

# Iran, Europe to pursue dialogue 'in near future': *Deputy FM*

## International Desk

Iran, Britain, France and Germany have agreed to continue diplomatic dialogue "in the near future," a senior Iranian diplomat said following talks on Friday focused on Tehran's nuclear program. "We are firmly committed to pursue the interests of our people, and our preference is the path of dialogue and engagement," Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said on X. He added that the latest bilateral, regional, and international developments, especially Iran's

nuclear issue and the lifting of anti-Iran sanctions were discussed during the meeting. His remarks came after an Iranian delegation, headed by Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi, held talks with deputy foreign ministers from the three European countries in Geneva on Friday. The negotiations, which were the continuation of talks in September on the sidelines of the annual session of the UN General Assembly in New York, were overshadowed by an anti-Iran resolution at the UN nuclear agency last week. Before the Friday nego-

tiations, Gharibabadi in a separate message on X called on the European Union to change its behavior toward the Islamic Republic. Referring to a meeting between an Iranian delegation with the EU's coordinator Enrique Mora on Thursday, Gharibabadi said, "It was reaffirmed to him that EU should abandon its self-centered and irresponsible behavior toward issues and challenges of this continent and international matters." The Iranian official said that Europe has failed to be a serious player in Iran's nuclear issue due to lack of self-confidence

and responsibility after Washington in 2018 broke off an international agreement and unilaterally reimposed sanctions on Tehran. "Europe is in need of self-recovery," Gharibabadi said. Mora, for his part, said the exchange was "frank" and focused on Iran's military support for Russia, the situation in the Middle East and the nuclear dossier.

Friday's talks have been overshadowed by the European countries teaming up with the United States against Iran, which was censured by the UN atomic watchdog for what it

claimed to be Tehran's lack of cooperation on nuclear issues. The IAEA move provoked a response from Iran, which slammed the move as "politically motivated" and in response announced the launch of "new advanced centrifuges" designed to increase its stockpile of enriched uranium. The UN nuclear agency confirmed on Friday that Iran plans to install around 6,000 new centrifuges to enrich uranium, according to a report seen by AFP on Friday. "Iran informed the Agency that it intended to feed" around 6,000 centrifuges



Kazem Gharibabadi

at its sites in Fordo and Natanz to enrich uranium to up to five percent, higher than the 3.67 percent limit Tehran had agreed to in 2015.

## Iran warns nuclear debate may shift toward possession of weapons

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that the nuclear debate inside Iran is likely to shift toward the possession of (nuclear) weapons if the West continues to threaten to reimpose all UN sanctions against the Islamic republic. The Iranian foreign minister made the remarks in Portugal's capital a day before a meeting between Iranian and European negotiators in Geneva on Friday.

Last week, the EU and the UK announced fresh sanctions against Iran after a censure motion brought by Britain, France, Germany and the US was passed at the International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors. Araghchi said IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi had promised to prevent the censure motion after Iran proposed limiting its uranium enrichment to 60 percent purity and allowing four nuclear inspectors to visit its nuclear sites. Grossi "failed because the Europeans had decided on the course of confrontation," he told reporters. Iran subsequently "decided to introduce thousands of new, highly advanced machines into the system. And now they have started to feed



Abbas Araghchi  
IRNA

them with gas. So, this is the result of their pressure," he added. Araghchi reiterated that Iran has remained within the confines of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, however, it still seeks cooperation. Araghchi said that Iran's engagement with the West on its nuclear program was not guaranteed. "There is a debate right now in Iran that it was perhaps a wrong policy. Why? Because it proved we did whatever they wanted and when it was their turn to lift sanctions, in practice, they didn't happen," he said. "So maybe something is wrong with our policy." Araghchi stressed that Iran has already acquired the capability and knowledge to develop nuclear weapons, but they are not part of its

security strategy. "So, I can tell you, quite frankly, that there is this debate going on in Iran, and mostly among the elites – even among the ordinary people – whether we should change this policy or not, whether we should change our nuclear doctrine, as some say, or not, because it has proved insufficient in practice," he said. He then wondered what the purpose was of Iran spending 10 to 12 years on negotiations, implementation, and fulfilling its obligations if it was only to be ultimately placed back under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. In 2015, Iran signed a nuclear agreement with world powers. However, the US withdrew from the deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions against Tehran.

