreading false narrative

Tel Aviv, however, is still spreading a false “narrative of a severely weakened Hamas” by claiming that the war in northern Gaza is mainly completed and that victory in southern Gaza would follow soon.

“The official narrative has been that Hamas is weakened, but in reality, the IDF’s doctrine of massive force is falling,” said Rogers, referring to the Israeli army. He raised doubts about the idea that Israel is making any significant progress in the war.

At one point, official casualty figures showed more than 460 Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza, Israel, and the occupied West Bank and about 1,900 injured. However, other reputable sources suggested much higher numbers. Even a department within the Israeli Ministry of Defense which deals with rehabilitation reported different figures to the ministry, giving a figure of around 5,000 injuries, whereas the official line was closer to 2,500. According to the rehabilitation department, over 2,000 military personnel had been registered as disabled since October 7 — with 58% of all those it had treated suffering from severe injuries to their hands and feet, which is a lot higher than the official figure.

“So, there are actually differences within the military itself as to the numbers that they’re releasing,” and one suspects that in fact, “the number of injuries is very much higher than is being said,” Rogers noted.

Hamas is fighting on its own territory with thousands of young fighters prepared and ready to die, which is a huge advantage for the military group, many analysts have suggested. This makes it “extremely difficult” for a more conventionally organized country to defeat such groups.

Rogers pointed out that Hamas is “certainly more efficient” in some of its use of weapons in current circumstances than what analysts would have expected.

As far as its tunnel network is concerned, it is even more extensive and more organized than it was assumed by the Israelis, he said, adding that Hamas has succeeded in hiding captives despite a very high level of surveillance and intelligence on the Israeli side.

The Israelis have developed airpower to a very sophisticated level, but whenever Israel sent in ground troops to Lebanon, for instance, they found it much more difficult to handle paramilitary groups such as Hezbollah or Hamas on the ground. It would be even more so difficult if part of the fighting was to happen underground, Rogers asserted, adding there is a suspicion that Hezbollah has developed a similar kind of system of underground tunnels in southern Lebanon, which, according to him, will be very tough to handle.

The reality is that any modern army fighting this kind of guerrilla war, in an urban environment with many

ruins and many obstacles around, “is going to find it very difficult,” he said, adding that this is as true for the Israelis as it was for US special forces and others in recent wars including Russia in terms of its fighting in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol.

Israel unable to win war

Yitzhak Brick, a major general (reserve) in the Israeli army and former ombudsman for the occupation forces, raised an alarm months ago that Hamas could launch an attack on Israel and that the country must prepare for a multi-front war, given the situation on the Lebanese border, but his claims were dismissed by the defense establishment and the political leadership.

He referred to Hamas as equipped, trained fighters who will cross the border on foot and attack with an aim to take back Palestinian land and conquer settlements.

Brick warned that the Israeli army has turned into a primarily air-based military, unable to win a war and fight effectively on the ground. He accused the leadership of completely trying to avoid losing on the battlefield, suggesting that this “completely loses the deterrence of the army and the ability to win the war.” “We have lost the ability to field an effective army and have become a one-dimensional aerial power that cannot win a war on its own.”

The current situation of the land forces “is tragic; they are not ready for war,” he told local broadcaster Channel 12 last May. “The truth is that an imaginary reality has been created by the general staff and spread throughout the army. The soldiers have lost their motivation and fighting spirit in recent years, and many are not ready to go into battle,” he said, adding that technology, which Israel heavily relies on, is not enough to win the war.

Things however are not looking that great for the Israeli Air Force either, as former Israeli Air Force chief Major General Amikam Norkin warned last year that the country no longer enjoys unfettered superiority and freedom of action in Lebanon’s skies, stressing that this reality was apparent to the Israeli military after Hezbollah began manufacturing its own drones, he told public broadcaster KAN.

Brick essentially suggested that Israel is unable to win the war against Hamas alone. But according to Rogers, it is unlikely that the United States will want to get involved on the ground to help the Israeli army because they have experienced problems with this kind of warfare themselves when fighting in the Middle East. Consequently, the US Army would be “really strongly opposed to this and would resist any attempt to do so,” and in this sense, “Israel is in this on its own as far as the ground troops are concerned,” said Rogers.

This article first appeared on Anadolu Agency.

