

# Deal within reach if diplomacy takes priority, Iran FM says ahead of Geneva talks

**Grossi:** Necessary elements for deal on the table

## International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said a deal with the United States is attainable provided diplomacy is given priority, as Tehran and Washington gear up for a third round of negotiations in Geneva on Thursday.

In a post late Tuesday on X, Araghchi described the ongoing talks as a "historic opportunity" to secure an "unprecedented agreement" that would address mutual concerns and protect shared interests. He said the upcoming round would build on understandings reached previously, adding that Iran would return to the negotiating table determined to reach a fair and balanced deal "as quickly as possible."

The Iranian foreign minister also reiterated Tehran's long-standing position that the country would "under no circumstances" develop nuclear weapons, while stressing that Iranians would

never relinquish their right to peaceful nuclear technology. He added that Iran would defend its sovereignty with resolve but would pursue a peaceful solution to disputes through negotiations.

## Full sincerity and good faith

Separately, Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi told NPR in an earlier interview that Iran is ready to finalize an agreement swiftly and is prepared to take the necessary steps to make that happen.

"We will enter negotiations in Geneva with full sincerity and good faith, and we hope this goodwill and positive approach will be reciprocated by the American side," he said. The talks come amid heightened tensions, with the United States reinforcing its military presence in the region and warning it could turn to force if diplomacy fails. Takht-Ravanchi said Iran hopes such a scenario



Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (2nd R) and Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi (2nd L) confer on the sidelines of the second round of talks with the United States in Geneva, Switzerland on February 17, 2026.

can be avoided, cautioning that any conflict would be difficult to contain and would amount to "a real gamble." "A war may begin, but ending it will not be easy," he said. "The entire region

would suffer the consequences of any aggression against Iran." He urged that diplomacy remain the focus instead of military escalation, troop deployments or the dispatch of naval forces.

Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf also stressed at a meeting on Wednesday that all options remain on the table in dealing with the United States, including both "dignified diplomacy" and what he described as a "regret-inducing defense" in case of confrontation.

"If you choose the path of diplomacy—one that respects Iran's dignity and mutual interests—we will be at the negotiating table," he said at the meeting. "But if you opt for war, the proud and united Iranian nation will once again bring you to disgrace."

Meanwhile, Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in an interview with RTVC Noticias that the crisis between Washington and Tehran can only be resolved through an agreement, warning that otherwise the use of force could be imposed.

Reports suggest Grossi will also attend Thursday's talks to ad-

dress technical aspects. He said the current uncertainty stems from the key fact that the agency has not been able to resume inspections of Iran's enriched uranium as it did before the 12-day war in June. "This is what creates uncertainty, and uncertainty can lead to dramatic decisions," he said.

In that context, Grossi called for intensified diplomatic efforts, noting that while the outcome is not guaranteed, the room for error narrows in the absence of technical verification.

He added that reaching an agreement to prevent further escalation and instability in the region remains possible, and that the necessary elements to achieve such a deal are already on the table. Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Ghalibaf also stressed at a meeting on Wednesday that all options remain on the table in dealing with the United States, including both "dignified diplomacy" and what he described as a "regret-inducing defense" in case of confrontation.

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## Foreign Ministry slams Trump's claims as 'big lie'

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Iran's Foreign Ministry has strongly pushed back against recent claims made by US President Donald Trump, rejecting his statements on Tehran's nuclear and missile program and the casualties during the January unrest as a "big lie."

In a post on X, Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei called US officials "professional liars," accusing them of being skilled at creating the "illusion of truth." He warned that "no one should be fooled by these prominent untruths." Baghaei further charged that the US administration and its surrounding "war profiteers"—specifically pointing to Israel—are deliberately applying a propaganda tactic attributed to Nazi figure Joseph Goebbels that if you "repeat a lie often enough,



Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei

IRNA

it becomes the truth." He said they are repeating falsehoods to fuel a "sinister disinformation and misinformation campaign against the nation of Iran." Trump's comments came during his annual State of the Union address. He claimed that Iran possesses missiles capable of threatening Europe and US bases abroad, and is developing longer-range systems that could potentially target the United States.

He also asserted that Washington dismantled Iran's nuclear weapons program during the 12-day conflict in June, but alleged that Tehran has since resumed what he termed its "sinister nuclear ambitions."

