

Report

Christians cry for help over Israeli persecution in Jerusalem

Palestinians Christians have sounded the alarm about the level of persecution they are facing from Israeli settlers backed by Israeli regime forces in the occupied holy city of Jerusalem (al-Quds) with a bid to drive out the religious community.

The Patriarch of Jerusalem who leads the Greek Orthodox church in the Holy Land has spoken out about the “darkness” Palestinian Christians are suffering in the holy land.

Speaking to British media, Patriarch Theophilos referred to the gloomy situation in Jerusalem warning “our presence in Jerusalem is under threat”.

He states “our churches are threatened by Israeli radical fringe groups. At the hands of these Zionist extremists; the Christian community in Jerusalem is suffering greatly. Our brothers and sisters are the victims of hate crimes. Our churches are regularly desecrated and vandalized. Our clergy are subject to frequent intimidation. The sworn intent of these radical groups is to extinguish the light of the Christian community from the Old City.”

He adds that by “working to exclude one community, the Christians, these radicals pose an existential threat not only to the Christian family but to the holy land itself”.

Experts say radical Israeli settler groups squatting on Palestinian land do not carry out such violations without a green light from Israeli authorities as far high as the Israeli cabinet.

Patriarch Theophilos does not speak for all Christians but he certainly echoes the warning by other Christians. For some time now, Church groups have reported attacks of vandalism and other crimes at their religious sites in the city.

Atallah Hanna, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem just recently spoke out about the struggles that Palestinian Christians have to face against Israel's occupation. ▶ Page 5

Report

E3 must match its speed with Iran

TEHRAN— As the Vienna talks enter a sensitive stage, the Western media outlets and the European troika, also known as E3, are trying to blame Iran for “slow progress,” but they seem to have forgotten that that ship has sailed.

As the Americans are accustomed to unilateral sanctions and pressure, and are not accustomed to speaking on an equal footing in international relations, it was expected that the negotiations would go on slowly.

However, what is happening in Vienna is the result of all parties' efforts to reach a lasting understanding.

According to Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, in the previous weeks Iran noticed that the other side launched a disinformation campaign with the aim of gaining concessions inside the negotiation room, but when they realized that this path was fruitless and wrong, they tried to converse inside the room and move on.

Reports show that somehow good progress has been made in various areas such as nuclear issues, sanctions removal, and verification mechanism, although in some areas there has been more progress.

“The remaining issues are important, and we have reached a point where it shows us whether the other side has the will to move the negotiations forward,” Khatibzadeh said on Monday.

Iran has stressed that a “good agreement” can be achieved in a short time, but the other side has not shown enough seriousness by wasting time in the seventh round.

The E3 must remember that speed is key. “Speed is important to us in the talks. Of course, it should be noted that speed is a two-way street and we cannot ▶ Page 2

No Country for Spies–Part One



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Iran’s Q3 non-oil trade rises 25% year on year

TEHRAN – The value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 25 percent during the third quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (September 23-December 21, 2021) as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the spokesman of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced.

According to Ruhollah Latifi, Iran traded 43.318 million tons of commodities worth \$27.156 billion in the mentioned three months, IRNA reported.

The official noted that the weight of the

traded goods in the mentioned period declined nine percent year on year.

As reported, the country exported 32.337 million tons of non-oil goods valued at \$13.335 during autumn, registering a 17-percent rise compared to the figure for the previous year's same time span.

The Islamic Republic also imported 10.981 million tons of commodities worth \$13.821 billion in the said three months, to register a 37-percent rise in terms of value year on year.



Iran's rowing league held at Azadi Lake
TEHRAN – The first round of the 7th edition of the Iran rowing league was held on Sunday in Tehran's Azadi Lake.
Brazilian rowing coach Pedro Sena attended the competition.
The Iranian men and women rowers participated in the competition.
The rowers prepare for the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Kashan is where you can dive into ancient Iranian culture

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN – Atmospheric spaces, rosewater, textiles, rugs, delicious dishes, and above all, hospitable people are some famous examples to describe Kashan in central Iran. The delightful oasis city is famed for numerous architectural masterpieces, a photogenic bazaar, and many old traditional houses some of which transformed into cozy boutique ho-

tels where sightseers may feel the traditional lifestyle.

Kashan is situated neighboring the route of travelers who are on their way to Isfahan, Shiraz, Tehran, and probably Yazd hereinafter. Moreover, it is a gateway to many sights, stories, and surrounding attractive villages to discover.

Its lavishly-decorated traditional houses,

According to Latifi, the value of Iran's non-oil trade also rose 25 percent during the ninth month of the current Iranian calendar year (November 22-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same month in the past year.

