

# Iran FM: Trump's maximum pressure 'failed' experience

Araghchi says 'not much of a problem' to verify Iran not seeking nukes

Iran's VP: No meeting between Trump, Pezeshkian on agenda

## International Desk

Talks on Iran's nuclear program seem to be returning on the right track after Iranian and American officials expressed readiness for resolving the issue through diplomatic negotiations. US President Donald Trump on Tuesday, ahead of a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran over allegations that the country is seeking a nuclear weapons capability. But Trump also suggested a willingness to work out a deal. "We don't want to be tough on Iran. We don't want to be tough on anybody," Trump said. "But they just can't have a nuclear bomb." As he signed the presidential memorandum, Trump described it as tough and said he was "torn" on whether to make the move. He said he was open to a deal with Iran and expressed a willingness to talk to the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"I want Iran to be a great and successful Country, but one that cannot have a Nuclear Weapon," he said early Wednesday in a post on his Truth Social platform. "I would much prefer a Verified Nuclear Peace Agreement, which will let Iran peacefully grow and prosper." Several Iranian officials reacted to the Trump's remarks and restoration of his "maximum pressure" campaign. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Trump's reimposition of "maximum pressure" against Iran will end in "failure" as it did during his first term. "I believe that maximum pressure is a failed experience and trying it again will turn into another failure," Araghchi told reporters following a cabinet meeting, adding that Tehran was not pursuing nuclear weapons. "If the main issue is that Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons, it is achievable and is not much of a problem," Araghchi added.

"Iran is a committed member of the NPT and its positions on this matter are quite clear," he said, adding that the fatwa of Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei against the possession and use of nuclear weapons also makes it crystal clear to everyone that Tehran is not seeking them. During his first term that ended in 2021, Trump pursued the policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran, withdrawing the United States from a landmark nuclear deal between Iran and major powers, and reimposing biting sanctions. The deal – known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – imposed curbs on Iran's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief. Tehran adhered to the deal until a year after Washington pulled out, but then began rolling back its commitments after the other sides, especially the European countries, failed to fulfill their commitments. Efforts to revive the 2015 deal have since fal-



US President Donald Trump speaks with reporters in the White House on February 04, 2025 in Washington, DC after he signed an executive order to reimpose maximum pressure on Iran.  
● ANNA MONEYMAKER/AFP

tered. While Araghchi hinted at the possibility of talks with Washington, Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref was more cautious on Wednesday. Aref said a meeting between Trump and Iranian president was not at all on the agenda. He highlighted that Iran has a clear stance on nuclear weap-

ons, underscored by a religious decree by the Iranian Leader that prohibits the development of nuclear weapons. He noted that if Trump believes Iran should not pursue nuclear weapons, he can rest assured as Iran's longstanding policy and religious decree firmly support this stance. On Wednesday, Iran's nuclear

agency chief Mohammad Eslami also insisted that the Islamic Republic remains committed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, saying, "Iran does not have, and will not have a nuclear weapons program." Iran has denied it is pursuing a nuclear weapons program, saying that its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

## Trump's Gaza proposal battered by international backlash

Many global leaders expressed opposition Wednesday after US President Donald Trump said he wanted to take control of the Gaza strip and "permanently" resettle Palestinians in other countries. Trump's shock proposal to rebuild Gaza and turn it into "the Riviera of the Middle East" triggered a flurry of condemnations in the Middle East and deep reservations among US allies, AFP reported. Hamas resistance group said that Trump's proposal "will only put oil on the fire". The group stressed in a statement, "Our Palestinian people ... will not allow any state in the world to occupy our land or impose guardianship on our great Palestinian people who have offered rivers of blood to liberate our land from occupation and to establish our state with Jerusalem as its capital." Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas hit back at Trump's proposal. Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership "expressed their strong rejection of calls to seize the Gaza Strip and displace Palestinians outside their homeland," Abbas's office said in a statement, adding that, "legitimate Palestinian rights are not negotiable." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who stood next to Trump as he unveiled his surprise plan, said it was "worth paying attention to this" idea and that US control of the Gaza Strip "could change history." Far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich later vowed to "definitively bury... the dangerous idea of a Palestinian state." The head of the UN refugee agency called Trump's statement "very surprising." Filippo Grandi,



