

Wishful Thinking Amid Gaza Fiasco



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Hamas has capability to combat Israel for several months: Iran FM

TEHRAN- According to Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Hamas notified Iran that it has adequate capability to press ahead with the conflict with Israel in the beleaguered Gaza Strip for months.

Addressing a conference of clerics and seminary teachers, held in the holy city of Qom on Thursday, Amir Abollahian declared that more than 80 days had passed since the Gaza war, yet "the Zionist regime has achieved nothing."

"According to Hamas commanders, only 14% of the resistance capacity has been damaged so far," the foreign minister said.

According to Amir Abdollahian, the length of Hamas tunnels currently exceeds the region of Gaza, and drone production operations have not been shuttered for even an hour since Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on Oct. 7.

"Hamas captured valuable security and military forces of the Zionist regime on the first day of Operation Al-Aqsa Storm," he went on to say. ▶ Page 2

150,000 flee central Gaza as Israel attacks refugee camps

An estimated 150,000 Palestinians are being forced to flee areas of central Gaza, the UN has said, as Israeli forces advance on refugee camps there.

Witnesses and Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, reported that the Israeli regime's tanks had reached the eastern outskirts of the Bureij camp.

Israel's military recently expanded its ground offensive to target Bureij and nearby the Nuseirat and Maghazi camps.

Israeli bombardment also killed dozens of people across Gaza on Thursday, the Hamas-run health ministry said.

Egypt has confirmed that it has put forward a three-stage proposal to stop the fighting which ends with a ceasefire.

A Hamas delegation is said to have arrived in Cairo to give its response to the plan.

So far, more than 21,300 people have been killed in Gaza - mostly children and women - during 11 weeks of fighting, according to the health ministry. ▶ Page 5

Israel censor bans reporting on 8 subjects, including arms captured by Hamas: Intercept

Weapons used by the Israel Defense Forces, security cabinet leaks, and stories about people held hostage by Hamas — these are some of the eight subjects the media are forbidden from reporting on in Israel, according to a document obtained by The Intercept.

The document, a censorship order issued by the Israeli military to the media as part of its war on Hamas, has not been previously reported. The memo, written in English, was an unusual move for the IDF's censor, which has been part of the Israel military for more than seven decades.

"I haven't ever seen instructions like this sent from the censor aside from general notices broadly telling outlets to comply, and even then it was only sent to certain people," said Michael Omer-Man, a former editor-in-chief of the Israel's +972 Magazine and today the director of research for Israel-Palestine at Democracy in the Arab World Now, or DAWN, a U.S. advocacy group. ▶ Page 5

Fall of Israel would be the revenge for assassination of general, IRGC chief says

TEHRAN- Iran's response to Israel's assassination of a top military advisor in Syria, according to the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), will be confined to the complete overthrow of the occupying regime.

Major General Hossein Salami made remarks during a funeral procession on Thursday for Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi, an IRGC commander who was assassinated three days ago in a terrorist Israeli bombing in a Damascus suburb.

"Seyyed Razi's martyrdom came out of the incapability of the Zionist regime," he said. "We will never exercise patience in the face of the martyrdom of our people. Seyyed Razi's revenge will be nothing but the elimination of the Zionist regime."

Salami said that Mousavi was "one of the most experienced and effective" resistance front commanders for the IRGC.

He stated that Mousavi had never strayed from the field of jihad (endeavor for the sake of God) throughout the last 45 years and that the commander was a close companion of Iran's renowned anti-terror hero Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani. ▶ Page 2

Four members of sabotage team affiliated with Israel executed in West Azarbaijan

TEHRAN- Four members of a sabotage team affiliated with Israel were executed in West Azerbaijan Province on Friday after being convicted of spying for the Israeli regime.

The four members, who had been convicted of crimes against national security, were hanged after going through the legal process.

These members had been involved in kidnapping Iranian security officials and setting fire to their cars and homes.

They had also been accused of making videos and photos of their operations and sending them to Israeli intelligence officers.

The four members were among a group of 10 people who were arrested in October on suspicion of being affiliated with Israel.

The head of the judiciary in West Azerbaijan province said at the time that the 10 were accused of trying to identify intelligence officers who were working against Israel.

He said they had been arrested through intelligence monitoring and that they had been receiving money from Israeli intelligence officers and Mossad agents.

The four main convicts are named Wafa Henare, Aram Omari, Rahman Parhaz, and Nasim Namazi.

Iranian, Iraqi oil ministries sign educational co-op MOU

TEHRAN - The Oil Ministries of Iran and Iraq have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in the educational fields, the portal of Iranian Oil Ministry Shana reported.

The MOU was signed by Iran's Deputy Oil Minister for Management and Human Resources Development Mehdi Ali-Madadi and Iraqi Deputy Oil Minister Bassim Mohammed Khudair in the presence of Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji and his Iraqi counterpart Hayan Abdel-Ghani in Tehran on Wednesday.

According to the MOU, the two countries will hold training courses for each other's oil staff.

Research cooperation, holding online sessions, and allocating scholarships from Iranian universities for the Iraqi Oil Ministry's human resources are also among the subjects included in the memorandum. ▶ Page 4



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Well-wishers bid farewell to assassinated commander

TEHRAN - People on Thursday held a massive funeral ceremony for a senior military advisor of the IRGC, who was assassinated by Israel in Syria.

Thousands of mourners thronged the iconic Imam Hussein Square in the capital Tehran to pay their homage to Brigadier General Seyyed Razi Mousavi, Press TV reported.

High-ranking military commanders and government officials were also present at the ceremony.

Earlier, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei led the funeral prayer for the slain general. The Leader extended condolences to Mousavi's family and appreciated his tireless jihad (endeavor for the sake of God).

Mousavi was martyred in a terrorist Israeli airstrike in a Damascus neighborhood on Monday. He was a comrade of top anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was also assassinated in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq in January 2020.

Jalal Literary Awards announces winners

TEHRAN- Winners in different categories of the 16th edition of the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards were honored during a ceremony at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Wednesday.

In the documentation category, Mohammad Rahmani received the top prize of Iran's most lucrative literary award valued at four billion rials (\$8,000) for his book "I Confess: The Life and Times of Vahid Afrakhteh, a Member of the Central Organization of the Mujahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO)."

In this category, Mohammad Hokm-Abadi received an honorable mention for his book "The Revival Operation: The Narrative of the Rise of a Knowledge-Based Complex in the Field of Electric Motors."

In short story collections competition, "Before It Is Monday" written by Ali Shahmoradi was honored. ▶ Page 8

Positive action by Egyptian government against anti-Iranian intentions

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

In an analysis, the Iran newspaper discussed Egypt's prevention of the landing of an aid plane to Gaza due to its Mahsa Amini livery and said: The Egyptian government prevented this plane from landing at El-Arish International Airport and stated the reason for this was the political logo on the tail and body of the plane. The anti-Iran movement with the code name Mahsa Amini tried to create insecurity inside our country. In this regard, we can point to the widespread coalition of anti-Iranian groups, from monarchists and MKO to separatists, who gathered together to sabotage the Islamic Republic and then divide Iran. In the meantime, the Western governments were pursuing their anti-Iranian goals by abusing the current situation in our country. Installing a picture of Mahsa Amini on a plane was also part of the West's propaganda project in this regard. The recent action of the Egyptian government can be considered as part of the results of active and extensive diplomacy of the Islamic Republic, which began with the start of the 13th government. Upon the normalization of relations between Tehran and Riyadh, Cairo has taken the same path to establish and improve relations with Iran.

Hamshahri: On the verge of sustainable peace

In an article, Hamshahri dealt with Amir Abdollahian's visit to Yerevan. It wrote: Amir Abdollahian's consultations in Yerevan are in a sensitive situation; because the review of trends in the region shows that the Republic of Azerbaijan and Armenia are taking important steps towards finalizing the peace agreement between the two countries. The head of Iran's diplomatic system believes that the realization of sustainable peace in this region, without the intervention of foreign powers and through regional guarantors, can bring countless benefits to all parties. On the other hand, despite the Zangezur Corridor plan, the Republic of Azerbaijan claims its desire to establish stable peace and normalize relations with Armenia. It seems that the Republic of Azerbaijan intends to hold early presidential elections, but is trying to use maximum of time to stabilize its regional position and strengthen its position after the war. Therefore, what should be considered during Amir Abdollahian's visit to Armenia is the role of Iran in the framework of the 3+3 format, as one of the guarantors of the peace process in the region.

Fall of Israel would be the revenge for assassination of general, IRGC chief says

From page 1 ▶ In January 2020, General Soleimani was assassinated in Iraq by the U.S. His pivotal role in combating the terrorist group Daesh Takfiri, which was founded by the U.S. and sponsored by Israel, was the reason for his great reverence across the region, especially in Iraq and Syria.

"He remained steadfast after the assassination of Haj Qassem and accompanied Qaani," Salami said.

"The enemy knew him better than us because it had received severe blows from him. The enemy knew what role and influence he had on the endless chain of power."

Salami said that the Palestinians themselves coordinated and carried out Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, which was initiated on October 7 against Israel by Hamas.

He said that the operation was a response to 75 years of Israeli occupation, atrocities against Palestinian youth, the regime's nightly incursions into the West Bank, and the desecration of the al-Aqsa Mosque.

The resistance groups "Hamas and Jihad are capable of producing weapons inside Gaza... The resistance will not end, but what ends is the Zionist regime's power."

He went on to add, "Certainly, the Zionist regime is not capable of providing a peaceful life for the world's Jews. It is not able to continue in the face of the people of Gaza."

Shargh: Grossi's vague agenda

In a note, Shargh discussed the recent claim of the Reuters news agency and said: Reuters claimed that the International Atomic Energy Agency declared in its new report that Iran has increased its production of uranium with 60% purity. Contrary to this claim, many diplomats believe that after the result of the recent negotiations between the United States and Iran, which led to the release of blocked Iranian money from South Korea and the exchange of prisoners between Iran and the United States, Iran has reduced the rate of enrichment. Although Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, condemned Tehran's position in his speech and considered it «unprecedented and contrary to the necessary cooperation», the reality is that there is no desire to provoke Iran's reaction in the war situation in the Middle East. Therefore, we are now witnessing a political and diplomatic fluctuation between Biden's reluctance to create tension with Tehran and the continuation of the escalation of Tehran-Agency differences. This fluctuation can make the occurrence of any proposition possible; therefore, what was raised in the report of the last days of the agency against Iran's nuclear program in the middle of the conflict between Hamas and Israel, can be the Agency's agenda for Tehran for the coming year.

Etemad: lack of unity in the Biden cabinet

In a commentary, Etemad discussed the divisions in the Biden administration. The paper wrote: The United States has deployed two groups of aircraft carriers to the east of the Mediterranean, and then sent a nuclear submarine to the region to strengthen its deterrence against Hezbollah, Iran's most powerful ally. According to the Wall Street Journal, military and defense cooperation between Iran and Russia is increasing. Especially in the situation where the war in Ukraine has turned into a complex puzzle for the West. Wall Street Journal reporter Norman claims, quoting American officials, that the spread of interactions between Iran's supporters in the region has caused division in the Biden government; many members of Biden's cabinet still do not know how they can approach Tehran again after the end of the Gaza war. While parts of the Biden administration are still seeking to find diplomatic solutions to reduce the scope of tensions, voices are heard louder than in the past that want to confront Iran's allies in the region.



Iranians bid farewell to IRGC commander

Thousands of mourners flocked to Tehran's renowned Imam Hussein Square on Thursday to pay their respects to General Mousavi.

High-profile military commanders and government officials were also present at the ceremony.

Earlier, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei conducted the burial prayer for the dead commander.

The Leader expressed condolences to Mousavi's family and praised his relentless jihad.

Funeral processions for the deceased IRGC adviser have recently taken place at the shrines of Sayyida Zaynab and Sayyida Ruqayya in Damascus, as well as the mausoleum of the first Shia Imam, Imam Ali, in the holy Iraqi city of Najaf and finally, he was put to rest in the mausoleum of Imamzadeh Saleh in northern Tehran on Thursday.

