

Iran: Increase in IAEA's inspections natural

Tehran says will not obstruct IAEA monitoring activities

International Desk

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) confirmed that Iran has allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to increase the number of its inspections from Iran's nuclear program, saying that Tehran has not and will not impede the UN agency's oversight of its sites. "The relationship between Iran and the IAEA is within the framework of safeguards and the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty]," Mohammad Eslami told reporters after visiting a nuclear achievements exhibition on Saturday. "To date, the agency has always had access for its monitoring within the framework of safeguards and NPT, and we have not created and will not create any obstacles for it," he said. "We have increased capacity. It is natural that the number of inspections should also increase," he said. Eslami's comments came after a report by the IAEA said that Iran had agreed to increase

monitoring. "When we carry out nuclear activities, and where we deal with nuclear materials, changing the scale will naturally change the monitoring level," he said. "When, for instance, three units become five units, it is only natural that the level of oversight increases proportionately." Last month, Iran announced it would launch "new and advanced" centrifuges in response to an IAEA board resolution censuring Tehran for what it called a lack of cooperation with the agency. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told AFP last week that Iran's expansion of enrichment was "a clear message that they are responding to what they feel is pressure." The decision came after Grossi toured Iran's key nuclear sites of Fordo and Natanz and agreed to carry out bilateral interactions in a spirit of collaboration. Eslami also dismissed allegations against Iran's nuclear program as fabrications driven by the Israeli regime.

Last month, Israeli officials were cited as claiming that the regime's aerial aggression at the end of October on Iran's military complex in Parchin had significantly hindered its ability to develop a nuclear bomb. "These distortions and provocations stem from the Zionist regime, which has long propagated against us. Their aim is to incite the world against Iran," Eslami said. Iran insists on its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and has denied any ambition of developing weapons capability. Nuclear tensions between Iran and the West have simmered since Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark 2015 deal with Tehran during his first term as US president, which had exchanged sanctions relief for limits on its nuclear program. In 2019, Iran started to roll back the limits it had accepted under the deal after the other parties, especially the European ones, failed to live up to their commit-



Chief of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami speaks to the media during a ceremony to unveil a domestically-made high power radio frequency generator during the 12th Iran Lab Expo in Tehran on December 14, 2024. AEOI

ments. Now, France, Germany and the UK, which are party to the nuclear deal, are threatening that they are ready - if necessary - to trigger the so-called "snapback" of all international sanctions on

Iran. Under the terms of the nuclear deal, which was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231, all previous UN sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program can be re-imposed in the event

of "significant non-performance by Iran of JCPOA commitments" (the snapback provisions). The three European countries will lose the ability to take such action on Oct. 18 next year when the 2015 UN resolution expires.

Iran FM: Syria facing difficult test by terrorists, aggressors

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Syria was facing a tough test, highlighting threats posed by terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Daesh as well as the Israeli-US aggression. "Today, Syria faces a difficult test. The threat posed by the movements of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh has heightened regional concerns, raising fears that the terrorists may turn Syria into their safe haven," wrote Araghchi in a note published by the Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar on Saturday. A senior UAE official also said on Saturday that his government had concerns about the affiliation of the Syrian militants with some radical groups.

"We hear some reasonable, rational language about unity, not imposing a system on all Syrians" from the country's new rulers, said Anwar Gargash, a presidential adviser in the United Arab Emirates, in remarks at the World Policy Conference in Abu Dhabi. But the nature of the new forces, the affiliation with radical groups, "I think these are all indicators that are quite worrying," he said.

Israel's military aggression

Elsewhere in his comments, the Iranian foreign minister said that the "acts of aggression and military interventions" by the Israeli regime in Syria, which he said are backed by the US

and allies from outside the region, have also created challenges. "The clear objective of these acts of aggression and interventions is the destruction of Syria's social foundations, scientific assets, economic infrastructure, and defensive capabilities," he said. "There is no doubt that the Islamic world is extremely worried about the future of the West Asian region, given the conditions that the Levant and Palestine are in," he added. The minister touched on the expansion of the Israeli regime's "barbaric crimes," and their extension to Syria, which began immediately after the fall of the Assad government.

Syria's transitional gov't calls on UN to compel Israel to stop attacks

The transitional government in Syria has submitted a complaint to the United Nations regarding the recent intensification of Israeli attacks on Syrian territories, calling on the international organization to compel Israel to stop its offensive and withdraw from areas it has entered.

