



The Cyrus Cylinder استوانه کوروش or Cyrus Charter منشور کوروش was discovered under the foundation of a Babylonian palace in 1879, making it perhaps the oldest time capsule on record. It commemorates Cyrus' victory over Babylonia in 539 BC and sets out the rights of subjects in his expanding empire. It is often commemorated as the oldest charter of human rights in the world.

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The Heavy Legacy of Gaza Conflict

By Paul Barker, Bidokht, Shiraz, Tehran 1971-76

The trajectory of recent history of the Middle East has been utterly scrambled by the horrific October 7 attacks by a couple of thousand militants from Hamas and Islamic Jihad against Jewish communities neighboring the Gaza strip, and the almost immediate and overwhelming Israeli military response. In crude numbers the proportion of Israeli victims of the Hamas October 7 attack would be equivalent to 45,000 Americans dead, or roughly fifteen times the death toll of the 9-11-2001 attacks. With so many Gazans still buried under the rubble of their apartment blocks it is impossible to know the scale of the Gazan death toll to date, but even using the Ministry of Health numbers of dead coming through its systems, the scale of Gazan dead would be equal to over 2,000,000 Americans dead, or over 130 times the number of Americans killed on 9-11-2001. The trauma felt on both sides is deep. It goes far beyond the recent killings and includes the deep scars of history and foreboding for the future. The origins of the Zionist//Palestinian conflict go back over a century and in this case history's arc has yet to bend towards peace and justice.

The assumptions and formulas that have underpinned American policies toward the region for the past decade or more are being scrambled and rendered obsolete. Arab members of the bilateral agreements known as the Abraham Accords have not been called on and have not offered support for Israel. Iranian-Saudi and Iranian-Arab in general rapprochement have moved forward. [China's influence in the Middle East is](#)

[increasing](#). The viability of America’s unqualified military and political support for Israel is in question, and with it our ability to broker peace within the region.

For seven weeks, with few exceptions, the current conflict has been contained to Gaza and Israel. If Hamas was counting on Iran’s regional network of militia groups, the Axis of Resistance to join and spread the fight to other countries, so far they would be disappointed. While the Iranian regime remains an enthusiastic supporter of Hamas and other regional actors, much of the political opposition and Iranian public oppose any Iranian involvement in the conflict. In 2009 a new anti-government slogan emerged in Iran: “Not Gaza, Not Lebanon, I will sacrifice my life for Iran.” The slogan grew out of Mousavi’s unsuccessful campaign for the presidency. It is not pro-Israel; it is anti-extremism and pro-Iran. Similar statements about Iran’s priorities have recently been made by former president Mohammad Khatami and other reform politicians. Politics in Iran is far more nuanced and complex than the image presented in US media.

Some American politicians are pushing for laws which would establish easy-to-break tripwires for military action against Iran; which would prohibit the US from making good on its commitments which resulted in the recent freeing of US hostages; and which would make diplomacy with Iran virtually impossible. We need leadership which would put water instead of gas on raging fires.

You can read more about all of these themes in the articles of this Bulletin.

Israel-Gaza-Iran

[Israel-Hamas War and Iran](#)

#1, Iran Podcast, 2023/11/16

Negar Mortazavi speaks to Trita Parsi, Executive Vice President of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft












[Iran and the Palestinians in Gaza, USIP, 2023/11/12](#)

[How division within Iran polarizes views on Israel-Palestine conflict, Amwaj, 2023/11/3](#)

[Iran doubles down on Muslim embargo on Israel amid dual messaging on Gaza war, Amwaj, 2023/11/2](#)

[Decoding Iran’s position on the Gaza war, Shahir Shahidsales, Stimson Center, 2023/10/27](#)

'Axis of Resistance'
Key members of the Iran-led constellation

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
|  Iran Leader: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei |  Syria Leader: Bashar Al-Assad |  Hezbollah Lebanon Leader: Hassan Nasrallah |  Ansarallah (Houthis) Yemen Leader: Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi |
|  Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq Iraq Leader: Qais Al-Khazali |  H. Hezbollah Al-Nujaba Iraq Leader: Akram Al-Kaabi |  Kata'ib Al-Imam Ali Iraq Leader: Shibl Al-Zaydi |  Kata'ib Hezbollah Iraq Leader: Ahmad Al-Hamidav |
|  Kata'ib S. Al-Shuhada Iraq Leader: Abu Ala Al-Walai |  Fatemiyoun Afghanistan Leader: Unknown |  Zainabiyoun Pakistan Leader: Unknown | |

