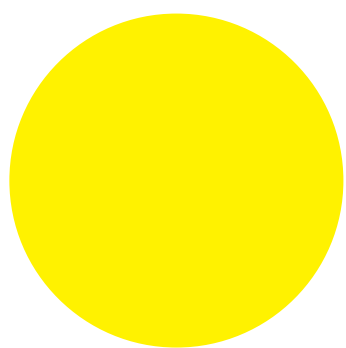


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) addresses members of Parliament's Legal and Judicial Committee and officials from the Drug Control Headquarters during a meeting on drug law enforcement and reform in Tehran on October 6, 2025.

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Iran should keep all doors open to dispel nuclear impasse

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE



After the United States withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal (the JCPOA) in 2018 and reimposed unilateral sanctions, Iran—having not reaped the promised benefits of the agreement—was compelled to scale back its nuclear commitments gradually. Negotiations between Tehran and Western countries to reach a new accord continued, and a fresh round of talks with the United States had also begun until June when Israel launched a military aggression against Iran and the United States bombed certain Iranian nuclear facilities. Tehran, reacting to what it saw as the International Atomic Energy Agency's passive stance and biased positions, suspended its cooperation with the watchdog. Meanwhile, the three European parties

to the JCPOA – France, Germany and the UK – seized on Iran's remedial measures and the suspension of cooperation with the IAEA to invoke the so-called "snapback" mechanism to restore UN. They even judged the Cairo understanding reached between Iran and the IAEA on a framework for new cooperation to be insufficient and Iran's final diplomatic efforts on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York failed to shift the hardline positions of Western states. Ultimately, on September 19, the UN Security Council voted against extending the suspension of sanctions and previous resolutions were effectively revived at the end of the 30-day period, although Russia and China, as permanent Council members, did not deem the enforcement of those sanctions mandatory. With the revival of UN resolutions, Iran's cooperation with the IAEA and the future of the country's nuclear file have been thrown into uncertainty. Iran now faces decisive choices—decisions that must find a way out of the current deadlock without jeopardizing the country's national

interests. Iran Daily spoke with Heydar-Ali Masoudi, an analyst of international affairs, about these developments.

IRAN DAILY: Considering Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent remarks that the Cairo understanding has become ineffective following the instigation of the snapback mechanism, is Iran seeking to redefine its cooperation with the IAEA, or are there signs that Tehran is moving toward suspending or cutting off collaboration?

MASOUDI: I think the Foreign Ministry, by necessity, should seek to strike a balance between domestic legal requirements on cooperation with the IAEA on one hand, and diplomatic imperatives and realities on the international stage on the other. At present there is some limited cooperation with the IAEA—primarily for oversight of the Bushehr power plant—but if cooperation were to be extended to other matters, such as monitoring sites that were bombed, three conditions would need to be met.

First, there must be a consensual decision within the Supreme National Security Council. Second, any such cooperation with the agency would need to be considered part of a broader diplomatic agreement with the major international powers. And third, there must be an agreed technical framework with the IAEA to ensure that cooperation can begin in a way that is secure and non-detrimental to Iran's nuclear industry.

Araghchi has said that the three European countries have weakened their role in the negotiation process by activating the snapback mechanism and by showing bad faith toward Iran's proposals. Yet he continues to stress Iran's adherence to diplomacy. Can this stance be read as Tehran sidelining the European troika and preferring to negotiate directly, without intermediaries, with Washington?

Previously the foreign minister spoke of completely sidelining Europeans from diplomacy should the snapback mechanism

be triggered. More recently, however, his remarks have focused on the weakening of Europe's position in negotiations. This could signal a tentative willingness in Tehran to remain open to diplomacy, even with European actors. Moreover, by "Europeans" one might mean more than just the troika; in recent months there have been occasional mentions of mediation by other European states, such as Norway, between Iran and the United States.

Overall, irrespective of European participation or absence in nuclear diplomacy with Iran, it appears that Tehran still maintains direct channels of communication with Washington, including through the US special representative for talks with Iran [Steve Witkoff]. The issue, though, is that with [US Secretary of State] Marco Rubio's ascendancy over many aspects of US foreign policy decision-making, the influence of figures like Witkoff has diminished, and the United States now seeks a different model of negotiations with Iran—one of direct, public talks. Yet, there may not be a domestic decision now in Iran to pursue such talks openly.

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