

# Iran, E3 to resume nuclear talks in mid-January

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baghaei said a fresh round of talks between Iran and the European troika – Britain, France, and Germany – regarding Tehran's nuclear program and regional issues is likely to kick off in mid-January. During a weekly press briefing in Tehran on Monday, he noted that Iran and the three European countries, also known as E3, initially agreed to carry on with talks following the previous format and context. The latest round of talks between Iran and E3 was held in November. Iran has consistently stayed committed to negotiations over the past two decades in an ef-

fort to address concerns and has never abandoned the negotiating table, he highlighted. Baghaei emphasized that Iran's decisions will be based on the attitudes and actions of the parties involved. Tensions between Iran and European countries have escalated over the past two years due to European accusations of Iran's delivery of missiles and drones to Russia as well as Iran's uranium enrichment. The European countries and the United States have also sanctioned several Iranian individuals and institutions over the issues. European countries claim that Iran has supplied ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the Ukraine conflict, an allegation that Tehran has categorically

rejected. In a recent action against Tehran, the European troika pushed the adoption of a resolution in the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in November. The resolution accused Tehran of poor cooperation with the agency and demanded a "comprehensive" report on its nuclear activities by spring 2025.

## Developments in Syria

In response to a question about developments in Syria after the fall of president Bashar al-Assad, Baghaei said Syria should not become "a haven for terrorism," saying such an outcome would have "repercussions" for countries in the region. "Our principled position on

Syria is very clear: preserving the sovereignty and integrity of Syria and for the people of Syria to decide on its future without destructive foreign interference," Baghaei said. According to Baghaei, Iran has been in contact with the opposition groups in Syria for a long time and its presence in Syria was aimed to prevent the advances of Daesh terrorists and the spread of terrorism throughout the region. He added that Iran has contributed to "developing political processes" in Syria while clarifying that there is "no direct affiliation with the current administration" in the Arab country. Assad left Syria earlier this month as militants led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)



Esmail Baghaei  
ISNA

group entered the capital Damascus after a lightning offensive. The takeover by HTS – proscribed as a terrorist organi-

zation by many governments including the United States – has sparked concern, though the group has in recent years sought to moderate its image.



## IRGC chief says Iran's power exceeds borders

Hossein Salami  
IRNA

The chief commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said on Monday that the dimensions of Iran's might and strength exceed the Islamic Republic's borders, advising the country's enemies to set up their arrangements in line with the country's power. "Our power exceeds Iran's borders, and all our enemies have to arrange their calculations in line with this very momentous power since their first mistake [against us] might constitute their last one," Major General Hossein Salami said on Monday, Press TV reported. Salami identified the IRGC's level of strength as superior to that of all other powers. "I daresay that no power across this world is capable of conquering this power, neither on the ground, nor at sea, or in the air." He also hailed the sacrifices that had been made by the IRGC servicemen for the people and in the battlefield. Elsewhere in his remarks, the com-

mander asserted that members of the regional Axis of Resistance produced their own weaponry. "Everyone fights using their own capability, and no one relies on others. We support the Resistance Front, using all our capacity, but they produce their own weapons. Their tactics belong to themselves [too]. So do ours." As a case in point, the commander pointed to the IRGC carrying out the country's Operation True Promise against the Israeli regime, using its own weapons instead of conveying them to the Resistance Front for deployment against the regime. "We struck [the regime] ourselves, and we are going to do the same from now onward." Salami considered the Islamic Republic to be in possession of the same causes and beliefs as those of the Lebanese and Yemenis people, who are fighting the Israeli regime's aggression and occupation. "Our enemies are common too," he added.