Hamas has capability to combat Israel for several months: Iran FM

From page 1 ▶ The minister mentioned the resistance's growing popularity, stating that Hamas now controls both Gaza and the ongoing war.

"After the Al-Aqsa Storm, more than 70% of the people of Gaza took up arms and came to the battlefield," he said. "After breaking the wall, all the Palestinian youth and people came to the arena and defended their country."

"The Zionist regime, meanwhile, has changed its goal in Gaza several times, but has failed," the minister added.

Amir Abdollahian discussed the U.S. full backing for the Israeli assault on Gaza as well as Washington's constant assurances to Iran that it did not want the conflict to spread, pleading with the Islamic Republic to assist in preventing a war spillover.

"At every stage, they were given a strong response and the establishment responded to them at the official level," he stressed.

"America is lying when it says it is not seeking to expand the war," he said, adding if the Americans were not looking to expand the war, they would not be delivering their equipment and weapons to Israel day and night.



"Today, American weapons are arriving in Tel Aviv from all the bases in the region without stop. In addition, some equipment also arrives directly from America in Cyprus and goes to Tel Aviv from Cyprus."

The proposal of taking advantage of Iran's ties to the resistance for post-war planning in Gaza was also presented before the UN; nevertheless, he said, "We declared that the Palestinian people should be the decision-makers themselves."

Amir Abdollahian mentioned resistance movements while discussing the advent of new world powers.

"The emerging powers do not mean only China's economy. Today, resistance has become a power,"

the minister said, referring to anti-U.S. groups in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Additionally, Amir Abdollahian expressed utmost admiration for the Yemenis and Hezbollah in Lebanon, praising their valiant actions during the conflict.

Alluding to the country's interception and targeting of Israeli ships and vessels bound for Israeli ports in Bab el-Mandeb, he continued that "today, Yemen has created a new legal regime in the Red Sea."

"Today, the leaders of the resistance have reached a high level of foresight and understanding and have shown this in the recent war."

Amir Abdollahian also underlined "many measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran in creating the Axis of Resistance to ensure

security in the region."

"Today there is no need for the Islamic Republic to take any action," he noted.

The developments are part of evolving concepts and mechanisms in the world, where the U.S. hegemony is on the decline.

"One development is that the exercise of American hegemonic power is weakening day by day. Today, a resistance group has destroyed the army that considered itself the third military power in the world," he averred.

"Today, in the White House, the issue is raised as to why support for Israel is to such an extent that Israel's defeat is considered America's defeat."

Amir Abdollahian mentioned another encouraging point, stating that Iran has started repairing its fences with Egypt after improving relations with Saudi Arabia.

He said the recent phone conversation between Ebrahim Raisi and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi aimed to talk about the recent events in Gaza and the possibility of reestablishing diplomatic relations between their two nations. "The recent contact between the Iranian and Egyptian presidents was in this context."

Hamas denounces cowardly assassination of Iranian military advisor

TEHRAN- Hamas has vehemently denounced Israel's assassination of a top military expert from Iran in the Sayyida Zeinab neighborhood of Damascus' countryside.

The group issued a statement on Thursday, saying that "the assassination of General Razi Mousavi by the Zionist enemy in Syria is a cowardly crime and aggression, as well as a violation of the sovereignty of an Arab country."

"We offer our condolences to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and emphasize that the enemy's crimes inside and outside Palestine will not succeed in breaking the will of our people and nation and suppressing our resistance," it added.

According to an IRGC statement issued on Monday, Gen. Mousavi was assassinated in an Israeli "missile attack."

The same day, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi sent a message saying that Israel "will certainly pay for this crime."

Islamic Jihad, another Gaza-based resistance group, has vowed that Israel could expect a strong retaliation to its "cowardly" assassination of Gen. Mousavi.

Islamic Jihad maintained in a statement that the general had played a critical role in helping regional resistance groups as well as the Palestinian nation, resistance, and cause.

"The occupying regime's dirty assassination operation proves once again that this criminal regime contaminates the entire region and its only job is to shed blood and spread murder and crimes," it added.

Based on the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Mousavi was assassinated with "direct coordination and participation of the U.S. and the West."

"This crime will have no result other than escalating attacks by the resistance against the Zionist regime and its mercenaries in the region," it said in a statement.

It went on to add, "We will never allow the occupying, criminal and cowardly enemy to feel safe and stable in the region. It must always live

in terror and panic and await the next response."

Speaking on Wednesday, Major General Hossein Salami, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), called General Mousavi "a unique and reliable" person who had permanently supported the entire resistance front.

General Salami highlighted martyr Mousavi's influence on the governments and armies of the host countries.

"Martyr Mousavi is a brave and unknown commander, but famous and shining in the sky. And he had amazing effects during more than 3 decades and almost 37 years of emigration in Syria and Lebanon," the general added.

He added, "I offer my congratulations and condolences on the martyrdom of the loyal comrade of Hajj Qassem Soleimani."

"These martyrdoms represent new growths of divine virtues, which are multiplied by the martyrdom of these loved ones, and the fragrance of the presence of these great commanders and martyrs spreads through the atmosphere of the society," the top general noted, adding that anyone who encounters these pleasant scents of patience, perseverance, and jihad becomes a new mujahid.

As per General Salami, the enemy has used all its talent and resources to destroy the face and image of Iranian society.

He declared, "We are at war with the enemy's ideal image and we want to disrupt the enemy's dreams."

"If we don't move, we will fall. Our endurance is not in stillness but in movement," General Salami said in conclusion.

On Wednesday, Iran's Defense Minister vowed to retaliate against the Zionist regime for its cowardly terrorist act that claimed the life of IRGC General Razi Mousavi in Syria.

General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani issued a statement following the martyrdom of Mousavi, a comrade of General Qassem Soleimani, who dedicated his life to the defense of Islam, the Islamic Revolution, and



the integrity of Ahl al-Bayt.

In his statement, General Ashtiani emphasized that Mousavi's sincere jihad in upholding the flag of Islam, safeguarding the people of Iran and the region, and his ultimate sacrifice in the form of martyrdom would not go unnoticed.

He also expressed his condolences to Mousavi's family and the Iranian people, and reiterated that the Zionist regime's cowardly actions would not be tolerated.

He assured that the right time and place would come when a powerful response would be given to the Zionist enemy.

In a press conference held on Wednesday, Brigadier General Ramezan Sharif, the spokesperson for Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, discussed the implications of Commander Mousavi's assassination in Syria.

Expressing condolences, General Sharif underscored the continuous battle against security threats, reiterating the IRGC's dedication to safeguarding the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

He also highlighted Commander Seyyed Razi's pivotal role in fortifying the security of Iran's borders.

He highlighted that the killing of Mousavi represents a persistent breach of international laws by the Israeli government, urging the global community to intervene and put an end to the actions of the occupying regime, emphasizing the threat it poses to international peace and security.

Praising Mousavi's diplomatic contributions, especially during Daesh attempts to destabilize the Syrian nation and assist the Zionists, General Sharif provided context to the international impact of the commander's efforts.

Israeli assassination of Iranian advisor breaches Vienna convention: Syria

TEHRAN- Syria has denounced the Israeli killing of a senior Iranian Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) member who was working as a military advisor in Damascus at the Arab government's formal request.

Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates called on the UN to take charge of stopping Israel's aggressive tactics that jeopardize global peace and security, in two identical letters to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on Thursday.

On December 25, the Syrian Ministry requested that the UN needs to intervene forcefully against the most recent Israeli offensive that was directed towards the Sayyida Zeinab locality in the countryside of Damascus.

"At 16:20 pm last Monday evening, the Israeli occupation forces carried out an act of aggression from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting the vicinity of Damascus City, which led to the martyrdom of the military advisor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus, Sayyed Razi Mousavi, which constitutes a flagrant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," the ministry said.

Mousavi was an experienced military advisor and one of the IRGC commanders tasked with providing "logistical support to the axis of resistance in Syria."

He was a close companion of senior Iranian anti-terror hero Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a January

2020 U.S. drone attack in Iraq.

Iran's ambassador to Syria, Hossein Akbari, told reporters that three missiles hit his residence outside Damascus just hours after he returned from the Iranian embassy.

Akbari emphasized that Mousavi had a diplomatic passport and residency, and that his assassination violated international accords.

At Damascus' request, Iran continues an advisory mission in Syria to assist the Arab nation in eliminating terrorists with international backing who have been battling the Syrian government since 2011.

The Israeli regime and the U.S. have been hand-in-glove with Daesh and other terrorist groups in Syria, carrying out frequent attacks

on forces associated with the Syrian government and its allies.

Israel is urgently trying to escalate the confrontation in order to hide its crimes against people in the besieged Gaza Strip, the Syrian ministry said.

"This brutal Israeli aggression against the sovereignty of the Syrian territories is part of the occupying authorities' attempt to expand and escalate their aggression in the region and to cover up war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity and brutal massacres committed daily against the defenseless Palestinian people and to escape their failure in the face of the will and determination of the Palestinian people," it said.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

By Mona Hojat Ansari

TEHRAN- Nothing could be more telling of Israel's growing fear, anger, and helplessness than an op-ed by former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett asking the U.S. to "take Iran on directly."

The op-ed published by the Wall Street Journal on Thursday asked for a direct confrontation with Iran under the pretext that Tehran is "sowing chaos" in West Asia.

"The Iranian regime is at the center of most of the Middle East's problems and much of global terror," the former prime minister wrote. "Yet inexplicably, almost nobody is touching it."

Bennett pointed out how Lebanon's Hezbollah movement has lobbed countless rockets at the occupied territories, making them inhabitable for Israelis, and how Yemen's armed forces have been preventing ships from docking at the Port of Eilat in response to the regime's complete siege of the Gaza Strip. He also pointed the finger of blame at Iran, for attacks on U.S. military bases in Iraq and Syria, which continue to occupy the two Arab countries despite repeated calls from the governments and locals to leave the region.

While Iran has repeatedly clarified that its ties with resistance groups in the region resemble an alliance and that it has no authority over the groups, the nature of the relations is not the point of discussion here. What should be discussed is how Israel's almost three-month war on the Gaza Strip, after an egregious defeat against Hamas on October 7, has only caused the regime to sink deeper into the mud as it struggles to find a way out of the crisis.

Earlier this month Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar said that members of the group's military wing, known as al-Qassam Brigades, have so far targeted at least 5,000 Israeli soldiers and officers. He underlined that one-third of Israeli forces, around 1,660, were killed, while the rest had been permanently disabled or seriously wounded.

The figures were announced after Israel was forced to withdraw one of its most highly decorated infantry units, the Golani Brigade, from Gaza. Several Israeli analysts and former officials have so far confirmed the high number of Israeli casualties, while the politicians in power continue to hide and even deny them.

While Israel's invasion of Gaza and its attempts to "eradicate Hamas" has so far spelled disaster for the regime, its relentless killing of Palestinian civilians and the vast carnage it has left behind has also dealt a serious blow to its reputation after years of big-budget propaganda campaigns aiming to cast Israel as the victim.

So as Israel feels like it has been boxed into a corner, it has begun new attempts to collate Western forces in order to transform the war in Gaza into a regional one with international reverberations.

Israel has already attempted to rile Iran and whip it into a pro-war fervor by assassinating a top IRGC advisor on Syrian soil on Monday. The officer named Sayyed Razi Mousavi is said to have been one of the close companions of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, an Iranian anti-terror icon that was killed during a U.S. terrorist attack thought to have been espoused by Benjamin Netanyahu, whom Bennett shares his warmongering



policies with.

In its next move, Israel tried to alert the world about an eminent military conflict with Iran after reporting a "blast" near its embassy in New Delhi, India.

While some political analysts inside Iran did get carried away by Israel's moves and asked for an immediate response to the assassination, the decision-makers in the country once again proved their astuteness by reserving the right to respond to the attack "at the right time and the right place."

Bennett's declaration of his role in the assassination of IRGC member Colonel Hassan Sayyad Khodaei in 2022, along with his claim of ordering an attack on a UAV base inside Iran, should be viewed as yet another desperate effort to provoke Iran into an expansive regional conflict.