Despite Iran's conflicting, yet calculated stances on the conflict, containing the war within the region may not be possible

[How Iran Really Sees the Israel-Hamas War](#), Sina Toosi, Foreign Policy, 2023/11/2

[Iranian human rights activists condemn those who call for war against Iran](#), Sina Toosi, 2023/10/24

An important letter was recently released by a group of prominent Iranian human rights activists and pro-democracy activists, including the husband of imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi. The letter condemns those who advocate for war against Iran, and affirms that the transition from the tyranny of the Islamic Republic to democracy will be realized through the struggle of Iranians, not by a military attack on Iran. They explicitly call out the warmongering stances of entities such as 'United Against Nuclear Iran' (UANI).

The letter is signed by Iranians with different intellectual and political orientations, who agree on one thing: war is not the answer. They warn about the devastating and dangerous consequences of war and call on people to not allow opportunists to link their fight for democracy, freedom, and peace with warmongering and calls for a military attack on their country. This letter is a powerful statement against war and for democracy in Iran. I have translated some key points of the letter in a tweet thread: <https://x.com/SinaToossi/status/1716823639969120705?s=20>

[Iran Can't Afford a Regional War](#), Alez Vatanka, Foreign Policy, 2023/11/2

Leaders in Tehran can either seize the diplomatic opportunity—or face a potential threat to their own power.

[What does Iran want? Israel, Gaza and the spectre of regional escalation](#), France 24 English, 2023/11/3

[North Korea's Covert Alliance With Iran Aligned Militias in the Middle East](#), Samuel Ramani, 38 North, 2023/10/23

[Israel-Hamas War: U.S. and Europe on Iran Role](#), USIP, 2023/10/25

[Iran plays up talks with Hamas to release non-Israeli hostages](#), Amwaj, 2023/10/30

[The secret Arab visitors in Iran and the 'liberation' of Jerusalem](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/7

[Iran: Threatening in Rhetoric, Cautious in Action?](#) Haleh Esfandiari, Wilson Center, 2023/10/31

[Iran's quandary: How to stay out of Israel's war on Hamas](#), Parisa Hafezi, Jonathan Saul and Arshad Mohammed, Reuters, 2023/10/22

[Why the World Is Watching Iran](#), Colin Clarke, NYT, 2023/10/23

[Civil Society and Human Rights Activists in Iran Call for an Immediate Ceasefire in Gaza](#), NIAC, 2023/11/3

[The Hidden History of Hamas](#), Akil Awan, Informed Comment, 2023/11/19

Blame and Action over Palestine

Stephen Gottlieb, Shiraz 1965-67
First broadcast on WAMC on 2023/11/7

Discussion over Israel and Palestine is largely about blame. There's plenty to go around – for cruelty, murder, mayhem and stupidity, for refusal to come to the table and refusal to accept the rights and the very existence of others. There's blame for this seventy-five years war, reminiscent of more than a century of wars that Europe fought over religious difference except this could be a millennium's war since the Crusades – and this over a small piece of desert, existential for Israelis but fought over as if everything depends on exclusion of the other. Jews have been kicked hither and yon since the birth of Christ who's probably horrified over what some, who claim to be his followers, did to the people of his birth. And both Israel and surrounding Muslim states have been unwilling to accommodate Palestinians. So perhaps this is an existential battle for everyone. Israel exists because the Jews faced an existential battle against Hitler's Fascists, and refugees had difficulty getting into [quotes] "civilized" but anti-Semitic nations. All that blame curdles my heart but brings us nowhere closer to a solution.

I'm not sure who wants peace. Israel said it does but Hamas hasn't. Israel might have outfoxed Hamas by playing more nicely with Palestinians, especially those on the West Bank and the P.L.O., as I've talked about on these airwaves. But I'm not sure if that's still possible. And in light of repeated wars on Israel by the Arab nations and the P.L.O., I'm not sure if it was ever possible.

