

Pezeshkian: Iran's policy is peace, interaction with world



Jonas Gahr Støre



Masoud Pezeshkian

President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran condemns any aggression in the world, stressing that the Islamic Republic's principled policy is to foster peace and friendship, prevent tensions and interact with world countries.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always tried to spread peace and friendship, condemned aggression anywhere in the world, and is ready to cooperate to stop wars, violence and insecurity in the world," Pezeshkian told Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre over phone, Press

TV reported.

The Iranian president criticized the US for violating the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and complained about the European parties' failure to fulfill their obligations under the accord.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran fulfilled all its obligations under the JCPOA, but it was the United States that, in addition to breaking the agreement and unilateral withdrawal from it resorted to increasing pressure and sanctions against our

country and nation and the European countries unfortunately did not implement even one clause of their commitments, contrary to expectations," Pezeshkian noted.

"Our policy is peace and friendship, avoiding tension and conflict, and interacting and expanding relations with all the countries of the world, but if our country is forced to do something under sanctions and pressure, then our approach and behavior will definitely move in another direction," he added. He denounced the double

standards of the US and certain Western countries vis-à-vis human rights and democracy.

"America and some Western countries accuse other countries of violating human rights because of the mistreatment of one person, but they are not only silent toward the bloodshed against tens of thousands of innocent women, children, young and old in Gaza and the bombing of civilian areas, schools and hospitals by the Zionist regime, they also provide financial support and weapons to this regime. Which

criterion and logic is this compatible with?"

Pezeshkian appreciated the positions of the Norwegian government in support of the Palestinian nation, calling on the Norwegian prime minister to work more closely with other European countries to immediately stop Israeli atrocities against oppressed Palestinians in Gaza.

For his part, the Norwegian prime minister described relations between Oslo and Tehran as friendly and historical, stating that Norway has always considered Iran as a friend and wished for the development and prosperity of the Iranian nation and will continue to do so.

Støre also expressed concern about the uptick in tensions in the West Asia region, especially Israeli offensives against the residents of the besieged Gaza Strip.

"We have condemned Israel's war against Gaza and its disastrous consequences. Norway, along with Ireland and Spain, was among the first European countries to have recognized the Palestinian people's right to establish an independent state. We hope these bitter and unfortunate developments will come to an end as soon as possible," he noted.

GCC chief: Council keen on consulting with Iran on regional challenges

International Desk

Secretary-General of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassim Mohammed al-Budaiwi said the council is interested in consulting with Iran on the major challenges facing West Asia.

Budaiwi made the remarks in a phone call with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, during which Budaiwi congratulated Araghchi on his appointment as the new Iranian foreign minister.

Stressing that Iran plays an important role in enhancing peace and stability of the region, Budaiwi said GCC states are interested in consulting with Iran on the major challenges that face the region. Abbas Araghchi called for a "new phase" of mutual understanding and cooperation between Iran and the GCC.

Araghchi stressed that Iran is keen to promote its "friendly and brotherly" ties with the council and its member states. Relations between Iran and the GCC should enter a "new phase of mutual understanding and cooperation," Iran's foreign minister said.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has pledged that his administration would prioritize bolstering ties with neighbors.

"Under my administration, we will prioritize strengthening relations with our neighbors," Pezeshkian wrote in an article on July 12.

"We will champion the establishment of a 'strong region' rather than one where a single country pursues hegemony and dominance over the others," he added.

Iran 'closely monitoring' Israeli threats: Air Defense commander

The Iranian Air Defense Force is closely monitoring the activities of adversaries, including the Israeli regime, as the force enjoys the highest level of readiness, said its commander.

"In the Air Defense Force, considering the aerospace threats from global arrogance, we have enhanced our air defense capabilities and remain vigilant against other threats; we are also closely monitoring

the wicked Zionist regime," Brigadier General Alireza Sabahifard said on Friday while addressing Friday prayers in Tehran. General Sabahifard went on to highlight that Iran has well

fought off enemies' fiendish plots against its independence, freedom and the Islamic system, and this accounts for the rise in adversaries' animosity towards the Islamic Republic as the main pillar of

the Axis of Resistance.

