

# Pezeshkian: No power can bully us if we stand united

Hassan Khomeini says people expect officials to exert courage in decisions



Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (L), accompanied by Seyyed Hassan Khomeini (R), the grandson of late founder of the Islamic Republic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, visits the mausoleum of Imam Khomeini in Tehran on February 1, 2025.  
● president.ir

### National Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday called for unity among all sectors to address various challenges across the country, stressing that, "If we are united, no power can bully us." Accompanied by his cabinet members, Pezeshkian made the remarks during a visit to the mausoleum of the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini to renew allegiance with his ideals on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Since taking office last July, the Iranian president has repeatedly called for unity among different political factions in Iran to resolve the country's problems.

Referring to the unity among Muslim countries, the president added that if the Muslim countries are united and take a united stance against the Israeli regime, the "small regime" cannot challenge the entire Muslim countries in the region. Meanwhile, the grandson of Imam Khomeini, Seyyed Hassan Khomeini, delivered a speech during the visit by the cabinet members. He told the ministers that the people who have elected the officials expect them to have courage when they make a decision for the country. He added that Iranians saw such courage in Pezeshkian and voted for him. Since Friday, nationwide celebrations have begun in the country to

mark the 46th anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Ten-Day Dawn celebrations begin on the 12th day of the Iranian month of Bahman in the Persian calendar which marks the return of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, to Iran after several years of living in exile. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 led to overthrowing of former Iranian monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. By toppling the Western-backed Pahlavi regime 46 years ago, the Iranian nation ended 2,500 years of monarchic rule and established a new political system – a republic based on Islamic values and democracy.

## Hamas, Israel complete fourth captive-prisoner swap

Freed Palestinian inmates were greeted by a cheering crowd in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah Saturday, after Hamas released three Israeli captives from the Gaza Strip in the fourth exchange under the group's cease-fire deal with Israel. Three other buses carrying freed Palestinians also arrived in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, with the inmates in grey prison uniforms met by hundreds of well-wishers. In Ramallah, the bus carrying the inmates struggled to make its way through the jubilant throng of supporters as it arrived from the Israeli-run Ofer Prison. Several of the freed prisoners were hoisted onto the crowd's shoulders, including an elderly man who raised his crutches over his head in a triumphant pose. Earlier in Gaza, captives Ofer Kalderon and Yarden Bibas were paraded on stage by Hamas fighters before being handed over to the Red Cross in the southern city of Khan Yunis. American-Israeli Keith Siegel was freed shortly thereafter in a similar ceremony at Gaza City's port in the north. Israel's military later confirmed that all three were back



Palestinian prisoners arrive in Khan Yunis on February 1, 2025, following their release under a cease-fire deal between Israel and Hamas.  
● EYAD BABA/AFP

in Israel. Hamas began to release the captives on January 19 under the terms of the cease-fire deal with Israel. Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters have so far handed over 18 captives to the International Committee of the Red Cross in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them women and minors. Israel released 183 Palestinians on Saturday. Hamas sources said a fifth captive-prisoner exchange would take place next Saturday. Hamas reported that many of the released Palestinian prison-

ers exhibit signs of torture and abuse. According to Hamas, the prisoners are currently receiving medical treatment at facilities in Gaza. "This confirms the brutality of what the prisoners are exposed to at the hands of the fascist Zionist gang, which is devoid of all human values and ignores international laws related to prisoners," it said in a statement. The Gaza cease-fire deal began on January 19, intending to end the 15-month Israeli war on Gaza and free captives still held in the blockaded territory in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

## Maduro calls for new beginning in bilateral ties with US

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Friday called for a "new beginning in bilateral relations" with the United States after the special envoy of his US counterpart Donald Trump visited Caracas. Maduro's government issued a statement after he met with Richard Grenell to discuss the deportation of migrants and criminals from the United States to Venezuela, a key demand of Trump, AFP reported. Six Americans detained in Venezuela were also released on Friday and returned to the United States with Trump's special envoy. The six men, who were not identified, were photographed smiling on a plane alongside Grenell. It is unclear exactly how many Americans were being held by Venezuela, but Venezuelan officials have spoken publicly of at least nine. Venezuela has accused most of them of terrorism and says some were high-level "mercenaries." Grenell and Maduro met at the Miraflores presidential palace in one of the first known meetings by the second Trump administration with a government it considers hostile. However, Maduro stressed the meeting had "zero agenda," and that he sought a "new beginning in bilateral relations" with the United States, according to a statement from the Venezuelan government. "There are things where we've reached initial deals and when they are complied with, new issues will open, hopefully new deals for the good of the two countries and the region," Maduro said, adding that he would be looking to see if what had been discussed with Grenell was reflected in what is communicated by the US about the meeting. "We say to President Donald Trump: we have taken a first step. Hopefully it can be sustained, we want to sustain it," Maduro said later during



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro (R) shakes hands with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Richard Grenell at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas on January 31, 2025.  
● ZURIMAC CAMPOS/VENEZUELA'S PRESIDENCY

a speech. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said earlier that Grenell would demand Caracas allow repatriation flights for members of the Tren de Aragua – the Venezuelan criminal gang Trump has designated a terrorist group. "President Trump expects Nicolas Maduro to take back all of the Venezuelan criminals and gang members that have been exported to the United States, and to do so unequivocally and without condition," Mauricio Claver-Carone, US special envoy for Latin America, said separately. According to Caracas, the Maduro-Grenell meeting was held in "mutual respect" and various issues were discussed including migration and the "negative impact of economic sanctions." The government statement also expressed Venezuela's "willingness to maintain open diplomatic channels." Claver-Carone said the talks did not imply any softening of the position on Maduro, whose previous term Washington had also considered illegitimate.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## Pitfalls of oversimplifying ...

Or, as Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in an interview with Al Jazeera, the release of Iran's frozen assets by the US would be one of the steps for confidence-building. Naturally, and especially based on past experiences, expressing the will to negotiate, whether in Iran or the US, requires certain prerequisites. Moreover, there have always been oppositions and lobbies on both sides to prevent reaching such a stage. So far, there are some indications that both sides are moving toward diplomacy. For instance, the new government in Tehran has based its foreign policy on balancing and constructive engagement with the world. The new US administration has not, at least in words and statements, shown any sign of choosing a path other than diplomacy. Moreover,

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the experience of the previous Donald Trump administration, its unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, and the acknowledgment by many US officials and analysts of the ineffectiveness of the maximum pressure policy against Tehran, are all before the new White House officials. Some realities in the region and the international system also necessitate that Iran and the US take steps to manage and reduce tensions, and any escalation of tensions will not benefit either side or their interests and considerations in the region. Apart from such oversimplifications about the potential talks between Iran and the US, there are defined principles in the policy-making norms of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, if reminded to supporters and opponents, might help prevent the polarization of pro and anti-negotiation stances. One of

these principles is that decision-making on major foreign policy issues, such as talks with the US, follows a specific path in the Establishment. Araghchi has repeatedly emphasized this, saying on January 15: "Decision-making on important state matters, including negotiations to lift sanctions, follows a well-known path. All opinions are heard, and the decision is made where it should be, and the Foreign Ministry, of course, executes what the Establishment decides." The major drawback of the oversimplifications made about the potential US-Iran negotiations is, on the one hand, raising society's expectations when no agreement has yet been reached, and on the other hand, diverting or pushing the diplomatic framework away from its natural and defined path and reducing it to club and street-level debates.