All the nations involved have been enablers of this conflict. Presidents Carter and Clinton came close to deals between Israel and the P.L.O. but neither put teeth into it by making it the price of our support. For years, we told Israel to stop uprooting Palestinians for Israeli "settlers" or squatters to take their land but it never went beyond talk. Instead we've tried to convince Israel that American support was unconditional. From examining the diplomatic records, some scholars concluded that American defeat of Iraq upended the power balance in the Middle East, deepening the rift between the U.S. and Iran and making the Middle east harder to handle. Obama's nuclear deal was miraculous but Trump's cancellation of the deal made Iran an intractable foe.

I think America is the one country that could have laid down the terms of a decent deal and made American aid and support conditional on it. Sure, that's big power politics but the parties don't seem able to resolve their problems themselves. I'm not sure domestic American politics would have supported it, but if we don't get it done, American politics could flip with disastrous consequences for both Israel and the Palestinians. Finally, I want to turn to the attacks against Jews stemming from reactions to the Israel-Hamas war, half a world away, by asking whether support for Palestinians make demonstrators and attackers complicit in Hamas' murder of noncombatant men, women, children, even infants? If not, Jews are no more complicit in Israel's actions either. By all means share my objections to Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, but that doesn't make Jews guilty of misbehavior. And if you support the rights of other minorities, then you must discredit stereotyping and prejudice because of people's heritage or faith. Plus, Jews in this country have been major and consistent supporters of the rights of others, so

driving them away is poor politics. Swinging at folk because of their heritage is unworthy of Americans, and the principles we've fought for.

You Iranian

Stephen Gottlieb, Shiraz 1965-67

First Published in Constitutionalism & Democracy, 2023/10/31

I keep wishing I wouldn't have to write more about the Middle East. But anyway

Years ago I observed a minor traffic accident in Manhattan. One of the drivers jumped out of his car yelling "You Iranian" at the other. Of course, he had no idea where the other driver was from but Iran was the villain of the day.

So today you hear people claiming that Iran was responsible for Hamas' attack on Israel.

Everyone needs a boogeyman. But Hamas did not need Iran or anyone else to turn them on. From their point of view the worst thing that could happen was peace between Israel and other Arab states. Peace between Israel and the Arab states would make their project of a Palestinian homeland almost impossible. Hamas had every reason to disrupt any such rapprochement. The Abraham Accords threatened just such a rapprochement and took no account of the plight of the Palestinians. War and assassination had been used before to disrupt rapprochement between Israel and the Arab states. Hamas had plenty of motivation to act. And given its guerilla tactics, it didn't need much from Iran, and certainly no puppet master pulling strings.

The war in Gaza and Israel is about Palestine, not Iran. And yes, Hamas' response was unconscionable, un-Islamic, terrorism, but as a matter of cause and effect, it is also true that Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinians created the conditions in which this could happen. The idea that our friends, or ourselves, can do no wrong, is just blind idiocy.

Back to Iran, there's something else Americans and their leaders don't understand. Iran feels surrounded by Turkey and the Arab states. Hamas is based in Sunni Islam. Iran created Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon and has been supporting it. But beyond the religious split, Iran and the Arabs are generally quite hostile to and look down upon each other. Iran feels isolated and uses the Palestinian issue to give it entry to the surrounding nations of the Middle East. As has been said, they need to be more Palestinian than the Palestinians to keep the doors open to its neighbors.

Demagogues have sold America the idea that nothing good can come out of dealing with Iran. But the nuclear deal with the US and other European countries was very popular among the Persian people. It offered an opening to world trade that could have made their lives much better plus there was a reservoir of admiration and affection for the US that lingered despite major conflict between us. The mullahs didn't like the deal but they understood that the people did and that put a lot of pressure on them to keep a workable relationship with this country.

Until an ignorant dilettante in the White House canceled it. Surrounded by unfriendly Arab states and with US trade cut off, Iran went looking for powerful friends and settled on Russia – not because they liked Russia – Russia was a historic threat to them – but

because the enemy of my enemy is my friend. And no, Humpty Dumpty is not going back together again for a long time.

