

Deputy FM raps Israel's nuclear arsenal as main obstacle to nuke-free Mideast

'US is main driver behind collapse of international legal order'



Kazem Gharibabadi (2nd L), Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, attends an official meeting in the Swiss city of Geneva on February 23, 2026.

IRNA

International Desk

The Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs described Israel's nuclear arsenal as the primary obstacle to establishing a West Asia free of nuclear weapons as he underscored the necessity of complete disarmament and the non-discriminatory implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Speaking at the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva,

Switzerland, Kazem Gharibabadi highlighted Iran's principled positions and stressed the need for the international community to return to effective multilateralism, achieve genuine disarmament, and ensure unconditional respect for international law. Gharibabadi reiterated the Islamic Republic's longstanding initiative to establish a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the West Asian region, emphasizing that achieving this goal

requires universal adherence to the NPT and the placement of all nuclear facilities in the region under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

The deputy foreign minister pointed out that the Israeli regime's possession of weapons of mass destruction and its repeated nuclear threats pose a significant obstacle to realizing this objective.

Israel is estimated to possess 200 to 400 nuclear warheads in its arsenal, making it the sole possessor of non-conventional arms in West Asia.

The occupying regime has refused to either allow inspections of its nuclear sites or sign the NPT.

Gharibabadi described the NPT as the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime, affirming that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always adhered to its obligations under the treaty.

He stressed that Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy is an inherent and non-negotiable right guaranteed under international law, which cannot be suspended, revoked, or made a precondition for negotiations.

"Iran has always been committed to its obligations under the NPT," the Iranian official said.

"The Islamic Republic does not have nuclear weapons, has never sought to acquire them, and has no intention of doing so. Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful and is guided by the country's legal obligations and its ideological and moral principles, which reject WMDs."

Gharibabadi also pointed out that the ongoing armed conflicts, persistent occupation, and crimes committed by the Israeli regime in the West Asia region, along with the erosion of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, pose serious challenges to global peace and security.

The deputy foreign minister emphasized that nuclear weapons pose the greatest threat to humanity and civilization, noting that the ongoing reliance of some countries on such weapons within their security doctrines stands in stark contrast to their international obligations and undermines the ethical and legal foundations of the non-proliferation regime.

He called for an immediate, irreversible, and verifiable commitment from all possessors of such weapons to the complete destruction of their nuclear arsenals.

Firmly rejecting any allegations of military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program, the deputy foreign minister said that the Islamic Republic neither possesses nuclear weapons, nor has it sought to

acquire them, nor does it have any such intention.

Iran's nuclear program is entirely peaceful and is guided by the country's legal obligations and its ideological and ethical principles, which reject weapons of mass destruction, he added.

Elsewhere, Speaking at a high-level meeting of the Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva, Gharibabadi said the United States is the main factor behind the collapse of the international order based on international law, warning against Washington's systematic disregard for core legal principles.

The deputy FM cited US military interventions, unilateral coercive economic measures, threats to states' territorial integrity, and persistent violations of sovereignty and non-interference as evidence of a calculated effort to undermine the existing legal framework.

Gharibabadi also criticized US support for the Israeli regime, saying Washington's backing, including vetoing draft resolutions aimed at halting the war in Gaza, has enabled war crimes and genocide, emboldening the regime to expand aggression across West Asia, including against Iran's sovereign territory.

Defense minister: Iran pushes back against geopolitical changes, foreign meddling in region



Iran's Minister of Defense Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh (R) meets with Armenia's Defense Minister Suren Papikyan in Tehran on February 24, 2026.

DEFA Press

International Desk

Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh reaffirmed at a high-level meeting with his Armenian counterpart, Suren Papikyan, on Tuesday the Islamic Republic's staunch opposition to any foreign intervention and underscored its unwavering commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty. The two officials also weighed plans to promote cooperation between Tehran and Yerevan, discussing avenues to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and addressing shared concerns about regional security. Nasirzadeh described Iran-Armenia relations as "deep, historical, and strategically significant," while expressing appreciation for Armenia's condemnation of US and Israeli aggressions against the Islamic Re-

public. Reiterating Tehran's long-standing security doctrine, the defense minister warned that Iran rejects any attempt to disturb the regional geopolitical balance.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran opposes any disruption of the regional geopolitical order," he said, stressing that lasting stability can only be achieved through cooperation among neighboring states.

"External powers, whose interventions are driven by their own interests, pose a direct threat to regional stability."

He also underscored the centrality of territorial integrity in Iran's security posture.

"Iran will not tolerate any encroachment that jeopardizes the sovereignty of regional nations. While Iran does not seek conflict, it will respond decisively should war be

imposed upon it." Reaffirming the importance of historical ties between the two countries, Papikyan stressed that Yerevan views stability in its southern neighbor as a strategic necessity. "Armenia will never be a source of threat to its historical neighbor," he said. "A stable Iran is fundamental to regional security."

The meeting comes amid a significant US military buildup across the region, including the deployment of carrier strike groups and advanced aircraft, a posture Iran has denounced as provocative amid the resumption of talks over its peaceful nuclear program.

During a visit to Yerevan in May 2025, the Iranian defense minister met with Secretary of the Security Council of Armenia Armen Grigoryan, highlighting the geopolitical and strategic position of Iran and Armenia in the region.

Nasirzadeh announced at the time that the two neighbors can complement each other in a number of sectors and contribute to one another's progress and development, stating that sustainable peace in the Caucasus will pave the way for broader regional cooperation and development.

Gov't spox says Tehran pursues deterrence, diplomacy simultaneously



International Desk

Iranian government spokeswoman Fateh Mohajerani said on Tuesday that President Masoud Pezeshkian's administration consistently prefers diplomacy over war, emphasizing that both diplomacy and deterrence are key strategies aimed at safeguarding national dignity and securing national interests.

While seriously pursuing diplomatic efforts, the government is also strengthening deterrence capabilities through the armed forces who are fully prepared, Mohajerani said, adding that recent military drills reflect that readiness, and at

the same time, negotiations are being followed with caution and vigilance.

The government spokeswoman also said that authorities are closely monitoring developments, remain committed to the outcomes of diplomatic processes, and are prepared to use all deterrent tools to prevent any miscalculation.

"In sum, we are fully prepared for both paths," she said.

Since February 6, Tehran and Washington have held two rounds of fresh nuclear talks with Omani mediation. The first round took place in the Omani capital Muscat, while the second was held in the Swiss city.

IRGC holds hybrid drill in south amid US escalation



TASNIM

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Forces conducted a combined military exercise in southern parts of Iran and the Persian Gulf islands. The drill featured controlled live-fire operations carried out in accordance with the range of various weapons and newly adopted combined tactics, utilizing modern technologies across different operational layers, as reported by Tasnim.

Last week, the IRGC Navy launched a military exercise titled "Smart Control of the Strait of Hormuz" in the strategic

waterway.

The combined, live, and targeted drill was conducted under the supervision, control, and field monitoring of IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Pakpour.

The main objectives of the naval war game included assessing the operational readiness of the IRGC Navy's units, reviewing support plans and scenarios for reciprocal military action, and making intelligent use of the geopolitical advantages of Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