Israel’s militarism foils any peace initiative

China better mediates between Israel, Palestine

By Ebrahim Behnam
Political analyst

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Nozar Shafiee

Josep Borrell, the EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs, and Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, have conducted a new round of negotiations in the West Asia region. According to reports, Borrell’s talks in Lebanon and Blinken’s meetings in Turkey, Jordan, Qatar, and Israel aim to prevent the escalation of the Gaza conflict and to broaden efforts to mitigate the ongoing hostilities. Can these negotiations extinguish or reduce the flames of war in Gaza? To discuss this matter, Iran Daily has interviewed Nozar Shafiee, an expert in international relations.

The US secretary of state and the EU high representative for foreign affairs have embarked on new diplomatic efforts in the region, particularly focusing on the Gaza conflict. According to media reports, the US and Europe are concerned about the potential escalation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel. In your opinion, can Blinken and Borrell have a significant impact? Is the likelihood of an escalation of the conflict serious?



Israeli soldiers attend the funeral of Captain Liron Snir, 25, who was killed in the northern Gaza Strip amid the ongoing ground operation of the Israeli army against Palestinian resistance group Hamas, on November 22, 2023.
● JAMES OATWAY/REUTERS

Yes, there is concern that Israel may intensify its attacks on Hezbollah, leading to a broader scope of the conflict. However, rather than being concerned about the expansion of the Gaza War, the US must focus on finding a solution to end the war and devise a plan for peace. The main problem is the lack of viable solutions to halt and conclude the conflict, an aspect that the US seems to overlook while primarily aiming to prevent the occurrence of a new war. The battleground, namely the Gaza Strip, despite its limited geographical extent, has repercussions that are felt in the entire Middle East, North Africa, and maybe even beyond. Therefore, the negotiations should prioritize finding a solution to cease the conflict.

The US continues to advocate for establishing two states of Palestine

and Israel, a proposal rejected by Israel or at least its current cabinet. Do you think the US has the capability to persuade the Israeli regime to accept such a plan?

A significant challenge in this regard is that Washington itself is part of the crisis or part of the problem. In the past, we have witnessed peace proposals put forth by the US that were unfair and predominantly in favor of Israelis, resulting in no tangible outcomes. An effective mediator should be impartial, sincere, and trusted by both conflicting parties. However, because the US is not impartial and is itself a part of the Israel-Palestine crisis, it has so far been unsuccessful in establishing peace. In the recent Gaza conflict, too, the US vetoed proposed ceasefires and deployed its naval fleets to the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea, giving Israel the green light to take any action against Palestinians.

Another point revolves around Israel. Israel’s aggressive policies obstruct any peace initiative, especially now that a hawkish cabinet led by Benjamin Netanyahu is in power there. Therefore, as long as one party continues its militaristic policy, chances for achieving diplomatic success remain elusive.

Israelis have believed in recent decades that increasing pressure on Palestinians would make them more inclined to accept conditions for peace, albeit a peace in favor of Israel. However, past experiences have invalidated this belief. Therefore, if a plan is to be proposed to end this crisis, it should also pressure Israel to abandon its military policies. The Gaza war experience tells us that proposed solutions regarding Palestine must be rational and mutually acceptable, rather than serving the interests of only one party.

Some experts believe that Israel is attempting to provoke Iran or Hezbollah and intensify the conflict to drag the US into the war. Do you think the US is currently prepared to enter a new war?

When countries perceive that their vital interests are at stake, they mobi-

lize public resources to prevent such threats. They may even resort to war in such a context. However, the US is currently grappling with more significant challenges, such as the conflict in Ukraine, upcoming presidential elections, and most importantly, its traditional competition with China. Americans are well aware that engaging in a new war in West Asia would undoubtedly result in greater losses in other regions. Therefore, it is in their best interest to choose a path that leads to peace. Some have suggested that China, in particular, should get involved and mediate between Israel and Palestine to end the Gaza conflict. China maintains good relations with Israel and is trusted more by Palestinians compared to the US. China, contrary to the US, maintains impartiality, and perhaps, could help untangle this decades-long conflict.

