

Iran warns of 'stronger response' to renewed Israeli aggression

International Desk

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Wednesday that the Israeli regime will receive a stronger response if it launches new strikes on Iran. "The usurping Zionist regime does not dare to repeat the attack on Iran, and if it makes this mistake, it will receive a stronger response," Iran's vice president said during a meeting held in Tehran to review the promotion of science and technology in the country. His remarks come amid menacing blusters and caveats by Israeli and American officials in the wake of the eruption of protests in Iran in response to the devaluation of national currency. Protests in Iran broke out last week after shopkeepers in Tehran temporarily closed their businesses to protest the sharp fall of the national currency, which plunged to record lows against the US dollar.

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. Iranian Army's chief commander also warned that escalating rhetoric and threats by enemies will be regarded as a direct threat and will not go unanswered, noting that any mistake by adversaries would trigger a decisive response. "We will cut off the hand of any aggressor," Major General Amir Hatami told students at the Army Command and Staff University on Wednesday, days after US President Donald Trump explicitly threatened Iran with military aggression. If Iran kills protesters, the United States will come to their rescue. "We are locked and loaded and ready to go," Trump wrote on Truth Social on Friday. General Hatami added that Iran considers the intensification of the enemies'

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref (r) speaks during a meeting held in Tehran on January 7, 2026 to review the promotion of national science and technology. 

rhetoric against the Iranian nation as a threat and will not leave its continuation unanswered.

Hatami underlined that any hostile action against Iran would have far-reaching consequences, stressing that Iran's Army will act with full force to defend the country's independence and territorial integrity. Hatami emphasized that Iran's Armed Forces are now far more prepared than in the pre-war period, warning that if enemies make a miscalculation, they will face a stronger and more decisive response. He was referring to a US-Israeli aggression against Iran in June, which killed at least 1,064 people and targeted military and civilian infrastructure in 12 days.



On June 24, Iran managed to impose a halt to the aggression after conducting waves of successful retaliatory operations. Referring to protests in Iran, Hatami said such protests have no connection to the US president or the "criminal prime minister of the Israeli regime [Benjamin

Netanyahu]. The army chief said protests are a normal and natural phenomenon in any country, but rapidly turning protests into riots is abnormal and inconsistent with Iran's "cultured nation," adding that such developments are the result of enemy planning.

Araghchi highlights Iran-Lebanon motivation to expand ties

FM to visit Beirut today

International Desk

Iran's foreign minister on Wednesday described his upcoming visit to Lebanon as a step toward strengthening ties with the Lebanese government and political establishment. "This motivation exists both on our part and on the Lebanese one. An economic delegation will accompany me to strengthen trade and commercial ties ... we will promote relations to a strong and independent level, free from outside interference," Araghchi told reports after a cabinet meeting. The Iranian foreign minister is scheduled to visit Lebanon today. The meeting comes as relations between the two countries have soured following Beirut's decision to disarm Hezbollah resistance group under pressure from Israel and the United States.

Araghchi had earlier invited his Lebanese counterpart Youssef Raggi to visit Iran. But the Lebanese top diplomat called for a meeting in a third country – an issue that has been rejected by the Iranian foreign minister.

In December, Araghchi said that he was "bemused" by his Lebanese counterpart's decision not to accept Tehran's invitation for an official vis-

it. The top diplomat noted that while he was grateful for Youssef Raggi's "kind invitation," there was no need for "a neutral venue" for talks between countries with "brotherly and full diplomatic relations."

Rejecting foreign interference

Referring to recent remarks by the US president about ongoing protests in Iran, he said the nation's internal affairs are exclusively a matter of the Iranian people. Araghchi stressed that Iran will not tolerate any foreign interference in its domestic affairs.

"Internal matters in Iran concern no one but the Iranian people. Any foreign attempts to interfere are unacceptable. The government is working with the people to resolve any issues, and no outside power has the right to dictate our internal affairs," he emphasized.

Turning to international diplomacy, Araghchi denounced Washington's obstructive approach, which he said makes meaningful negotiations impossible at present.

"Now is not the right time for negotiations, and this is due to US policies. We have never abandoned the negotiating table. We are always ready for talks based on mutual interests



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (l) speaks during a meeting with Somaliland's self-declared president Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, in Hargeisa, on January 6, 2026. 

and respect, but the US government continues to pursue a confrontational and self-serving approach," he explained.

Focusing on economic resilience, the minister outlined efforts to reduce reliance on hostile powers, adding, "Our Economic Diplomacy Department is now the most active section of the Foreign Ministry. We are expanding trade and economic cooperation, particularly with our neighbors, to bypass the obstacles imposed by the US."

According to Araghchi, the provincial diplomacy program identifies local capacities and aligns them with regional opportunities to strengthen Iran's economy independently. This approach has been warmly received across the country.

He concluded by reaffirming Iran's commitment to national strength and removal of sanctions on its own terms.

"We have not forsaken our duty to remove sanctions, and we will act decisively and diligently when the opportunity arises, independent of US dictates," Araghchi said.

Iran calls Israeli FM's visit to Somaliland a 'dangerous precedent'

Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned the visit of Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar to the self-declared republic of Somaliland, calling it a "dangerous precedent in international relations" and a "lethal blow to the legal and normative foundations of the United Nations."