"After Iran launched two failed UAV attacks on Israel in February 2022, Israel destroyed a UAV base on Iranian soil. In March 2022, Iran's terror unit attempted to kill Israeli tourists in Turkey and failed. Shortly thereafter, the commander of that very unit was assassinated

in the center of Tehran," Bennett claimed in the op-ed, suggesting that he has been able to pick up on some Iranian analysts' and officials' miscalculations.

But even if Tehran gives Israel the excuse to ask for a concerted Western attack on Iran, it remains unlikely that such a scenario would play out.

The U.S. is currently bogged down in Ukraine and with Joe Biden trying to get elected as America's president for the second time in 2024, a full-scale war with Iran, which could potentially decimate the entirety of West Asia and disrupt global oil supplies for several years, is the last thing his administration would have on the agenda.

Furthermore, the notion of "toppling" the Iranian government through sanctions and riots has proven to be unattainable in recent years, and no longer appears to be a viable option.

Regrettably, for Bennett, it appears that Israel is now left to confront the repercussions of its harrowing crimes against humanity.

DECEMBER 30, 2023

Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Ali Daei among five AFC Asian Cup legends

TEHRAN - Some of Asia's biggest superstars as well as its most promising young talents will be in action as 24 nations from across the continent battle each other for supremacy in the AFC Asian Cup 2023 which gets underway on January 12.

The continental showpiece, entering its 18th edition, has provided the perfect stage for many to write their names into Asian football folklore and a number of players have grown their legends with stellar displays during the tournament's 67-year history.

With the excitement building ahead of the latest edition of the tournament, the-AFC.com looks at five such names who weaved magic on the pitch and became synonymous with the AFC Asian Cup.

At the start of 1996, a 27-year-old Ali Daei had scored just seven goals for Iran. But the qualification campaign for the AFC Asian Cup 1996 and the tournament proper transformed him into the predatory striker who would hang up his boots a decade later with a record 109 international goals.

Daei finished the qualifiers with 12 goals before emerging as the hero for his country in the Finals. He was on the scoresheet in all three group stage fixtures, but it was in the quarter-finals that Daei put on his greatest show.

Iran and Korea Republic traded blows to be tied 2-2 with 24 minutes left when the striker stepped up and pulled Iran into a 3-2 lead. He would then score one of the greatest AFC Asian Cup goals - expertly bringing down a cross on the edge of the box and firing a half-volley into the top corner.

Daei completed his hat-trick in the 83rd minute before sealing the 6-2 win with his fourth from the penalty spot. Team Melli was beaten on penalties in the semi-finals by eventual champion Saudi Arabia, but Daei struck again in the third-place playoff win over Kuwait to top the scoring charts on eight goals.

Though Daei scored three in each edition as he captained his country in 2000 and 2004 - the latter seeing another third-place finish - a winner's medal proved elusive for the Iranian. But there's no doubt that the AFC Asian Cup's all-time leading scorer, with 14 goals, has left an indelible mark on the competition.

Shunsuke Nakamura (Japan), Younis Mahmoud (Iraq), Tim Cahill (Australia) and Saleh Al Nu'eimah (Saudi Arabia) are four other legendary players in the list.

Persepolis earn hard-fought win over Nassaji: PGPL

TEHRAN - Persepolis football team edged past struggling Nassaji 1-0 in the 2023/24 Iran's Persian Gulf Pro League (PGPL) on Thursday.

Shahab Zahedi scored the winner with a header in the 31st minute in Tehran's Azadi Stadium.

Persepolis are third with 29 points, two points behind leaders Sepahan.

Earlier in the day, Sepahan suffered a 3-1 away loss to Gol Gohar.

Alireza Alizadeh opened the scoring for the hosts in the 14th minute. Sepahan midfielder Arshia Sarshogh was shown his second yellow card in the 47th minute.

Roberto Torres made the scoreboard 2-0 five minutes later. Shahriar Moghanlou pulled a goal back before the hour mark. With two minutes remaining, Masih Zahedi scored Gol Gohar's third goal.

Sepahan drawn with Al Hilal in 2023/2024 Round of 16

TEHRAN - The AFC Champions League 2023/24 knockout stage has all the ingredients to be an exciting affair following

the official draw at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Thursday.

Six former Asian champions were among the teams who advanced to the knockout stage, with the Round of 16 scheduled to be played in February.

Inaugural AFC Champions League winners Al Ain FC of the United Arab Emirates will play FC Nasaf with the Uzbekistan club to host the first leg of the Round of 16 clash.

Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr, seeking their first title, will meet Al Fayha SC in an all-Saudi Arabian clash, the-afc.com reported.

Four-time Asian champions Al Hilal SFC of Saudi Arabia will travel to play Iran's Sepahan SC, runners-up of the 2007 edition of the tournament.

Two-time AFC Champions League winners Al Ittihad of Saudi Arabia will face Uzbekistan's Navbahor in the fourth last 16 tie of the West Zone.

*Round of 16

West (February 12,13; February 19, 20)

FC Nasaf (UZB) v Al Ain FC (UAE)

Al Fayha SC (KSA) v Al Nassr (KSA)

Sepahan SC (IRN) v Al Hilal SFC (KSA)

Navbahor (UZB) v Al Ittihad (KSA)

Shamsaei nominated for best Men's National Team coach

TEHRAN - Iran national futsal team head coach Vahid Shamsaei was nominated for the Best Men's National Team Coach.

The 23rd edition of the annual futsal prizes was released by Futsalplanet.com on Wednesday.

Best Men's National Team Coach nominees are as follows:

*Nominees

(Listed in alphabetical order)

Bakhodir Akhmedov (UZB)

UZBEKISTAN N.T.

Carlos César Nuñez Gago (ESP)

THAILAND N.T.

Carlos Raúl Chilavert Genaro (PAR)

PARAGUAY N.T.

Hicham Dguig (MOR)

MOROCCO N.T.

Jorge Gomes Braz (POR)

PORTUGAL N.T.

Kenichiro Kogure (JPN)

JAPAN N.T.

Marcos "Marquinhos" Xavier Andrade (BRA)

BRAZIL N.T.

Mico Martic (CRO)

FINLAND N.T.

Matias Raúl Lucuix (ARG)

ARGENTINA N.T.Vahid Shamsaei (IRN)

IRAN N.T.

Iran's women's futsal team nominated for 2022 Best

TEHRAN - Iran's women's national futsal team were nominated for the Best Men's National Team.

The 23rd edition of the annual futsal prizes was released by Futsalplanet.com on Thursday.

The Best Women's National Team in the World nominees are as follows:

*Nominees

(Listed in alphabetical order)

Brazil, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, Ukraine

Iran dismisses Western statements on its nuclear program

TEHRAN - The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry has responded to a joint statement issued by the United States and three European countries concerning Iran's nuclear program, emphasizing that Tehran's nuclear activities comply with international rules and regulations.

In a statement on Friday, Nasser Kanaani denounced remarks by Britain, France, Germany and the U.S. regarding Iran's nuclear program, saying that Iran's activities are "entirely peaceful."

Western powers condemned Iran on Thursday for "escalation" of its nuclear program, after the UN watchdog said Tehran had upped its high-grade uranium enrichment.

Kanaani emphasized, "As reiterated many times, the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been and will remain peaceful."

The spokesman remarked, "It's quite amusing

that the countries responsible for the current situation regarding Iran's nuclear program are attempting to shift blame and victimhood with a heart detached from reality."

He stressed that Tehran's nuclear activities comply with international rules and regulations, adding that enriching uranium up to 60% has been a routine at Iranian nuclear facilities.

Kanaani suggested, "These countries would be better off reviewing their performance in the past two years in the negotiations for lifting sanctions and observing the outcome of their unconstructive policies."

Emphasizing Iran's position, the spokesman stated, "Enrichment at the 60% level in Iran's nuclear facilities has consistently been proportional to the peaceful needs of the country and fully under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)."

Kanaani assured, "Iran is fully aware of all its

international rights and obligations and, within this framework, will continue its cooperation with the agency."

Expanding on the diplomatic discourse, Kanaani added, "Avoiding negotiations and raising unrelated issues, which have led to the current state of the negotiations, do not grant the United States and three European countries the authority to assert anything about Iran's nuclear program."

The spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded, "As in the past, the Islamic Republic of Iran regards negotiation and diplomacy as the most effective means to address baseless concerns about its peaceful nuclear program. The responsibility now lies with the United States and the three European countries. They must make the requisite political decisions, setting aside rhetorical statements and unproductive pressures."

Chances for JCPOA revival are dim: Ulyanov

TEHRAN - Russia's permanent representative to the international organizations in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, has voiced skepticism about the revival of the Iran nuclear deal, describing the chances as currently at a minimum.

In an exclusive interview with RIA Novosti news agency network on Friday, Ulyanov highlighted that during his tenure leading the Russian delegation in March 2022, nearly all aspects of the agreement to reinstate the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) had been discussed and agreed upon, reaching 99% completion. However, he remarked, "The chances are at the lowest point to revive the JCPOA."



The Russian diplomat noted a significant shift in Washington's position during the fall of 2022, signaling a reluctance to revive the nuclear agreement with Iran. This stance was later mirrored by the UK, France, and Germany, leading to their departure from the negotiating table between February and March of that year.

Ulyanov emphasized

the hypocritical nature of statements from European troika representatives regarding Iran's alleged non-compliance with the JCPOA. He pointed out that the 2022 agreement had unequivocally confirmed Tehran's adherence to nuclear commitments.

Addressing the recent uproar from Western nations over Iran's uranium enrichment to 60%, Ulyanov reminded that the JCPOA strictly limits Iran to 3.67% enrichment, highlighting a departure from this agreement by Western nations themselves.

In his concluding remarks, Ulyanov criticized the West's position, deeming it "completely illogical." He underscored

the precarious nature of the current situation, fraught with uncontrollable tensions at any moment. However, he acknowledged that the decision to return to the negotiating table ultimately rested with the West, emphasizing that Russia cannot compel them to resume talks.

The JCPOA, signed in July 2015 between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France - along with Germany, facilitated relief from sanctions for Iran in exchange for adjustments to certain aspects of its nuclear activities.

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

Iranian Army seeks pious, committed and jihadi recruits, says general

TEHRAN- The Army's Executive Deputy Commander said on Friday that the Iranian Army is seeking to recruit pious, committed, and jihadi individuals.

Addressing reporters on the sidelines of the Army's admission exam, Mahmoudi stated that the Army conducts numerous recruitment exams annually to ensure the provision of specialized human resources.

"Today we witnessed the successful conduct of this entry exam across the country,

with the participation of 21,000 volunteers," General Mahmoudi said, adding that the exam aims to train future high-ranking officers and commanders.

He emphasized that the Army prioritizes individuals with strong religious convictions, unwavering commitment, and a jihadi spirit to lead its units.

"Candidates must undergo a rigorous selection process," the general explained. "First, they must pass the admission exam,

followed by interviews, medical examinations, and physical fitness tests. Only after successfully navigating these stages will they be admitted into the Army."

Extending advice to the candidates, Mahmoudi urged them to demonstrate unwavering dedication to serving the nation, persisting through any challenges that may arise. "The rewards of enduring these difficulties in the pursuit of education and a promising career are immense," he added.

Armenia exports commodities worth \$34m to Iran in 8 months

TEHRAN - Iran has imported commodities valued at \$34 million from Armenia during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-November 21), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Mohammad Rezvani-Far said that Armenia registered the highest growth in export of goods to Iran, among the other neighboring countries, in the mentioned eight-month period.

In late October, Iranian Transport and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash traveled to Armenia to meet the country's senior officials and discuss ways of expanding trade and transit ties between the two countries.

Speaking to the press prior to the visit, Bazrpash emphasized Iran's readiness to export technical-engineering services to Armenia, announcing the plan of the two countries to strengthen the level of trade and transit, and remove cumbersome regulations in the way of trade development.

Regarding the objectives of his trip to Armenia, the official pointed out that the two countries have common borders with each other, which is an advantage for both, saying: "During this trip to Armenia, we have based negotiations with political and economic authorities on two axes."

"The main focus of the negotiations with the Armenian authorities is the development of economic relations and the removal of redundant regulations that hinder the two countries' trade development. Also, the development of transit is another goal we are pursuing in this trip, because the development of transit is one of the main foundations of the development of economic relations," he added.