Iran to chase the elusive Asian Cup crown in Qatar



By Amirhadi Arsalanpour
Staff writer

When skipper Parviz Qelichkhani lifted a third successive Asian Cup trophy for Iran on home soil in June 1976 – courtesy of an Ali Parvin's match-winning freekick against Kuwait – it was hard to think that the country's wait for another title in the continent's flagship international event would stretch beyond four decades.

Once the dominant force of the sport in Asia, Iran had to watch Saudi Arabia and Japan steal the show for the best part of the next 11 editions – winning seven titles between them – with Kuwait, Iraq, Australia, and, most recently, Qatar also getting the taste of silverware at the tournament.

For all the talent in the Iranian squad throughout the years, the country has been left regretting the 'what if?' moments, controversial refereeing decisions, and individual blunders when leaving the competition as an unfortunate loser.

From Nasser Mohammadkhani and Hamid Alidousti in the 80s to legendary keeper Ahmadreza Abedzadeh and the magnificent trio of Ali Daei, Khodadad Azizi, and Karim Baqeri in the 90s, and then Mahdi Mahdavi, Ali Karimi, and Javad Nekounam in the early years of the new century, all finished their illustrious careers without the coveted trophy, settling for a consolation bronze or individual awards on each occasion.

"We're tired of losing in the penalties," a weeping commentator Javad Khiabani said on TV after Yahya Golmohammadi's miss from the spot against the 2004



● FFIRI

host China saw Iran fall to a third last-four shootout defeat in the history of the competition. The shootout heartbreak was repeated in the quarterfinals against South Korea in 2007 and Iraq eight years later in Australia, while the South Koreans also sent Team Melli packing, thanks to extra-time winners in the last-eight round, in 2000 and 2011. A sixth semifinal setback came in the previous edition in the United

Arab Emirates, where Carlos Queiroz's star-studded team suffered a devastating 3-0 defeat against Japan.

Fifteen of the Iranian players in the UAE will again be in the 26-man squad when beginning their quest for the Asian Cup glory against Palestine in the Group B opener in Qatar on Sunday.

Widely regarded as one of the finest generations of the Iranian footballers, Amir Qalenoee's men

will be looking to build on years of close bond under Queiroz to end the long-time drought in the event, which could prove to be a fitting finale to the international careers of certain players in the team – most notably the captain of the group Ehsan Hajsafi, as well as Karim Ansarifard and Omid Ebrahimi. For the Iranian head coach himself, the tournament will provide an opportunity for relief.

Having always felt harshly treated

to see his previous spell in charge come to an end after only 11 months following the 2007 loss to South Korea, 60-year-old Qalenoee, in what is likely his last top managerial role, is eager to add the Asian crown to his decorated trophy cabinet, not to mention secure his place on the bench for the World Cup in two years.

However, despite a decent run since he was appointed to the job last March, the challenge is not

going to be any easier this time around as all of the Asian elite teams will have the same high ambitions in Qatar.

Some jaw-dropping results and performances over the past two years – including last September's 4-1 hammering of Germany – make Japan the ultimate favorite to win a record-extending fifth title, while Jürgen Klinsmann's South Korea, chasing a first trophy since 1960, will be spearheaded by top European club stars in Son Heung-min, Kim Min-jae, and Lee Kang-in.

Saudi Arabia, with high-profile Italian Roberto Mancini in charge, will be out there to prove its Pro League's spending spree in the summer has not led to the national team's decline, and Australia will return to Qatar on the back of an impressive World Cup campaign in the Persian Gulf country two years ago.

Qalenoee will yearn for his strike force of Mahdi Taremi and Sardar Azmoun to be in top form during the course of the four weeks, despite the two missing their respective clubs Porto and AS Roma this season, while pinning hopes on Brentford midfielder Saman Qoddous, enjoying his best international spell under the manager, to be the linchpin of his team going forward.

The 2022 World Cup final at the Lusail Stadium saw Lionel Messi walk away with the one single prize that had eluded the Argentine great all his life, and a whole footballing nation of Iran will yearn to watch their team end the decades-long hunt when a second major final showdown is staged at the venue on February 10.

Djokovic poised to scale Grand Slam peak at favourite stomping ground



REUTERS – Novak Djokovic resumes his quest for Grand Slam supremacy at the Australian Open, where the seemingly invincible Serb will be the firm favourite to claim his 25th major singles title and eclipse a record that has stood for half a century. The 36-year-old enjoyed one of the most dominant seasons of his career in 2023, winning a record-extending 10th crown at the Melbourne major before triumphs at the French and U.S. Opens to go level with Margaret Court on 24 Grand Slam singles titles.

