

# Iran FM: Trip to China aimed at consulting on international issues

## International Desk

Iran's top diplomat, who touched down in China's capital on Friday for a two-day visit, said his trip is aimed at consulting with Chinese officials on bilateral ties and regional and international issues including Iran's nuclear issue.

Abbas Araghchi told reporters in a video published by Iranian state media as he arrived in Beijing that the visit was taking place "at a very suitable time." Referring to numerous consultations held between Tehran and China on different international issues over the past years, the Iranian foreign minister said, "Now, there exists critical circumstances. Not only the region abounds with various tumults, but also there are various [thorny] issues at the international level, also our nuclear issue in the new year will face a situation that needs more consultations."

"The invitation of our Chinese friends was for this reason, that at the beginning of the new year... we should think together, consult and be ready for the challenges that will come."

In an article published by China's of-

ficial People's Daily newspaper on Friday, Araghchi said his visit to China will open a "new chapter" in strategic cooperation between the two countries and herald a "golden" era for bilateral relations.

"The next golden 50 years of Iran-China relations will demonstrate that this visit marks the beginning of a new chapter of strategic cooperation between the two countries," he wrote. The top Iranian diplomat also noted that Iran and China have long engaged in "practical cooperation" to promote multilateralism and develop indigenous values, adding that both sides have defended each other's fundamental interests in international forums. He also hailed "pragmatic" Iran-China ties, citing close political and defense coordination, exchange of high-level delegations, as well as cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the BRICS group of emerging economies, and the Beijing-brokered deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023.

Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged in October to increase ties with Iran

during talks with his counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian in Russia on the sidelines of a BRICS summit.

"Iran and China share common interests and concerns not only at bilateral and regional levels, but also at the trans-regional and international levels," Araghchi emphasized.

"While firmly believing in the significance of multilateralism and the benefits of joint cooperation towards the prosperity of human society, both countries keep cooperating closely in multilateral mechanisms, including the SCO and the BRICS."

China is Iran's largest trade partner. Both states are subject to different levels of illegal sanctions imposed by the US.

The two countries signed the long-term strategic partnership deal in March 2021 to reinforce their long-standing economic and political alliance.

In his article, Araghchi said that West Asia is facing numerous challenges, the core of which is the Palestine issue.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza, caused by the Israeli genocide and supported by some world powers, has



been exacerbated by the inaction of the international community and irresponsible behavior of some parties, he noted.

Iran and China believe that an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and the delivery of humanitarian aid are now the most important priorities, he said. The Iranian foreign minister further

referred to the recent developments in Syria, urging respect for the country's unity, national sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Tehran, he pointed out, believes that the Syrian people should decide the future of their country without destructive intervention or external imposition.

## Syria's new rulers warn against incitement as tensions brew

Syria's new authorities on Thursday launched a security crackdown in a coastal region where 14 policemen were killed a day before, vowing to pursue "remnants" of the ousted Bashar al-Assad government accused of the attack, state media reported.

The violence in Tartous Province, part of the coastal region that is home to many members of Assad's Alawite sect, has marked the deadliest challenge yet to the new authorities which swept him from power on Dec. 8, Reuters reported.

The security forces launched the Tartous operation to "control security, stability, and civil peace, and to pursue the remnants of Assad's militias in the woods and hills", state news agency SANA reported.

The crackdown was announced as the Damascus authorities warned of an attempt to incite sectarian strife, after a video dating from late November circulated on social media showing a fire inside an Alawite shrine in Aleppo. The interior ministry said unknown groups perpetrated the violence and that its forces were working "night and day" to protect religious sites.

In a predominantly Alawite neighborhood of Damascus, Alawite sheikh Ali Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the former Al-Qaeda affiliate which led the mili-



Fighters affiliated with Syria's new administration stand guard on the streets of Syria's western coastal city of Latakia on December 26, 2024.   
AAREF WATAD/AFP

tant campaign that toppled Assad, has repeatedly vowed to protect minority groups. Many members of minority groups, including Christians, are worried about the policies of the new rulers.

In a predominantly Alawite neighborhood of Damascus, Alawite sheikh Ali Dareer said that homes had been vandalized and people beaten on the basis

of their religious identity, despite HTS promises the sect would be treated with respect. He blamed "a third party" trying to incite discord.

Dareer told Reuters that the community had extended its hand to the new government but there "have been many violations", citing multiple accounts of people being beaten at a checkpoint.

An HTS fighter in the area said there had been an incident on Thursday in which Alawites were taken off a bus and beaten because of their religion, but denied that HTS was responsible.

"This is a matter of sedition, and we don't want to be dragged into it," Dareer said. "Thousands of people are filled with resentment, anxiety, and their dignity is offended," he said. "However, we must remain committed to peace."

Underlining sectarian tensions, protesters chanted slogans during a rally outside local government headquarters in Tartous, images posted on social media on Wednesday showed.

Mohammed Othman, the newly appointed governor of the coastal Latakia region adjoining Tartous, met Alawite sheikhs to "encourage community cohesion and civil peace", SANA reported. The Syrian information ministry declared a ban on what it described as "the circulation or publication of any media content or news with a sectarian tone aimed at spreading division".

## Yemen launches missile attack on Israeli targets



### International Desk

Yemen on Friday said they carried out new military operation against Israel, using a hypersonic ballistic missile.

The Yemeni Armed Forces in a statement on Friday said they "carried out a specific military operation targeting Ben Gurion Airport in the occupied area of Yaffa [Tel Aviv] using a hypersonic ballistic missile of Palestine2 type".

The statement said the armed forces also targeted a ship in the Arabian Sea.

Israel's military earlier Friday said "one missile that was launched from Yemen was intercepted before crossing into Israeli territory."

There was no immediate comment on the other attacks claimed by Yemenis.

The latest attack by the Yemenis came after Israeli raids pounded Sana'a's international airport and other targets in Yemen on Thursday.

On Thursday, Israeli warplanes attacked Sana'a airport where the head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said he was waiting for a flight. Four people died in the airport attack and around 20 travelers and staff were wounded, a Yemeni official said on Friday. The WHO chief said one of his plane's crew was among the injured.

The strikes against what Israel's military called Ansarallah's "military targets" left six people dead in total, according to Yemeni media, and came a day after Yemen launched missile and drone attacks on Israel. Sana'a's international airport resumed services at 10:00 am

(0700 GMT) on Friday, Deputy Transport Minister Yahya al-Sayani told a press conference.

The airport's control tower was "directly hit," along with the busy departure lounge, he said.

On Friday, the top of the control tower was a bombed-out shell and large windows in the airport building were shattered, with glass littering the ground.

"The attack happened when there were a lot of passengers and a plane departing at 7:00 pm," Sayani said.

"There was another plane planned to land and it did land directly after the attack."

A series of strikes were also carried out against a power station in Yemen's strategic western port city of Hudaydah, the al-Masirah television channel reported. The statement by the Yemen's Armed Forces also said that Israeli "aggression will only increase the determination and resolve of the great Yemeni people to continue supporting the Palestinian people".

Yemenis have declared their open support for Palestine's struggle against the Israeli occupation since the regime launched its devastating war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, which has so far killed more than 45,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

Ansarullah has been also targeting ships linked to Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom to force an end to the Tel Aviv regime's genocidal war on Gaza. The Yemeni Armed Forces have said they will not stop their attacks until Israel's ground and aerial offensives in Gaza end.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