The high-ranking commander pointed out that the Iranian Air Defense Force is currently at the "highest level of its self-sufficiency, preparedness and combat prowess."



Taliban-ruled Afghanistan ...

The fall of the Afghan government gave the Taliban access to more than \$7 billion worth of American military equipment, as stated in reports submitted to US lawmakers and confirmed by the Pentagon. Facing an uphill battle, the Taliban announced an interim government in early September 2021.

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The group had ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, imposing a self-proclaimed and apocryphal interpretation of Islam that deprived women of most of their rights by the deployment of cruel punishments, including public executions and amputations.

In the group's first official press conference, Zabi-

hullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesperson, sought to strike a moderate tone and said women would be permitted to work and study and "will be very active in society but within the framework of Islam." Prior to the Taliban takeover, women and girls continued to experience gender-based discrimination and violence and after the

group took office, they lost many of their fundamental human rights despite reassurances from the Taliban that women's rights would be respected.

"Women employed in government ministries were told to stay at home while their male colleagues resumed work," Amnesty International said in a report following the Taliban's ascent to power. "There were reports of women being barred from their workplaces or sent home in different parts of the country... In some cases, women were reportedly escorted home from work by Taliban fighters and told that they would be replaced by their male relatives."

There used to be more than 20,000 women police officers in Afghanistan but most of them were discharged by the Taliban and only a fraction was retained to manage women's prisons. As for the education sector, Taliban leaders announced that a "safe learning environment" was required before women and girls could return to education but boys were only permitted to resume school.

The UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) described in

a new report last month the erosion of women's rights as one of the most notable aspects of the Taliban rule, stressing that the Taliban issued a series of decrees that have systematically removed women from public life and decision-making positions in almost all sectors, and banned them from pursuing secondary and high-level education. The report also stressed that the Taliban government bears responsibility for a high rate of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and violations of fundamental freedoms.

As per the rules on women's behavior in public, except for the capital and other urban areas, Taliban decreed in more conservative Afghan regions located in the south and east that all women should have a male chaperone when they travel more than 78 kilometers.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said in a report on August 15 that at least 1.4 million girls have been deliberately denied access to secondary education since the Taliban takeover, an increase of 300,000 since its previous

count in April 2023, with more girls reaching the age limit of 12 every year.

UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay underlined that UNESCO is "alarmed by the harmful consequences of this increasingly massive drop-out rate, which could lead to a rise in child labor and early marriage."

In the realm of food insecurity, UNICEF said 10 percent of children under five in Afghanistan are malnourished and 45 percent are stunted, meaning they are small for their age in part due to poor nutrition. Nearly 80 percent of people in Afghanistan were also reported to lack sufficient access to clean water.

Such cases of mismanagement alongside flagrant rights violations and curbs on personal freedoms have caused the international community to take what the Taliban say and promise with a pinch of salt.

The majority of Afghanistan's 45 embassies and 20 consulates across the world are still run by diplomats appointed by the country's former democratic government, remaining in a state of limbo and declining to work with the Taliban government. The Taliban have severed

ties with many of Afghan embassies in Western countries, accusing them of being "loyal" to the country's former government. Cut off from Kabul financially, these embassies have struggled in recent years to pay staff and their bills.

The country's seat at the United Nations is still held by the former government, which was led by Ashraf Ghani, though the Taliban administration is seeking to claim that seat as well.

Still unrecognized by the international community, the Taliban are grappling to beat isolation by launching diplomatic ties with neighboring countries as part of attempts to garner formal recognition.

The Taliban have received informal recognition through establishing bilateral ties with countries such as Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan, and holding high-level meetings with officials from those countries. Less than a month away from the 3rd anniversary of a government formation by the Taliban, it has yet to be seen whether the former militants show a penchant for advocating civil rights as well as leadership roles for women in public and political life.

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Cartoonist