As previously announced by the acting head of IRICA, the value of Iran's non-oil trade rose 38 percent during the first nine months of the current year (March 21-December 21, 2021), as compared to the same period of time in the past year. ▶ Page 4

Interview

Beijing opposes expanding nuclear talks to regional issues: Chinese professor

By M. A. Saki

TEHRAN – A Chinese professor of Middle Eastern Studies at Shanghai International Studies University says that Beijing does not support the expansion of the Iran nuclear deal to all other regional issues.

“Despite the U.S. attempts to bundle the Iranian nuclear issue with other regional policies, China does not support the expansion of the Iranian nuclear issue to all other regional security issues,” Yuan Zhang tells the Tehran Times.

“The Iranian nuclear talks should not expand the topic of negotiations to regional issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli issue and the security of the (Persian) Gulf states,” the professor remarks. ▶ Page 5

particularly Brujerdi, Tabatabai, Ameri, and Abbasi house, feature incredible architecture, which certainly will enchant every visitor! Furthermore, the Sultan Mir-Ahmad public bathhouse is also a recommendable destination to see; its tile work, stucco, and ceiling lights are breathtaking.

Don't forget to roam through the domed bazaar, where you can find loads of ▶ Page 6

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Interview

Scholar says U.S. less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A professor from Hamline University says that the U.S. reputation suffered greatly during the four years of Donald Trump's presidency so that the U.S. is now “less reliable of a partner”.

“The U.S. is less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump. This may be the new political reality with the USA,” David Schultz tells the Tehran Times.

During his presidency, Trump left certain international agreements, including the Paris climate accords and the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Talks started in April 2021 to restore the nuclear deal after President Joe Biden announced that the U.S. is willing to return to the agreement. Talks are still underway in Vienna and some progress has been made, but Iran is seeking guarantees that the U.S. won't abandon any possible agreement again.

Indeed, U.S policies in recent years under the slogan of “America first” have caused the world to be more cynical about Washington's reliability.

Schultz says American leadership entails “diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military tools all coming together to support international agreements and institutions that support U.S. interests.”

Following is the text of the interview:

What is your expectation about the Vienna talks? While American officials blame Iran for its stance, some European and Russian parties are talking about improvement in the negotiations.

I have very low expectations for these talks. Even though in theory both ▶ Page 5

Four Iranian players nominated for 2021 world's best

TEHRAN – Four Iranian futsal players have been nominated for the best player in the world in 2021 in four categories.

Launched in 2000, FutsalPlanet Awards, presented by magazine FutsalPlanet, aims to honour the best players of international futsal annually.

Aliasghar Hassanzadeh, who is now the most capped Iranian futsal player, has been nominated for the best men's player in the world.

Hassanzadeh's rivals are Cristian Alejandro Borruto (ARG), Erick Olim Mendonça (POR), Esteban Cejudo Guerrero (ESP), Carlos Vagner Gualarte Filho “Ferrão” (BRA), Jovan Lazarevic (SRB), Alex Rodrigo da Silva Merlim “Babalu” (BRA/ITA), Jean Pierre Guisel Costa “Pito” (BRA) and Rodrigo Hardy Araújo (BRA).

Soheila Malmoli is nominated for the best women's player in the world. ▶ Page 3

Scholar says U.S. less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump

From page 1 ▶ the U.S. and Iran want an agreement, in reality I do see the politics or incentives lining up. For Iran, as it gets closer to a critical mass in terms of enriched uranium, the hardliners see little incentive to reach a deal, especially given that they cannot trust the U.S. not to pull out again. For the U.S., while Biden would like to resolve the Iran issue to move on to Russia and China, he is distracted by the latter two and he also faces both internal political pressure and pressure from the Saudis and Israel not to compromise. Overall, an agreement is possible but difficult and it is hard to see what the terms would be.

Even when certain governments reach an agreement with the U.S. and abide by it, there is no guarantee that the U.S. won't leave it. Trump's abrogation of the 2015 nuclear deal – JCPOA – is an example. Given such an experience, how can other countries trust the U.S.?



This is one of the major stumbling blocks in terms of reaching agreement here. The U.S. is less reliable of a partner now than it was before Trump. This may be the new political reality with the USA.

Many American politicians and

political leaders are talking about U.S. leadership (except Trump who raised the motto of America first). What are the main requirements of such a leadership?

U.S. leadership requires American engagement in the world. The re-

treat inward makes that more difficult, as well as possibly the growing reluctance after Afghanistan to use force as an alternative. Leadership requires diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military tools all coming together to support international agreements and institutions that support U.S. interests.

What are your comments on Trump's criticism of Biden? Is he a serious rival to Biden in 2024?