In a letter addressed to the UN Security Council and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Syria's permanent representative to the UN Qusay al-Dahhak condemned the Israeli attacks, terming them as a "serious violation" of Syria's sovereignty, the UN charter and security council resolutions, and the 1974 Disengagement Agreement between the two countries.

"Syria renews its call on the United Nations and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities and take firm and immediate measures to compel Israel to immediately stop its ongoing attacks on Syrian territory, ensure that they are not repeated," read the letter.

Dahhak also urged the UN to pressure Israel to "immediately withdraw from the areas it has penetrated over the past few days, and to fully abide by the Disengagement Agreement and the UNDOF mandate," referring to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force peacekeeping mission which is tasked with maintaining the ceasefire between the two countries. On December 8, the same day that the



Syrian militants announced the fall of the Bashar al-Assad government, Israel launched a fresh offensive in Syria, carrying out hundreds of airstrikes across various parts of the country and seizing the UN buffer zone in the Golan Heights. Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu stated that the 1974 agreement has "collapsed" after the Syrian soldiers abandoned their positions, claiming that Israeli troops moved into the zone to prevent "hostile forces" from establishing themselves at the border. Israel has continued its attacks on Syria since, and reportedly struck around 20 sites belonging to the Syrian army in different parts of Syria on Friday evening, including Damascus, Suwayda, Latakia, and others. Regional countries, including Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, have condemned the Israeli attacks and seizure of the UN-patrolled buffer zone, deeming it a violation of international law. The United States on the other hand has defended Israel's actions.

Arab FMs urge support for inclusive, 'peaceful' Syria transition

Top diplomats from eight Arab countries, meeting in Jordan on Saturday, called for a peaceful transition in Syria with UN and Arab League support following the fall of former Syrian government at the hands of militants. In a final statement after the talks in the Jordanian Red Sea port of Aqaba, foreign ministers from Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar said they had agreed to "support a peaceful transition process" in Syria, "in which all political and social forces are represented," AFP reported. Anti-government militants, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, toppled the longtime ruler of the country on Sunday following a lightning offensive. HTS is rooted in Al-Qaeda's Syria branch and is designated as a "terrorist" organization by many Western governments

but has sought to moderate its rhetoric. A transitional government installed by the militant forces has insisted the rights of all Syrians will be protected, as will the rule of law. The foreign ministers, meeting in Aqaba in the presence of Arab League chief Ahmed Aboul Gheith, said the political process in Syria should be supported by "the United Nations and the Arab League, in accordance with the principles of Security Council Resolution 2254" of 2015, which set out a roadmap for a negotiated settlement. The Arab diplomats also declared their backing for a transitional rule agreed upon by Syrians, which would enable "a political system that corresponds to the aspirations of all parts of the Syrian people, through free and fair elections overseen by the United Nations". They also warned against "any ethnic,

sectarian or religious discrimination" and called for "justice and equality for all citizens". In their statement, the ministers said state institutions must be preserved to stop Syria from "slipping into chaos", also calling to boost joint "efforts to combat terrorism... as it poses a threat to Syria and to the security of the region and the world". They condemned "Israel's incursion into the buffer zone with Syria", demanding "the withdrawal of Israeli forces" from Syrian territory. They also denounced Israeli air strikes on Syria, which have targeted key military assets across the country in recent days. In addition to the Arab foreign ministers' meeting, Jordan was also hosting US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and top EU and UN officials for talks on Syria Saturday.

Respect for Iran's...

In this context, if Mr. Trump aims to resolve issues through negotiations, Iran is equally prepared to step up to the plate and has the necessary capacity for direct talks. Therefore, all predictions about the success of negotiations hinge primarily on whether both parties are genuinely willing to engage in this process. The second and crucial condition that paves the way for negotiations is for the other side to respect Iran's rights. It is impossible to overlook a country's rights and expect fruitful

negotiations in return. Thus, if the incoming Trump administration genuinely intends to resolve issues, it must acknowledge Iran's legitimate rights in various fields. The nuclear agreement, known as the JCPOA, is merely one of the bones of contention that both sides can negotiate. As Iran has repeatedly stated, the US and Western countries must recognize its undeniable right to peaceful nuclear technology. Accordingly, we will pursue not only our nuclear rights but also our other rights in various topics at

the highest levels. Fortunately, Iran's Foreign Ministry, with its strong grasp of international conditions and global affairs, is well-equipped to advocate for the country's rights. Regarding nuclear matters, both parties could prioritize the revival of the JCPOA or work toward a new nuclear agreement. The key point here is that the US must recognize Iran's regional power and respect our rights as a significant country in the region. Iran, in turn, will strive to create the necessary conditions for a more favorable environment.

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