



US 'forced labor' claim groundless, detrimental

The so-called UFLPA does not protect human rights but rather violates the rights of the people in Xinjiang, including their rights to survival and employment **10**

EXCLUSIVE

China could raise tariff rate on imported cars

China should consider raising the temporary tariff rate on imported cars with engines larger than 2.5 liters in order to achieve country's "dual carbon" goals: expert **13**

Expanding population, range of wild Asian elephants in Yunnan

Accompanying elephant protectors, GT reporters delve into the natural habitat of Asian elephants in Southwest China to gain a direct understanding of the profound significance of conserving biodiversity **8-9**

► Nationwide mourning



In this photo provided by Fars News Agency, mourners gather around a truck carrying the coffins of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his companions who were killed when their helicopter crashed on May 19, 2024 in a mountainous region of the country's northwest, during a funeral ceremony at the city of Tabriz, Iran on May 21, 2024. Photo: VCG

China hopes ICC to uphold objective view on Gaza crisis

By Chen Qingqing

China on Tuesday said it hopes that the ICC will uphold an objective and fair stance and exercise its powers in accordance with the law after the International Criminal Court (ICC) applied for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders.

Some Chinese experts said the ICC seeking Israel and Hamas warrants serves more of a symbolic pressure as its enforcement mechanism faces challenges. Yet, they noted the move will still increase moral and public pressure against Israel, leading to greater scrutiny under international law.

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said on Monday that his office had applied for arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders for alleged crimes committed during the Hamas-led October 7 attack on southern Israel and Israel's subsequent war on Gaza, Al Jazeera reported on Monday.

Khan announced his office had "reasonable grounds" to believe that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant bear "criminal responsibility" for "war crimes and crimes against humanity," Al Jazeera reported.

"We have noted relevant reports. We want to stress that the international community has overwhelming consensus on the need for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and ending the humanitarian crisis suffered by the Palestinians," Wang Wenbin, spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said on Tuesday. The collective punishment of the Palestinian people should not continue any longer, Wang noted.

► Bloc expansion demonstrates organization's global influence

Chinese FM calls SCO members to maintain strategic autonomy

By GT staff reporters

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday called for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) members to maintain their strategic autonomy, solidarity and cooperation and never allow external forces to turn the region into a geopolitical arena.

Wang made the remarks at a meeting of the SCO Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs that was held in Astana, Kazakhstan on Tuesday.

Wang, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that currently as the international situation is turbulent

and changing, a few countries are pursuing hegemony and power, forming small cliques, establishing hidden rules, engaging in interference and suppression, "decoupling and cutting off ties," and even assisting the "three forces" in the region, with the aim of suppressing the strategic autonomy of the "Global South" and block-

ing the revitalization path of emerging markets and developing countries.

The "three forces" that Wang mentioned in his remarks refer to terrorism, separatism and religious extremism.

The more chaotic the world becomes, the more we need to adhere to the "Shanghai

► Empty railway



Commuters walk along a platform at St Lazare RER station in Paris on May 21, 2024, during a strike called by SNCF employees asking for more pays during the Paris Olympic Games. Circulation on commuter and RER trains operated by the SNCF is significantly disrupted on May 21, 2024, due to the strike by railway workers in Ile-de-France on the eve of the day of negotiations on bonuses received for the Olympic Games. Photo: VCG

Seeking Israel and Hamas warrants 'a symbolic pressure' but will increase moral pressure on Israel

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China has always stood on the side of fairness and justice and on the side of international law on the Palestinian issue. We support all efforts of the international community to promote a comprehensive, fair and lasting solution to the issue, the spokesperson said, noting that China hopes the ICC will uphold an objective and fair stance and exercise its powers in accordance with the law.

Both the US and Israel rejected the latest ICC act, as US President Joe Biden called the application for an arrest warrant for Netanyahu and Gallant "outrageous," and Netanyahu said the ICC decision was a disgrace and an attack on Israel.

The application was made as Gaza has been undergoing an intensifying humanitarian crisis with the living conditions continuing to deteriorate in certain parts of Rafah and as the number of casualties continues to increase, according to a UN Security Council briefing on Monday.

Mustafa Barghouti, general secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative (PNI) party, said in an interview with Al Jazeera that the reaction of the US toward the warrant application highlights the hypocrisy of the Biden administration – "previously praising the ICC for issuing an arrest warrant against Putin while now describing the decision to apply for arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant as outrageous."