For now Trump remains a serious rival to Biden in 2024, if both decide to run. There is a lot that can happen between now and the 2022 midterm elections. Remember, in 1982 Ronald Reagan looked certain to lose and then won big in 1984.

To what extent does U.S. foreign policy draw the attention of the American public?

Right now foreign policy is a minor issue for the public. The economy, the pandemic, and crime are far larger issues.

Christians cry for help over Israeli persecution in Jerusalem

From page 1 ▶ In December, Hanna was hospitalized after Israeli regime forces struck him with gas canister attack at his Jerusalem church. From his hospital bed, he warned of his strong belief that the occupation forces had tried to have him assassinated, or at the minimum poison him to the extent that he is weakened and unable to continue his daily activities.

Hanna has been an outspoken critic of Israel's occupation of Palestine, and its persecution of Christians as well as Muslims in the occupied territories. On many occasions he has made powerful speeches within occupied Palestine and abroad. He has promoted Palestinian unity and raised the issue that Christian Palestinians in the occupied territories are oppressed and terrorized just as badly as Muslim Palestinians.

Just a few weeks before the regime attacked him with injuries that left him in a hospital bed, he spoke at a conference in the Turkish city of Istanbul devoted to raising awareness about the Palestinian issue warning that Christians cannot stay silent regarding Israeli crimes.

He says "there is no disunity between Muslims and Christians in Palestine.. We are all one family. Muslims here are our closest friends. The only danger and persecution we face is from the occupation."

"There is no disunity between Muslims and Christians in Palestine," said Hanna in his speech. "We are all one family. Muslims here are our closest friends. The only danger and persecution we face is from the occupation... Many Christians in the West support Israel. Yet Israel's actions go against all moral and religious values."

Given Hanna's highly vocal criticism of the occupation, Israel's blatant attack on his church shows how keen the regime has been to crack down on any form dissent no matter what m faith the individual belongs to.

The regime has also gone to great lengths to avoid putting its apartheid crimes under the spotlight. For instance even those visiting the occupied Holy Land, Israeli tour firms operating in Bethlehem do not give a full guided tour of the city and its Christian sites to avoid showing the settlement wall built in the Second Intifada (uprising) of 2003.

This apartheid wall which has expanded so vastly and infringed on so many Palestin-



ian rights including there ability to walk from town to town or village to village without making a massive diversion or being harassed at a checkpoint. It has not only infringed on Palestinians' movement, but also their dignity and the quality of their life.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 following a military offensive against a defenseless population. Since then, Israeli settlement activity has continuously expanded with illegal settler communities squatting, which are segregated from the native Palestinian population.

All settlements are considered illegal under internal law.

Such a system has been likened to apartheid by much of the international community including UN bodies, human rights groups, and even U.S. government officials such as former Vice President John Kerry.

A Palestinian citizen of Bethlehem, Fadi Qattan says "I can't visit the [Christian] holy sites... under the current [Israeli] separatist regime in Palestine with its checkpoints and separation wall".

Jews, Muslims, and Christians had once lived in great peaceful harmony across Palestine, with religious freedom for all. Yet Israel's illegal founding in the early 1920's by the British, a regime that would go on to receive widespread support from the United States, forced a mass exodus of the Palestinians living there, and the Christian population has since dwindled.

There are approximately 400,000 Palestinian Christians who live in the diaspora worldwide. There are also roughly 50,000 Christian Palestinian who remain living in the occupied territories despite the atrocities they face. Many have also emigrated because of the difficulties they endured living

under occupation.

Last Christmas, Israel initially blocked Palestinian Christian residents in the besieged Gaza Strip, who sought to visit Bethlehem for the holiday season. Eventually it allowed a number of Palestinians to leave, but only a small minority were given permits to leave, meaning that the majority were still barred from temporarily visiting Bethlehem the birth place of Prophet Jesus peace be upon him.

Similarly, in April last year, Israel imposed harsher restrictions on Palestinian Christians in Gaza hoping to visit Bethlehem for the religious Easter pilgrimage.

The challenges presented by radical Israeli settler groups backed by the regime's forces in occupied Jerusalem (al-Quds) to both the Christian and Muslim communities have been met with condemnation by the international community, including rights groups.

The Israeli Palestine conflict has often been misrepresented as one between Jews and Muslims, however Christians are suffering just the same. The reality is Zionism has taken over the name of the peaceful Jewish faith and it's extremist elements have deviated from the Jewish religion.

Experts widely agree that not all Jews are Zionists and not all Zionists are Jews. In fact many Zionists are Christian and Jewish extremists who have deviated from both the Christian and Jewish faiths and committed atrocities and war crimes and crimes against humanity in occupied Palestinian land.