## UNRWA chief: Israel violates all rules of war in Gaza

Attacks on schools, hospitals 'commonplace'

## International Desk

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), said attacks on schools and hospitals have been commonplace in Gaza, stressing that Israel has violated all the rules of war in the Palestinian territory. "Attacks on schools and hospitals have been commonplace. The world must not become numb. All wars have rules. All of those rules have been broken," Lazzarini said in a post on his X account. Lazzarini reiterated his calls for a cease-fire in Gaza. "A cease-fire is long overdue—a respite for civilians wherever they are including across Gaza & the immediate release of hostages. Enough time was wasted," he stated. The head of the UN's agency said "one child gets killed ev-

ery hour" in Gaza by Israeli attacks. "These are not numbers. These are lives cut short. Killing children cannot be justified." "Those who survive are scarred physically and emotionally," he added. Lazzarini warned that the clock was ticking for these children. "They are losing their lives, their futures and mostly their hope." An official from one of only two functioning hospitals in northern Gaza said on Monday that Israeli forces were continuing to target his facility and urged the international community to intervene before it is "too late." Hossam Abu Safiyeh, director of Kamal Adwan hospital in the city of Beit Lahia, described the situation at the medical facility as "extremely dangerous



AFP

and terrifying" owing to shelling by Israeli forces. Safiyeh reported that the hospital, which is currently treating 91 patients, had been targeted on Monday by Israeli drones. "This morning, drones dropped bombs in the hospital's courtyards and on its roof," said Safiyeh in a statement. "The world must understand that our hospital is being tar-

geted with the intent to kill and forcibly displace the people inside." On Sunday, Safiyeh said he received orders to evacuate the hospital, but the military denied issuing such directives. The health ministry in Gaza said on Monday that 58 people were killed in the Palestinian territory in just 24 hours, bringing the overall war death toll to 45,317.

## What is meant...

Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) were formed to defend Iraq against terrorism and combat extremist groups. In Yemen, Ansarallah focuses on domestic objectives, including resisting foreign intervention and preserving Yemen's territorial integrity. These goals extend beyond the influence or strategic interests of any foreign state, including Iran.

## Ideological affinity and strategic convergence without dependency

Iran's relationships with these groups are primarily founded on ideological alignment and mutual objectives. Iran extends support to organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, Ansarallah, and Iraqi factions like Kata'ib Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq due to their roles in opposing Israeli policies, countering extremist groups, and reinforcing the "Axis of Resistance" in the region. Nevertheless, these relationships do not imply absolute control or dependency. These groups often make independent decisions, guided by their own strategic priorities and distinct from Iranian directives.

## Grassroots origins and localized support bases

These organizations are firmly embedded within their respective local communities. Hezbollah and Hamas are acknowledged as key domestic actors in Lebanon and Palestine, respectively. The PMF consist of grassroots Iraqi groups that enjoy strong backing from both the Iraqi government and its citizens. Similarly, Ansarallah is a native Yemeni movement with deep historical ties to Yemen's Zaydi Shia community. Their legitimacy and longevity are sustained primarily by social support from their local societies, rather than relying exclusively on external aid. This local foundation affords them significant autonomy in their decision-making processes.

## Divergent tactical choices and strategic autonomy

There have been occasions when these groups have diverged from Iranian policies, either tactically or strategically. For example, Hamas has at times adopted positions that differ from Iran's stance on specific regional matters. Similarly, the PMF operate

within the framework of Iraq's internal political dynamics, which do not always align with Iranian directives. Ansarallah in Yemen prioritizes its own peace agreements and domestic issues, which may diverge from Iran's broader regional strategies. Although these groups receive support from Iran due to ideological and strategic commonalities, they remain autonomous actors with distinct objectives and agendas. Characterizing them solely as Iranian proxies oversimplifies their complex relationships with Iran and the broader regional dynamics. Moreover, the term "proxy" is often employed as a political tool to undermine the legitimacy of these groups in international discourse. While Iran's support for them is undeniable, categorizing them purely as proxies fails to acknowledge their independent origins, objectives, and operational frameworks. They are independent entities operating within their respective regions, cooperating with Iran based on shared interests and ideological alignment, rather than functioning under Iranian command.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