"The ICC's application for warrants is more of a symbolic pressure, as its enforcement is quite difficult. The application can be described as 'having little actual harm but inflicting great insult,'" Li Weijian, a research fellow with the Institute for Foreign Policy Studies of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, told the Global Times on Tuesday.

Mounting pressure

Since the outbreak of the latest round of Palestine-Israel conflict, there has been a significant shift in the international public opinion, some experts said. At the beginning, there might have been some sympathy for Israel or condemnation of Hamas, but now the sentiment seems to have become more critical of Israel, including a notable change in the attitude of the US, they noted.

"The international community, especially vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue, has shown considerable support for Palestine's bid to become a full member of the UN, with many countries voting in favor," Li said. "This demonstrates the international community's support for Palestine and a clear opposition to Israel's attempts to maintain the status quo or to escalate the conflict."

The UN General Assembly recently adopted a resolution supporting the Palestinian bid to become a full UN member with 143 votes in favor, which also reflects the will of the international community.

Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said on Monday that Israel must immediately cease its military offensive in Rafah city in the Gaza Strip.

"Nothing can justify the perpetuation of conflict. The collective punishment of civilians does not create conditions conducive to the rescue of hostages. Israel must immediately cease its military operation in Rafah," he told the UN Security Council.

Some Western countries voiced their support for the ICC's move. French foreign ministry was quoted as saying in a Reuters' report on Monday that the country fights against impunity.

Page Editor:
yangsheng@globaltimes.com.cn



Weighty agenda anticipated for SCO summit 2024: expert

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Spirit," grasp the correct direction, further strengthen and solidify the SCO, more effectively safeguard common interests, respond to various challenges and defend fairness and justice, said Wang.

Wang called for security cooperation, saying that common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security should be ongoing dynamics in the region.

Taking the Global Security Initiative as a guide, the SCO countries should work with the international community to solve security challenges, eliminate the root causes of conflicts, play a leading role in global security governance and contribute to promoting world peace, he said.

SCO's unique role

In March, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said at a meeting in Boao, South China's Hainan Province, that all leaders of the SCO member states plan to take part in the upcoming summit of the association in Astana in July, Russian News Agency TASS reported.

This year's SCO summit must deal with a weighty agenda, which includes discussions on strengthening counter-terrorism cooperation, institutional reforms and expansion of SCO membership, economic and trade cooperation, and cultural and other aspects, said Cui Heng, a scholar from the China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation.

Cui noted that the meeting of SCO foreign ministers sought to negotiate the result before the leaders' summit.

One highlight of this year's summit will be SCO expansion, said Han Lu, an associate research fellow at the Department for European-Central Asian Studies at the China Institute of International Studies. The organization will include more countries and its international influence will be further elevated. This suggests the strong appeal the Shanghai Spirit has, Han said.

Belarus plans to become a full member of the SCO in July, Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said, as the Belarusian state-run news agency BelTA reported in March.

Wang met with Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Aleinik on Monday in Kazakhstan. Wang said that the two countries' heads of state have established a profound friendship as well as solid mutual trust, jointly steering China-Belarus relations into a fast lane, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

Saudi Arabia's cabinet also approved a decision to join the SCO last year, Reuters reported.

Speaking at a reception in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the SCO Secretariat held in Beijing in February this year, Wang said that changes unseen in a century are unfolding at a faster pace and the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation. He pointed out that there is therefore a greater need for carrying forward the Shanghai Spirit and such a cooperation platform as the SCO.

Currently, the SCO is the largest regional multilateral organization composed of non-Western countries and it focuses on political and security cooperation. This is the unique-

ness of the SCO, Cui said. He noted that against the backdrop of rising anti-globalization trend and emerging challenges on especially political and non-traditional security, the current global governance framework cannot meet the needs of addressing security threats. This means the value of the SCO is further highlighted in coping with those challenges.

The SCO, in many aspects, represents a new cooperation model distinct from Western-centric organizations, which seek military expansion and make efforts to form small cliques. The SCO provides a favorable platform for strengthening South-South cooperation, said Qian Feng, director of the research department at the National Strategy Institute at Tsinghua University.

In their meetings with Wang, the foreign ministers of Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan voiced their support for the one-China principle, and expressed their hope of promoting bilateral relations by expanding cooperation.

For his part, Wang told Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubaev on Monday that China supports the government of Kyrgyzstan in maintaining national independence and pursuing a development path that is in line with its own national conditions.

Wang told Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov that China is willing to strengthen cooperation with Uzbekistan in the fields of counter-terrorism, anti-narcotics and combating transnational crimes, to increase cooperation in countering interference and infiltration, and never allow external forces to disrupt Central Asia.