

# Iran denounces US, Israel for meddlesome remarks about protests

'Remarks nothing but incitement to violence, terrorism, murder'



Esmail Baqaei  
IRNA

## International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokes-

man Esmail Baqaei on Monday denounced recent remarks by American and Israeli officials about ongoing

protests in Iran, saying that the meddlesome remarks are nothing but "incitement to violence, terrorism, and murder".

Several Iranian cities have been the scene of protests against economic problems since December 28, which began at Tehran's Grand Bazaar over the national currency devaluation. The rial has sunk to a record low and inflation has risen to 40%.

Several people have been reportedly killed during the recent protests in the country.

On Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that the regime stands in solidarity with "the struggle of the Iranian people and with their aspirations for freedom, liberty and justice".

The US President Donald Trump also renewed his threat of US intervention, warning that Iranian authorities would be "hit very hard" if more pro-

testers died.

In response to Trump's threats, Baqaei said Iran's Armed Forces will not hesitate or compromise when it comes to safeguarding the country's sovereignty and integrity.

Baqaei added that psychological warfare and media manipulation against the country are part of the strategy of the Israeli regime and the US to exert pressure on Tehran.

"There is no doubt that the Zionist regime (Israel) and the US are trying to maintain an atmosphere of tension and psychological warfare while keeping economic pressure" on the country, Baqaei said at a weekly press conference.

"The Zionist regime is determined to exploit the slightest opportunity to sow division and undermine our national unity, and we must remain vigilant," he said.

Back in June, both Israel and the US

launched a 12-day war on Iran, during which more than 1,000 Iranians were killed.

Iranian officials have acknowledged the economic pressure facing the public and said peaceful protests are legitimate. At the same time, they have warned that foreign-backed elements are seeking to exploit the situation and fuel violence.

On Monday, the speaker of Iran's Parliament said the protesters' "legitimate demands" should be heard and used as the basis for change.

But Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf added that any foreign agents and opponents of the establishment attempting to exploit the protests would be "confronted effectively".

His comments echoed those of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who declared on Saturday that "rioters should be put in their place".

## Trump threatens Colombia with military strike

US president repeats threat to annex Greenland

### International Desk

The US President Donald Trump threatened military action against his Colombian counterpart, Gustavo Petro, following Washington's abduction of Venezuela's leader, and said he believed the government in Cuba, too, was likely to fall soon.

Trump's comments on Sunday came amid a growing outcry over the brazen abduction of Nicolas Maduro, with Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay and Spain condemning the US action as a "dangerous precedent for peace and regional security".

Trump told reporters on board Air Force One that Venezuela and Colombia were "very sick" and that the government in Bogota was run by "a sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States".

"And he's not going to be doing it very long. Let me tell you," Trump said, referring to Petro.

When asked if he meant a US operation against Colombia, Trump said, "Sounds good to me." The remarks prompted a sharp rebuke from Petro, who told Trump to "stop slandering" him while also calling on Latin American countries to unite or risk being "treated as a servant and slave".

In a series of lengthy posts on X, Petro noted that "the US is the first country in the world to bomb a South American capital in all of human history". But he said revenge



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters aboard Air Force One as he travels from Las Vegas to Miami, on January 4, 2026.  
MARK SCHIEFELBEIN/AP

was not the answer.

### 'Latin America must unite'

Instead, Latin America must unite, Petro said, and become a region "with the capacity to understand, trade, and join together with the whole world".

"We do not look only to the north, but in all directions," he said.

US forces kidnapped Maduro in Caracas early on Saturday in what Washington described as a law enforcement operation to bring him to trial on "narcoterrorism" charges.

Maduro denies the allegations, and critics say the US's toppling of the Venezuelan leader was aimed at taking control of the country's vast oil reserves.

Trump said a lot of Cubans were killed in the US raid on Caracas, adding that an American military inter-

vention in Cuba was unnecessary because the island appears ready to fall on its own.

"Cuba is ready to fall," he said. "Cuba now has no income. They got all of their income from Venezuela, from the Venezuelan oil. They're not getting any of it. Cuba literally is ready to fall."

