

Amir-Abdollahian to Lavrov: Iran does not compromise with any party on its territorial integrity



This file picture shows an aerial view of Iran's Abu Musa Island in the Persian Gulf. ● REUTERS

National Desk

The Iranian foreign minister, in a phone call with his Russian counterpart, emphasized that respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries is a fundamental principle in international relations, adding that Tehran does not compromise with any party on these issues.

In a reaction to a joint statement from several Arab countries and Russia about Iran's three Persian Gulf islands, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb are an integral part of Iran, IRNA reported.

Alluding to the positive and growing relations between Moscow and Tehran, he stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any claims in this regard from any party.

Sergei Lavrov regarded

Moscow-Tehran relations as strategic and emphasized that Russia has always respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He asserted that this official policy of Moscow should never be called into question.

He said that Russia explicitly highlighted respecting Iran's governance and territorial integrity in the final statement of the Morocco summit.

The remarks came two days after the sixth Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum in Morocco concluded with a statement reiterating the UAE's claim over the islands. The Russian delegation to the forum was led by the Russian foreign minister.

"The statement supported peaceful solutions and initiatives aiming to resolve the conflict through bilateral negotiations or the In-

ternational Court of Justice, according to international law and the UN Charter," the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced. Moscow had previously voiced its support for UAE's claim back in July during a joint summit between the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Russian Federation.

Statement rejected as baseless

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman also dismissed the final statement of the forum on the three Iranian islands as "baseless and unacceptable," Press TV reported.

"The Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb, located in the blue waters of the Persian Gulf, eternally belong to Iran and are an inseparable part of the Islamic Republic of Iran's land," Nasser Kanaani stressed.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider its territorial integrity and sovereignty over the three islands negotiable and rejects any claim by any side on the issue and will not back down from its sovereignty and territorial rights in any way," he added.

The spokesperson underlined the policy of promoting ties with the neighboring countries and the need to respect the principle of good neighborliness.

He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran asks all its northern and southern neighbors to take the actual and potential capacities at the bilateral and regional levels into account and take steps to boost ties and refrain from making and repeating certain rejected claims."

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will not hesitate to preserve its territorial integrity."

Interference in Iran's affairs

In a separate message, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said on Thursday that the claims on the three Iranian islands was regarded as interference in Iran's internal affairs.

"The meeting was held in the presence of some Arabs, who are ignoring the fate of the Palestinians, and Russian experts in Morocco and issued a statement that has various flaws, the most important of which is interference in Iran's affairs," he said, condemning the statement.

The UAE, which has taken a "regrettable" stance on the Palestinians and backed Israel's killing of the oppressed people of Gaza, keeps bringing up this "baseless claim" of the three islands instead

of implementing practical measures to stop the Israeli onslaught in Gaza, he said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the rightful owner of the three islands, will closely watch the actions of those who wish to harm the national and regional interests and will respond accordingly," he said.

Velayati added that the islands' ownership "will not be affected by such poor meetings."

Calling on Russia to pay further careful attention to its stances regarding the Islamic Republic, the senior adviser said, "The strategic and friendly relations between Iran and Russia have not been achieved easily."

"In circumstances in which Russia is in a complex international situation, some positions of the Russian Foreign Ministry are regrettable," he

said, acknowledging that "although, some political pressures on Russia in the current complicated situation will cause it to damage its reputation in order to obtain a worthless point."

The three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs have historically been part of Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world.

However, the United Arab Emirates has repeatedly laid claim to the islands.

The islands fell under British control in 1921, but on November 30, 1971, a day after British forces left the region and just two days before the UAE was to become an official federation, Iran's sovereignty over the islands was restored.

International Desk

The Israel-Hamas war is pushing Gaza towards famine, the United Nations warned ahead of an expected Security Council vote Friday on a resolution to boost aid to the Palestinian territory but not call for a cease-fire.

