

Pezeshkian urges promotion of multilateralism

Israeli war on Lebanon may spiral into regional conflict



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at the Summit of the Future on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly at United Nations headquarters in New York on September 23, 2024.
● TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the necessity of interaction and dialogue between the world countries in order to reach a common point of view and promote multilateralism to resolve problems facing the world. Iran's foreign policy is based on de-escalation, constructive interaction with countries and the establishment of peace, stability and security, Pezeshkian told his Finnish counterpart, Alexander Stubb, during a meeting on the sidelines of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

Pezeshkian also pointed to the UN's important role in creating convergence among countries to ensure peace and prevent war and occupation across the world.

The Iranian president also held separate meetings with several other world's leaders in New York.

Tensions in West Asia

During his meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Pezeshkian expressed Iran's «serious» worries over the expansion of tensions in West Asia.

Pezeshkian said that on the first day of his presidency, Israel assassinated

Ismail Haniyeh, political leader of the Palestinian Hamas resistance group, in the Iranian capital, adding, however, that the Islamic Republic exercised patience to prevent the escalation of tensions.

The Israeli regime, he added, has killed more than 41,400 Palestinians in its genocidal war on the Gaza Strip and has now spread the aggression to Lebanon, where it has killed many others.

«We are very seriously concerned about the expansion of the conflict across the entire region,» he continued.

The Iranian chief executive also appreciated Gu-

terres for his expression of sympathy over Saturday's deadly coal mine explosion in the eastern Iranian city of Tabas.

He said the bitter incident is a result of the illegal sanctions against Iran that ban the import of mining equipment to the country. Pezeshkian further emphasized that Iran is seeking to establish sustainable peace and security in West Asia with the help of neighboring governments, including those in the Persian Gulf region.

Cessation of Israel's apartheid

Addressing a UN session dubbed «Strengthening the United Nations Goals,» Masoud Pezeshkian called for a cessation of the Israeli occupation and apartheid in Palestine and immediate implementation of a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, where the regime has been waging a genocidal war for more than 11 months.

«In a world where civilians are being killed ruthlessly in Gaza, blind state terrorism sheds the blood of children and women, and genocide and assassination is being supported, [conclusion of] no document would serve to guarantee peace and development,» the president said.

Pezeshkian said Iran de-

manded elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the region without any preconditions.

Economic, social development

«Iran demands a strong, united, safe, and stable region, where the resources of the regional countries are used for [bringing about] synergy towards [realization of] economic and social development and disposal of common problems,» he added. Citing an instance of Iran's contribution to regional stability, he mentioned the Islamic Republic's having invariably served as a leading force in fighting terrorism, and said the country was prepared for cooperation with other countries, which were similarly after «real confrontation» with the evil phenomenon.

Sanctions

The president, meanwhile, addressed the issue of the unilateral sanctions that have been imposed on the Islamic Republic and some other countries on the part of the US and its allies.

«Unilateral sanctions stop realization of sustainable development goals,» he said, adding, «This fact has to be included in whatever document that is being prepared for the future.»

In his meeting with the President of European Council Charles Michel, Pezeshkian called the continuation of Israel's crimes as the most serious concern of the world at the present time.

«Which international law has allowed a regime to bomb women, children and innocent and defenseless people in hospitals, schools and shelters?» Pezeshkian asked. «With what justification does the world watch these crimes and take no practical and effective measures to stop these crimes?»

No transfer of missiles to Russia

The Iranian president also rejected allegations by Western countries that it has supplied short-range missiles to Russia for use against Ukraine, saying that Iran is seeking to stop the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

During an exclusive interview with CNN on Tuesday, Pezeshkian called on the international community to stop Lebanon from becoming another Gaza.

Israel's attacks on Lebanon

The Israeli regime's intensified attacks on Lebanon, the president stated, carries the risk of dragging

the entire region into conflict.

«We must not allow Lebanon to become another Gaza at the hands of Israel,» Pezeshkian told CNN's Fareed Zakaria. «The events that are unfolding in Lebanon may turn into a regional conflict that could be dangerous for the future of the world.»

The Iranian president urged the UN Security Council to «take immediate action» against the «insane» Israeli escalation. Global condemnations pour in after the Israeli regime's recent offensive, which has resulted in the deaths of more than 550 people in Lebanon.