Cooperation between the two countries regarding the issuance of licenses for Iranian airlines, the removal of road tolls, the promotion of cooperation in the framework of the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC) and the Persian Gulf-

Black Sea Corridor, expanding rail transportation and using Iran's logistics and port capacities were also among the subjects for negotiations during Bazrpash's visit to the neighboring country.

In a meeting between Bazrpash and Armenia's Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructures Gnel Sanosyan, the two sides negotiated and agreed on the presence of Iranian companies in the construction and transport projects, the construction of the second bridge at Nordouz terminal, and the holding of a trilateral transit meeting with Georgia.

The Iranian minister emphasized the presence of Iranian companies in the construction and transportation industries, and proposed the elimination of entry and exit tariffs between the two countries to facilitate traffic.

He also proposed the holding of a trilateral meeting between Iran, Georgia, and Armenia to facilitate traffic in the North-South corridor and welcomed the proposal for the construction of a second bridge on the Aras River at the Nordouz border to increase traffic between Iran and Armenia.

The Armenian minister, for his part, said, "We will use the capacity of Iranian companies to build and complete the North-South corridor, and a contract for the construction of a section of the route is ready to be signed with Iranian companies in the field of road construction."

He welcomed the tripartite transit meeting with Georgia and said, "I will meet with the Georgian minister in the next three days and discuss the issue." The official considered the Armenia-Iran-India transit axis important.

Iran and Armenia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cooperate in the fields of labor exchange, technical and professional training, as well as, welfare and empowerment of the disabled

Iranian, Iraqi oil ministries sign educational co-op MOU

From page 1 ▶ The educational projects covered in the MOU will start either next month or two months later, the report said.

The MOU was signed during a meeting between Oji and a visiting Iraqi delegation headed by the country's Oil Minister at the place of the Iranian Oil Ministry.

'Joint energy projects serve both Iran, Iraq interests'

During the meeting with the Iraqi delegation, Oji said Iran and Iraq are both holders of huge hydrocarbon reserves and joint projects in this sector will be in both countries' interests.

The minister said Iran and Iraq have a common stance on OPEC and OPEC+ policies, expressing his gratitude to Abdel-Ghani for supporting the alliance's production cuts aimed at stabilizing oil prices.

He further pointed to the strong historical and religious bonds between the two nations, saying that Iran's 13th administration is seeking to expand relations with neighboring countries, particularly Iraq.

The Iraqi oil minister, for his



Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Mehdi Ali-Madadi (L) and Iraqi Deputy Oil Minister Bassim Mohammed Khudair exchange signed documents in the presence of Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji and his Iraqi counterpart Hayan Abdel-Ghani in Tehran on Wednesday.

part, said Iraq attaches great significance to the development of relations with Iran.

Touching upon the stance Iraq adopted in the recent OPEC+ meeting, Abdel-Ghani said the coalition's decision helped stabilize oil prices and was to the advantage of producers, consumers, and even investors.

The Iraqi official further stated that Iranian companies can participate in different projects in Iraq, including joint fields' development projects.

He referred to the development of offshore and onshore exploration blocks as an area for Iranian knowledge-based companies' cooperation with Iraq.

Investment in gas production and oil refinery projects is also among potential fields for bilateral cooperation, he concluded.

Iran ready to develop Iraq's upstream, downstream sectors

Speaking to the press after the meeting with the Iraqi delegation, Oji said Iran is self-sufficient in all

sectors of the oil industry despite sanctions and the Islamic Republic is ready to develop Iraq's upstream and downstream sectors.

"The two sides reached favorable agreements on the exploration and development of joint onshore and offshore fields in line with their previous sessions held in Tehran and Baghdad."

The minister said a working group has been formed to follow up on the renovation and reconstruction of refineries in Iraq by Iranian experts.

Given Iran and Iraq's common stance on policies of OPEC and OPEC+, the two delegations held positive talks in this regard as well, the official said.

Mentioning the bartering of natural gas between the two countries, the minister said: "We expressed our readiness for collecting sour and rich gas in Iraq and exporting sweet gas to the neighboring state."

He expressed hope the executive operations of projects, particularly the development of joint fields by both Iran and Iraq, will be carried out as soon as possible.

Inflation rate falls 0.5%

TEHRAN - The Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period ended on December 21, which marks the end of the ninth Iranian calendar month Azar, at 44.4 percent, falling 0.5 percent from the figure for the twelve-month ended to the eighth month.

The center put the country's point-to-point inflation rate at 40.2 percent in the ninth month, which means families have paid an average of 40.2 percent more for purchasing the same package of commodities and services in that month, compared to the same month in the preceding year. The point-to-point inflation rate rose one percent in the ninth month from the previous month.

The Statistical Center of Iran has put the average inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on March 20, 2023, which marks the end of the past Iranian calendar year 1401, at 45.8 percent.

The center had put the inflation rate in the twelve-month period that ended on March 20, 2022 (the end of the Iranian calendar year 1400) at 40.2 percent and that of the Iranian calendar year 1399 at 36.4 percent.

In mid-July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in an economic outlook report said inflation in Iran which was reported to be 49 percent in 2022 is expected to fall to 42 percent in 2023 and then to 30 percent in 2024.



Tehran, Dushanbe ink 2 cooperation MOUs

TEHRAN - Iran and Tajikistan signed two memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for cooperation in various fields at the end of the two countries' 16th Joint Economic Committee meeting in Dushanbe on Thursday, IRIB reported.

The cooperation MOUs were signed by Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian and Tajikistan's Minister of Energy and Water Resources Daler Juma, as the heads of the mentioned committee.

Holding a training course in the field of water, connecting the power grids of Iran and Tajikistan, implementing dam and power plant projects in Tajikistan, and implementing a tunnel project were among the most important subjects discussed between the two sides in the joint meeting, which were also covered in the MOUs.

Iran calls for expansion of trade ties with Tajikistan

During his stay in Tajikistan, the Iranian Energy Minister also met and held talks with the Prime Minister of Tajikistan Qohir Rasulzoda, and called for the expansion of economic ties between the two countries.

Referring to the banking problems in the way of the

economic and commercial relations of the two countries, which has caused dissatisfaction in the private sector, especially in the export sector, Mehrabian said: "The development of water and electricity cooperation between the two countries has started in the past and is still developing, and it is necessary to improve this cooperation in the future by establishing proper monetary channels."

The minister also considered the holding of the two countries' joint economic committee meeting as a favorable opportunity for joint production and economic development of the two countries and emphasized the need for resolving banking problems to facilitate the export of technical and engineering services and the establishment of joint ventures.

In this meeting, the prime minister of Tajikistan also evaluated the development of trade between the two countries as positive and pointed to the joint committee as a necessity for the development of relations between Iran and Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe hosted the 16th meeting of Iran-Tajikistan Joint Economic Committee on December 27-28.

ICCIMA to set up investment, trade development agencies in target markets



TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Hossein Selahvarzi has said the chamber is going to set up investment and trade development agencies in the target markets, the ICCIMA portal reported.

Selahvarzi made the remarks in a meeting with Mehrdad Saadat, the head of the Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce, in

'FTA with EAEU provides Iran access to EAEU's \$70b agricultural market'



TEHRAN - The head of the Iran Chamber of Cooperatives (ICC)'s Agriculture Committee has said the signing of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has facilitated Iran's access to the \$70-billion agricultural and food products market of the EAEU nations.

"The Eurasian countries are directly or indirectly neighbors of our country, and we share land border



Bank Melli Iran's Big Step towards Exiting from Business Activities

Bank Melli Iran is ready to transfer and sell 49 companies and subsidiaries under its control, in light of fulfilling the Supreme Leader's agendas and the honorable government's policies regarding banks exiting from business activities.

According to BMI public relations, these sales and transfers have taken place based upon the emphasis of the Supreme Leader and also the government on the issue of resistance economy, aiming to create new investment opportunities to build new enterprises and support domestic production, and improve the financial system of the country and with this action, BMI has taken a big step towards reducing the business activities.

The most important enterprises on the BMI's list and ready to transfer are included: National Development Investment Group

(vbank), Ayandeh PC, National Iranian Steel Company, Mazandaran Wood & Paper Industries (MWPI), Iran Trans Co, Barez Industrial Group, Shazand Petrochemical Company, Behshahr Industries Development Corp, Margarine, Grand Maghsoud Group, and Paxan Co.

BMI has a serious agenda to sell and transfer shares of its subsidiaries and surplus properties.

It is to be said that since the beginning of the thirteenth government, the process of transferring and assigning surplus properties of BMI has been accelerated, and now we see a significant part of these surplus assets of this bank has been transferred.

Done During Eight Months; Paying Childbearing Loans to More than 122 Thousand Applicants in Bank Melli Iran

In line with acting based on the approvals of the Money and Credit Council and the Youthful Population and Family Protection Law, Bank Melli Iran has granted 122,660 interest-free loans for childbearing from the beginning of the year to the end of Aban.

According to BMI public relations, in line with fulfilling the government's targets and upstream documents, this bank seriously pursues granting childbearing loans to eligible applicants and families and in this regard, with a firm determination has achieved suitable good results during the eight months of this year.

According to this, BMI has paid a total value of 67,374 billion Rials to eligible families from the beginning of the year to the end of Aban.

The amount paid for the childbearing loans by BMI, considering the monthly quota, indicates a growth of 126%, which is much higher than the percentage of the notified quota.

In addition, these statistics show during the eight months of this year, childbearing loan payments by BMI to eligible applicants have increased 130% more than in the same period of the last year.

Therefore, BMI's branches have paid on average more than 512 interest-free childbearing loans per day to eligible families, from the beginning of Farvardin to the end of Aban.

It should be said that in addition to paid loans, 42,300 people are currently in line to receive this loan.

It is to be noted, that parents of children born from 1400 Farvardin, can apply for the loan up to two years after their birth date by visiting ve.cbi.ir and registering in the Central Bank system.

Interest-free childbearing loan with a maximum 4 percent fee annually is only paid for children born in Iran and once for each child without requiring them to make a deposit.

Israel censor bans reporting on 8 subjects, including arms captured by Hamas: Intercept

From page 1 ▶ Titled "Operation 'Swords of Iron' Israeli Chief Censor Directive to the Media," the order is not dated, but its reference to Operation Swords of Iron — the name of Israel's current military operation in Gaza — makes clear that it was issued sometime after Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel. The order is signed by the chief censor of the Israel Defense Forces, Brig. Gen. Kobi Mandelblit. (The Israeli Military Censor did not respond to a request for comment on the memo.)

The document was provided to The Intercept by a source who himself was given a copy by the Israeli military. An identical document appears on the Israeli government's website.

"In light of the current security situation and the intensive media coverage, we wish to encourage you to submit to the Censorship all materials dealing with the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F.) and the Israeli security forces prior to their broadcast," the order says. "Please update your staff of the content of this letter, with an emphasis on the news desk and field reporters."

The order enumerates eight topics the media are forbidden from reporting on without prior approval from the Israeli Military Censor. Some of the topics touch on hot-button political issues in Israel and internationally, such as potentially embarrassing revelations about weapons used by Israel or captured by Hamas, discussions of security cabinet meetings, and the Israeli hostages in Gaza — an issue that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been widely criticized for mishandling.

The memo also bans reporting on details of military operations, Israeli intelligence, rocket attacks that hit sensitive locations in Israel, cyberattacks, and visits by senior military officials to the battlefield.

Concerns about the politicization of the military censor are not merely hypothetical. Last month, the Israeli censor reportedly complained that Netanyahu was pressuring him to crack down on certain media outlets without legitimate reason. Netanyahu denied the charge.

Self-censorship and secrecy

The Israeli Military Censor is a unit located within the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate. The unit is commanded by the chief censor, a military officer appointed by the defense minister.

Since Israel's war on Hamas started, more than 6,500 new items were either completely censored or partially censored by the Israeli government, Guy Lurie, a research fellow at Jerusalem-based Israel Democracy Institute, told The Intercept.

