

Pezeshkian: Iran neither seeks war nor hesitates to defend itself

International Desk

The Iranian president said on Thursday that Tehran seeks no war with any country but is determined to defend itself against any aggression, amid US president's threats to launch strikes against Iran over its nuclear program. "The Islamic Republic of Iran has never pursued war or conflict," Masoud Pezeshkian said in a phone call with Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman on the occasion of Muslims' Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the holy fasting month Ramadan. Pezeshkian stressed that the non-peaceful use of nuclear energy has no place in the country's security and defense doctrine. The Iranian president said that the inspections carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

have verified the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities. It is possible for the nuclear activities of Iran to remain fully subject to verification as they have been in previous years, added the president. He also expressed Iran's readiness to engage in dialogue "based on mutual interest and respect" with the aim of easing tensions over the program. "We seek no war with any country, but will also not hesitate to defend ourselves. And our readiness and capability in this regard is at the highest level," he emphasized. US President Donald Trump threatened over the weekend that he might order military strikes against Iran if Tehran refused to enter negotiations to "make a new deal" on its nuclear program. During his first term in office, Trump withdrew the United States from a previous agreement on Iran's nuclear



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Masoud Pezeshkian

program, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and launched a maximum pressure campaign against the country. Trump restored that policy after re-

turning to the White House for a second term in January. On March 12, Trump sent a letter to Iran's leadership, asking for negotiations to reach a new deal and threat-

ening military action if Tehran refused. Iran has ruled out direct negotiations with the US under pressure and threats but says indirect talks remain an option.

Dozens killed in Israel's fresh strikes on Gaza

International Desk

Israeli strikes on Gaza killed dozens of Palestinians on Friday as the occupying regime announced the launch of a new ground offensive in Gaza City and ordered new evacuations in the besieged Palestinian territory. Rescuers said on Friday that Israel's military aggression had killed at least 30 people across the Palestinian territory since dawn. A single Israeli strike on Khan Yunis killed at least 25 people, a medical source at the southern city's Nasser Hospital told AFP. "The situation is very dangerous, and there is death coming at us from every direction," Elena Helles told AFP via text message, adding that she and her family were trapped in her sister's house in Shujaiya. Israeli minister of military affairs Israel Katz said on Wednesday that the regime would bolster its military presence inside the Gaza Strip to destroy the resistance forces' infrastructure. The operation would "seize large areas that will be incorporated into Israeli security zones," he said, without specifying how much territory.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also said the occupation army was dividing Gaza and "seizing territory" to force Hamas to free the remaining Israeli captives seized in the group's October 2023 attack on the occupied territories. On Thursday, Gaza's civil defense agency said more than 30 people, including children, were also killed in an Israeli strike on Dar al-Arqam school serving as a shelter for displaced Palestinians in the al-Tuffah neighborhood, northeast of Gaza City. "One of the missing was a pregnant woman who was expecting twins," the agency's spokesman Mahmud Bassal said. The Israeli military claimed it had struck a "Hamas command and control center in the area of Gaza City." "It was like the Judgement Day. They bombed us with missiles and everything went dark. We started looking for our children and our belongings but everything was gone. We couldn't find our children," sobbed Raghda al-Sharafa, who was among the displaced civilians sheltering in the school buildings.

According to Palestinian medical authorities, at least 100 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes

across Gaza on Thursday. Hamas condemned the strike on the school, calling it a "heinous massacre" of innocent civilians. The health ministry in Gaza said 1,249 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory since Israel resumed intense bombing on March 18, bringing the overall death toll since the war began to 50,609. In Lebanon, Hamas's military wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, said that two of its members were killed in an Israeli strike after the Israeli military said the strike had killed a Hamas commander. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the strike as a "flagrant attack on Lebanese sovereignty" and a breach of the November 27 cease-fire in the war between Hezbollah resistance group and Tel Aviv. Israel has also issued evacuation orders to residents in parts of northern Gaza, instructing civilians to move west and south to shelters, warning that it planned to "work with extreme force in your area." The UN humanitarian office said around 280,000 Palestinians have been displaced since Israel ended the cease-fire with Hamas last month.

