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Menara initiative could offer framework for regional stability, development

By Mohammad Irani
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OPINION

Former Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has recently proposed the creation of a regional body to facilitate peaceful nuclear cooperation among its members via an opinion published in *The Guardian*. According to the veteran diplomat, the Middle East Network for Atomic Research and Advancement, or Menara, which means "lighthouse" in Arabic, is open to all qualified states in the Middle East and North Africa, to join, provided that they reject the development or deployment of nuclear weapons and commit to mutual verification of their compliance. In return, Menara would help them benefit from peaceful nuclear technology, including energy production, medicine, agriculture and scientific research. Mohammad Irani, a former Iranian ambassador in Jordan and Kuwait, believes the initiative could serve as a solution to sustainable development in the region. Here is what the former envoy has to say about Zarif's proposal:

For any initiative to gain traction in the region, certain preconditions and sustained efforts are required so that it may be recognized by different parties, assessed from the standpoint of each state, and its implications carefully weighed. The "Menara" proposal—currently being discussed as a framework for regional cooperation in fields such as nuclear energy—must first be tested for receptivity among regional nations.

A preliminary evaluation is possible. The Middle East, unfortunately, remains one of the world's most volatile regions. This reality should serve as a wake-up call for its governments to approach every new security initiative as an opportunity worth exploring. The Menara plan presents both strong potential and obvious obstacles. Its value lies in offering policymakers and intellectuals across the region a new platform to ease hostilities and lower the temperature of regional tensions. Contrary to narratives promoted by the West that depict Iran's nuclear program as a root cause of instability, it is in fact the existence of an illegal, oppressive, occupying, and rogue regime—the Zionist regime of Israel—that poses the real security threat in the region. The problem that this regime has with regional states is not limited to occupation. Its very survival depends on stirring up instability around it.

One need only imagine the Middle East in the 1940s—before this regime was established. Would the region be mired in such persistent security crises, growing tensions, arms races? The timeline of regional insecurity correlates directly with the creation of this regime, which has endangered all surrounding countries. Thus, the first and most fundamental roadblock to the Menara proposal is the Israeli regime itself. Israel is unlikely to permit the realization of any initiative—especially one aimed at regional peace and inclusive development.

Regional nations are deeply concerned about further destabilization, as their interests cannot be secured amid chronic unrest. It is hoped that this initiative—clearly the result of thoughtful planning—will help move the region toward a calmer, more stable, and prosperous future.

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Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd R) honors the family of Nima Rajabpour, a chief journalist who lost his life when Israel bombed Iran's state broadcaster in June, during a weekly press conference by Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei (1st R) in Tehran on August 4, 2025 ahead of the National Journalist's Day which falls on Friday.

Iran's parliamentary diplomacy in Geneva



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