

# Pezeshkian, VP defend new 'cross-party' cabinet lineup



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) and his First Vice-President Mohammadreza Aref attend a cabinet meeting on August 11, 2024. [president.ir](http://president.ir)

## National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and his First Vice-President Mohammadreza Aref defended the new cabinet lineup after the proposed list of ministers came under criticism. Pezeshkian submitted the list of his new cabinet members to Parliament on Sunday, less than two weeks

after he was sworn in before the country's legislators. The proposed list drew criticism from a number of individuals in Iran's Reformist camp. During separate meetings on Sunday with representatives from the provinces of Fars, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Kerman, the president said that one of the cabinet's main features is its

cross-partyness, adding that the formation of the cabinet focused on the criteria of capability, expertise, and relevant experience of individuals. On Sunday, the president presented his cabinet's lineup in a letter to Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, with the legislative body officially commencing the process

of reviewing the proposed ministers' qualifications. Pezeshkian urged all members of Parliament and national elites to assist the government in appointing managers and officials of executive agencies based on the stated qualities. In response to the issues raised by the representatives, the president emphasized that the new gov-

ernment will allocate the country's resources with care and precision, considering priorities and areas of deprivation in pursuit of justice and rights. He added that addressing the provinces and deprived regions is a fundamental principle of this government.

He regarded national consensus and setting aside differences as the key to advancing matters and achieving success in the country, stressing that in the new administration, the core of actions will be laws, documents, and national macro-policies. Pezeshkian also said that any identified shortcomings in these documents and policies would be addressed.

Meanwhile, the first vice-president said on Monday that the strategy for selecting managers and ministers in the new government does not focus on political ideology.

"Instead, the new administration's leaders must strive to fulfill the ideals and values of the holy establishment of the Islamic Republic

of Iran, as well as the demands of the people and the promises made by the president, with the foremost priority being the resolution of the people's economic and living challenges," he added. Iran's former foreign minister Javad Zarif announced on Monday that he had resigned from his new post as a presidential aide in strategic affairs.

He cited several reasons for his resignation, most notably his disappointment with the lineup in the newly-proposed 19-member cabinet, however, he supported the new president, saying that, "My message... is not a sign of regret or disappointment with dear Dr. Pezeshkian or opposition to realism; rather it means doubting my usefulness as a vice president for strategic affairs." Zarif noted that he would return to academia and focus less on Iran's domestic politics.

He was Iran's top diplomat between 2013 and 2021 in the Moderate government of former president Hassan Rouhani.

## EU should ban Israeli ministers for 'incitement of war crimes': Borrel

The European Union foreign policy chief said the bloc should consider sanctioning far-right Israeli ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, after they said aid to Gaza should be blocked and the starvation of two million people in the territory could be justified. "While the world pushes for a cease-fire in Gaza, Min. Ben Gvir calls for cutting fuel and aid to civilians," he said on X. "Like Min. Smotrich sinister statements, this is an incitement to war crimes. Sanctions must be on our EU agenda."

Ben-Gvir said in a post on social media platform X on Sunday that the transfer of humanitarian aid and fuel to the Gaza Strip should be stopped "until all our captives" held by Hamas are released.

In the same post, Ben-Gvir also called for the permanent occupation of Gaza.

His comments after Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said last week that he believes blocking humanitarian aid to Gaza is "justified and moral" even if it causes two million civilians to die of hunger in the coastal Palestinian slier. Borrel's call came as an increasing number of states have threatened to impose sanctions on senior Israeli officials over their conduct during the Gaza war. Ben-Gvir and Smotrich are considered to be among the ministers most likely to face sanctions.

## 'No further delay' to cease-fire

Meanwhile, the leaders of France, Germany and Britain said Monday that "there can be no further delay" in negotiating a cease-fire in Gaza.

The joint statement came after one of the deadliest reported Israeli strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip in more than 10 months of war.

"The fighting must end now, and all hostages still detained by Hamas must be released," French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a joint statement.

"The people of Gaza need urgent and unfettered delivery and distribution of aid," the statement said. "There can be no further delay."

International mediators have invited Israel and Hamas to resume negotiations towards a long-sought truce and prisoner-release deal, as the fighting in Gaza and the killings of resistance leaders have sent tensions soaring across the region.

Hamas on Sunday called on US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators to implement a cease-fire plan for Gaza put forward by US President Joe Biden, instead of holding "more negotiations."