Australian Court won the last of those trophies in 1973 and Djokovic is poised to go past her on his happiest hunting ground, where 12 months ago he braved a political row involving his father and battled through a torn hamstring to prevail. Barring a blip in a thrilling Wimbledon final against Carlos Alcaraz and a couple of late-season defeats by another youngster in Jannik Sinner, the world number one was virtually unbeatable last year with little to suggest he will slow down in 2024. "You're not really meant to play

tennis like that at 36," Djokovic's former coach Boris Becker said in a recent Eurosport podcast.

"When does the guy get tired, or when does he run out of motivation?"

Djokovic has not got off to the best of starts in the new season, suffering his first defeat in Australia in six years at the United Cup mixed team tournament after being hampered by a right wrist issue against Alex de Minaur.

"I think I'll be okay," Djokovic said. "It did have quite an impact, particularly on the forehand and serve. I have plenty of time, I think enough time to get myself in the right shape for the Australian Open."

With his 43-match winning run in Australia ended, Djokovic will be fired up to get a head start in his quest for the Golden Slam – winning all four majors and the gold medal at the Olympic Games – to match Steffi Graf's rare feat in 1988.

"I've always had the highest ambitions and goals. That's not going to be different (in 2024), that's for sure," Djokovic said after outclassing Alcaraz and Sinner in back-to-back matches to secure the year-end top spot at the ATP Finals in November.

"The drive that I have is still there. My body has been serving me well, listening to me well. I have a great team of people around me. The motivation, especially for the biggest tournaments in the sport, is still present. "It still inspires me to keep going."

Real target Bayern's Davies for next season

BBC – Real Madrid want to add Bayern Munich and Canada left-back Alphonso Davies to their squad for next season.

Davies, 23, has a contract until June 2025 with German champions Bayern.

He has played in all but one of their Bundesliga games this season and started all six Champions League group-stage matches.

Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti has tended to rotate between France's Ferland Mendy, 28, and Spain's Fran Garcia, 24, at left-back this campaign.

Ancelotti has just signed a new deal with Madrid until June 2026 despite interest from Brazil.

The Italian is now looking at how he can rebuild and refresh his squad after only winning the Copa del Rey last season.

Real Madrid are still targeting France and Paris St-Germain forward Kylian Mbappe but Davies is also a key target and they are hopeful he will end contract negotiations with Bayern.

Last summer saw them sign England midfielder Jude Bellingham, but lose their main striker Karim Benzema to Saudi Arabian club Al-Ittihad.

Davies, who was born in a refugee camp in Ghana in 2000, joined Bayern from Vancouver Whitecaps in January 2019.

He has made 176 appearances for Bayern and won 13 trophies, including five Bundesliga titles and the Champions League in 2020.

Davies made his Canada debut aged 16 and has been capped 44 times, scoring 15 goals, including their first at a World Cup finals at Qatar 2022.



● EUROPA PRESS



Yemenis unrattled by empty threats Ansarallah launches largest attack in Red Sea



Yemen's Ansarallah fighters take positions on the deck of the Galaxy Leader cargo ship in the Red Sea in November 2023.
● REUTERS

Yemen's Ansarallah resistance movement fired its largest-ever barrage of drones and missiles, targeting ships in the Red Sea heading to the ports of Israel.

The resistance movement's spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree in a televised statement said the attack "targeted an American ship that was providing support to the Zionist entity". Saree also described it as an "initial response" to American troops sinking Yemen's vessels and killing 10 Ansarallah fighters last week.

Yemen will "continue to prevent Israeli ships or those heading to the ports of occupied Palestine from navigating in the Red Sea until the aggression stops and the siege on our steadfast brothers in the Gaza Strip ends," Saree said.

"The naval forces, the missile force, and the unmanned air force of the Yemeni armed forces carried out a joint military operation with a large number of ballistic and naval missiles and drones," he said in a statement on X.

The resistance movement says they are targeting Israeli-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza. It says its attacks aim to end the pounding Israeli air-and-ground offensive targeting the Gaza Strip.