However, there has been little action taken by the international community, no punitive measures or sanctions against the Israeli regime, that you would expect to see if this type of terror was practiced anywhere else in the world.

Critics argue Israel is literally getting away with murder as it has the backing of the United States which not only shields the Israeli occupation in the United Nations Security Council but America itself lives by the rule of the jungle.

The longer the world issues only statements of condemnation and takes no real action, the longer Palestinians will continue to suffer under the apartheid entity in the occupied lands; regardless of their religion.



China sees Australia and other nations as "tributary states."

In September, Australia signed a defense and security pact with the US and UK. The pact, known as AUKUS, provides a path for the Royal Australian

Navy to acquire nuclear-powered submarines.

In December, Prime Minister Scott Morrison revealed that Australia agreed to buy K9 Thunder self-propelled howitzers from South Korea.

Beijing opposes expanding nuclear talks to regional issues: Chinese professor

"JCPOA is not just an issue between Iran and the United States"

From page 1 ▶ Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate the Vienna talks? Is there any glimmer of hope to reach an agreement?

The Vienna talks have struggled to move forward amid stumbles. Given the differences between the United States and Iran, the prospects for negotiations are oppressive, but there is also some hope. The most important reason for optimism about the prospects of the negotiations is that the resumption of negotiations is a widely shared demand of all parties. Whether it is the Biden administration that wants to fulfill its campaign commitment or Iran that wants to lift sanctions to revive its economy, it is in their respective interests to return to the negotiating table.

Of course, in order to push for a realistic agreement, the claims made by all parties should be legitimate and reasonable, and countries should not intimidate others at every turn, especially not by threatening to use military means to force the other side to make concessions.

Negotiations on the Iran nuclear deal should center on the Iranian nuclear issue itself, with the agreement aiming to establish controls and monitoring mechanisms to ban production of nuclear weapons, to lift sanctions against Iran, to restore crude oil exports, and to ensure compliance with the agreement and prevent any withdrawal from it.

How do you see China's role in efforts to revive the JCPOA? What are the main advantages of reviving the nuclear deal for China?

China formally called the talks on the JCPOA beneficial and considers it has entered a new stage.

China is firmly committed to political and diplomatic solutions to the Iran nuclear issue and to the effectiveness of the negotiations. China sees the Vienna talks as an opportunity to push the JCOPA back on track.

China maintains an objective and impartial position and advocates that all parties to the nuclear negotiations should work to maintain the negotiation process and explore creative solutions. China understands Iran's reasonable demand for lifting sanctions, supports Iran in safeguarding its legitimate interests, supports the negotiations, and will be willing to see an historic agreement reached in the Vienna talks.

Despite the U.S. attempts to bundle the Iranian nuclear issue with other regional policies, China does not support the expansion of the Iranian nuclear issue to all other regional security issues. The Iranian nuclear talks should not expand the topic of negotiations to regional issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli issue and the security of the (Persian) Gulf states.

The JCPOA is not just an issue between Iran and the United States. The revival of negotiations would contribute to regional political



tions cannot toxify a powerful regime nor hamstring its progress.

How can the Iran-China strategic partnership change the game in the region especially when it comes to encountering U.S. sanctions?

The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Iran. The two countries have reached a good strategic cooperation relationship. The China-Iran friendship had weathered the international changes. The China-Iran Comprehensive Cooperation Program opens up broad prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

The United States has been adopting a strategic contraction in the Middle East (West Asia) in recent years. After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. contraction posture has become more pronounced. There is a contradiction between the relatively aggressive U.S. attitude of maintaining the addition of new restrictions in the nuclear negotiations and the de facto U.S. behavior of strategic contraction from the Middle East (West Asia), which has also weakened the U.S. credibility in the negotiation process.

Some critics say China intends to replace the U.S. in West Asia. What characterizes China's attitude and policies in this region?

China opposes unilateralism and hegemonic politics, defends the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, and has no intention of replacing the United States in the Middle East (West Asia). Unlike the United States, which constantly demands that its Middle Eastern (West Asian) allies participate in the fight against China, China does not view its relationship with the United States as one of confrontation and cherishes its partnership with MENA countries. China values the development of friendly commercial relations with all countries around the world to realizing common prosperity

to build a global community of shared future. China believes that the long-term stability of the Middle East (West Asia) depends on development and cooperation.

China advocates mutual respect and considers Middle Eastern (West Asian) countries as cooperative partners, development partners and peace partners. China has no desire to export its development model, but it is willing to share its experience of modernization and independent development with Middle Eastern (West Asian) countries, including Iran.

"China has no intention of replacing the U.S. in West Asia."