

# Iran notifies EU of 'limited' opportunity for nuclear diplomacy

**International Desk**

Iran's foreign minister said in a warning to the European countries that an opportunity has arisen for the revival of nuclear negotiations but it is "limited." Abbas Araghchi's comments came after the head of UN nuclear watchdog Rafael Grossi visited Iran and held talks with high-ranking officials. "There is still an opportunity for diplomacy, although this opportunity is not much, it is a limited opportunity," Araghchi said in an interview with the state television. Talks, though, could resume between Iran and the European countries soon towards enabling the revival of the 2015 nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the top diplomat said. He reminded that the UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed the JCPOA upon its conclusion, would expire next October. "Therefore, if we fall short of coming to an agreement before that, we will come across some critical conditions."

However, Iran was "completely ready" to engage in fresh negotiations that would yield results if the other parties were "truly willing" to lead the talks towards fruition too, according to Araghchi. The visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general is seen as one of the last chances for diplomacy before US President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House in January. During his first term between 2017 and 2021, Trump imposed a policy known as "maximum pressure" against Iran. This included Washington tearing up the nuclear deal that had been reached under his predecessor, Barack Obama in 2015. Trump reinstated heavy sanctions, which the current US administration of Joe Biden has maintained. "Our nuclear path in the next year will be a sensitive and complicated one, but we are prepared for any scenario and conditions," Araghchi said on Saturday. He said Iran will be ready for both "confrontation" and "coop-



Abbas Araghchi

eration", whichever path the other side decides to follow. During his visit, the IAEA chief held talks with Araghchi as well as with President Masoud Pezeshkian and Iran's nuclear chief Mohammad Eslami. Grossi also toured the key uranium enrichment plants of Natanz and Fordo in central Iran.

**IAEA meeting**

His visit came ahead of a meet-

ing of the IAEA's Board of Governors later this month at which Britain, France and Germany could propose a new anti-Iran resolution. In his interview on Saturday, Araghchi warned against such a measure. "If a resolution is passed against us, it will face reciprocal actions from Iran. We will take new measures in our nuclear program that they will certainly not like."

"It looks like there is a political approach in this area, [as part of which] the Westerners are trying to force the agency's Director General [Rafael Grossi] into complicating the situation," the top diplomat stated. Expectations have run high that Trump will take a harder line with Tehran when he takes office in January. The New York Times reported on Thursday that Trump's tech

billionaire ally Elon Musk had met the Iranian ambassador to the UN in a bid to defuse Tehran-Washington tensions. Araghchi in his interview on Saturday denied that such a meeting had taken place. "Now is not the time for such meetings. It is not wise, and there is no will for it."

**Israel's attacks**

During his interview, Araghchi also warned the Israeli regime about the consequences of launching further aggression against Iran, including the country's nuclear facilities. "Whenever the Zionist regime takes an action against the Islamic Republic, we will respond with comparable and proportionate measures," the top diplomat said. "In fact, they know what will happen if they carry out an attack against our nuclear installations," he added. The official reminded that the regime has issued a number of threats against the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites, which Tehran has duly reported to the IAEA.

## Israeli strike kills dozens in Gaza's Beit Lahiya

Hezbollah's spokesman assassinated by Israel



AFP

An Israeli attack on a residential tower in Beit Lahiya, north Gaza, killed at least 72 people, Gaza's Government Media Office said on Sunday. The civil defense said its teams are unable to reach the area, and that dozens more are wounded and trapped under the rubble. The Israeli strikes also hit a central Beirut district where a Lebanese source reported the death of Hezbollah's spokesman in one raid. A Lebanese security source said Hezbollah spokesman Mohammed Afif was killed in a strike on Beirut's Ras al-Nabaa district, one of relatively few attacks outside the group's strongholds. Israel's military declined to comment, AFP reported. A year after the Gaza war began in last Oc-

tober, Israel launched a major assault in the north of the Palestinian territory which it claimed was meant to stop Hamas fighters from regrouping there. Gaza's civil defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal said three separate attacks on refugee camps in central Gaza also killed 15 people, and an Israeli drone strike on the southern city of Rafah killed five. Gaza's health ministry on Sunday said the overall death toll in more than 13 months of war had reached 43,846. The majority of the dead are civilians, according to ministry figures, which the United Nations considers reliable. Pope Francis has called for an investigation to determine if Israel's attacks in Gaza constitute genocide, according to excerpts released Sunday from an upcoming new book ahead of the pontiff's jubilee year. It's the first time that Francis has openly urged for an investigation of genocide allegations over Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip. In September, he said Israel's attacks in Gaza and Lebanon have been "immoral" and disproportionate, and that its military has gone beyond the rules of war.