The Red Sea links the Mideast and Asia to Europe via the Suez Canal and its narrow Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The strait is only 29 kilometers (18 miles) wide at its narrowest point, limiting traffic to two channels for inbound and outbound shipments, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Nearly 10% of all oil traded at sea passes through it and an estimated \$1 trillion in goods pass through the strait annually.

US and UK forces claimed that they have shot down more than 20 drones and missiles over the Red Sea launched by the Yemeni forces, in what London branded Wednesday the "largest attack" yet by the Yemeni forces.

The Western allies' warships and planes took out 18 drones and three missiles on Tuesday, the US military said.

HMS Diamond, a British destroyer, intervened with "her guns and Sea Viper missiles" after the drones were "heading for her and commercial shipping in the area", UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said.

It comes a week after 12 nations led by the United States warned the resistance movement in Yemen of consequences unless they immediately halted firing on commercial vessels in the busy international shipping corridor.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the Ansarallah movement had launched a complex attack of one-way attack UAVs, as well as firing anti-ship cruise missiles and an anti-ship ballistic missile from Yemen.

It claimed that they were downed by a combination of F/A-18 warplanes, operating from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier, three American destroyers and the British naval vessel, CENTCOM said.

The incident is the latest since the US set up a multinational naval task force last month against the Ansarallah movement.

Abbas: Gaza is integral part of Palestine

Hamis: Blinken tries to justify Israel's genocide



● AFP

International Desk

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas described the Gaza Strip as "an integral part of the Palestinian state" during a meeting with visiting US top diplomat Antony Blinken.

"It is not possible to accept or deal with the plans of the occupation authorities to separate it, or cut off any part of it," the Palestinian leader told Blinken.

The Palestinian president also raised "efforts made to stop the Israeli aggression against Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank," Wafa news agency reported. Blinken told Abbas that Washington supports "tangible steps" towards the creation of a Palestinian state.

Blinken reiterated Washington's longstanding position that a Palestinian state must stand alongside Israel, "with both living in peace and security," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

The United States has dispatched its top diplomat to the region for the fourth time since the eruption of war on October 7. Blinken has so far visited several countries, including Turkey, the UAE and Jordan. The Wednesday meeting came a day after talks on Tuesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet.

As Blinken arrived under tight security at Abbas's headquarters, a group of protesters held up signs that read "Stop the genocide," "Free Palestine" and "Blinken out".

Justifying genocide

The Hamas resistance movement in Gaza also denounced Blinken's visit to the region, saying the US official's "attempts to justify the genocide committed by the Israeli occupation army against Palestinian civilians ... are miserable attempts to wash the hands of the criminal occupation of the blood of children, women and the elderly of Gaza".

Israel intensified its onslaught on central and southern Gaza Strip with dozens killed in overnight attacks, including 15 from one family in Rafah city - an Israeli-declared "safe zone".

The Health Ministry in Gaza said Wednesday at least 23,357 people have been killed in more than three months of Israel's strikes on the Palestinian territory.

The toll includes 147 deaths in 24 hours, a ministry statement said,

while 59,410 people have been wounded across the Palestinian territory since conflict erupted on October 7.

Attacks on Israeli soldiers

Meanwhile, the Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad movement in Gaza, said its fighters targeted Israeli military troops with a barrage of mortar shells around Al-Mahatta area in the southern city of Khan Younis.

Mortar shells were also used to hit Israeli soldiers and vehicles in the southern Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City, it said.

Israel's military said on Tuesday that Palestinian fighters ambushed Israeli troops in a dense Gaza City neighborhood, killing at least nine of them. At least 187 Israeli soldiers have been killed so far.

The conflict in Gaza has now spread to other parts of the region where resistance movements have been targeting Israel's position in support of Palestinians. In the north of occupied Palestine clashes have intensified between Israeli army and Lebanese resistance movement, Hezbollah. The Israeli army has so far killed dozens of resistance's fighters in its attacks on Lebanon, including senior commanders of the resistance groups.

Extrajudicial killings

On Tuesday, UN experts in international law condemned the killing of Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Arouri and other fighters in drone strikes on Lebanon, saying this amounted to the crimes of extrajudicial killings and murder.