But what has been unraveling the Middle East has been the unwillingness of a segment of Israeli and Palestinian politics to follow the ethical injunctions of their own faiths.

And for too many of us, the solution seems to be to keep the history of other countries out of the schools and prevent Americans from gaining a realistic understanding of the world. But ignorance will not solve problems.

— If you think I'm on target, please pass it on. For the podcast, please [click here](#). This commentary was scheduled for broadcast on WAMC Northeast Report, on Oct. 31, 2023.

[Machiavelli and War in the Middle East, Stephen Gottlieb, Constitutionalism & Democracy, 2023/10/244](#)

[Unprecedented connections: Iran, US, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Gulf region](#)

[MAPA / PCIA panel with John Limbert, Assal Rad and Dylan Williams, 2023/10/24](#)

US Policy

[The War That Remade the Middle East, Maria Fantappie and Vali Nasr, Foreign Affairs, 2023/11/20](#)

The United States will have to craft a new strategy for the Middle East, one that contends with the realities it has long ignored. Washington, for example, can no longer neglect the Palestinian issue. In fact, it will have to make resolving that conflict the centerpiece of its endeavors. It will simply be impossible for the United States to tackle other questions in the region, including the future of Arab-Israeli ties, until there is a credible path to a viable future Palestinian state.

Washington must also address Tehran's rising power, which has rattled the [Middle East](#).

[Hawks Try and Fail to Make the War in Gaza All About Iran, Daniel Larison, Eunomia, 2023/11/6](#)

[The reason behind US pressure to slow Israel's ground invasion, Trita Parsi, 2023/10/24](#)

"US official tells **Yonatan Touval** that Israel's ground invasion has been delayed to give the US time to prepare for the broader regional war Israel's invasion of Gaza will spark. Hence, I assume, Biden's refusal to call for de-escalation..."

[US diplomacy lost traction in Middle East. Isolating Iran no longer possible. M.K. Bhadrakumar, 2023/10/27](#)

[Will Gaza be US' Suez Crisis Moment? Arnaud Bertrand, X, 2023/11/18](#)

[US is barreling toward another war in the Middle East, Jonathan Hoffman, Responsible Statecraft, 2023/11/6](#)

What exactly is the Biden administration doing to avoid the broader conflict?

[What they mean when they say America is 'indispensable', Anatol Lieven, Responsible Statecraft, 2023/10/25](#)

President Biden used the phrase to justify US involvement in the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, but it's really just code for 'primacy.'

[Biden Renews State of Emergency with Iran](#)

On November 7, President Biden renewed the national emergency with respect to Iran, which gives the president broad powers to unilaterally impose sanctions or other punitive measures and regulate trade. President Jimmy Carter declared the state of emergency, which must be extended every year, in 1979 as a response to the U.S. hostage crisis.

[My Call for a Ceasefire, Senator Jeff Merkley, 2023/11/20](#)

Region

[Israel-Hamas War: The Regional Ripple Effects](#), Steven Cook and Kim Ghattas, Foreign Affairs interview, 2023/11/2

[America Is a Root Cause of Israel and Palestine's Latest War](#), Stephen Walt, Foreign Policy, 2023/10/18

How 30 years of U.S. policy ended in disaster.

[High-Level Diplomatic Meetings in Tehran Address Escalation of Israel-Gaza Conflict](#), USIP, 2023/11/9

[Iran's president meets MbS, Sisi for the first time](#), Amwaj, 2023/11/13

[Why Iran Is Gambling on Hamas](#), Mohammad Ayatollahi Tabaar, Foreign Affairs, 2023/11/1

Tehran's Strategy to Weaken Israel and Divide the Region

[Secret U.S. Military Presence In Yemen Adds A Twist To Houthi Attack On Israel](#), Ken Klippentein, 2023/11/2

[The Future of Hamas in Qatar](#), Georgio Cafiero, Stimson Center, 2023/11/2

In the wake of the October 7 attack on Israel, Qatar has helped mediate with Hamas but has been under fire for their controversial relationship

