



## U.S. Sanctions on Syria: a Lesson for Iran

Despite al-Jolani's overtures to U.S. and Israel, Washington refuses to remove Syria sanctions

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## Iran will negotiate, but knows how to counter sanctions too, says VP

TEHRAN – Mohammad Reza Aref, Iran's Vice President, spoke at a session of the Foreign Economic Relations Committee in the Foreign Ministry on Monday, emphasizing that the country is open to negotiations, but has learned how to counteract sanctions.

Aref condemned the sanctions imposed on the Iranian people as unjust and inhumane, stating, "If the enemy's aim had been limited to the government, sanctions on essential goods and medicine would not have been imposed."

He further expressed that Iran expects the international community to assist in lifting these sanctions.

We are open to negotiations, but we must reassure our economic partners that we will counteract the sanctions while continuing our development programs, Aref said.

The vice president underscored the significance of comprehensive relations, particularly economic ties with regional and export-target countries.

He remarked that the Foreign Economic Relations Committee, established in 1981, has been a hub for interaction and thought regarding foreign relations for the past 43 years.

Aref emphasized the committee's role in analyzing current regional conditions and shaping foreign policy strategies to enhance connections with neighboring countries, Islamic countries, and those in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. ▶ Page 2

## 'This is hostage-taking': Iran condemns arrests of nationals at US order

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baqaei, condemned the detention of Iranian citizens in Italy and the United States, labeling these arrests as politically motivated actions orchestrated by the United States.

Speaking in a weekly press conference on Monday, Baqaei described the detentions as "a form of hostage-taking," asserting that the accusations against these individuals lack merit. He emphasized that using judicial pretexts to justify such arrests is inhumane and violates human rights.

"We urge these countries not to let their relations with Iran be influenced by the demands of third parties. From the outset, we have pursued this issue vigorously and provided consular assistance to the Iranian citizen detained in Italy," he added. ▶ Page 2

## Iran's resilient stand beyond headlines

By Faramarz Kouhpayeh

TEHRAN – Benoit Faucon in his recent article for the Wall Street Journal, titled "A Weakened Iran Prepares to Face Trump 2.0," paints a bleak picture of Iran, describing a country teetering on the brink of collapse.

While it is true that Iran faces substantial challenges, a closer and more balanced analysis reveals a different story. Many of the claims in the article seem shaped by geopolitical agendas, presenting a narrative that requires a thorough and fair reassessment.

Iran's current economic difficulties are undeniable but often misrepresented in Western narratives. The article attributes these challenges mainly to internal mismanagement and corruption while downplaying the crippling impact of decades of U.S.-led sanctions.

These sanctions, often imposed unilaterally and outside international legal frameworks, have severely restricted Iran's access to global financial systems, essential imports, and foreign investments. The sanctions have targeted critical sectors like healthcare and energy, disproportionately affecting ordinary citizens. ▶ Page 3

## Why is Washington keen to nurture Syrian Kurds?

By Sondoss Al Asaad

BEIRUT – Upon assisting Israel's security and political challenges, following the Lebanon war and the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar stated, "In a region where we will always be a minority, we must ally with other minorities." Sa'ar added that the Kurds are "a great nation but they do not enjoy political independence."

During his meeting with Jens Ploetner, the German chancellor's special adviser on foreign and security policy on December 18, Sa'ar also stressed that "the international community has a role in protecting minorities in Syria, including the Kurdish minority, which is being attacked and threatened these days."

Fearing the growing role of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s, David Ben-Gurion formulated the Torat Haperipheria doctrine based on the advice of the Zionist theorist Elyahu Sasson.

Tel Aviv accordingly allied with Turkey; the Pahlavi regime in Iran; the Christian minorities in Ethiopia and southern Sudan; the Druze in Syria and Lebanon; the Kurds in Iraq; and the Maronite Christians in Lebanon.

## Israel tightens grip on Syrian land

By Wesam Bahrani

TEHRAN – Reports from Syria say the Israeli regime is reinforcing its military in recently occupied regions of Syria, causing concerns about increasing tensions in the region.

Journalists on the ground have reported that the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) are constructing roads to link 13 newly established military positions in the province of Damascus, also home to the capital city, as well as the southwestern provinces of Quneitra and Daraa.

Reports show that the occupation regime is installing concrete barriers and surveillance cameras there.

In addition to these measures, it has taken control of six significant water bodies in southern Syria. The most recent one is the al-Mantara Dam, located in Rural Quneitra, further solidifying its dominance in the region.

The dam is a vital water source for Syrians living in Quneitra and its surrounding provinces.

In addition, the occupation regime has constructed large dirt barriers to prevent residents from accessing the area surrounding the dam.

## Israeli ministers painting genocidal scenario for the West Bank

By Shahrokh Saei

TEHRAN – The recent deadly shooting attack in the occupied West Bank has highlighted anti-Israel sentiment amid its genocidal war in the Gaza Strip.

On Monday, gunmen opened fire on a bus and vehicles adjacent to the Palestina village of Funduq near Nablus city.

Three Israelis were killed and several others were injured in the incident.

The Israeli army immediately imposed a cordon around all villages in the area to apprehend the shooters.

The Palestinian Hamas resistance movement hailed the attack as a "heroic response against the occupation's continued crimes (including) the war of genocide in Gaza."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed a harsh crackdown on the attackers and their supporters.

Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir said he had instructed the army to "act with force" in the pursuit of the assailants.

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## Value of Iran's petchem export rises 32% in 9 months on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's petrochemical export has increased 32 percent in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 – December 21, 2024), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

Foroud Asgari said that 50.7 million tons of petrochemicals worth \$19.7 billion have been exported during the mentioned nine-month period, indicating 33.25 percent growth in weight year on year.

As stated by the head of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC), the petrochemical industry plays a vital role in promoting Iran's status in the international economy. ▶ Page 4



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## Occupied Territories airspace defenseless against Iran: IRGC

TEHRAN – Brigadier General Ali Mohammad Naeini, the spokesperson for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), has described the skies above the occupied territories as wide open and unguarded against Iran.

During a press conference on Monday, Naeini said, "The enemy saw in the True Promise II and II operations that their skies are open to us, and we can repeat these operations with even greater force."

He added that Iran has been fully prepared for large, complex, and heavy battles on any scale for a long time. ▶ Page 2