Trump says favors 'direct talks' with Iran on nuclear dossier

Donald Trump
AFP

US President Donald Trump said Thursday he wanted "direct talks" with Tehran on a nuclear deal, after he threatened to bomb Iran over its nuclear program. Trump has given Iran's leaders a two-month deadline to reach an agreement on the country's nuclear program, which has strained relations with Western nations for decades. Western countries including the United States have long accused Iran of pursuing a nuclear weapon, which Tehran has denied, insisting its enrichment activities were solely for peaceful purposes, AFP reported. "I think it's better if we have direct talks," he told reporters onboard the presidential plane Air Force One. "I think it goes faster and you understand the other side a lot better than if you go through intermediaries." Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said last week that Tehran would not engage in direct talks with

Washington "until there is a change in the other side's approach towards the Islamic republic." On Wednesday, Araghchi reiterated Tehran's readiness to take part in indirect negotiations with the US, warning that US threats are "complicating" the current situation. "The Islamic Republic, as in the past, is ready for real negotiations from an equal position and indirectly," Araghchi said in a phone call with his Dutch counterpart, Caspar Veldkamp. He stressed that this "requires a constructive atmosphere and the avoidance of approaches based on threats, intimidation and blackmail." Trump in his first term ripped up a 2015 nuclear deal negotiated by predecessor Barack Obama and re-imposed crippling sanctions on Iran. "They wanted to use intermediaries, I don't think that's necessarily true anymore," Trump said. "I think they're concerned, I think they feel vulnerable. I don't want them to feel that way," he added. "I think they want to meet." Trump said last month he had written to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to call for nuclear negotiations and warn of possible military action if Tehran refused. Ayatollah Khamenei responded by saying that US threats "will get them nowhere" and warned of reciprocal measures "if they do anything malign" against Iran.

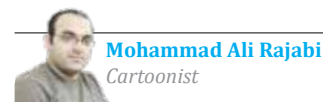
Iran 'strongly' criticizes approval of anti-Iran resolution at UNHRC

International Desk

Iran strongly slammed the approval of an anti-Iran resolution at the UN human rights council, calling it a discriminatory move that undermines the credibility of the council. Addressing the UN Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) 58th regular session, Iran's ambassador to the UN headquarters in Geneva Ali Bahraini said the move "bogs down the council into a new quagmire of inefficiency and waste of resources" and diminishes trust in the work of the agency. The council passed the resolution against Iran that extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran and decided that the Fact-Finding Mission should continue with a mandate to "monitor and investigate allegations of recent and ongoing serious human rights violations in the Islamic Republic." Bahraini urged the council to focus on the catastrophic situation of human

rights in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. "In a situation where the most severe rights violations are being committed in Palestine and their perpetrators enjoy the highest level of immunity and impunity, the sponsors of draft resolution A/HRC/58/L.20/Rev.1 are trying to mislead the council by portraying a false picture of the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran," the envoy said. He warned that the Western sponsors of the resolution, including the UK and Germany, should be held accountable for all their oppression against the Iranian people and humankind. Iran's Foreign Ministry's spokesman Esmail Baqaei also expressed regret over the continued exploitation of human rights mechanisms by the UK, Germany, and certain other Western countries to exert political pressure on developing nations. He condemned the two countries' leading role in pushing an anti-Iranian resolution at the UN Human

Rights Council, saying that they lack the moral standing to lecture others on human rights. Baqaei emphasized that the resolution's content is factually incorrect, relying on unsubstantiated claims attributed to unnamed individuals, rendering it legally baseless and invalid. The Foreign Ministry spokesperson also pointed to the hypocritical approach of the UK, Germany, Canada, and other sponsors of this anti-Iran resolution over the past two years regarding the Israeli regime's genocide in Gaza and the crimes of the regime against the people of Lebanon and Syria. He pointed out that the UK is one of the biggest political, financial, and military backers of the Israeli regime. Baqaei also said Germany is the second-largest arms supplier to Israel, with its foreign minister openly justifying the killing of innocent Palestinian women and children. These two countries have no moral authority to preach human rights to others.

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