[The 'Al-Aqsa Storm' surprises Israel and upsets plans for a new security order](#), Amir Hossein Vazirian, Stimson Center, 2023/11/7

Hamas's assault on Israel has challenged the security reliance of other Middle Eastern states, shifting the security structure of the region

[The Islamists: How Hamas relates to other Islamist organizations](#), Wilson Center, Various articles

[Chinese plans to build a road through the Wahan Corridor to directly connect with Afghanistan and Iran](#), S.L. Kanthan, X, 2023/11/11

Nuclear Issues

[Timing of Key Sunsets in Nuclear Deal](#), USIP, 2023/10/18

Economy

[Gaza war puts new strain on Iran's economy](#), Mohammad Salami, Stimson Center, 2023/11/1

Iran's deteriorating economy is one reason why many Iranians oppose their government's support for groups like Hamas and Hezbollah

Human Rights

[Iranian teenager Armita Geravand dies after alleged confrontation](#), Reuters, 2023/10/28

[Tragic Death of Armita Geravand Sparks Outrage and Calls for Change in Iran](#), NIAC, 2023/11/1

[Anti-hijab protests 'changed Iran and its prisons', says freed researcher](#), Joris Fioriti, Al-Monitor, 2023/11/4

[European Union Honors Mahsa \(Jina\) Amini and the Iranian Women's Movement with the Prestigious Sakharov Prize](#), NIAC, 2023/10/23

[Increased Detentions and Harsher Sentences for Baha'i Citizens](#), NIAC, 2023/11/3

[Guterres: Islamic Republic Executions Alarming](#), USIP, 2023/11/9

Legislation

[H.R. 5961](#), or the "No Funds for Iranian Terrorism Act," is a reckless piece of legislation that would force the U.S. to renege on the recent prisoner swap with Iran and bar Iranian funds held abroad from being used to purchase food and medicine. 19 House Republicans just sided with Democrats to vote it down 198 – 225!

[HR 6010](#) — 118th Cong dress (2023-2024) To invalidate the use of United States passports to travel to Iran, and for other purposes. **Sponsor:** [McCormick, Richard \[Rep.-R-GA-6\]](#) (Introduced 10/20/2023) **Cosponsors:** (4) **Latest Action:** 10/20/2023 Introduced in House

[HR 6015](#)— 118th Congress (2023-2024) To require the President to prevent the abuse of financial sanctions exemptions by Iran, and for other purposes. **Sponsor:** [Luetkemeyer, Blaine \[Rep.-R-MO-3\]](#) (Introduced 10/20/2023) **Cosponsors:** (0) **Latest Action:** 10/20/2023 Introduced in House

[HR 6017](#) — 118th Congress (2023-2024) To revoke the waiver determination submitted to Congress on September 11, 2023, with respect to certain sanctions imposed with respect to Iran. **Sponsor:** [Steel, Michelle \[Rep.-R-CA-45\]](#) (Introduced 10/20/2023) **Cosponsors:** (4) **Latest Action:** 10/20/2023 Introduced in House

[Rightwing group pressures states to pass pro-Israel resolutions](#), The Guardian, 2023/11/21

The American Legislative Exchange Council is promoting a model resolution for state legislatures to support Israel's Gaza offensive

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Peace Corps Iran Association advances peace and understanding between Americans and Iranians through education, outreach and advocacy, and upholds the legacy of the Peace Corps in Iran.

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PRINCIPLES: The Board of Peace Corps Iran Association has adopted the following Guiding Principles for our advocacy efforts toward improving relationships between Iran and the United States, and their peoples.

1. Understanding and acceptance of other people and cultures are the building blocks of friendship, inclusiveness and world peace. As citizens of a world power, Americans bear a special responsibility.

2. Tolerance and mutual respect form the foundation for peaceful interactions between countries and their citizens.
3. Bringing countries and their citizens into the global community through cultural and economic ties reinforces international cooperation and reduces the likelihood of armed conflict.
4. Negotiation and diplomacy are essential to resolving international issues.
5. Force is rarely justified in dealing with conflicts. Peace is built and sustained through voluntary agreement and consent.

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