"Killings in foreign territory are arbitrary when they are not authorized under international law," the two UN Special Rapporteurs, Ben Saul and Morris Tidball-Binz, said in a statement issued in Geneva.

"Israel was not exercising self-defense because it presented no evidence that the victims were committing an armed attack on Israel from Lebanese territory."

Arouri was killed last week by a drone in Beirut's southern suburbs, the stronghold of Hezbollah, in an attack widely attributed to Israel. Israeli forces also killed Wissam Tawil, a top Hezbollah commander, in a strike in south Lebanon on Monday, sources familiar with the resistance group's operations said. Hezbollah retaliated on Tuesday, hitting Israeli army headquarters in Safed, northern Israel, with drones.

Parliaments urged measures to stop Israel's killings

International Desk

Representatives of 26 Islamic and Asian countries emphasized that the parliaments of countries should force the international bodies to take the necessary measures for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza to stop further killing of civilians.

The representatives of Islamic and Asian countries participated in the 5th emergency meeting of members of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (PUIC) on Palestine in the Iranian capital of Tehran on Wednesday.

Addressing the conference, Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the Israeli regime was founded on genocide and aggression, and its survival depends on perpetrating such heinous crimes.

"What is coming to pass in the Gaza Strip today is a cause of deep concern and



● IRNA

shame for humanity. It is a double injustice to a nation that has been deprived of any human rights and has been under aggression and occupation for more than seven decades," Qalibaf said.

"No awakened conscience can be dismissive of the heinous and widespread bloody crimes being committed by the Zionist regime's war machine in Gaza

and its horrendous effects on the peace and security of the region and the world." Qalibaf also touched on Washington's and its Western allies' unflinching support for the Israeli regime over the past decades, saying, "Israel has not only committed the most heinous crimes against the oppressed people of Palestine, but as a corrupt and pampered child under the support of the Western political system and as the center of crisis in the region has remained immune from any accountability, responsibility and punishment."

The top Iranian legislator also censured the West's double-standard approach towards Israeli crimes in Gaza, saying, "What we are witnessing in Palestine these days is a clear example of the hypocritical and deviant policy of the United States and its Western allies in supporting bloodshed, absolute defense of an aggressor, and categorical denial of the historical and civilizational realities of Palestine.

Syrian Parliament Speaker Hamuda Sabbaq said the Israeli regime has not only killed Palestinian women and children, but has targeted the infrastructure in the Palestinian territory.

He said that the West has provided the regime with technical and logistical support. Sabbaq added that Israel's crimes in Gaza is a clear violation of the resolutions of the United Nations.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist





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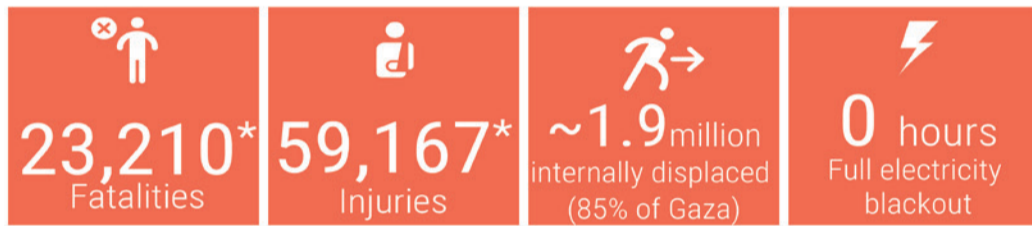
Numbers speak for themselves

OVERVIEW

The snapshot provides a comprehensive overview of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza as of 9 January 2024, including casualties, particularly among women and children.

Significant damage has been inflicted upon critical infrastructure and essential services, affecting people's ability to maintain their dignity and basic living standards.

This snapshot highlights reported figures on the impact of hostilities on people in Gaza, where a major humanitarian crisis has unfolded.



