

Different Interpretations

Throughout the years following the JCPOA, there has always been a clear difference in interpretation between Iran and Western parties regarding Iranian missile tests, satellite launches, and their connection to UN Security Council Resolution 2231. Western parties claim, like they just did again, that this resolution prohibits any ballistic missile activity by Iran, including the use of satellite launch vehicles for placing satellites into orbit. They claim that satellite launches help Tehran's ballistic missile program. As French Foreign Ministry spokesperson Anne-Claire Legendre claimed, "These activities are all the more worrying in the context of the continuing escalation of Iran's nuclear program."

However, the reality is quite different from the Western interpretation as per the texts of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231. Banning Iran's ballistic missile activities was not mentioned in the 2015 JCPOA text at all. Even in Resolution 2231, the issue was not raised. What the Western parties refer to is a non-mandatory and non-binding request in the third article of the second appendix of the resolution. This article calls on Iran not to have any activities related to the design and use of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

So, this part of the appendix of Resolution 2231, contrary to the limiting Resolution of 1929, makes only a non-binding request ("called"). What is more, it is not even about the activities of ballistic missiles "capable of delivering" atomic weapons, but about ballistic missiles "designed to be capable" of carrying nuclear weapons. In fact, Resolution 2231 represents a significant modification by the UN Security Council regarding Iran's missile activities compared to Resolution 1929. Resolution 1929, adopted in 2010, imposes extensive prohibitions against Iran's conventional weapons activities in Article 8 and even more stringent prohibitions against Iran's ballistic missiles in Article 9. Article 9 states the Security Council "decides that Iran shall not undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and States are required to take all necessary measures to prevent the transfer of related technology or technical assistance."

Thus, the claims of the European states and the US against Iran's missile tests and satellite launches seem to align more with Resolution 1929 rather than Resolution 2231. This is despite the fact that these four states are well aware that with the 2015 JCPOA agreement and the endorsement of Resolution 2231, the previously passed Resolution 1929 has automatically been nullified.

Untenable Positions

The positions of Western countries are so legally untenable that even BBC Persian, on April 23, 2020, explicitly stated that the European trio's request from the UN secretary-general to inform the Security Council that Iran's ballistic missile program is not a violation of the JCPOA or Resolution 2231.

In response to the US State Department's previous claim that the launch of the Nour-1 satellite in 2020 violated Resolution 2231, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova had dismissed the claim, instead accusing Washington of violating the nuclear deal.

According to Zakharova, the US "flagrantly breached the norms of international law and violated the UNSC resolution 2231" and was trying to deflect international condemnation by making baseless accusations of Iran's noncompliance with requirements of the Security Council.

The humorous part of the story is that while the European trio accuses Iran of violating UN Security Council Resolution 2231, it has openly announced its intention to violate the same resolution and the JCPOA itself. According to the JCPOA, on October 18, another set of Iran's sanctions related to its missile activities were due to be lifted. However, since Germany, France, and the UK have claimed that Iran has not fulfilled its JCPOA commitments since 2019, they are making plans not to lift those sanctions on October 18. The US government has thrown its support behind the move as well.

In response to the failure of the European parties to fulfill their obligations a year after the US unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018, Iran gradually reduced its commitments.

Iranian officials have repeatedly emphasized that any increase in Iran's nuclear activities or a reduction in its commitments under the JCPOA is based on Article 36 of the nuclear agreement, which grants Iran these rights. Iran has insisted that as soon as the other parties to the JCPOA honor their commitments and let Iran benefit from its safeguarded interests under the deal, it will quickly return to fully honoring its own commitments.

So, Western countries are essentially blaming Tehran for not adhering to the nuclear agreement and violating Resolution 2231, while they themselves, led by the United States, have failed to adhere to the agreement and are now openly planning to violate it again on October 18.



Fierce Western criticism of Iran's missile tests or satellite launches has become a repetitive pattern against Iran. They have attempted to label any Iranian action in these domains as a violation of the JCPOA and Resolution 2231.



that its missile and space programs fall outside of the purview or competence of Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015) and its annexes." Despite sanctions imposed by Western countries in recent years, Iran has managed to take giant strides in its civilian space program. It is among the world's top 10 countries capable of developing and launching satellites. "We caution against any politically driven approach used by certain developed countries with space programs that seek to demonize the use of

space technology for peaceful purposes by developing countries under absurd pretexts, such as proliferation concerns," the Iranian diplomat said. "This hypocritical approach seriously jeopardizes the exercise of the inherent right of states to access space and celestial bodies as well as their freedom to explore and use outer space for peaceful purposes, including their free access to space science, technologies, and applications without discrimination of any kind."

