

Zarif hopes Trump would be 'more realistic' about Iran

International Desk

Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed hope that the US president would be "more realistic" about Iran during his second term in office.

Addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Zarif, who negotiated Iran's nuclear agreement with world powers in 2015, said the US President Donald Trump should know that his withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 led to a massive expansion of Iran's nuclear program.

"I hope that this time around, a 'Trump 2' will be more serious, more focused, more realistic," Zarif said.

The Iranian official said that Trump failed to achieve its goals to force Iran to curb its nuclear program by withdrawing from the nuclear agreement, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"Of course, he (Trump) has imposed heavy sanctions on Iran. He should know that the low-income people in Iran are suffering due to his sanctions," Zarif said.

In response to a question about the claim by US intelligence sources that Iran has a few weeks to build a nuclear weapon, Zarif said, "Had we wanted to build a nuclear weapon, we could have done it a long time ago. A program to build nuclear weapons is not going to be like our program. You build nuclear

weapons in hidden laboratories that are not subject to international inspection." Zarif emphasized that Iran is not a security threat. He said that some countries portray Iran as a security threat for the world.

"People who are worried about our nuclear program like the Israelis, they say we are days away from a nuclear weapon, so why didn't they welcome the JCPOA. JCPOA in the worst analysis would have kept Iran away from nuclear weapons for at least 15 years. People, like Netanyahu, have claimed in the 1990s that Iran will have a nuclear weapon in 6 months." And now they claim Iran is a couple of days away from a nuclear weapon.

"Iranophobia and Islamophobia are a tool for them to carry out actions similar to the genocide in Gaza. They say they are taking these actions against Iran. But they are genocide of children in Gaza," Zarif said.

In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with six world powers. However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo. In 2019, Iran started to roll back the limits it had accepted under the JCPOA after the other parties, especially the



European countries, failed to live up to their commitments.

Referring to the Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip, where more than 47,000 Palestinians were killed in just 15 months of the regime's strikes, Zarif said, "Right now as you look at Gaza... Netanyahu did not achieve his goal of destroying Hamas, Hamas is still there. Israel had to come to a ceasefire."

"I wouldn't suggest anybody start rejoicing over destroying Hamas as well as the Palestinian resistance, or cutting Iran's arms, because the resistance will stay as long as they're occupied," he added.

"The resistance is not dead. I can tell you that the wishes for the resistance to go away have been based on a misrepresentation, a framing by Israel, that this



Iran's Vice President for strategic affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif (r) talks with CNN journalist Faeed Zakaria during the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on January 22, 2025.

● FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP

is not an Israeli-Palestinian issue but an Israeli-Iranian issue."

UN nuclear chief urges dialogue between Iran, US to settle disputes

International Desk

The head of the UN nuclear agency on Wednesday called on Iran and the United States to hold talks to settle their dispute over Iran's nuclear program.

Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said dialogue was "absolutely indispensable" to move forward in nuclear negotiations with Tehran.

"Without that dialogue, there's not going to be any progress," Grossi told reporters at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Grossi said comments from US President Donald Trump and members of the new US administration show "there is a disposition" to have a "conversation and perhaps move into some form of an agreement." Iranian officials also recognize that talks are needed, he noted.

Iran's nuclear program has grown "dramatically" in terms of capabilities, facilities and inventory of nuclear material since the end of Trump's previous term in 2021, Grossi added.

During his first term, Trump pursued a policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran, withdrawing the United States from a 2015 landmark nuclear deal which imposed curbs on its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

Tehran adhered to the deal until Washington's withdrawal in 2018, but then began rolling back its commitments. Efforts to revive the pact have since faltered.

The IAEA said last month that a revamp of Iran's Fordow enrichment plant would lead to an increase in the rate of production of uranium enriched up to 60 percent.

The rate of production will jump around sevenfold to more than 34 kilograms (75 pounds) of highly enriched uranium per month, it said.

"I think this is a clear indication of an acceleration. They're pressing the gas pedal," Grossi said.

Iran insists on its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and denies it is seeking an atomic weapons capability.

Since taking office in July, the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has repeatedly announced his government's readiness to



Rafael Grossi
● AFP

hold talks with the Western countries to resolve their disputes over Iran's nuclear program.

Ahmad Bakshayesh, an Iranian lawmaker, recently said President Pezeshkian favors direct negotiations with the United States to put an end to long-standing differences, including Iran's nuclear issue.

In recent months, Iran and European parties to the nuclear deal - France, Germany and the UK - have held several rounds of talks on Iran's nuclear program and have agreed to resume the negotiations in the future.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi said on Tuesday that Tehran is ready to start negotiations to lift "illegal and unilateral" sanctions imposed on Iran.

"We have always been ready for this, and if there is (readiness) on the other sides, we believe that the negotiations will take shape and will reach a conclusion," Gharibabadi told reporters on the sidelines of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with six world powers.

However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo.

In 2019, Iran started to roll back the limits it had accepted under the JCPOA after the other parties, especially the European countries, failed to live up to their commitments.

Swiss national who died in jail had photographed military sites: Iran



Asghar Jahangir
● MIZAN

International Desk

Iran's Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir said on Wednesday that a Swiss prisoner who took his own life this month had been jailed for "taking photos of restricted military sites."

On January 9, the judiciary said a Swiss national accused of spying had committed suicide in jail in the eastern city of Semnan.

A day later Switzerland confirmed the man's death, identifying him as a 64-year-old who had been visiting the country as a tourist. He had been living in southern Africa and had not resided in Switzerland for nearly two decades, the Swiss authorities added, without identifying him.

On Wednesday, Jahangir provided more details, saying the man was born in Namibia, held Swiss citizenship, and had entered Iran last September or October.

"He entered our country as a tourist in (the Iranian month of) Mehr, driving a private car equipped with various technical devices," Jahangir said at a press conference.

"After travelling through several provinces, he reached Semnan Province, where he was arrested

for taking photographs of a restricted military site."

Jahangir added that the man had been accused of cooperating with "hostile governments."

"On the day of the incident, after having breakfast, in the absence of his cellmate, he turned off the cell's electricity and, in a spot not covered by cameras, cut a curtain in the restroom and managed to hang himself. Prison staff immediately responded upon being informed of the incident and arrived at the scene, but despite their efforts, the individual passed away," Jahangir said.

"With the permission of the Iranian Prisons' Organization, a delegation from the Swiss Embassy, along with a trusted physician, was present at the scene, examined the body, and confirmed the suicide. The body was then transferred to the Tehran Forensic Medicine Organization and, in the presence of Swiss embassy representatives, handed over to them," Jahangir said.

His body was transferred to Tehran and handed over to the Swiss Embassy for repatriation, the spokesman added.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

