

Iran, Bahrain agree to hold talks on resuming ties



Iran's Acting Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani (r) shakes hands with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani in Tehran on July 23, 2024.
 ● IRNA

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Bahrain have agreed to start negotiations on the resumption of political relations between the two countries after a hiatus of more than eight years. The announcement was made in an early Monday joint statement by the two countries, Press TV reported. According to the statement, the agreement was reached following a meeting between Iran's Acting

Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani and his Bahraini counterpart, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, on the sidelines of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue summit in Tehran. The visit by the Bahraini top diplomat was his second in less than a month, after attending the funerals of late president Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in May along with six others.

The joint statement noted that the two countries' top diplomats held a bilateral meeting "within the framework of fraternal and historical relations between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and [in view of] religious [and] neighborly ties [as well as] the common history and mutual interests between them." "During the meeting, the two sides agreed to create necessary mechanisms to start negotiations

between the two countries on how to restart political relations" between Tehran and Manama, the statement concluded.

The announcement came after in early June, Mohammad Jamshidi, the deputy chief of staff for political affairs to the Iranian president said Bahrain had sent a message to Iran through Russia to normalize relations.

A week earlier, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa had said during a state visit to China that his country was working to restore diplomatic relations with Iran.

"We believe in the principle of good neighborliness and non-interference in internal affairs," he stressed, adding, "We are working to restore diplomatic relations with Iran as a neighbor."

Bahrain followed suit with Saudi Arabia to sever diplomatic relations with Iran on January 4, 2016, after Iranian protesters, enraged by the execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr by the Saudi government, stormed its diplomatic mission in Iran.

Tehran and Riyadh reached an agreement in the Chinese capital city of Beijing in March 2023 to restore diplomatic relations and re-open embassies and missions.

Scrutinizing Israel-Hezbollah conflict amid ceasefire bids in Gaza



By Syed Ali Hassan
 Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

Israel needs to understand that the Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah will stop its retaliatory attacks on the northern occupied territories only after a ceasefire in Gaza.

Senior American officials have expressed concerns over a potential major war between Hezbollah, a powerful group within the Muslim resistance front in Lebanon, and Israel. In the past two weeks, Hezbollah has launched numerous attacks on Israeli-occupied northern areas, disrupting the regime's defense systems and causing significant financial damage. These attacks began immediately after Israel's brutal aggression in Gaza on October 7, in support of the oppressed Palestinians. Hezbollah had multiple objectives in targeting Israel, such as diverting a substantial part of Israel's military strength to the northern occupied territories to prevent full military force from being used against Palestinians in Gaza, imposing financial burden on Israel by moving Jewish settlers from the occupied northern areas, and protecting Hamas's military strength and strategic assets. Hezbollah has largely succeeded in these goals, as Israel has not been able to significantly harm Hamas's military leadership in southern Lebanon.

In this context, American officials are advising Israel's aggressive government that a ceasefire in Gaza is the most effective way to end Hezbollah's attacks on Israel's northern territories. Hezbollah's relentless attacks in May and June have shaken Tel Aviv. According to Israeli media, on Wednesday, May 15, 2024, Hezbollah conducted a significant attack on an Israeli air force base using two drones, deviating from conventional attacks. The attack destroyed a major blimp used for missile detection, known as the Sky Dew. This base is located near Golani Junction, about 35 kilometers (21 miles) from the Lebanese border. According to the Israeli multi-language online newspaper, The Times of Israel, Hezbollah has launched thousands of drones, missiles, and rockets at northern Israel in the past seven months. Although most of these attacks have been limited to border areas, the successful attack on Israeli targets about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the border on May 15, 2024, has stunned Tel Aviv with Hezbollah's

power and military capability. The Sky Dew aerostat, valued at \$230 million, was deployed two years ago to detect long-range missiles, cruise missiles, and drones from Syria and Lebanon. Its destruction makes it difficult for Israel to keep the northern occupied territories safe from aerial attacks. Hezbollah has essentially blinded Israel to targeted aerial strikes on military installations in the north, aiming to maximize damage to Tel Aviv's military strength. In retaliation, Israel conducted nighttime airstrikes on populated areas in Baalbek, located about 100 kilometers inside the Lebanese border, considered a Hezbollah stronghold, causing significant damage to life and property. Concurrently, the mayor of Nazareth, a northern city under Israeli occupation, informed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he cannot ignore the increasing severity of Hezbollah's attacks.

Hezbollah's escalating attacks in the past two months have resulted in the death of 14 Israeli soldiers and 10 aides, according to Tel Aviv's official numbers. However, active human rights groups in Israel claim that over 80 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the last two months, and 36 soldiers died in a single day under a barrage of over 100 rockets fired by Hezbollah.