Speaking to reporters in Tehran Wednesday, ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said the visit is "a clear violation of the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia" and strongly condemned it, Press TV reported.

The spokesman referred to the international community's emphasis on the need to respect the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Somalia as an independent member state of the United Nations.

Baghaei added that "actions by the Zionist regime aimed at the dismemberment of Somalia constitute a dangerous precedent in international relations and a lethal blow to the legal and normative foundations of the United Nations."

He stressed the need for "cooperation among the international community, Islamic and African countries to prevent the weakening of Somalia's national sovereignty."

Saar arrived in Somaliland on Tuesday, meeting with the territory's self-declared president, Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, known as Irro. The visit came just ten days after Israel became the first entity in the world to recognize Somaliland as independent.

Somalia's federal government condemned the visit as an "unauthorized incursion," saying Israel's recognition of Somaliland



Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar (l) visits Somaliland's self-declared president Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, in Hargeisa, on January 6, 2026. 

undermines the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Analysts say Israel's move appears aimed at securing a strategic foothold in East Africa, targeting Red Sea shipping lanes, intelligence operations, and regional influence, all at the expense of international norms.

The visit exposes the cynical opportunism of both parties. Israel, long willing to exploit fragile states for strategic advantage, is treating Somaliland as a pawn to project power in the Red Sea corridor and beyond. Somaliland's leaders, meanwhile, are legitimizing a breach of Somali sovereignty for short-term political gain, demonstrating a reckless disregard for the rule of law and regional stability.

For a region already beset by conflict, famine, and political fragility, such provocations are a dangerous escalation.

Rejecting the Russian ...

Many countries also argue that Russia's proposed conditions would lead to an unstable ceasefire and future conflicts rather than genuine peace. Without addressing the underlying causes of tension—such as Russian forces near new borders, deep-seated distrust, and the possibility of repeated aggression—such an agreement would merely postpone confrontation rather than resolve it. Russia's demands for complete sanctions relief and the restriction of Western military influence, without reciprocal guarantees, are seen in the West as unilateral concessions. Consequently, many perceive this model of peace as essentially consolidating Russia's military victories rather than achieving a fair and lasting agreement, making it politically, strategically, and legally unacceptable.

Three scenarios are plausible in the context of the Ukraine-Russia crisis:

Scenario 1: Conditional and Limited Peace (Partial Acceptance of Russian Demands)

In this scenario, international pressure and the war's attritional nature might push Ukraine and the West toward accepting some of Russia's conditions, such as a long-term ceasefire, Ukraine's relative neutrality, and tacit recognition of Russian control over certain areas. Drivers of this scenario include declining military capacities, Western economic fatigue, increased attacks on critical infrastructure, and shifting European political priorities. The outcome would be a fragile peace, with eastern Ukraine effectively under opposing control and the international environment remaining tense. This scenario is likely to result in a "suspension of war" rather than a full resolution, although it would reduce the intensity of hostilities.

Scenario 2: Continued Attritional War

and Escalation

Here, neither Russia nor Ukraine would retreat from their strategic positions, with Western military and financial support for Ukraine continuing. Drivers include political deadlock in negotiations, intensified missile attacks, introduction of advanced equipment, and geopolitical competition among major powers. The result would be a protracted, multi-phase war threatening not only Ukraine's territory but also European energy security, global economic stability, and Eastern European borders. Short-term ceasefires may occur, but overall hostilities would persist.

Scenario 3: Comprehensive Peace through Multilateral Agreement and Security Guarantees

In this scenario, developments such as a change in political leadership, heavy international pressure, or strategic agreements among global powers could pave the way for a full peace settlement. Key drivers include the economic need for

reconstruction, public pressure in the countries involved, shifts in Europe's security calculus, and direct negotiations among major powers. Ukraine would accept certain military limitations in exchange for international security guarantees, while Russia would concede on some maximum demands. The outcome would be the gradual restoration of stability, the beginning of Ukraine's reconstruction, and the formation of a new European security framework—a challenging but most promising scenario for a durable resolution.

Ultimately, the future of peace between Russia and Ukraine depends heavily on the balance of military power, international political and economic pressure, and domestic developments in both countries. If the war remains attritional, the parties may move toward a managed ceasefire or conditional peace—one that may not be fully comprehensive or permanent but could prevent further infrastructure destruction and human

suffering. In such a case, agreements would focus on halting hostilities, stabilizing contact lines, and imposing military constraints, without fully resolving border disputes or the status of contested areas. This pattern may resemble a "cold peace," where active warfare halts but the political and security roots of the crisis persist. True and lasting peace, however, is possible only if either of two conditions is met: a fundamental shift in the strategic calculations of the parties, or effective intervention and security guarantees from major international powers. The future of peace hinges on whether the parties conclude that the cost of continuing the war exceeds that of compromise. If such a shift occurs, the formation of a new European security framework, Ukraine's reconstruction, and a partial rollback of maximum demands are plausible. If it does not, the prospect of peace remains distant, and the crisis may endure for years as a frozen or "cold" conflict.