



The European Union's political director Helga Schmid (C-L) and Iran's deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C-R) wait for a bilateral meeting as part of the closed-door nuclear talks with Iran in Vienna, Austria, on Feb. 2 020.
● ROLAND ZAK/AP

firmed, but the cease-fire did not happen, and we saw what followed. From your words, it can be inferred that a cease-fire is still a viable option for the Islamic Republic. Or, after the events of the past few weeks, has a cease-fire been ruled out?

A cease-fire is not something that can be easily dismissed. After all, the less costly the solution, the better it is for Muslims and the oppressed. We, who are sitting here, must consider that they [Gazans] are under bombardment, and we should try to defend women, men, and others, both on the battlefield and through diplomacy.

Therefore, a cease-fire is certainly something we think about and find beneficial. Our foreign minister, who has traveled to various countries, has also made efforts to prevent the situation from escalating. But we must be prepared in every way. However, the priority is to resolve the issue through simpler means.

How seriously do you consider the issue of infiltration in Iran, Lebanon, and the entire Resistance Axis in recent events?

Generally, the issue of infiltration in Iran has been serious in recent years. In my opinion, some oversights have occurred in the past few years, and although the country's security agencies have dealt with some of them, they have not been able to prevent all of them. Nevertheless, it is an important point that they are still pursuing and thinking of ways to address it.

Do we have infiltration in the country's political and security structure, or in the military?

I can't say which sector, but I do know that there have been incidents

like assassinations, both of nuclear scientists and others, that show they have infiltrated. Uncovering this is very important, both in terms of quantity and quality. Therefore, we need to be sensitive to this issue and find the clues, and this sensitivity has now been created.

Do you think the outcome of the US presidential election will have an impact on the recent tensions in the region?

Apparently, it will. I mean, some of the trends in the US are more radical, and overall, Americans play a key role in this issue. But some of them are even more radical. I don't know how much impact it will have, since they are already operating at full speed in the region.

The situation is at its most chaotic. I doubt that the next generation of Americans who come to power can take it further than this. They have already provided all the military and non-military support they can. What else can they add? But perhaps the circumstances will bring them to their senses and they will show more balanced behavior.

As we approach the 45th anniversary of the takeover of the US embassy in Tehran, how effective do you think that event was in shaping the eternal breakup between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the US.

No one has said [it has been an] "eternal breakup". Imam Khomeini and the Leader (Ayatollah Khamenei) have both stated that we never say that our issues with the US can never be resolved, but rather that the US needs to change its behavior. There is no doubt that the Americans are causing a lot of problems under the current circumstances. My understanding is that right now, in the combat we are in, the United

States is standing against us. Israel is an instrument of action. Recently, I saw that a Russian official at the UN Security Council said that the Americans have even shared Iranian military intelligence with Israel. So, this is how it works: they are openly taking Israel's side, pretending to be looking for a cease-fire, but in reality, they are backing Israel. Therefore, I think we need to be realistic about this.

Don't you think that the takeover of the US embassy on November 4, 1979, played a role in turning the Iran-US relationship into a red line for the Islamic Republic?

Let's consider that in the world of politics, countries like the US are pragmatic and follow their own interests. Take a look at how the Americans have dealt with Iran since that date. It is not the case that there is a red line; at certain times, negotiations have taken place with the Americans. For example, negotiations were held with the US regarding Iraq. The same goes for the JCPOA...

But it was never official.
It was official.

So, did the presidents of Iran at the time have direct negotiations with the presidents of the US?

Not at the presidential level, but officials at lower levels did negotiate.

Nevertheless, a bilateral relationship with other countries has a clear defi-

inition.

Yes, because in some cases, they didn't treat Iran fairly. After the JCPOA, incidents occurred that changed their approach. Mr. Trump, after all those negotiations, tore it apart. And after that, he committed a crime in the case of General Qasem Soleimani. We need to look at all these events in one context.

So, you mean that if the embassy hadn't been taken over, the same incidents would have occurred between Iran and the US?

In the world of politics, countries pursue their own interests, with or without an embassy. I'm not saying it had no impact, but I'm saying that if they wanted to have a reasonable relationship with Iran, they could have acted in a way that would have resolved the embassy issue, but they didn't. As soon as an incident occurred in Iran, they would take advantage of it to weaken Iran.

What was your opinion about the embassy takeover at the time, and what is it now?

At the time, the Imam said it was a "second revolution" and everyone supported it. I don't think anyone was opposed to it at the time, at least not openly. But now the question is, given

the situation we're in, what should we do? I think that with the crisis created by Israel and the US, we need to think logically and reasonably about this issue. Especially you, as a media outlet, sometimes create an unjustified infatuation in society about the US, which lacks a reasonable basis. You should be pursuing Iran's national interests. If our interests are secured with China or Russia one day, we should negotiate with them. If our national interests are met with the West, we should negotiate with the West. We don't want to be one-dimensional; our national interests should be the basis. If the Americans did something wrong, we should say so and take our business elsewhere. We might work with the Chinese. The point is that our national interests should be the priority.

The full interview was published first by the Persian-language Khabaronline news agency.



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Missiles launched from Iran towards Israel streak across the night sky as seen from Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on Oct. 1, 2024.
● ABDEL KAREEM HANA/AP