To put the figure in context, Lurie said it was about four times more than before the war started, citing a report in the Israeli outlet Shakuf based on freedom of information requests. The number of submissions to the censor, however, are significantly higher at this time of heightened conflict, so Lurie noted that news items are facing a normal level of censorship in light of the ratio to total submissions.

I calculated how much of my money the U.S. sent to kill Palestinians. You can too.

As Americans, our money is paying for Israel's atrocities in Gaza. How much did you give?

By Jon Schwarz

AS 2023 ENDS, I've been asking myself: How much money am I, personally, contributing to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and its attack on Gaza?

The Israeli assault on Gaza launched after the October 7 attacks by Hamas has so far killed more than 20,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including thousands of children and over 100 journalists. Nearly 90 percent of the territory's residents have been displaced, and it has been called "one of this century's most destructive wars."

So how much have I chipped in to create this hell on earth?

The best answer I've come up with is \$150.

There are two ways of looking at this number.

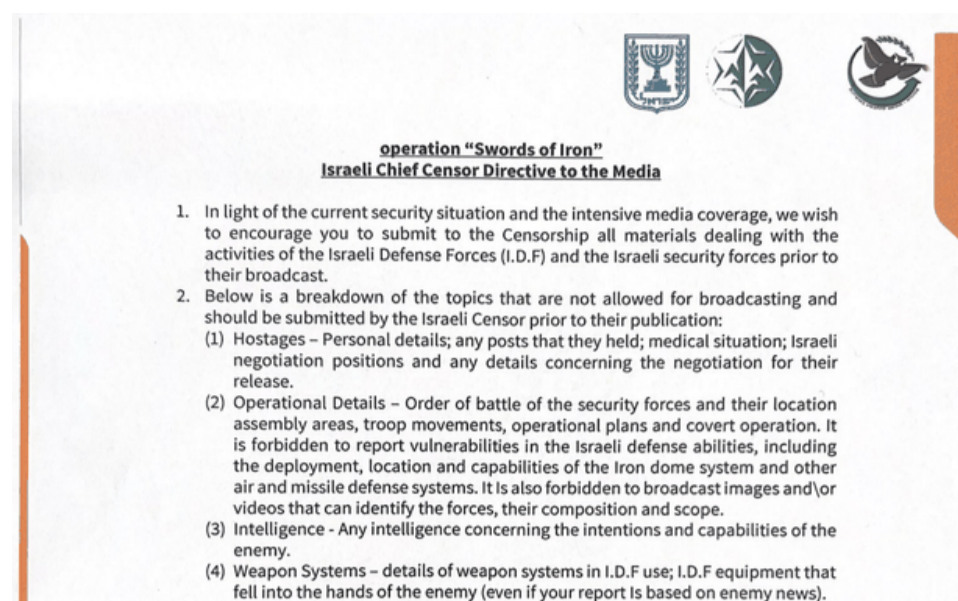
One is that this is a relatively small amount of money. Another is that the U.S. is so astonishingly rich and powerful that we as a country can mete out overwhelming brutality to others and barely notice as individuals. This is, in part, what makes the dollar amount of my contribution especially horrifying.

What the U.S. gives Israel

In any case, \$150 is necessarily a guesstimate. It could be more or less. Let's go through how I came up with the figure.

To start with, adherents of modern monetary theory would tell you the government doesn't need to tax anyone to spend. I believe this is correct. It's part of why the notion of "taxpayer money" is a dangerous misconception: What we're talking about really is "public money" — it doesn't belong only to taxpayers. For our purposes, however, these are distinctions without a difference.

Next, we have to look at how much money the federal government spent in 2023, and on what. The federal 2023 fiscal year ended on September 30, but I'm going to assume the FY2023 numbers



The actual number of new stories affected by the censor, however, can never be quantified. Because of a system of close relationships and a feeling for what to expect, Israeli journalists can censor themselves.

"Reporters are expected to censor themselves and not report any of the forbidden material."

"People self-censor, people do not even try to report the stories they know won't get through," Omer-Man said. "And that is really showing right now in how little regular Israelis are seeing in the press about what is happening in Gaza to Palestinians."

It is these kinds of unofficial censorship that give the censor in Israel its power, said experts.

In a 2022, a State Department report on human rights in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories took on the military censor, singling out two Arabic-language newspapers in occupied East Jerusalem. While noting that the IDF censor didn't review the papers, the State Department said, "Editors and journalists from those publications, however, reported they engaged in self-censorship due to fear of retribution by Israeli authorities."

At one time, the censor had an Editors Committee composed of three members: one from the press, one from the military, and a publicly elected member who served as chair. Though the Editors Committee no longer officially exists, a similar, albeit informal body still maintains some sway.

Though the law that mandates the censor gives it widespread powers, the censor maintains its respectability in Israel by being politically independent and exercising restraint, especially in comparison to other countries in the region.



operation "Swords of Iron" Israeli Chief Censor Directive to the Media

1. In light of the current security situation and the intensive media coverage, we wish to encourage you to submit to the Censorship all materials dealing with the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces (I.D.F.) and the Israeli security forces prior to their broadcast.
2. Below is a breakdown of the topics that are not allowed for broadcasting and should be submitted by the Israeli Censor prior to their publication:
 - (1) Hostages - Personal details; any posts that they held; medical situation; Israeli negotiation positions and any details concerning the negotiation for their release.
 - (2) Operational Details - Order of battle of the security forces and their location assembly areas, troop movements, operational plans and covert operation. It is forbidden to report vulnerabilities in the Israeli defense abilities, including the deployment, location and capabilities of the Iron dome system and other air and missile defense systems. It is also forbidden to broadcast images and/or videos that can identify the forces, their composition and scope.
 - (3) Intelligence - Any intelligence concerning the intentions and capabilities of the enemy.
 - (4) Weapon Systems - details of weapon systems in I.D.F. use; I.D.F. equipment that fell into the hands of the enemy (even if your report is based on enemy news).

"If you look at the law that governs censorship, it's really draconian in terms of the formal authorities the censor has," Lurie told The Intercept. "But it's mitigated by this informal arrangement."

Almost all of it happens in secret: Committee discussions are confidential, as are most communications between media outlets and the censor.

Asked why the processes are so secretive and why even the news organizations won't speak out, one Western journalist based in Israel and Palestine, who asked for anonymity to avoid reprisals, had a blunt assessment: "Because it's embarrassing."

Foreign press and the censor

That the memo of directives for the current Israeli war on Gaza was in English suggests that it was intended for Western media. Foreign journalists working in Israel must obtain government permission, including a declaration that they will abide by the censor.

"In order to get a visa as a journalist, you have to get approval from GPO" — Government Press Office — "and therefore you have to sign a document that says you will comply with the censor," said Omer-Man. "That in itself is probably against the ethics guidelines at a bunch of papers."

Nonetheless, many journalists do sign the document. While The Associated Press, for instance, didn't respond to The Intercept's query about whether it cooperates with the military censor, the news wire has in the past reported on the issue, including admitting that it holds itself to the directive.

"The Associated Press has agreed, like other organizations, to abide by the rules of the censor, which is a condition for receiving permission to operate as a media organization in Israel," the agency wrote in a 2006 story. "Reporters are expected to censor themselves and not report any of the forbidden material."

(See full text at tehrantimes.com)

are equal to calendar year 2023.

In 2023, the government spent about \$6.3 trillion. About \$1.4 trillion of that is the cost of Social Security, which has its own dedicated revenue sources, mostly payroll taxes. Then, \$0.8 trillion was spent on Medicare, about half of which comes from general revenue. So let's say the total federal spending that has to be funded from non-dedicated sources is \$4.5 trillion (\$6.3 trillion minus \$1.4 trillion minus \$0.4 trillion). This isn't precisely right for various complicated reasons, but it's close enough.

The total aid the U.S. will be giving to Israel in 2023 and early 2024 will be about \$18 billion. (That's the \$3.8 billion in normal annual aid, plus \$14.5 billion in supplemental aid that's been passed by the House and will surely be passed soon by the Senate.)

If you want, you could argue that Israel uses this for things other than its attack on Gaza and its wider occupation of Palestinian lands. But let's, in our thought experiment, apply the twisted logic of the U.S.'s laws against material support: All cash is fungible, which is to say that even if Israel doesn't spend all the U.S. money killing Palestinians, those other expenditures free up money to put toward that purpose.

It's also true that the U.S. is supporting Israel's actions in ways other than direct aid that also cost money: shielding Israel at the United Nations, sending the Dwight D. Eisenhower and Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Groups to the Mediterranean, etc. So let's call it a wash and just use the \$18 billion number.

That \$18 billion is 0.4 percent of \$4.5 trillion.

What I give Israel

The \$4.5 trillion in outlays comes from various sources, mostly income taxes, corporate taxes, and borrowing.

I'll pay about \$27,000 in federal income taxes for 2023. I also purchased government bonds: the maximum-allowed \$10,000 in

inflation-protected I bonds.

My 401(k) and mutual funds probably bought some federal bonds too. And surely some of the burden of corporate taxes fell on me, also through my 401(k) and mutual funds. Then, I paid some tax costs that companies were able to pass along to consumers. But there's no way to calculate all this, and it all was certainly a small amount in any case. So let's just add the \$27,000 together with the \$10,000 and say I contributed a total of \$37,000 out of that \$4.5 trillion.

Four-tenths of a percent of \$37,000 is about \$150.

There you have it. That's my monetary contribution to the extraordinary brutality of Israel's occupation and its war on Gaza.

You can figure out your own contribution if you want: Add your income taxes to any federal bonds you bought this year and multiply that number by 0.004. It's easy, but not very fun.

At that point, you may ask yourself: What can I do about this, beyond trying to stop this war?

There is a long history of tax resistance in America. However, technology has made it easier for the government to track where all your money is, and if you refuse to pay taxes, it will eventually seize what you owe out of your bank accounts. You will likely also go to prison.

You theoretically can also vote for anti-war candidates in 2024, but there often aren't any. And even if they win, they won't take office for more than a year, much too late to make any difference in the current war. Despite the unpopularity of Israel's treatment of Palestinians and cracks beginning to show in the Democratic coalition, the pro-Israel lobby and bipartisan support for Israel remain strong in Washington, where foreign policy is set.

So I don't know what the answer is. If you figure it out, please let me know.

(Source: The Intercept)

WORLD HEADLINES

150,000 flee central Gaza as Israel attacks refugee camps

From page 1 ▶ The Israeli military has called for the evacuation of a strip of land stretching across central Gaza that includes the Bureij and Nuseirat camps, and told the almost 90,000 residents and 61,000 displaced people in the affected areas to move southwards to the town of Deir al-Balah.

However, the UN warned on Thursday that they had nowhere to go because Deir al-Balah was already overcrowded, with several hundred thousand displaced people sheltering there.

The UN says that Rafah - which had already become the most densely populated town in Gaza - has seen about 100,000 new arrivals in recent days as Israeli ground forces have pushed into new neighborhoods.

Tom White, Gaza director for UN relief agency UNRWA, said more and more people were being pushed into the southern Gaza town of Rafah, «so more people into a very small strip of land that cannot support them».

Trump blocked from Maine presidential ballot in 2024

Maine's top election official has ruled that Donald Trump cannot run for president next year in the state, citing a constitutional insurrection clause.

Secretary of State Shenna Bellows said Trump was not eligible because of his actions leading up to the US Capitol riot in 2021.

Maine now joins Colorado as the two states to ban Trump from the ballot.

The decisions increase pressure on the US Supreme Court to weigh in.

Colorado votes reliably Democratic, however, Maine is more politically competitive and would be more significant for Trump - the Republican frontrunner - to lose.

The Trump campaign has already said it will lodge an appeal in the state's courts against the Maine ruling, which won't take effect while the legal process plays out.

Hours after Maine's decision, California - America's most populous state- announced that Trump would remain on the Republican primary ballot there.

Courts in other states, including Michigan and Minnesota, have also recently dismissed efforts to block Trump from running as a candidate.

It is likely that the Supreme Court will make the ultimate decision as to whether Trump can run for president or whether he is ineligible because of a Civil War-era amendment to the US Constitution.