Referring to the ongoing negotiations between Tehran and Washington—with a third round set for Thursday—Trump stated that while Iran is seeking a deal, the US has yet to hear the "sacred words"

that Iran would never pursue nuclear weapons. This is while Tehran has consistently denied seeking nuclear arms or any other weapons of mass destruction, citing its religious doctrine and established policy.

While expressing a preference for a diplomatic resolution, Trump vowed he would never permit what he called "the world's largest state sponsor of terror" to obtain nuclear weapons.

In another part of his address, Trump alleged that the Islamic Republic had shot or executed at least 32,000 protesters during the January unrest. Iranian authorities have previously stated that the violence which interrupted peaceful protests was the work of foreign-backed terrorist elements, and have put the number of deaths at just around 3,000.

## Prominent figures, activists say no to war on Iran

## International Desk

A group of 353 Iranian researchers, political and civil society activists, and public figures from across a broad spectrum of political views have signed and released a statement titled "No to War and Aggression Against Iran," urging citizens to raise their voices against any military action targeting the country. In the statement, the signatories described violence and war as "the greatest evils in politics," warning that armed conflict would bring devastating consequences for Iran and its people.

"War kills, destroys, plunges families into grief, wipes out infrastructure, spreads poverty, and sacrifices the innocent," the statement said. It added that conflict fuels further violence, deepens existing crises, weakens society's ability to address its challenges, and dims prospects for development, democracy, justice, and prosperity in Iran.

The group accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and war hawks in Washington of seeking, through threats, sanctions, and warmongering, to destabilize and weaken Iran. Referring to the heavy loss of life in January as a result of foreign-backed element's involvement in peaceful protests, the statement said that no tragedy, regardless of its cause, justifies war, further suffering for compatriots, or destruction inflicted on the country.

"We, a group of concerned Iranians, despite the full diversity of our political positions, un-

equivocally and without hesitation oppose any aggression against Iran," the signatories declared. They argued that solutions—however difficult—must be pursued inside the country through constructive, development-oriented and reform-driven internal change.

The statement emphasized the need to "speak out loudly and clearly" against what it called the destructive path of war, adding that in the face of any aggression, they would stand firmly in defense of Iran. The group also called on fellow citizens, as well as individuals with influence and public standing, to amplify their opposition to war and external aggression.

Among the signatories are prominent political, academic and civil society figures, including former vice president Eshaq Jahangiri, former foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, senior reformist figure Behzad Nabavi, intellectual Abdolkarim Soroush, former communications minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, academic Mohammad Fazeli, and sociologist Maqsood Ferasatkah, reflecting the wide range of political and intellectual currents represented in the initiative.

The statement comes as the United States has expanded its military presence in the region while engaging in negotiations with Iran, and has repeatedly warned that it could resort to military action if diplomacy fails.

Iranian officials have cautioned against any act of aggression, vowing a decisive response and warning that any conflict would likely spill over and destabilize the wider region.

## Draft Ukraine resolution will not advance lasting peace, say UN envoy

## International Desk

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in New York said Tehran voted against a Western-backed resolution on the Ukraine crisis, arguing that the draft would not advance lasting peace and could instead deepen existing divisions. Speaking at the 23rd plenary meeting of the Eleventh Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Ali Bahreini said the resolution was introduced at an inappropriate time and without transparent prior consultations. He added that achieving a durable and long-term solution to the conflict requires addressing its root causes, including the provocative actions and decisions by certain states and the North Atlantic



Iran's national flag flutters in front of the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Treaty Organization (NATO). He expressed regret that the resolution failed to tackle those fundamental issues. Bahreini also questioned the underlying objectives of the draft, saying there were concerns that its purpose was not to pro-

mote lasting peace in Ukraine but rather to serve political interests amid ongoing geopolitical rivalries.

He stressed that since the outset of the Ukraine crisis, Iran has maintained a clear, consistent and unchanged position, emphasizing the need for all UN member states to fully respect the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and international law. The Iranian envoy also firmly rejected what he described as baseless allegations regarding Tehran's support for one of the parties to the conflict, saying such accusations have been repeatedly denied and remain categorically rejected. Both Kiev and European countries have repeatedly accused Iran of supplying arms, including drones and missiles to Russia, a claim that Iranian authorities have firmly rejected. The resolution, backed by Western countries, was adopted with 107 votes in favor, 12 against and 51 abstentions on Tuesday.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

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