## 'Comprehensive, impactful' diplomacy tops Araqchi's agenda

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Abbas Araqchi was introduced to Parliament on Sunday as the nominee for Minister of Foreign Affairs by President Masoud Pezeshkian, with "comprehensive, active, and impactful" diplomacy being as his core program. The nominee outlined his plans during a Monday morning session of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission. A "comprehensive, active, and impactful" diplomacy with a balanced and functional approach was announced as the cornerstone of Araqchi's agenda.

His agenda calls for dignified and pragmatic



engagement with Europe, preventing efforts to build a consensus on portraying Iran as a security concern again at the UN Security Council, and honorably lifting sanctions through "purposeful and unprotracted" negotiations. These items define Araqchi's strategy for direct-

ing Iran's foreign policy apparatus.

Araqchi joined the Iranian Foreign Ministry in 1989 and served as chargé d'affaires at the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Organization of Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in the early 1990s.

He also served as ambassador to Finland from 1999 to 2003, and to Japan from 2007 to 2011. The senior diplomat worked as the former political deputy at the Foreign Ministry from 2017 to 2021, also serving as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator in talks with the P5+1 during former president Hassan Rouhani's administration.

## Europe inclined to ...

He also emphasized the readiness of European nations to fortify relations with Iran.

Addressing the situation in Gaza, Michel underscored the imperative of respecting humanitarian rights, ceasing attacks, enforcing a cease-fire, extending comprehensive aid to the people of Gaza, and recognizing an independent Palestinian state.

The European official's aspiration to solidify ties with Iran resonates with the sentiments conveyed by other European officials in their congratulatory messages to Masoud Pezeshkian. This signifies that Tehran and Brussels stand on the precipice of a new era, shaped by the Iranian presidential election and the triumph of a reformist president espousing a platform of "constructive engagement" with the international community.

While Europeans may have been initially reserved in their embrace of Pezeshkian's victory, they did not overlook this major domestic event. EU Spokesperson Nabila Massrali took to the social network X to extend her congratulations to Pezeshkian, affirming, "We are ready to engage with the new government in accordance with the EU's policy of critical engagement."

Enrique Mora, deputy to the EU's foreign policy chief, graced the inauguration of Iran's new president and held a meeting with Abbas Araqchi in Tehran who is set to become Iran's foreign minister in the new government. Following their talks,

Mora conveyed his satisfaction with the conversation via Twitter, expressing his anticipation for future collaboration.

Over the past three years, a confluence of factors has contributed to a chill in Iran-Europe relations, including the impasse in JCPOA revival talks, the Ukraine war, accusations of Tehran providing military aid to Russia, Europe's failure to uphold commitments to Iran following the 2018 US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, the 2022 protests in Iran, and the responses from European nations to these developments.

However, there is now a glimmer of hope for a potential thaw in these relations. Jalal Sadatian, a former Iranian diplomat, expresses this optimism in an interview with Iran Daily. "With the election of a reformist president who has underscored the importance of mending relations with the world, Europeans, too, are hopeful for a rapprochement with Iran, as stronger ties benefit both parties."

Sadatian, the former Iranian chargé d'affaires in the UK, highlights the detrimental impact of certain stances taken by officials in the foreign ministry of Iran's previous government, particularly their threats to Europe regarding energy supplies in the wake of the Ukraine war, with warnings of "a tough winter for Europe."

"Such stances effectively kept the Europeans away from Iran and sowed seeds of distrust. In contrast, during Hassan Rouhani's

administration, Europeans enjoyed amicable relations with Iran. While Iran was justifiably displeased with their lack of fulfillment of JCPOA commitments, Europeans refrained from joining then US president Donald Trump in his efforts to isolate Iran, notably at the UN Security Council," Sadatian said.

According to Sadatian, Iran presents several advantages for Europeans, including its strategic geographical location and its ability to influence developments in the volatile West Asia region. Moreover, Tehran holds considerable economic allure for Europeans, both as a supplier of energy and as a vast consumer market.

He underscores that boosting relations with Europe would also yield diverse economic and political advantages for Iran. "Regardless of the political landscape following the US election," he asserts, "cementing ties with Europeans can bolster Iran's position in its dealings with the US."

Just as the Iranian presidential election has paved the way for a normalization of relations between Iran and Europe, so too can the ascendancy of the left (the Labour Party) in the UK and the rejection of far-right candidates in France contribute to this trajectory, despite the German government's persistent headline stance on Tehran. Nonetheless, the overtures made by European nations, exemplified by Michel's expression of willingness to strengthen bonds with Iran, herald the potential for a gradual yet significant improvement in their frosty relations.

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