Syria's air defense units repel Israeli aggression near Damascus

Syrian air defenses have intercepted most Israeli missiles near the country's capital city of Damascus, amid an upsurge in the regime's acts of aggression against the Arab nation following the bloody onslaught against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

"At around 11:55 p.m. local time (2055 GMT) on Thursday, the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial attack from the direction of the occupied Golan Heights, and targeted a number of sites in the southern flank of Damascus," the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) quoted an unnamed military source as saying.

The source added that Syrian air defenses shot down most of the missiles.

The report noted that there were no injuries in the strike, but there were material losses.

The strike comes a day after Damascus International Airport reopened following repeated Israeli strikes.

Hezbollah launches fresh strikes on Israeli targets

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement has launched fresh strikes on Israeli targets across the occupied territories in support of Palestinians who are subjected to Israeli atrocities.

Israeli media reports said Hezbollah fired anti-tank missiles at the Dolev settlement on Friday, as the Israeli regime keeps bombarding the besieged Gaza Strip.

Hezbollah also said its fighters targeted Hadab Yaron with appropriate weapons, hitting it directly.

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas waged the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in response to the Israeli regime's decades-long campaign of bloodletting and devastation against Palestinians.

About 30,000 people dead or missing in Gaza: official

The director of Gaza's government media office has told Al Jazeera that more than 29,000 people have been killed or gone missing as a result of Israeli aggression. He also said it is also estimated that more than 7,000 people are still trapped under rubble.

The director added about 800,000 residents of Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip do not have access to hospitals.

Haley defends leaving slavery out as cause of Civil War

Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's answer about the cause of the Civil War during an event in New Hampshire has sparked blowback just as she's looking to pull off an upset in the Granite State primary next month.

Haley has sought to clarify her remarks since, saying Thursday that "of course the Civil War was about slavery" and arguing that the voter who asked the question was a "Democrat plant."

But the moment has led to criticism from across the political spectrum, including from top GOP rivals. And while Republican strategists are doubtful the blunder will be a decisive factor for her campaign, they acknowledge it's a distraction that doesn't help.

"What it does is it's an unnecessary fumble for her at a time when she doesn't need something like this," said Republican strategist Ron Bonjean.

Democrats were quick to seize on her comments, with President Biden sharing a clip of the exchange on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, saying, "It was about slavery."

Leading voices of color have also rebuked Haley's comments.

Democratic National Committee Chair Jaime Harrison said in a statement that he is "disgusted" but "not surprised," calling her comments a "slap in the face to Black voters."

The voter who asked the question, which came during a town hall Wednesday, called Haley out after she failed to mention slavery in her response.

Putin 'tried everything possible' to make peace - Ukrainian diplomat

Russian President Vladimir Putin personally sought a peace agreement with Ukraine in April 2022, according to Ambassador Aleksandr Chaly, a distinguished member of the Ukrainian delegation.

Chaly expressed this perspective during an event at the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) in early December, where he dissected the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. The ex-deputy foreign minister is an associate fellow at the Swiss government-funded foundation. His remarks drew media attention after a video of the event was released on YouTube last week.

Over 200 local dishes offered at festival in northern Iran



TEHRAN – On Thursday, the third edition of Iran's grand culinary festival was held in Rasht, the capital of Gilan province with the presence of several foreign envoys and diplomats.

The festival commenced at Rasht's central hall, welcoming the ambassador of Kazakhstan, Turkey's cultural attaché, among other attendees including the head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Research Institute, the director-general of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Gilan.

The grand food festival showcased over 200 almost-forgotten local dishes, aiming to revive and reintroduce them to the public eye, ILNA reported.

Ten international judges were meticulously evaluating the diverse range of dishes presented at this monumental food festival, the report said.

A section of the festival was dedicated to children, offering them the chance to familiarize themselves with traditional foods.

Iran, a land steeped in history, art, and culture, beckons travelers with not just its awe-inspiring landmarks but also a culinary journey that's as diverse as the landscapes that adorn this ancient land. Among the many treasures

Iran offers to visitors, its local foods and dishes stand tall as a testament to the nation's culinary heritage.

From Tehran's bustling streets to the remote villages nestled in the Zagros Mountains, Iran's cuisine paints a vivid picture of its cultural mosaic. Despite the influx of global culinary influences, Iran's culinary heritage remains deeply rooted in tradition.

In 2020, the Islamic Republic joined an online campaign launched by the UNWTO to promote gastronomy as an essential part of tourism. Iranian cuisine, usually dominated by fragrant herbs, varies from region to region. It principally accentuates freshness, deliciousness, and colorfulness.

No Persian meal is complete without an abundance of herbs. Every table is usually set with sabzi-khordan, a basket of fresh herbs, radishes, and scallions, which are eaten raw and by the handful. Persian cuisine is, above all, about balance — of tastes and flavors, textures and temperatures.

Experts believe that food tourism has become one of the most dynamic and creative segments of tourism and, at the same time, has naturally positioned itself as an element of diversification of tourism with a high impact on the promotion of sustainable development at the regional and local levels.

Iran's local foods and dishes stand not just as a delight for the taste buds but also as a gateway to understanding its rich history, diverse culture, and the warmth of its people. Exploring Iran's culinary tapestry isn't merely a gustatory experience; it's an immersive journey that connects travelers to the soul of this ancient land.

In a world where borders blur and cultures intermingle, Iran's culinary heritage remains a distinct and cherished treasure—an invitation to savor the flavors that have stood the test of time.

Centuries-old windmills added to Iran's national list of cultural heritage

TEHRAN – Several centuries-old windmills (locally called Asbads) located in the ancient town of Sangan, northeast Iran, have been inscribed on the country's national list of cultural heritage.

Asbad is a smart system to grind grains, a technique that goes back to ancient times when the people living in the eastern parts of Iran, in an attempt to adapt themselves to nature and transform environmental obstacles into opportunities, managed to invent it.

"Historical Asbads in the city of Sangan (which is located in Khaf county of Khorasan Razavi province) have been registered under the number 3396 in the list of Iran's national heritage," said Mahmoud Togharaei, who presides over the Registration and Preservation Office for the province's historical monuments.

These Asbads, located in the southeast of Sangan, consist of 10 windmill structures that have remained linearly connected from the Qajar era to the present day, the official said.

Togharaei said Asbads are relatively tall adobe structures constructed in the past along the path of seasonal or local winds. "Utilizing the power of the wind and converting it into rotational force, they were connected to millstones, grinding wheat and other grains. Asbads were mainly constructed in the eastern regions of Iran, often along the path of the 120-day winds of Sistan."

He said the structure of Sangan's Asbads represents a two-story windtower. "The upper story containing wooden vanes is known as the 'parkhaneh' (wind catcher), and the lower story housing the stone mill is termed as the 'as-khaneh' (mill house)."



"Asbads, as symbols of sustainable, creative, and unique architecture adapted to the regional climate, held a vital role in people's lives in the past. They have attracted global attention and are introduced as an Iranian element, standing on the brink of global registration."

The official emphasized: "This intangible cultural heritage, with its valuable architectural and technical-engineering features, embodies cultural, social, and economic aspects of past generations. They are considered as valuable heritage from the knowledge of ancestors in the sustainable and appropriate utilization of climate and environmental conditions for future generations."

"Following the national registration of these monuments, essential actions toward their restoration, preservation, and revitalization must continue, positioning them as cultural tourist attractions, open to the scrutiny of heritage enthusiasts."

To date, more than 2,700 historical artifacts in Khorasan Razavi have been registered in Iran's national heritage list.

Glimpses of ancient Iranian windmills

The development of Asbads took place due to the scarcity of water resources and continuous 120-day winds, which annually sweep through the east and southeast of the Iranian plateau from late May to late September. In fact, wood, mud, and brick were the main construction materials for the two-story windmills.

Britannica says the earliest known references to windmills are to a Persian millwright in 644 CE and windmills in Seistan [Sistan], Iran, in 915 CE.

Iran seeks UNESCO recognition for arrays of its ancient windmills that can be found in the provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, South Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts has almost completed the necessary preparations for a chain of ancient vertical-axis windmills; however, the documentation and mapping works have not been completed yet.

The documentation and mapping projects entail various architectural plans, cross-section geometry, photogrammetric photographs, and their proprietorship. Official reports suggest all documenting and

mapping stages are being carried out based on the UNESCO standards and criteria.

According to the UN cultural body, Robert Forbes, a technology historian, stresses the point that the Islamic era windmill was the invention of Iranians. He writes: "This invention which was initially an exclusive device for Iran and Afghanistan, turned into an important source of energy all over the Islamic territories in the 12th century, and not only it was used for the grinding of grains and operation of water pumps, but also the chopping of sugarcanes and other purposes."

Moreover, the UNESCO website says that such vertical-axis windmills were taken to China during the Mongol reign.

Furthermore, the know-how of windmills was taken to other Islamic territories and was used in Egypt as the main source for the chopping and grinding of sugarcanes. In the 11th century, windmills reached Spain, the Islands of the Aegean Sea, and Portugal.

Constructed of clay, wood, and straw, those ancient gears which are inherited from preceding generations, are perched on a cliff overlooking the village, milling grain for centuries.

According to the latest official data, a total of 374 Asbads have been identified so far mostly in the eastern wing of the country, but not all of them in faultless conditions.

Technically speaking, unlike European windmills, the Iranian design is powered by blades arrayed on a vertical axis in which the wind power is directly translated down without the need for any gears found on the horizontal-axis mills.

Saffron harvest: a unique agritourism experience

TEHRAN – Saffron production in Iran is not just an annual harvest; it's a cultural celebration, a kind of feast, and an immersive journey into the heart of one of the world's most treasured spices.

Venturing into saffron fields during the harvest season, typically starting in early November, offers travelers an exclusive invitation to witness a mesmerizing process. As the sun gently rises, farmers clad in traditional attire delicately pluck each delicate saffron flower, a task passed down through generations. It's a picture that poartrays the painstaking effort and skill required to cultivate this precious spice.

The saffron harvest isn't solely about collecting the delicate threads; it's a celebration of community, culture, and heritage. Traditional music fills the air, accompanied by laughter and jovial conversations among families and friends, creating an atmosphere brimming with warmth and hospitality.

Iran's saffron, an emblematic agricultural product, boasts superior quality and is exported to a third of the world's nations, earning it titles like the "flower of health," "king of spices," and "red gold."

While saffron is synonymous with Persian cuisine, its significance transcends the culinary world. Local experts eagerly share tales of saffron's historical and medicinal uses, revealing its role in traditional remedies and its potency in enhancing well-being. Highly prized in Persian cuisine for its distinctive aroma, color, and flavor, this "red gold" from Iran reaches 65 countries, as highlighted by the vice president of the Association of Saffron Producers and Exporters of South Khorasan, Ali Hosseini, according to a recent report by Mehr news agency.

With a heritage dating back over 3,000 years, Iran stands as the premier producer of the world's

finest saffron. Torbat-e Heydariyeh in Khorasan Razavi province is often referred to as the global capital of saffron production.

Apart from Khorasan Razavi, North Khorasan, and South Khorasan provinces, which serve as the primary hubs for saffron cultivation, regions like Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari and Khuzestan also participate in its production.

Renowned Iranian physicians such as Zakaria Raazi, Abu Ali Sina, and Abu Reyhan Birooni utilized saffron for medicinal purposes, a tradition that has endured for centuries.

Since 2016, a Saffron Farming System based on Qanat irrigation in Gonabad County has gained recognition from the FAO GIAHS Initiative as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System. This system utilizes indigenous knowledge and skills, passed down through generations, allowing local farmers to produce high-value saffron through the Qanat underground aqueduct.

The Saffron Farming System, reliant on Qanat irrigation, plays a pivotal role in generating employment, curbing migration, fostering sustainable livelihoods, enhancing water efficiency, and preserving indigenous knowledge for a sustainable future. This international recognition by UNESCO and the FAO has drawn increasing numbers of eco-tourists to explore the region, including the Qanat System of Gonabad and the picturesque saffron fields, enriching the local economy while safeguarding the natural landscape.

Saffron holds a revered place in Persian culture, influencing aromatic dishes, vibrant desserts, and both physical and spiritual medicine. The saffron harvest season, commencing in early November, offers a golden opportunity for agritourism, adorning the arid Iranian landscape with bright purple flowers amidst the absence of other vegetation.

