



Israel's Dream of Renewed Occupation

Israel wants to stay in Lebanon beyond 60-day ceasefire deal

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Israeli occupiers in southern Lebanon, in a handout image released on December 27, 2024.

Renowned graphic novelists to collaborate on new comic about Gaza

Art Spiegelman, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel "Maus," has announced that he will be collaborating with Joe Sacco, creator of the documentary-comic "Palestine," in a new project about Gaza.

Spiegelman said that the new graphic novel will likely be difficult to find a publisher for in the U.S., given the ongoing wave of censorship on Palestine in western art, but added: "I'll finish this thing or die trying," Middle East Eye reported.

Spiegelman is an American cartoonist, co-editor of the comic magazines Arcade and Raw, and contributing artist for the New Yorker.

He was born to Polish Jews who lived through the German occupation of Poland and were sent to Auschwitz.

Of 85 of his relatives alive at the beginning of the Second World War, only 13 survived the Holocaust, including his parents.

Spiegelman's "Maus" was serialized from 1980-1991, illustrating his interviews with his father about his experiences as a Holocaust survivor. ▶ Page 8

What will await Israel if it refuses to leave Lebanese lands?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

SOUTH LEBANON – The Israeli occupation regime must its troops from southern Lebanon within 60 days of November 27, the day the ceasefire agreement went into effect. However, the Israeli regime has not only refused to pull out of the Lebanese lands it has also violated the truce by making sporadic attacks that have expanded to the north of the Litani River.

The Lebanese army had asked the committee supervising the implementation of the ceasefire agreement to pressure "Israel" to withdraw all at once from the Western sector; however, it did not heed the request. Two days after deploying in Shma'a, the Lebanese army informed the committee of its decision to enter the border town of Naqoura. Nevertheless, due to the procrastination by the Israeli occupation forces to withdraw the entry of the Lebanese army was postponed to an unspecified date, as it was scheduled for Thursday morning in coordination with UNIFIL and the Supervision Committee. ▶ Page 5

Iraq says it won't be a launchpad for attacks on neighbors

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Iraqi President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid underscored on Saturday that Iraq will not allow its territory to serve as a platform for aggression against neighboring countries.

This firm stance highlights Iraq's commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty, maintaining regional stability, and fostering peaceful relations amid persistent instability in the region.

Critics have accused the United States of violating Iraqi sovereignty through its illegal military occupation of the Arab country. Experts have also pointed to the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, which is among the largest in the world, for interfering in Iraqi politics and stirring divisions with its neighbors in particular Iran.

Speaking at a ceremony commemorating the martyrdom of Sayyed Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, Rashid declared, "We remain committed to ensuring that our land is not used as a launching pad for aggression against any of our neighbors." ▶ Page 5

Ayatollah Khamenei urges increased focus on Imams Jawad, Hadi, and Askari in literature and art

TEHRAN – During a meeting on Saturday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei highlighted the importance of Imam Jawad (AS), Imam Hadi (AS), and Imam Askari (AS) in the history of Islam.

He criticized the insufficient mention of these esteemed Imams in sermons and literature, emphasizing their unparalleled role in the quantitative and qualitative expansion of Shi'ism during their eras.

During the closing of a mourning ceremony for the martyrdom of Imam Hadi (AS), the Leader underscored the necessity of addressing the lives and teachings of these Imams in various historical and artistic fields. He noted that Shi'ism has never seen such expansion as it did under the guidance of these three Imams.

"Baghdad and Kufa became the main centers of Shi'ism during the time of Imam Hadi and Imam Jawad, and their contributions to Shi'ite teachings are unmatched," he remarked.

Ayatollah Khamenei called on researchers and artists to dedicate more efforts to studying and creating works about these Imams, lamenting the lack of attention they have received in these areas. He urged for an increase in literature and artistic productions that highlight the significant contributions of these Imams.

Iran says ready to enter 'constructive' talks for new nuclear deal

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said the Islamic Republic is ready to resume constructive and immediate talks on its nuclear program with the Western sides.

"We are still ready to enter constructive dialogue without any delay about our nuclear program, a dialogue with the aim of reaching an agreement," Araghchi told China's CCTV in an interview aired on Saturday.

President-elect Donald Trump quit the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran in his first term in May 2018 and returned all the previous sanctions that had been lifted under the agreement and added new ones.

According to the deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran agreed to put a cap on its nuclear work in return for the termination of financial and economic sanctions. ▶ Page 2

Turkish action to cripple Iran's transit?

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN – Turkey's recent decision to revoke fuel tax exemptions for Iranian commercial vehicles entering its borders has sparked significant controversy.

This measure, implemented on December 29, 2024, forces Iranian truck drivers to pay exorbitant fuel taxes, amounting to 155 percent of Turkey's special consumption tax rate.

Iranian truckers, already facing delays at border crossings, now confront additional financial burdens that could disrupt the region's trade dynamics.

The move comes as a retaliatory response to Iran's "full-tank" policy, which mandates foreign trucks leaving Iran to pay a customs duty equivalent to the fuel in their tanks to combat fuel smuggling.

While Turkey justifies its decision as reciprocal, it undermines ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral trade relations between the two nations. ▶ Page 4

Fajr theater festival welcomes intl. submissions

TEHRAN – The 43rd edition of Fajr International Theater Festival (FITF) has received submissions from 46 countries across the world, the organizers have announced. A total of 231 works from 46 countries including Russia, Norway, Sweden, Canada, and several African countries applied to participate in this year's event, Mojgan Vakili, the director of the international section of the festival said during a press conference held in Tehran on Saturday. However, the international section of the event will be held non-competitively. "The decision to host the international section non-competitively was made by the festival organizers," she added.

She shared that 20 works have been prioritized for final selection, culminating in six stage performances and one online presentation. ▶ Page 8



IRGC begins extensive military drills in western Iran

TEHRAN – Iran's Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) Ground Force has commenced large-scale military exercises, termed the "19th Great Prophet Exercise," as of Saturday.

The initial phase of the drill, executed by the Mirza Kuchik Khan Brigade, concentrated on rapid response operations, which included the swift deployment of troops and military hardware to designated combat zones.

Brigadier General Mohammad-Nazar Azimi, commander of Najaf Ashraf Regional Headquarters of the IRGC Ground Force, underscored the importance of these exercises, stating, "New weapons and equipment will be utilized in this exercise, and the capabilities of Basij forces will be employed."

Azimi further noted that this exercise series is ongoing, with the first stage taking place in Kermanshah province. ▶ Page 3