the United Nations' high commissioner for refugees, told AFP it was not "clear" what the idea entailed, which made it difficult to comment on such a "sensitive issue." UN rights chief Volker Turk later insisted that deporting people from occupied territory was strictly prohibited. "The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law and must be protected by all states," Turk said. Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Trump's idea was "something almost incomprehensible." Lula told Brazilian radio that, "What happened in Gaza was genocide, and honestly, I don't know if the United States, which is involved in all this (in terms of support for Israel) would be the best placed to take care of Gaza." China said it opposed the "forced transfer" of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. Asked about Trump's statement at a press conference, foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said, "China has always maintained that Palestinian rule over Palestinians is the basic principle of the post-war governance of Gaza." The French Foreign Ministry said Gaza should not be controlled by "a third party". "France will continue to campaign for the implementation of the two-state solution, the only one that can

guarantee long-term peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike," the ministry said. Turkey lashed out at Trump's proposal, calling it an "unacceptable issue." Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told the official news agency Anadolu that relocating Palestinians from Gaza was something "neither we nor the region can accept." He added it was "wrong to even bring it up for discussion." Egypt gave strong support to Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas, calling for the authority to govern the Gaza Strip. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for the swift reconstruction of Gaza, without the displacement of Palestinians. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Palestinians "must be allowed home" in Gaza, reinforcing his backing of a two-state solution. Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said, "It is clear that Gaza – like the West Bank and east Jerusalem – belongs to the Palestinians. They form the basis for a future Palestinian state." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said his country's long-standing support for a two-state solution in the Middle East had not changed. "Australia's position is the same as it was this morning, as it was last year, and it was 10 years ago," he said.

## Ayatollah Khamenei names Hezbollah leader as Lebanon representative

### International Desk

Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei named Hezbollah leader Sheikh Naim Qassem as his "representative" in Lebanon. "The leader of the revolution in a decree introduced Sheikh Naim Qassem, secretary general of Hezbollah, as his representative in Lebanon," Tasnim news agency reported. Tasnim carried a copy of the official decree which said Sheikh Naim Qassem will represent Khamenei in handling financial matters, receiving and distributing religious funds and managing religious affairs. Previously, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah – who was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike on



southern Beirut in September 27 last year – had been vested with the designation. On October 29, Hezbollah's Shura Council, the group's central decision-making body, elected Sheikh Qassem as the new chief of the Lebanese resistance movement.

## Pezeshkian: Iran seeks end to all conflicts in world

### International Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran seeks establishment of peace and an end to all conflicts across the world, adding that problems can be solved through negotiation and dialogue. President Pezeshkian made the remarks in a meeting the new Swedish ambassador in Tehran Mathias Otterstedt on Wednesday. Referring to the long history of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Iranian president said, "I hope that during

your mission, relations between the two countries will be strengthened in all fields." The President also met with Vitezslav Grepl, the new ambassador of the Czech Republic. During the meeting Pezeshkian said that bilateral relations between the countries can resolve many differences and tensions and provide a better world for people to live together. Both ambassadors emphasized the importance of relations with Iran and the will of their countries to expand relations and economic exchanges with Iran.

## Leader pardons 3,000 convicts on eve of Revolution anniversary

### International Desk

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei agreed to grant amnesty, reduce, or commute the sentences of over 3,000 convicts on the 46th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. A statement by the Leader's website said Ayatollah Khamenei agreed to the request by Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei on the issue. Ayatollah Khamenei regularly grants am-

nesty or reduces sentences for prisoners during major religious and national celebrations, a gesture that aligns with the values of mercy and reflection prevalent during these times. However, the clemency does not apply to all types of prisoners, including those sentenced for their role in armed struggles against Iran, armed or organized drug trafficking, rape, armed robbery, arms smuggling, abduction, bribery, and embezzlement.