Separate diplomatic efforts were also underway for a fresh pause in the worst-ever Gaza war, which was triggered by an unprecedented attack by Hamas fighters on Israel in October.

The entire population of Gaza faces "an imminent risk of famine", according to a UN-backed global hunger monitoring system on Thursday.

UN warns war pushing Gaza to famine



"We have been warning for weeks that, with such deprivation and destruction, each day that goes by will only bring more hunger, disease and despair

to the people of Gaza," UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths posted on X, formerly Twitter.

The UN estimates 1.9 million Gazans are now dis-

placed, out of a population of 2.4 million.

On Friday, Israeli forces signaled they were widening their ground offensive with a new push into central Gaza.

As hopes faded for an imminent breakthrough in talks this week in Egypt aimed at getting warring Israel and Hamas to agree to a new truce, air strikes, artillery bombardments and fighting were reported across the Palestinian enclave.

Israel's military on Friday ordered residents of Al-Bureij, in central Gaza, to move south immediately, indicating a new focus of the ground assault that has already devastated the north of the Strip and made a series of incursions in the south.

No functional hospital

The World Health Organization said on Thursday that northern Gaza has been left without a functional hospi-

tal due to a lack of fuel, staff and supplies.

Only nine out of 36 health facilities were partially functional in the whole of Gaza, according to the WHO. All these facilities are concentrated in the enclave's south. "There are actually no functional hospitals left in the north," Richard Peepkorn, WHO representative in Gaza, told reporters via video link from Al-Quds (Jerusalem).

Soaring death toll

The war began on October 7 when Hamas fighters broke through Gaza's militarized border and killed around 1,140 people in Israel, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. Palestinian fighters also abducted about 250 people.

But the soaring death toll during the Israeli military campaign of retaliation has drawn increasing international criticism, even from staunch ally the United

States. In its latest update on casualties, Gaza's Health Ministry said 20,057 Palestinians had been killed and 53,320 wounded in Israeli strikes since Oct. 7.

With aid workers running out of words to describe conditions in Gaza, the UN Security Council has been locked all week in negotiations over how to phrase a resolution about the war.

The latest draft seen by AFP calls for "urgent steps to immediately allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and also for creating the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities".

It does not call for an immediate end to fighting. Backed by its ally the United States, Israel has opposed any reference to a "cease-fire".

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US ambassador to the UN, told reporters that Washington would support the resolution if it "is put forward as is". Meanwhile, in phone call with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised Friday to continue to supply the Gaza Strip with humanitarian aid and urged a peaceful resolution to fighting between Israel and Hamas.

The Kremlin said that Putin urged the "importance of a quick cessation of the bloodshed and the resumption of the political process".

With homes destroyed, people are living in crowded shelters and struggling to find food, fuel, water and medical supplies. Diseases are spreading, and communications

have been repeatedly cut.

After weeks of pressure, Israel approved the temporary reopening of the Kerem Shalom crossing on December 15 to enable aid deliveries directly to Gaza, rather than through the Rafah crossing from Egypt.

On Thursday, an Israeli strike hit the Palestinian side of Kerem Shalom, the crossings authority and the Health Ministry in the Hamas-run territory said.

The UN secretary-general's spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, said aid movement via the crossing had been temporarily suspended following the "drone strike".

Dujarric's comments came after Israeli President Isaac Herzog said Israel could enable as many as "400 trucks a day" of aid and blamed the UN for failing to bring more. According to the UN, the number of aid trucks entering Gaza is well below the daily pre-war average.

On Thursday, military spokesman Daniel Hagari claimed Israeli troops have killed more than 2,000 Palestinian fighters since a one-week cease-fire ended on December 1. He did not elaborate on the basis of his figures.

According to Israel's military, the deaths of two more soldiers in Gaza brought to 139 the number killed since it began its ground assault on October 27. Hamas authorities said overnight strikes claimed several more lives across the territory.

Reuters and AFP contributed to this report.

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