

Pezeshkian: Iran favors peace, opposes wider war in West Asia



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd R) talks to a reporter during a round-table with journalists in New York City, the US, on September 23, 2024.
president.ir

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Monday that Iran does not seek a wider war in West Asia and that such a conflict would have no winners. "We don't want war... We want to live in peace," Pezeshkian told a round-table with journalists as he attended the UN General Assembly in New York.

"We don't wish to be the cause of instability in the region." Pezeshkian called for dialogue to resolve the volatile situation in West Asia and blamed Israel for stoking tensions and instigating conflict, citing assassinations in Tehran and elsewhere that he said Israel had carried out. "We know more than anyone else that if a larger war were to erupt in the

Middle East, it will not benefit anyone throughout the world. It is Israel that seeks to create this wider conflict," he said. The Iranian president also slammed the United States and other Western countries for what he called double standards as they criticized Iran over human rights but ignored Israel's "atrocities" in Gaza. Asked about the possibil-

ity of negotiating a new agreement with the United States on Iran's nuclear program, Pezeshkian said Iran is not interested in a new nuclear deal but to return to the 2015 nuclear accord that the United States pulled out of 2018. "Let's go back to step one," he said. If all sides lived up to that agreement, then Tehran might consider new talks, the president said. Pezeshkian, when asked about assessments from US intelligence agencies that Iran was trying to promote campus protests in the US against Israel, rejected the accusation and said it was "childish." People around the world are protesting because they outraged at the situation in Gaza and do not need to be bribed to take to the streets, he added. The United States and its allies claim Iran has supplied Russia with armed drones and ballistic missiles for its war against Ukraine, but Pezeshkian denied Tehran was arming

Russia with missiles. He said Iran opposes "Russian aggression" against Ukraine and called for dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Message of peace, security

Upon his arrival at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, Pezeshkian said he is carrying Iran's message of peace and security for the world during his trip to New York. The message, he said, was synonymous with "the slogan that has been adopted by the United Nations this year too." "Instead of bloodshed, war, and massacres, we should build a world, in which all humans can live comfortably, notwithstanding their color, race, ethnicity, and the region where they live," he said. "And unfortunately, the world we are currently living in is not like that. There are some double standards," the president noted.

The remarks come amid the all-out political and military support by the United States and many other Western countries for Israel amid the regime's ongoing genocidal war on the Gaza Strip and daily instances of deadly aggression against the occupied West Bank, Lebanon, and other locations across the region. During his stay in New York, the Iranian president will address the general assembly on Tuesday, will deliver a speech at the Summit of the Future and will hold various bilateral meetings with foreign officials, including 20 heads of state. Pezeshkian will also hold separate meetings with American media executives, Shia scholars living in the US, Iranian political elites living in the US, Iranian scientific elites, Iranian entrepreneurs and doctors, Iranian expatriates, secretary general of the United Nations and the president of the European Council.

Pezeshkian felicitates Saudi king, crown prince on National Day

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian extended his congratulations to the Saudi king and crown prince on Saudi National Day. The Iranian president sent separate messages on Monday to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who also serves as the prime minister, Press TV reported. In his messages, Pezeshkian stressed the importance of improving mutual relations in all fields. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also congratulated his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, on the occasion. The top Iranian and Saudi diplomats also met on Sunday on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In March last year, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed under a Chinese-brokered deal to restore diplomatic relations severed in 2016. As part of a joint statement issued by the two sides, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to implement a security cooperation agreement signed in April 2001 and another accord in 1998.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon kills over 270

International Desk

Israeli strikes on Monday killed more than 270 Lebanese in the deadliest barrage of missiles since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war as the Israeli military warned residents in southern and eastern Lebanon to evacuate their homes ahead of a widening air campaign against Hezbollah. Thousands of Lebanese fled the south, and the main highway out of the southern port city of Sidon was jammed with cars heading toward Beirut. Lebanese Health Minister Firass Abiad said the Israeli strikes on Lebanon on

Monday claimed the lives of at least 274, including 21 children. About 5,000 people had been wounded "in less than a week" of Israeli attacks, Abiad said. The government ordered schools and universities to close on Tuesday across most of the country and began preparing shelters for people displaced from the south. The Israeli military announced that it hit some 300 targets Monday, claiming it was going after Hezbollah weapons sites. The military said it was expanding the airstrikes to include areas of the valley

along Lebanon's eastern border with Syria. Hezbollah said in a statement that it also fired dozens of rockets at an Israeli military post in Galilee. It also targeted for a second day the facilities of the Rafael defense firm, headquartered in Haifa.

Evacuation warnings

The evacuation warnings were the first of their kind in nearly a year of steadily escalating conflict and came after a particularly heavy exchange of fire on Sunday. Hezbollah launched around 150 rockets, missiles and drones into northern occupied territories in retaliation

for strikes that killed a top commander and dozens of fighters. The increasing strikes and counterstrikes have raised fears of an all-out war, even as Israel is continuing its genocidal war on Gaza. Hezbollah has vowed to continue its strikes in solidarity with the Palestinians. The Israel's attacks on Monday came after an Israeli airstrike on a Beirut suburb on Friday killed a top Hezbollah military commander and more than a dozen fighters, as well as dozens of civilians, including women and children. Last week, thousands of communication devices,

used mainly by Hezbollah members, exploded in different parts of Lebanon, killing 39 people and wounding nearly 3,000. Lebanon blamed Israel for the attacks, but Israel neither confirmed nor denied responsibility.

'Dangerous consequences'

Iran's Foreign Ministry warned Israel on Monday of "dangerous consequences" following its deadly strikes. Kanaani said Israel's "crimes" in Palestinian territories and their "expansion to Lebanon are a clear example of a serious threat to regional and international



Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike in the Lebanese town of Marjayoun on September 23, 2024.
RABIH DAHER/AFP

peace." Meanwhile, Iraq's top Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali Sistani also warned of the risk of a regional escalation with potentially "catastrophic consequences." Sistani urged an end to the Israel's "genocidal war" in

Gaza, where the regime has killed more than 41,000 Palestinians since last October.

Iran ready for nuclear talks at UN if other parties willing: FM

International Desk

Iran is ready to start nuclear negotiations on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York if "other parties are willing," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Monday in a video published on his Telegram channel. The US, under then-president Donald Trump, withdrew in 2018 from a nuclear accord signed in 2015 by Iran and six world powers under which Tehran curbed its disputed nuclear program in return for the removal of international sanctions. Indirect talks between Washington and Tehran to revive the deal have stalled. Iran is still formally part

of the deal but has scaled back commitments to honor it due to US sanctions reimposed on the Islamic Republic. "I will stay in New York for a few more days than the [Iranian] president and will have more meetings with various foreign ministers. We will focus our efforts on starting a new round of talks regarding the nuclear pact," Araghchi said in an interview. He added that messages have been exchanged via Switzerland and a "general declaration of readiness" issued, but cautioned that "current international conditions make the resumption of talks more complicated and difficult than before."



Araghchi said he would not meet with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, adding, "I do not believe it would be expedient to hold such a dialogue. There were such meetings before but there is currently no suitable ground for that. We are still a long way from holding direct talks." Since the renewal of US sanctions during the Trump administration, Tehran has refused to directly negotiate with Washington and worked mainly through European or Arab intermediaries.

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