Pezeshkian said the Lebanese resistance movement is facing an entity armed to the teeth with access to advanced weaponry.

«Hezbollah cannot stand alone against an entity that is being defended and supported and supplied by Western countries, by European countries and the United States.»

During his meeting with Switzerland's President Viola Amherd, the Iranian president expressed his satisfaction with the good relations between the two countries and appreciated the Nordic country's medical aid to Iran under sanctions.

Israel, Hezbollah trade strikes as Lebanon's death toll tops 554

International Desk

Israel and Hezbollah traded fire again on Tuesday – including a new Israeli airstrike on Beirut – as the death toll from a massive Israeli bombardment climbed to nearly 560 people and thousands fled from southern Lebanon with the two sides on the brink of all-out war.

Israel struck the Hezbollah-controlled area of the Lebanese capital for a second consecutive day after

mounting a new wave of airstrikes on Lebanon. Hezbollah also said it had fired rockets into northern occupied territories earlier on Tuesday.

An Israeli airstrike on the southern suburbs of Beirut on Tuesday killed another Hezbollah commander, Ibrahim Qubaisi, who was a leading figure in its rocket division, two security sources in Lebanon said.

Lebanese authorities said 558 people had been killed, including 50 children and

94 women, in Israel's airstrikes on Monday. A further 1,835 were wounded, they said, and tens of thousands more have fled for safety.

«We are waiting for victory, God willing, because as long as we have a neighbor like Israel, we can't sleep safely,» said Beirut resident Hassan Omar.

Afif Ibrahim, a taxi driver from southern Lebanon, said, «They (Israel) want us (Lebanese) to kneel, but we kneel only to God in our prayers; we bow our heads

to no one but God.»

After nearly 12 months of deadly war on Gaza, Israel is shifting its focus to the northern frontier, where Hezbollah has been targeting Israel's military positions in the occupied territories in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

Calls for diplomacy

Calls for diplomacy are growing as the conflict worsens, with UN human rights chief Volker Turk urging all states and actors with influence to avert further escalation in Lebanon. The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, described the escalating conflict as almost a «full-fledged war» as world leaders gathered in New York for the opening of the 79th United Nations general assembly.

«If this is not a war situation, I don't know what you would call it,» Borrell said before the UN gathering, citing the increasing number of civilian casualties and the intensity of military strikes. He said efforts to reduce tensions were continuing but Europe's worst fears about a spillover were becoming a reality.

The Iranian president denounced the UN's «inaction» against Israel, describing it as «senseless and incomprehensible.»



Children, wounded in Israeli strikes on their village, receive treatment in the southern Lebanese village of Saksakiyeh on September 24, 2024.
● MAHMOUD ZAYYAT/AFP

«In my meeting with the Secretary General of the United Nations, I said the UN inaction against the crimes of the occupying regime is senseless and incomprehensible,» Masoud Pezeshkian said in a post on X, adding that, «I expressed my deep concern about the spread of the conflict in the entire Middle East.»

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati urged the UN and world powers to deter what he called Israel's «plan that aims to destroy Lebanese villages and towns.» He said he was canceling a scheduled cabinet meeting to fly to New York to «make further contacts» with leaders to try to end the violence.

China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, expressed support for Lebanon and condemned what he termed «indiscriminate attacks against civilians,» Beijing's Foreign

Ministry said on Tuesday. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told MSNBC that he believed «a path forward» could still be found to de-escalation and a diplomatic solution. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged restraint and sought de-escalation on the border between Lebanon and Israel, telling his governing Labour party, «call again for all parties to step back from the brink.»

In Lebanon, displaced families slept in shelters hastily set up in schools in Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon. With hotels quickly booked to capacity or rooms priced beyond the means of many families, those who did not find shelter slept in their cars, in parks or along the seaside.

Well-wishers offered up empty apartments or rooms in their houses in social media posts, while volunteers

set up a kitchen at an empty petrol station in Beirut to cook meals for the displaced.

In the eastern city of Baalbek, the state-run National News Agency reported that queues formed at bakeries and petrol stations as residents rushed to stock up on essential supplies in anticipation of further strikes. The Tuesday attacks came after thousands of communications 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 did not confirm or deny any responsibility.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