Amid such escalating attacks, Israel has threatened broader aggression on the north. Consequently, American and European diplomats are trying to convince Tel Aviv to abandon the idea of extensive military action against Lebanon, as resistance forces aim to provoke such a mistake to endanger Israel's security. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has stated that the US and the EU are seeking a diplomatic solution to end the ongoing fighting on Israel's northern areas adjacent to the Lebanese border.

During a press briefing with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, Blinken mentioned that Hezbollah has linked its actions against Israel to Gaza. If a ceasefire in Gaza is achieved, the likelihood of finding a diplomatic solution to the northern crisis increases. Meanwhile, US Special Envoy Amos Hochstein is in Beirut, engaging indirectly with Hezbollah to reduce the intensity of attacks on Israel.

In the current scenario, the concerns of the US and Europe are evident. Israel is entangled with the resistance front, and now the resistance alliance is preparing to tighten its grip on Israel.

Israeli strike kills 10 family members of Hamas chief

International Desk

Israeli forces on Tuesday bombarded the besieged Gaza Strip, where Palestinian officials said one strike killed 10 family members of Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas' Political Bureau, including his sister.

According to Reuters, at least 24 Palestinians were killed in three separate airstrikes on Gaza City early on Tuesday.

The reported strike came three days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the "intense phase" of the war raging since October 7 was winding down, and as his defense minister was visiting Washington.

Israel's military did not immediately confirm the early-morning strike, which the Civil Defense Service in Gaza said hit the family's house in the northern al-Shati refugee camp, leaving some bodies trapped under the rubble, AFP reported.

"There are 10 martyrs and several wounded as a result of the strike, including Zahr Haniyeh, sister of Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh," Civil Defense Service spokesman Mahmud Basal told AFP.

Haniyeh lost three sons and four grandchildren in a strike in April. The Hamas chief at the time said about 60 of his relatives had died in the Gaza war.

Health Ministry in Gaza said Tuesday that at least 37,658 people



have been killed during more than eight months of war.

2,000 children lost one or two legs

Meanwhile, the head of the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees said that ten children per day are losing one or both of their legs in the war in Gaza.

"Basically, we have every day 10 children who are losing one leg or two legs on average," UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini told reporters in Geneva.

Citing figures from the UN children's agency UNICEF, he said that figure "does not even include the arms and the hands, and we have many more" of these.

"Ten per day, that means around 2,000 children after the more than 260 days of this brutal war," Lazzarini said.

He said amputation often takes place "in quite horrible conditions," sometimes without anaesthesia.

Save the Children said on Monday that up to 21,000 children are estimated to be missing in the chaos of the war.

Presidential candidates attend final televised slugfest

National Desk

The fifth and final televised debate in the 2024 Iranian presidential election took place, with six hopefuls presenting their plans and blueprints on how to make the government more efficient.

Campaigning for the snap presidential election, scheduled for June 28, is in full swing, with six candidates in the fray—Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, Masoud Pezeshkian, Amir-Hossein Qazizadeh Hashemi, Alireza Zakani, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, and Saeed Jalili—pulling out all the stops to win voters' favor.

During the debate, Pezeshkian emphasized his commitment to alleviating the burdens of economic sanctions, acting as a liaison between the government and the youth, revamping production infrastructure, addressing energy inefficiencies, honoring Iran's rich cultural diversity, and highlighting the support of the Islamic Revolution's leader in supporting the country's progress, and mediating conflicts.

Qalibaf placed a strong emphasis on addressing "inflation" and promoting "prosperity" during his debate, promising to carry on "the legacy of Martyr President Raisi" by seeing through the completion of "the projects he left unfinished". He

encouraged the Iranian people to actively engage in the election, stating that their participation is crucial for safeguarding national security.

Pourmohammadi said he has risen from the heart of the original discourse of the Islamic Revolution. He voiced his worry regarding the people. During his last debate, the cleric said he seeks bridges between ethics and politics, dignity and expediency.

During the debate, Jalili highlighted the government's focus on engaging with communities to grasp the nation's potential. He criticized the negotiation [with foreign nations] as a form of disrespect towards the people. He said "The duty of the government is interaction, not negotiation. Those who negotiate disrespect the people."

Zakani said he is "familiar with poverty". The nominee underscored his commitment to combatting "corruption" and "discrimination", expressing concern about incompleteness of Raisi's government (mission). Qazizadeh Hashemi asserted a perspective of optimism by rejecting the notion of deadlocks and advocating for a solution-oriented approach. "We have no solution other than building the country with the method practiced by President Raisi".