

IAEA chief: Tehran possesses no nuclear arms

International Desk

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi has said Tehran possesses no nuclear arms, expressing concern about some of its nuclear capabilities.

"Iran does not have nuclear weapons, but it has certain nuclear capabilities that are a source of concern," Grossi told FRANCE 24 in an interview.

Grossi said that there are many questions about Iran's nuclear program that the agency and the country have tried to solve, adding that the two sides have solved some cases while some other issues are still outstanding.

He acknowledged that after the United States' withdrawal from the nuclear deal known as the Joint Compre-

hensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, the agreement "entered a sort of a limbo," with Iran taking some retaliatory measures "by ceasing to abide by this agreement, thereby, reopening the possibility they would do a number of things which could be of some concern".

"Iran is not a nuclear weapon state," the IAEA chief asserted, clarifying further that "Iran is a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)."

Turning to the upcoming COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference, Grossi was thrilled to share the key role nuclear energy has been playing in the world's efforts to protect the environment, battle climate change, and transition to cleaner energy across the globe.

"For the first time, at the COP, the countries that use nuclear energy are going to say, 'nuclear energy is part of the solution we really need,'" he said.



Iran finalizes deal on Russian Su-35 jets, choppers

Iran has finalized arrangements for the delivery of Russian-made Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets and helicopters, and jet trainers, said the deputy defense minister on Tuesday.

As Tehran and Moscow forge closer military relations, Brigadier General Mahdi Farahi said plans have been finalized for Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, Mil Mi-28 attack helicopters, and Yak-130 jet trainers to join the combat units of the Iranian Armed Forces, Tasnim news agency reported.

He said those three advanced military aircraft will be definitely at Iran's disposal and the process is underway.

The general noted that Iran has the strongest fleet of military helicopters in the region, in terms of quantity, and has upgraded the capabilities of the chopper after carrying out several projects.

Iran hasn't acquired any new fighter aircraft in recent years, other than a few Russian MiG-29 Fulcrum fighters in the 1990s.

Iran and Russia have

signed major deals to boost their economic, trade, energy and military cooperation.

In September, the Iranian Air Force received its first Russian-made Yak-130 jet trainers.

Developed by Russia's Yakovlev and Aermacchi, the Yak-130 is a subsonic two-seat jet trainer and light combat aircraft.

The advanced aircraft would allow Iranian military pilots to undergo training in operating 4+ and fifth-generation fighter jets, like Sukhoi Su-57.

FM: US sought Iran's help to contain Gaza war

National Desk

Iran has received a flurry of messages from the US over the past weeks to help prevent a spillover of the Gaza war, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said.

When asked in an interview with Qatar-based Al Jazeera television network if there were communication channels with the US to ensure the prevention of the spread of the war, Amir-Abdollahian said his country has received messages through diplomatic channels, explicitly conveyed via the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which safeguards US interests.

"The Americans consistently emphasized in their messages that they were not seeking to expand the scope of the conflict. We responded that they effectively escalated the war by aligning with the Israeli regime and extensively supplying weapons and financial support to Tel Aviv.

He also said the recent expansion of the conflict in the region in the past weeks is seen as a natural response by resistance forces against this unilateral action and the full military support of the US for Israeli attacks, resulting in the killing of Palestinian women and children.

"It is important that the aggression and crimes must halt and that the temporary cease-fire must become a permanent one. Otherwise, the region will face new conditions," he said.

The four-day cease-fire in Gaza, which expired on Monday, was extended for two more days. It led to a cessation of Israel's devastating war on Gaza as well as a swap of Palestinians incarcerated in Israeli jails and captives held by Hamas.

Elsewhere in his interview, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran had no proxy groups in the region, adding that resistance movements are operating to protect the interests of their own countries, preserve regional security, and defend the Arab-Muslim Ummah.

"Hamas is a reality that is rooted inside Palestine. Hamas is part of the Palestinian resistance. We believe that the future of Gaza will be decided by the Palestinian people and resistance."

The Iranian foreign minister also described Lebanon's Hezbollah as one of the most powerful resistance groups in the region.

The US and some Western countries sent 28 messages to Hezbollah in the six past weeks, urging the resistance movement to exercise restraint and prevent the expansion of the Gaza war, he said.

Israel not letting enough fuel into Gaza: EU

Disease could be bigger killer than bombs: WHO

International Desk

Israeli restrictions on fuel supplies to Gaza are hampering aid deliveries and humanitarian access required under an UN resolution, an EU commissioner, Janez Lenarcic, said Tuesday.

Lenarcic - who is in charge of crisis management - was speaking as the EU countries and aid organizations scrambled to provide relief to Gaza's 2.3 million population under a truce agreed by Israel and Hamas.

"We are calling for the in-

crease of fuel supplies to the (Gaza) strip," Lenarcic told journalists in Brussels. "The humanitarian access should be based on the needs, and not on some restrictions," he said.

Much of Gaza's population has been displaced by Israel's war, and the narrow coastal territory's health system has been brought to its knees, while water, food, medicine and power supplies have been all but exhausted.

Israel launched its war on Hamas in retaliation for

the movement's October 7 attack on Israeli cities close to Gaza, which Israel says killed 1,200 people.

Authorities in Gaza say the relentless Israeli bombing and ground offensive has killed 15,000 people, thousands of them children.

Lenarcic said aid deliveries to Gaza were encountering two bottlenecks.

One is that trucks needing to enter Gaza via the Rafah crossing with Egypt - the only entry not giving onto Israeli territory - had to undergo screening at a point



90 minutes' drive away. The other is that Israel is allowing only restricted amounts of fuel to go into Gaza which are "still not sufficient for the needs" of the territory.

Critical infrastructure in the besieged territory has been crippled by fuel and supply shortages and targeted attacks on hospitals and United Nations facilities.

Bigger killer

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said more people could die from disease than from bombings in the Gaza Strip if the health and sanitation systems are not repaired.

Margaret Harris, a spokesperson for the WHO described the collapse of Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza as a "tragedy" and voiced

concern about the detention of some of its medical staff by Israeli forces who took over the complex earlier this month.

Her remarks came a day after Israel and Hamas agreed to extend an initial four-day truce which has facilitated the release of dozens of people from both sides. It has also helped surge in humanitarian aid delivery into the Gaza Strip, which has been under a total siege by the Israeli regime since the beginning of the conflict on October 7.

Short truce

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the extended truce as "a glimpse of hope and humanity," but warned it was not enough time to meet the aid needs



A convoy of trucks carrying fuel and aid drive in Gaza City's Zeitoun district on November 25, 2023. **MAHMUD HAMS/AFP**

of the Gaza Strip.

Mediator Qatar said on Monday that the initial four-day truce had been extended by two days, continuing a pause in seven weeks of warfare that has killed thousands and laid waste to the Palestinian territory.

"I strongly hope that this will enable us to increase even more the humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza that are suffering so much - knowing that even with that additional amount of time, it will be impossible to satisfy all the dramatic needs of the population," Guterres told reporters.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