*Sources: MoH Gaza

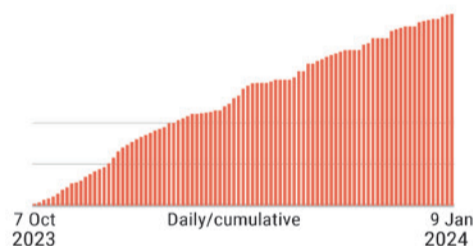


REPORTED CASUALTIES (Cumulative) as of 9 January 2024

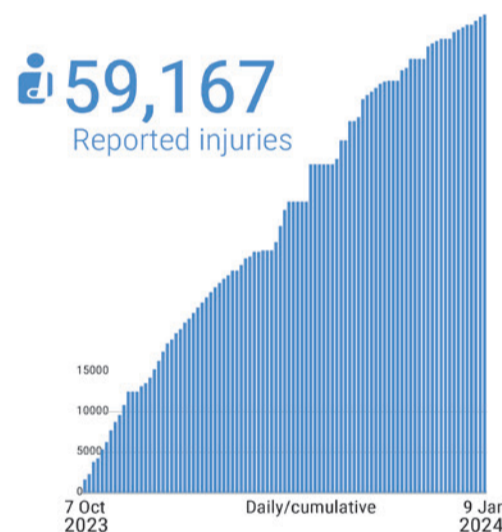
Palestinians*

23,210 Reported fatalities in addition to ~1,000 fatalities in Israel, including people involved in the 7 October attack

70% of fatalities are reported to be women and children.



*Sources: Ministry of Health, Government Media Office



Israelis**

Over 1,200*** Reported fatalities

1,162 identified fatalities, including at least 33 children

~5,400 Reported injuries

183 Reported fatalities **1,065** Reported injuries

136 captives remain in Gaza (including soldiers and foreign nationals)

** According to Israeli media citing official sources
 *** The reported estimate includes foreign nationals

DAMAGE*



- Over **60%** of Gaza's housing units reportedly destroyed or damaged
- **372** education facilities reportedly damaged
- **11** bakeries reportedly destroyed
- **30** hospitals and **53** health care centres out of service
- **121** ambulances damaged
- **20** WASH facilities damaged
- At least **3** churches and **142** mosques damaged

*GMO as of 9 Jan

BASIC SERVICES AND LIVELIHOODS

FOOD SECURITY*

- **2.2 million** people at imminent risk of famine
- **378,000** people at Phase 5 (catastrophic levels) Phase 5 refers to extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities.
- **939,000** people at Phase 4 (emergency levels)

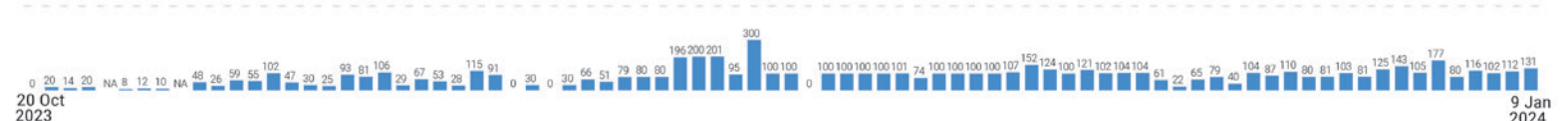
*Source: IPC, 21 December

WATER AND SANITATION

- **Two** out of the three water pipelines coming from Israel became operational as of 3 January.
- **No Access** to clean water in the northern governorates. Fuel shortage impacts: 60 water wells, 2 desalination plants, sewage stations and pumps, wastewater treatment.

INCOMING TRUCKLOADS

The pre-crisis average per working day in 2023 was **500 trucks, including fuel.**



HEALTH

- Hospitals are under heavy strikes.
- The number of functioning hospitals has dropped from **36** to **13**.

At high risk

At least **1,000** kidney failure, **>2,000** cancer patients, **130** neonates in incubators.

Critical shortages

of drugs, blood products and supplies (**Fuel at the hospitals is being severely rationed**).

EDUCATION

625K (100%) Students with no access to education.

Over 69% of all school buildings have sustained damage.

HUMANITARIAN OPERATION

- **148** UN staff killed: UNRWA: **146**; WHO: **1**; UNDP: **1**
- At least **326** health workers killed
- **45** Civil Defence killed while on duty
- **112** Journalists killed

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

- Due to security incidents since its opening on 17 December, aid through Kerem Shalom was suspended between 25 and 28 December, but resumed on 29 December. All other Israeli-controlled crossings are closed.
- The Rafah crossing with Egypt is open for approved goods, and for the movement of some wounded and sick people, and aid workers.
- Access to the sea and to areas near Israel's perimeter fence is restricted.