Its ability to thrive with minimal water consumption enables saffron cultivation across diverse regions.

This precious herb, besides its culinary uses, finds application in the medical industry, exhibiting preventive properties against ailments like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, and offering treatment for various conditions, including colds, hepatitis, diabetes, and digestive issues.

Furthermore, saffron detoxifies the liver and kidneys, purifies the blood, aids in wound healing, and serves as a potent antioxidant, rich in vitamins B1, B2, B6, and C. Its antidepressant properties are associated with serotonin metabolism, mitigating symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders.

Additionally, saffron serves as a natural permitted colorant in the food industry, a tradition dating back centuries in Iran, where saffron has been used in celebratory sweets and dishes.

Iran's saffron exports witnessed a notable surge of 52 percent in the initial five months of the current Iranian calendar year compared to the previous year, marking an increased value of about \$88 million.

The top five destinations for Iranian saffron in this period included China, the UAE, Spain, Qatar, and Afghanistan, with exports reaching 47 different countries.

Notably, the saffron festival in Rafsanjan county and the saffron-related museum in Seno village, Gonabad, highlight the cultural significance and allure of this precious spice within Iran.

Beyond the fields, the saffron harvest opens doors to explore the rich cultural tapestry of Iran. Travelers can visit nearby villages, each with its unique charm, offering glimpses into local life, handicrafts, and ancient traditions.

First Announcement



IN THE NAME OF GOD

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING

INTERNATIONAL SINGLE-STAGE TENDER No: 1402/108-40/03

Renewal

Tender Holder:

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN BROADCASTING (IRIB)

Subject of Tender :

Broadcasting the TV network of Press TV on Paksat satellite in accordance with the technical specification and other terms and conditions mentioned in the tender documents.

Deadline and how to receive the tender documents:

From Sunday 31 Dec 2023 (1402/10/10) 10:00 a.m until Tuesday 02 Jan 2024 (1402/10/12) by 15:00 p.m with presentation of introductory letter by company or its representative and the receipt of paying the documents fee.

Place of receiving the tender document:

Interested participants may refer to purchasing (KALA) Dept. ,4th Floor of IRIB Administration Complex ,Hotel Esteghlal St. Vali –Assr Ave, Tehran, Iran

The fee of the tender documents and how to deposit it:

Submission of payment receipt for the amount of 10,000,000 Rials to account 4101029171204273 with BIC No.IR 310100004101029171204273 IRAN Central Bank in the name of IRIB.

Type and amount of guarantee for participation to tender:

The amount of deposit for participating in tender is USD 33333 fixed or its equivalent in Rials 17/000/000/000 which should be in the form of Bank Guarantee.

Time and place of delivering Bidding Envelopes:

The sealed (A,B&C) packages /envelopes and the qualification evaluation package/envelope separately packed , should be submitted no later than 10:00 a.m. on Saturday 03 Feb 2024 (1402/11/14) at the address mentioned in 4th clause.

Time and place of opening Qualification Evaluation envelopes:

The date of opening the Qualification Evaluation envelopes is on Saturday 03 Feb 2023 (1402/11/14) at 10:30 a.m in the office of International Purchasing Dept.

Time and place of opening Envelopes:

The envelopes A of those eligible participants who meet the qualification criterion and approval of Technical and Commercial committee will be opened on Sunday 04 Feb 2024 (1402/11/15) at 12:00 p.m in the office of Financial Vice President .In case of complete content in the envelopes A the envelopes of B and C of eligible participants will be opened at the same time and place.

The participant must be qualified by the competent authorities.

Fore more information please see :

www.iriboffice.ir/tenders and http://iets.mporg.ir/ Tel: 00982122167053

Purchasing (Kala) Dept.,IRIB

FAO, Iran successful in Bactrian Camels Conservation Project

TEHRAN – Bactrian Camel Conservation Project completion is not only an achievement but a testament to our collective commitment to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development, Yubak Dhoj GC, FAO Representative a.i. to the Islamic Republic of Iran, said in a message on the terminal workshop of the Bactrian Camel Conservation Project on 28 December.

In the pursuit of preserving the Bactrian camel, a species listed as “Critically Endangered” by the IUCN, FAO initiated a project two years ago to provide technical support for the preservation of the Bactrian camel through enhancing both in-situ and ex-situ conservation. Various training courses empowered camel owners, experts, veterinarians, and scientists.

“Simultaneously, enhancing the livelihoods of local herders, capac-



ity building, and raising awareness among society and policymakers play a crucial role in the sustainability of such projects. Our commitment to protect this valuable species has been realized in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agricultural Jihad,” GC stated.

Referring to the challenges

faced during the implementation phase, he mentioned the main achievements of the project including, the establishment of the first germplasm hub for Bactrian camels in Iran at the Jafar Abad station, capacity-building programs for government experts and camel herders through national and international training

programs, empowering the newly established cooperative company by procuring feeding equipment as well as facilitating a wool processing workshop.

Moreover, he pointed out other achievements such as microchipping of Bactrian camels, providing nutritional supplements, vaccines, and medicines coupled with the customization of the Sareban Yar application for performance recording.

“We have embraced advanced reproductive technologies, such as the cryopreservation of genetic materials from Bactrian camels. In a groundbreaking initiative, we have also attempted embryo transfer,” he further highlighted.

He expressed trust that the government will continue efforts to conserve this valuable species, building on the work modeled jointly by FAO in this project.

UNICEF holds remedial classes for Afghan students in Iran



TEHRAN – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has held remedial classes for more than 1,500 students in six provinces of the country with high numbers of refugees.

The Ministry of Education, the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs of the Ministry of Interior, and Relief International cooperated with UNICEF to implement the remedial classes program in the provinces of Fars, Isfahan, Khorasan Razavi, Semnan, Sistan-Baluchestan, and Yazd.

The program was supported by financial aid from the EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the UNICEF website announced in a press release on December 27.

It helped the students, no matter whether Iranian or Afghan, who had fallen behind the school work for different reasons, such as not benefiting from pre-primary and schools' readiness programs or COVID-19 pandemics, to cover their education gaps and catch up with their lessons.

Through UNICEF-supported remedial courses conducted from March to May 2023, each student received at least 30 hours of different subjects, including Persian, Mathematics, and Science.

Both Afghan and Iranian students enjoyed high-quality education in case of learning loss.

In addition, at the end of the course, each student received nutrition, hygiene packs, and stationery, to prepare them for the next academic year.

Recent services

The Ministry of Health and UNICEF cooperated to take necessary actions to combat malnutrition among vulnerable children in Yazd and

Khorasan Razavi provinces.

Funded by the ECHO, the initiative provided 750 children under five, with essential nutrition supplies designed for the prevention and management of malnutrition in health facilities, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on November 19.

Also, 165 severely malnourished children benefited from therapeutic supplements in Yazd and Khorasan Razavi provinces' hospitals.

With the improvement of the nutritional status of these children, UNICEF is now positioned to advocate for the widespread use of these supplies in less advantaged provinces and areas, the report added.

In addition, UNICEF plans to support the production of relevant domestic products to provide a sustainable solution to malnutrition-related challenges faced by communities in need.

Recently, the Iranian Red Crescent Society in cooperation with UNICEF organized eight educational workshops for students and their family members residing in the city of Khoj which was struck by a strong earthquake in January.

On January 28, an earthquake measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale hit Khoj in the northwestern West Azarbaijan province. The disaster affected at least 261,000 people and displaced 130,000 from their homes.

A total of 1,700 male and female students and 120 of their family members attended these workshops.

These educational workshops were held to empower children and their families in team building, team support, anger management, emotion regulation, empathy, happiness, self-care, and environmental care.

Facilitators of these workshops had earlier participated in a capacity-building training program organized jointly by UNICEF and the IRCS, funded by the ECHO, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on November 12.

Two pilot programs for the well-being and empowerment of young boys and girls have been launched in four provinces of the country.

Ministry of Sports and Youth and the Drug

Control Headquarters in cooperation with UNICEF have implemented these programs in Kermanshah, Alborz, Isfahan, and Mashhad.

One program is for empowering adolescents and young boys and the other program is for girls' psycho-social health and their empowerment.

Soft and technical skills are taught to boys aged 15 to 24 in three UNICEF-supported centers located in Kermanshah, Alborz, and Isfahan provinces.

The centers provide different services including on-the-job training, internships, mentoring, psycho-social support, counseling, and social entrepreneurship programs.

The focus of this program is to facilitate a smooth transition from learning to earning, empowering 1,618 adolescents and youth in these provinces, the UNICEF website announced in a press release on November 13.

In the next step, with the expansion of this program, it will encompass the following provinces: Sistan-Baluchestan, South Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, Kerman, and Hormozgan.

Some of these provinces have a significant number of Afghan refugee children and adolescents.

Simultaneously, the psycho-social well-being and empowerment centers for girls in the cities of Mashhad and Kermanshah have played an important role in addressing the psycho-social challenges of vulnerable adolescent girls in these provinces.

These centers are dedicated to preventing substance use and mitigating social harm among young girls, the report added.

A total of 2,023 adolescent girls and their families, 1,720 girls and 303 parents, have received support through a holistic approach which includes face-to-face meetings online outreach, and referral services.

After evaluating the results of these programs and enhancing the capacity of non-governmental organizations, these programs will be implemented in other provinces that face the challenge of illegal drug use.

Over 27 million people participate in national health campaign

TEHRAN – More than 27.3 million people have so far participated in the national health campaign to be screened for hypertension and diabetes nationwide.

Out of the screened people, 65 percent were men and 35 percent were women. A majority of the participants were aged between 35 to 45, IRNA reported.

So far, 538,308 people were identified with probable high blood pressure and 323,324 people with probable diabetes.

The main objective of the campaign is to provide free health care for diabetic and hypertensive patients in the framework of the family physician program and to create an electronic health file for patients.

The identified patients will be checked every month or every three months by healthcare workers and doctors to receive free tests and medicines if needed.

National health campaign

The first phase of the national health campaign started in November aiming to reduce deaths caused by non-communicable diseases.

The project with the theme of “earlier awareness, better care” will continue until January 5, 2024, ISNA reported.

Nowadays, health is one of the most essential human needs. Before the coronavirus pandemic, people may not have realized its importance, but this disease showed us how precious health is, Health Minister Bahram Einollahi said at a ceremony to unveil the Campaign.

“Maybe everyone thinks that our job is treatment, but it is not true. Our main duty is to prevent diseases and promote health.”

For this reason, we started a project called “national health campaign” on November 11, which will continue till January 5, 2024.

Emphasizing the importance of improving health literacy, Einollahi said, “The level of literacy in the society has increased, and we expect this level to improve in the field of health as well. Also, we hope to manage having an electronic health file for every Iranian with their national identification code to record the history of illnesses in their family, their lifestyle, etc. so that their diseases and their reasons can be traced easily.”

He emphasized the campaign should include over 70 percent of the country's population; there is full preparation for its implementation in all universities of medical sciences, and everyone is mobilized to implement the plan.

Talking about the national health campaign, Einollahi said the campaign focuses on providing electronic health records for each family and screening them for diabetes and hypertension, and 70 percent of people are expected to participate in the campaign.

Einollahi added: “About 83 percent of all deaths registered in hospitals are caused by non-communicable diseases. Around 300,000 people die from cardiovascular diseases every year. Some 32 percent of people over 18 years

old have hypertension, and 60 percent are unaware of their high blood pressure. Some 30,000 deaths per year occur due to diabetes in the country, which are all significant cases.”

By implementing the national health campaign, half a million deaths from non-communicable diseases and 30,000 deaths from diabetes can be prevented, he added.

Einollahi went on to say that in the future, each individual with a national ID code, will have a health file. In 93 cities, health information is collected by healthcare providers.

Health promotion program

Around 400,000 health volunteers are active in the country, acting as the link between the health system and different strata of the society, ISNA quoted Farshidi as saying on December 5.

Referring to the ‘comprehensive system of social participation’ which was introduced this summer, he said the promotion of health mainly highlights the rights of citizens and social justice.

