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Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd L) meets with the family of Razmik Khachatorian, an Iranian soldier of Armenian Christian faith who fell during the 1980s Iran-Iraq war, on Christmas Day in Tehran on December 25, 2025. president.ir

Arsonist posing as firefighter: Washington's 'talks' offer is a threat, not diplomacy



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**O P I N I O N
E X C L U S I V E**

There is a particular kind of insolence that only an empire in decline can still afford: the insolence of burning down a house and then swaggering back to the smoldering ruins to offer "assistance"—on the condition that the homeowner surrenders the deed, the keys, and the right to rebuild.

This week at the UN Security Council, Morgan Ortagus, introduced as the Trump administration's deputy Middle East envoy, delivered exactly that brand of insolence. "The United States remains available for formal talks with Iran," she

said, "but only if Tehran is prepared for direct and meaningful dialogue." Then came the real message, stripped of diplomacy's lipstick: "Foremost, there can be no enrichment inside of Iran, and that remains our principle."

Let us translate this for those who still cling to the mirage of "engagement" as if it were a charm against American coercion. Washington's idea of "direct and meaningful dialogue" is not a conversation. It is a summons. It is not negotiations. It is capitulation, packaged in the language of reasonableness.

"No enrichment inside of Iran." Not limits. Not verification. Not reciprocal steps. Not a balanced arrangement anchored in rights and obligations. A flat prohibition. A demand that a sovereign nation renounce an internationally recognized component of a peaceful nuclear program, even as the very states is-

suing the demand sit atop vast arsenals, fuel cycles, and—when convenient—selective "exceptions" for their preferred allies.

In other words, the United States has not returned to the table; it has returned to the podium.

And yet, there remains a troubling faction at home—call them the incurable optimists, the professional "dialogue" class, or simply the perpetually surprised—who treat every American threat as a "new opening." They hear a conditional offer and imagine a ladder out of pressure. They hear a diktat and call it "a starting point." They speak of "trust-building" as though trust were built by the party that walked away first, imposed collective punishment next, and now claims moral authority over the wreckage it created.

The record is not ambiguous. Under the

JCPOA, Iran accepted the most intrusive verification regime in modern nuclear diplomacy, implemented commitments in good faith, and was rewarded with what—exactly? A US exit, European paralysis, and a global banking system terrorized into compliance with Washington's extraterritorial bullying. The E3, draped in elegant rhetoric, proved incapable—or unwilling—to deliver the economic normalization they promised. They signed with one hand and apologized with the other.

Then, after undermining the very agreement they now mourn in op-eds and conference panels, Washington and its European companions have the audacity to present themselves as "firefighters." They lecture Iran about responsibility while ignoring their own signature crime: the deliberate destruction of a functioning diplomatic framework for

domestic political spectacle and strategic convenience. The arsonist now holds a hose—filled with gasoline—and demands applause for his "concern." What is new is not the American posture. What is new is that, at the Security Council, the empire's script is no longer met with automatic deference. The rift is visible, and it matters.

China and Russia, for their own reasons and interests, placed their weight behind Iran's position on the illegality of the so-called "snapback" mechanism as brandished by those who violated, abandoned, or hollowed out the JCPOA. They refused to sanctify the logic that says: you can renege on your obligations, sabotage the bargain, and still claim the privileges of the very agreement you dismantled. That is not law; it is vandalism dressed as procedure.

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