The US and Cuba have had strained relations since Fidel Castro overthrew a Washington-backed government in Havana in 1959 and established a socialist state allied with the former Soviet Union.

Trump went on to warn Mexico, saying the country "has to get their act together because they're [drugs] pouring through Mexico and we're going to have to do something".

### Greenland annexation

Donald Trump again proposed annexing Greenland, after Denmark's leader urged him to "stop the threats" over the island. The US president said "we need Greenland from the standpoint of national security".

Trump has repeatedly raised the prospect of the semi-autonomous Danish territory becoming an annexed part of the US, citing its strategic location for defense purposes and mineral wealth. Greenland's Prime Minister Jens Frederik Nielsen responded by saying "that's enough now" and described the notion of US control over the island as a "fantasy".

## Talks with US can begin 'tomorrow' if there is change in US approach: Deputy FM



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi (R) poses for a photo during an interview with Synergy Program released on January 5, 2026.  
ISNA

### International Desk

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the United States has shown willingness to resume nuclear negotiations with Iran by sending messages. But he said any talks must be meaningful and based on fair conditions.

In an interview with Synergy Program released on Monday, Gharibabadi said that Tehran has never opposed dialogue in principle, but "not at any price."

"Sitting down at the negotiating table with the United States is not a complicated issue; if a decision is made today, negotiations can begin tomorrow", Gharibabadi said, but he said if there is no change in the US approach toward talks, such negotiations will not produce results.

Iran and the US held five rounds of negotiations last year to settle differenc-

es over Iran's nuclear program. But in the middle of talks in June, the Israeli regime launched a surprise attack on Iran. The US later joined the aggression and bombed three Iranian nuclear facilities.

Gharibabadi noted that during five rounds of talks with the US, Washington's main demand was zero uranium enrichment in Iran - a position the Islamic Republic has consistently rejected.

The Iranian deputy foreign minister stressed that diplomacy has not reached a dead end, but negotiations under the shadow of military threats amount to coercion.

"As long as the United States believes it can achieve its objectives through sanctions pressure and ultimately military action, entering into genuine negotiations will be very, very difficult," Gharibabadi said.

He underlined that useful negotiations based on a win-win approach take shape when Washington comes to the conclusion that pressure, sanctions, and military threats no longer work.

## When law becomes ...

Given reports of Iran's roughly \$2 billion claims on Venezuela, how will a change of power in Caracas affect the prospects for recovering these debts? And amid expanding US influence, what legal or international tools does Iran have to pursue and reclaim them?

The change of power in Venezuela forces the recovery of Iran's claims to face the challenge of "state succession," according to international law, the new government is legally responsible for the financial obligations of the previous government. Of course, in this case, by citing the "Agreement for the Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela," the Iranian government and the interested investors can use

the dispute resolution mechanisms provided in this treaty: according to Article 11 of this agreement, if a dispute arises between an Iranian investor and the Venezuelan government, the parties must first attempt to settle it through friendly negotiation and consultation. If an agreement is not reached within six months, the Iranian investor can refer the case to one of the following authorities:

- Competent Venezuelan courts: Referring the lawsuit to the domestic judicial system of the host country.
- Ad hoc arbitration: Establishing an arbitral tribunal based on UNCITRAL (UN Commission on International Trade Law) rules.
- The International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in Paris: Referring to this reputable international body.
- The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID):

Provided that both countries are members of the relevant convention.

- Governing Law: In these arbitrations, the provisions of this agreement itself and the general principles of international law will be the criteria for action. If the dispute is over the interpretation or implementation of the agreement itself (for example, if Venezuela violates its protection obligations), the Iranian government can act directly against the Venezuelan government based on the following:
- Consultations: The parties first attempt to resolve the dispute amicably.
- Arbitration: In the absence of an agreement within six months, Iran can refer the matter to an arbitral tribunal consisting of three arbitrators.
- If Venezuela does not cooperate in appointing its arbitrator, Iran can request the President of the International Court of Justice to appoint the opposing party's arbitrator or the third arbitrator.

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