**Attacks on Lebanon**

On Israel's second front in the north, the Lebanese security source, speaking on condition

of anonymity, said Hezbollah's Afif was killed in a strike on a central Beirut building which housed the office of the Lebanese branch of Syria's ruling Baath party. Lebanese state media earlier said the Israeli strike on Ras al-Nabaa district killed at least one person and wounded three. Previous strikes claimed by Israel have killed senior Hezbollah officials, including its leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in late September. AFP TV footage showed several strikes hit Hezbollah's south Beirut stronghold earlier, after the Israeli military warned people to evacuate. The Israeli army said about 20 projectiles were seen crossing from Lebanon into Israel on Sunday, and that some were intercepted. Israel has escalated its bombing of Lebanon since September 23 and has since sent in ground troops, following almost a year of limited exchanges of fire with Hezbollah fighters. Lebanese authorities say more than 3,452 people have been killed since October last year, with most casualties recorded since September. Israel says 48 soldiers have been killed fighting Hezbollah. In Israel, police said they arrested three suspects over flares shot near the home of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the central city of Caesarea, while he was away.

## Pezeshkian: Government bent on implementing sea-based plans

**National Desk**

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said his government is determined to implement sea-based development plans which are important for the country's development, growth and prosperity. Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting held on Sunday to review development plans focusing on Makoran coastal area in the country's southeast. Pezeshkian pointed to the fact that the blue economy plays an important role in the development of countries that have access to the seas. "One of our main priorities in the 14th government is pursuing and developing the sea-based economy for prosperity and economic development across the country." "It is necessary to design our development plans with a broad but realistic view so that we can come atop in the region in terms of economy and technology," he said. Iran's Ports and Maritime Or-

ganization (PMO), in a recent report, underlined the importance of the country's maritime capacities and the role that the sector can play in developing the country's economy. Last Monday, the president highlighted the importance of fundamental reforms in the proposed plans for the development of the Makoran coastal region, issuing four key directives to facilitate the preparation of the necessary conditions for development in the region. Pezeshkian referred to the necessity of achieving the desired outcomes in the proposed development plans for the Makoran region as requiring problem-solving and providing solutions to the issues with the goal of creating a region that serves the people and the country. The geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic advantages of Makoran hosting a comprehensive sea, road, rail and air transportation network along oil and gas transmission lines would enormously fortify Iran and upgrade its status.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Assad calls eradication of terrorism 'regional, int'l responsibility'

**International Desk**

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said regional countries and the international community are required to bring an end to terrorism plaguing the West Asia region. He made the remarks during a meeting with Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh in the Syrian capital of Damascus on Sunday. Assad said that eradicating terrorism is a regional and international responsibility, warning that the threats posed by the scourge endanger all people across the world. The Syrian president and the Iranian defense chief also dis-

cussed defense and security issues in the region, as well as ways to strengthen Tehran-Damascus cooperation aimed at countering terrorism and enhancing regional stability and security. Earlier in the day, Nasirzadeh held talks with his Syrian counterpart Lieutenant General Ali Mahmoud Abbas on a range of bilateral and regional issues. Nasirzadeh and Abbas exchanged their views on the promotion of defense cooperation between the two countries. They also highlighted the key role of the regional countries in ensuring security and called for the withdrawal of foreign



forces from the region. Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Damascus on Saturday, the Iranian defense minister highlighted Syria's place in Iran's foreign policy. Hailing Syria's valuable experiences in the war on terrorism, Nasirzadeh described Syria as a main pillar of the Axis of Resistance. In 2017, military advisory

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad (R) meets Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh (L) in Damascus, Syria on November 17, 2024. SYRIAN PRESIDENCY assistance provided by the Islamic Republic helped the government in Damascus to score a monumental victory over the Daesh terrorist group.