## Syrian forces, militants clash amid reports of breach into Aleppo

*Iran: Reactivation of terrorists in Syria 'US-Zionist plot'*

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The Syrian Army said on Friday it had repelled surprise attacks by a coalition of foreign-backed militants on Aleppo as reports suggested that the insurgents had entered the country's second-largest city. In a statement, Syria's Armed Forces said it had been clashing with militants in the countryside around Aleppo and Idlib, destroying several of their drones and heavy weapons. It vowed to push back the assault, saying that the militants were spreading false information about their advances. The army statement also said troops regained control of positions that had been taken by the militants in the Idlib and Aleppo countryside. Meanwhile a Syrian security official, requesting anonymity, told the state-run SANA news agency that reinforcements had arrived in Aleppo. "There are fierce bat-

tles and clashes west of Aleppo, but they have not reached the city," the official added. It was the first time the city had been attacked by militant groups, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) since 2016, when they were ousted from Aleppo's eastern neighborhoods. The HTS and allied factions claimed that they had seized a number of towns and villages in Aleppo and Idlib Provinces after launching an offensive on Wednesday – the same day that a fragile cease-fire took effect in neighboring Lebanon between Israel and resistance group Hezbollah. The militants claimed to have captured the critical town of Khan Tuman on the outskirts of Aleppo, local sources reported. The Syrian Ministry of Defense announced in a statement that the Syrian Army, backed by the Russian Air Force, had inflicted heavy losses on the militants and their equipment in Aleppo and Idlib.



AFP

Oleg Ignasyuk, the deputy head of the Russian Center for Reconciliation of the Opposing Parties in Syria, said that at least 400 terrorists affiliated to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, had been killed.

### 'US-Zionist plot'

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi described on Friday the reactivation of militant groups in Syria as a plot orchestrated by the US and Israel following the occupying regime's defeat in Lebanon and Palestine. During a phone conversation with his Syrian counterpart, Bassam al-Sabbagh, Araghchi reiterated Tehran's support for the Syrian

government, its people, and the army in their fight against terrorism, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding regional security and stability. The phone call came a day after Iranian Brigadier General Kioumars Pourhashemi, a military advisor of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), was killed the northwestern province of Aleppo. Syria has been gripped by foreign-sponsored militancy since March 2011, with Damascus saying the Western states and their regional allies are aiding terrorist groups to wreak havoc in the Arab country.

## Hayat Tahrir al-Sham...

Within this analytical framework, Israel has immediately opened up a new front in Syria, in coordination with Turkey, following the cease-fire with Lebanon. Anti-Assad groups, mainly the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), cannot take effective action without intelligence support from Israel or Turkey. Tel Aviv and Ankara aim to "Vietnamize" Syria for Iran, as some Israeli officials had previously stated that Syria would become Iran's Vietnam. Israel and Turkey ulti-

mately want to either oust Bashar al-Assad from power or isolate him from the Resistance Front and Iran. As Israel has yet to achieve its primary goal of destroying the Resistance Front, it may try to spread the flames of war in Syria to Iraq, and even Iran, in order to send a message to Arab countries in the region that it is the dominant power and can safeguard its own security and that of its Arab allies, as well as American interests. Therefore, the situation in Syria has become increasingly complex, and it

remains unclear how long the current conflicts will persist. Israel has conveyed a message to Assad through the UAE, either to cut off the supply lines of Resistance forces from Syria to southern Lebanon or face assassination. Evidence suggests that Assad has not acquiesced to Israel's demands. In recent days, numerous messages have been circulating on Israeli social media calling for Assad's assassination. For instance, a post on the page of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) on Thursday stated that Syria is facing

a critical test. According to the INSS, now that Aleppo has been thrown into chaos, Israel should intensify its airstrikes against Resistance forces in Syria, particularly Iranian positions, while Arab countries simultaneously pressure Assad to distance himself from the Resistance Axis and Iran and return to the Arab fold. Thus, the West Asia region remains fraught with new tensions and developments, a major portion of which are the result of the rivalry between big powers and the conflict of interests in this region.

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