By people-oriented participatory plans, it is tried to prevent the dominance of a certain group with local influence or the exclusion of some classes from services and facilities.

Health promotion programs aim to engage individuals and communities and promote a healthy lifestyle, prevention, and timely response.

It is a three-pronged plan. The first part involves ‘individual and family’, which refers to individual and family self-care and management. More than three million family ambassadors are active in this field.

The second part is the ‘neighborhood’ that promotes the health and the participation of 400,000 health volunteers.

The third part refers to the workplace and organization that practices a self-care approach at work.

In September 2022, Einollahi said that Iran has one of the strongest health systems in the region and that this opportunity should be used optimally in the field of health diplomacy.

Based on innovative indicators of health technology development in 2021, Iran was ranked 60th among 132 countries, which shows an improvement of 60 steps compared to 2014, Younes Panahi, the deputy health minister for research and technology, has announced.

In June 2021, Ahmed al-Mandhari, the World Health Organization director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, said the Islamic Republic of Iran is a role model for primary health care.

The national budget bill for the next Iranian calendar year 1402, which starts on March 21, has increased the health sector's budget by 29 percent compared to the current year's budget.

The bill has proposed a budget of 2,730 trillion rials (about \$6.8 billion) for the Ministry of Health, IRNA reported.

The administration has also proposed 690 trillion rials (about \$1.7 billion) as subsidies to provide medicine by health industries.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Men with obese wives at higher risk of cardiovascular disease

The results of a 16-year study at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences in Tehran showed that men whose wives were obese or overweight had a higher risk of cardiovascular disease.

Farzad Hadaegh, the lead researcher of the study, said that couples share socioeconomic status, dietary patterns, and other environmental and lifestyle factors, but are genetically unrelated.

The results of this study emphasize the role of environmental factors, especially lifestyle behaviors of family members in the incidence of cardiovascular disease, and this may help to identify early at-risk individuals in the community and family to implement prevention programs, he explained.

خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی در مردان با همسران چاق بیشتر است

نتیجه یک پژوهش ۱۶ ساله در دانشگاه علوم پزشکی شهید بهشتی تهران نشان داد خطر ابتلا به بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی در مردانی که همسران آنها چاق یا دارای اضافه وزن بودند، نسبت به مردانی که همسران شان وزن طبیعی داشت، بیشتر است.

فرزاد حدادق، مدیر این تحقیق، می‌گوید: زوجین در موقعیت‌های اقتصادی - اجتماعی، الگوهای غذایی و سایر عوامل محیطی و سبک زندگی مشترک اند، اما از نظر ژنتیکی بی‌ارتباط هستند.

نتایج این مطالعه به نقش عوامل محیطی به ویژه رفتارهای مربوط به سبک زندگی اعضای خانواده در بروز بیماری‌های قلبی عروقی تاکید می‌کند و این موضوع ممکن است به شناسایی زودهنگام افراد در معرض خطر در جامعه و خانواده برای اجرای برنامه‌های پیشگیری کمک موثری کند.



Milk for students in elementary schools

After a six-year hiatus, students in elementary schools across the country are provided with milk free of charge.



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Public Relations Office: Tel: (+98 21) 88805807
Subscription & Distribution Dept.: Tel: (+98 21) 43051603
Printed at: Jame Jam Bartar Borna - 44197737



No. 18, Moghadasi Alley, Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran P.O. Box: 14155-4843 Zip Code: 1599814713

DECEMBER 30, 2023

GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Hearts of people are like wild beasts. They attach themselves to those who love and train them.

Imam Ali (AS)

Prayer Times > Noon:12:06 Evening: 17:19 Dawn: 5:43 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 7:13 (tomorrow)

Sa'dabad Historical Cultural Complex hosting Rastin Molaeizadeh's paintings

TEHRAN-The fifth individual exhibition of the young autistic savant Rastin Molaeizadeh titled "IC 1101" is underway at Sa'dabad Historical Cultural Complex in Tehran.

The exhibit includes paintings by the 11-year-old artist, showing the process of launching spaceships and details of the launchers, IRNA reported.

Autistic savants are people who suffer from a developmental disability yet demonstrate some cognitive ability, exceeding what most people can do. These abilities may involve, art, music, arithmetic, spatial skills, or calendar abilities.

IC 1101 is considered a large galaxy characterized by an extensive, diffuse halo. IC 1101 possesses a diffuse core which is the largest known core of any galaxy to date, and also hosts a supermassive black hole that is one of the largest black holes known. The galaxy is located at 1.15 billion light-years from Earth.

Comparing IC 1101 and autism, Raha Mokhtari, Rastin's mother, said that while IC 1101 is one of the largest galaxies in the known world, "as earthly observers, we see it as a faint star in the sky. Likewise, we are a long way from understanding the world of autistic people and that has caused us to remain oblivious to their unique abilities".

Concurrent with the exhibition, Neauph-le-Château Mansion in Tehran hosted a conference titled "Wonderful Mind," where neuroscientist and neurologist Abdolrahman Najlerahim and cognitive neuroscience researcher Reza Khamaki talked in support of autism.

Born in Tehran, Rastin was very playful but had speech delays and oral-motor problems as a child. At the age of two years

and eight months, he was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), which refers to a group of disorders characterized by impairment in the development of social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, imaginative activity and a limited number of interests and activities that tend to be repetitive. So, his therapies started immediately.

Since he was three, Rastin showed interest in the geometric relationship of objects and achieved creative arrangement with every geometric shape.

At the age of four, he started painting on the walls of the house and the next step was painting on all the ceramic surfaces of the house. After six months he began painting on paper.

When he was six years old, he became interested in the space shuttles and this was the beginning of his endless passion for space technology. Scientific documentaries about astronautics and the launch process were among his favorite fixed programs, and many books with related images were provided to him.

Apart from design, Rastin had a great interest in making launchers and used Lego, cardboard, cans and any tool to create a 3D model.

At the age of seven, he learned school lessons at home, and with indescribable enthusiasm, he started robotics and astronomy courses in a well-equipped research center in Mashhad, along with the language class.

Since June, he has held four solo exhibitions in Mashhad and Tehran. The current exhibit will run through January 1, 2024 at Sa'dabad Historical Cultural Complex located at Shahid Taheri St., Shahid Fallahi St., Valiasr St.

Cartoon of Day



KENNY TOSH

Gaza genocide

Cartoonist: Kenny Tosh from Nigeria

Jalal Literary Awards announces winners

From Page 1 ▶ In novel section, "Beirut" by Ebrahim Akbari-Dizgah and "Sorrow-Burning" by Azam Azimi shared the top prize of the event.

The Jury did not select a winner for the literary review category and Soghra Salehi received an honorable mention in this section for her book "Apocalyptic End Times in Novels."

This edition of the event dedicated a section to the Palestinian Cause and in this section "Sur" written by Hossein Ali Jafari and "Meta-Static Israel" written by Kourosh Aliani were honored.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards are highly regarded literary honors in Iran. Named after the renowned Iranian writer and intellectual, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, these awards celebrate excellence in literature across various genres, including novels, short stories, and critical essays.

The awards aim to recognize and promote outstanding literary achievements, encouraging writers to explore



Ebrahim Akbari-Dizgah receives the award for his novel "Beirut" at the 16th Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards' closing ceremony on December 27, 2023.

diverse themes, experiment with different styles, and contribute to the enrichment of Iranian literature.

Each year, a distinguished panel of judges carefully selects the winners and honorees, considering the

literary merit, originality, and social impact of the works. The awards ceremony, held annually, brings together renowned writers, scholars, and literary enthusiasts to celebrate the power of words and the immense talent within Iran's literary community.

With its commitment to literary excellence, the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards have become a prestigious platform for Iranian writers to showcase their creativity and receive well-deserved recognition for their contributions to the world of literature.

Mojabi's 70 years of paintings displayed at Azad Art Gallery



TEHRAN-A collection of paintings by the poet, writer, literary and art critic Javad Mojabi, 84, are displayed at an exhibition at Azad Art Gallery in Tehran, which opened on Friday.

This is the first time the veteran figure is showing his artworks. "I have been painting since I was 15. These works can be called my mental memories about the surrounding conditions; of course, a significant part of the works was designed in the past decade," ISNA quoted him as saying.

According to Mojabi, he has been planning to hold such an exhibition for many years, and now he has put 75 of his works on display.

Among his many publications, Mojabi has

written the two-volume book "Ninety Years of Innovation in Iran's Visual Art", which introduces 426 Iranian modern artists.

In the book, he has chosen artists who have been active for four or five decades and whose works have been accepted by the professional artists of the society.

He has called the book a personal narration of the history of art that is useful for researchers, students of art and all artists.

Titled "70 Years of Painting," the exhibition of Mojabi's paintings will be running for two weeks at Azad Art Gallery located at No. 5, Salmas Square, Fathi Shaaqai St., Valiasr St.

Motaz Azaiza mural in Manchester for all journalists in Gaza, artist says

A mural of Palestinian photojournalist Motaz Azaiza was created in tribute to those covering the conflict in Gaza, the artist behind it has said.

Azaiza, who has more than 17 million Instagram followers, was recently named "man of the year" by GQ Middle East for his work covering the Israel-Gaza war.

Akse P19, who painted the mural in Manchester, said it was "dedicated to all journalists reporting from Gaza".

Ali Yousef, who commissioned the work, said it had had "positive" reactions.

The restaurant owner said Greater Manchester's Palestinian community had been "left helpless and



quite hopeless" by what was happening, so "got together and said we needed to commend those who are conveying news from within Gaza".

He said the restrictions on communication in Gaza meant that "without them, we would have zero journalism, because

there is no internet".

He added that he had developed a respect for Akse P19 after seeing his murals around Manchester and he and his wife approached the artist to design a mural "thinking he was not going to respond, but he got back and agreed".

Akse P19, who declined to be interviewed, has previously created murals of footballer Marcus Rashford and suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst and painted the work in Burnage over a depiction of Uma Thurman he created at the same site in 2018.

In a post on Instagram, he said the war had been "the deadliest period for journalists covering conflicts since [Committee to Protect Journalists] records began in 1992".

"This mural is dedicated to all journalists reporting from Gaza right now," he added.

At least 64 media workers have been killed while covering the conflict, which began in October.

Gaza conflict changing Palestinian painter's approach

Born in 1947, a year before the establishment of Israel, veteran Palestinian artist Sliman Mansour never imagined he would witness another Nakba.

The emotional impact of events in Gaza over the past 80 days has been deep and profound. He has many artist friends in Gaza who have lost everything – their artwork, their homes – but who are at least alive. For now.

He has completed several paintings that he started before October 7 in addition to a mud work, he tells The National by phone from his Ramallah studio. His oeuvre of "realistic, symbolic" artwork, spanning five decades, is characterized by figures and landscapes that embody and celebrate Palestinian cultural identity, the land and "sumud", or steadfastness. But they also reflect its history of loss, displacement and exile.

Seventy-five years of painful history, punctuated by one tragedy after another, has created a kind of emotional and mental "rust", says Mansour, and he has used art to

eradicate that accumulation. Doing so has involved a layered process in the production of his artwork.

With the crisis in Gaza unfolding, his artistic approach is taking an unanticipated turn. He has begun a new, large piece for an exhibition.

"All the images that come to my mind are really horrible," he says. "Some I can't get out of my mind – I can only get them out through painting. You know, I always hated abstract expressionism. I didn't like it. But I think now is the time for it."

Sliman has been at the forefront of Palestinian art for decades and has played a leading role in shaping Palestinian visual cultural identity as events have unfolded.

In 1973 he co-founded the League of Palestinian Artists. In 1987 he and three other artists established the New Visions Movement in response to the First Intifada, a movement that boycotted Israeli supplies and turned to local materials, like mud and henna, which could be utilized both practically and symbolically to produce



powerful art.

Returning to the present, Mansour feels that, while the war has been devastating, the horizon does not remain entirely dark. He perceives a growing shift in the public's attitude in the West in a way that could benefit Palestinians. Sympathy for the plight of his people has increased greatly due to widely visible updates on the ground from both journalists and civilians about recent events, as well as a renewed interest in Palestinian culture that has buoyed book sales documenting the situation's long history.