

Araghchi touts 'significant progress' in Iran-US talks in Geneva

Technical teams to begin detailed expert reviews in Vienna



The photo shows Iranian diplomats during nuclear talks between Iran and the United States in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 26, 2026.
● IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTRY

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called the latest round of nuclear talks between Tehran and Washington in Geneva "the most intense so far", where "significant progress" was made in the negotiations.

"It concluded with the mutual understanding that we will continue to engage in a more detailed manner on matters

that are essential to any deal – including sanctions termination and nuclear-related steps," Araghchi said in a post on X on Friday.

The Iranian foreign minister also held a phone conversation with his Egyptian counterpart, during which Araghchi said that "success in this path requires seriousness and realism from the other side and avoidance of any miscalculation and excessive demands."

He said it was agreed that starting Monday, technical teams in Vienna at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would begin detailed technical reviews to organize certain technical issues within a defined framework, which would then be aligned with the political demands and considerations of both sides. Araghchi added that it was also decided that the next round of talks would take place in the near future, likely in less than a week.

A senior US official told Axios the talks were "positive" but did not immediately provide additional details.

Iran and the United States held their third round of negotiations in Geneva on Thursday to resolve a decades-old dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The Oman-mediated talks follow repeated threats from US President Donald Trump to strike Iran, and with the United States conducting its biggest military build-up in the region in decades.

Excessive demands

Trump on February 19 gave Iran 15 days to reach a deal, and while Iran has insisted the discussions focus solely on its nuclear program, the US wants Tehran's missile program and its support for

resistance groups curtailed.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday that Trump's negotiating team would demand that Iran dismantle its three main nuclear sites and hand over all its remaining enriched uranium to the United States.

Following the talks in Geneva on Thursday, Araghchi told state TV that the negotiations "made very good progress and entered into the elements of an agreement very seriously, both in the nuclear field and in the sanctions field." UN nuclear chief Rafael Grossi joined the negotiations, a source close to the talks told AFP.

Donald Trump said in his State of the Union address that Iran had "already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas, and they're working to build missiles that will soon reach the United States of America."

He also accused Iran of "pursuing sinister nuclear ambitions," though Tehran has always insisted its program is for civilian purposes.

'Big lies'

The Iranian Foreign Ministry called such claims "big lies." US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said

on Wednesday that Iran is "not enriching right now, but they're trying to get to the point where they ultimately can," adding that Tehran "refuses" to discuss its ballistic missile program and "that's a big problem."

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted ahead of the talks that the Islamic Republic was not "at all" seeking a nuclear weapon.

US Vice President JD Vance told the Washington Post on Thursday there was "no chance" that a long-threatened strike on Iran would result "in a Middle Eastern war for years with no end in sight."

Parallel to the talks is a dramatic US military buildup in the region, with the USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, sent to the Mediterranean this week.

Washington currently has more than a dozen warships in the Middle East: one aircraft carrier – the USS Abraham Lincoln – nine destroyers and three other combat ships.

It is rare for there to be two US aircraft carriers in the region.

The maximum range of Iran's missiles is 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles), according to what Tehran has publicly disclosed.

Iran voices readiness to broker Afghanistan-Pakistan peace talks

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday Tehran is ready to facilitate dialogue between Iran's eastern neighbors, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as the two countries are engaged in a new conflict described by Islamabad as an "open war."

"In the blessed month of Ramadan, a month of self-restraint and strengthening solidarity in the Islamic World, it's fitting for Afghanistan and Pakistan to manage and resolve their existing differences within the framework of good neighborliness and through dialogue," Araghchi said in a post on X on Friday.



Taliban fighters look up while manning an armed pickup truck at the Afghan side of the Ghulam Khan crossing with Pakistan in Khost Province, Afghanistan, on February 27, 2026.
● SAIFULLAH ZAHIR/AP

This comes as Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Asif declared the neighbors are at "open war" following months of tension.

Asif said in an X post that Pakistan had hoped for peace in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of NATO forces in 2021 and expected the Taliban, which seized power in the country, to focus on the welfare of the Afghan people and regional stability.

Instead, he said that the Taliban had turned Afghanistan "into a colony of India," with which Pakistan has periodically engaged in wars, clashes and skirmishes since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1947.

Pakistan bombed major cities in Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul, on Friday, after Afghan forces had attacked Pakistani border troops on Thursday night.

Given the escalation of air and ground clashes, is there a risk that this crisis could spill over into a broader regional war?

The clashes are unlikely to widen; neither side seeks an expanded confrontation. Pakistan is facing very low economic growth, which limits its ability to organize heavy military operations once again. At the same time, it faces ongoing concerns along its eastern border with India, whose government has demonstrated a highly pragmatic approach to attacking Pakistan without hesitation. Therefore, Pakistan is not inclined toward broadening the conflict or turning it into a full-scale war.

Iran shares borders and mutual interests with both countries. What measures can it take to prevent being harmed from these clashes?

The most significant step Iran can take is direct and unbiased mediation between the parties. Unfortunately, during previous mediation efforts, Iranian officials adopted positions that effectively pushed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan into a corner and weakened its negotiating stance. As a result, the Islamic Emirate did not participate in the talks. It appears that a balanced approach toward both sides is required in order to move forward with a serious dialogue with both countries. Iran has the capacity to do so, both historically and in terms of shared interests, enabling it to engage with both Pakistan and Afghanistan and to broker agreements.

Tehran raps continued UNSC silence on Zionist crimes as 'catastrophic'

Israel launches new deadly aggression on Lebanon

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei on Friday strongly condemned the renewed aggression of the Israeli regime against Lebanon, calling for immediate action from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Baqaei described the UNSC's continued silence and inaction toward the Israeli violations and crimes as "catastrophic," urging an immediate action from the council to fulfill its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security. He also emphasized the direct responsibility of the United States and France, as guarantors of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Lebanon, for the ongoing disastrous situation in Lebanon.

His remarks came after Israeli warplanes conducted at least 13 airstrikes on Lebanon's Bekaa Valley on Thursday, killing one person and wounding 29 others.

Lebanon's Ministry of Health said that a "16-year-old Syrian boy was killed" near Baalbek. The attacks targeted Shmestar, Boudai, Harbata as well as the Hermel and Nabi Chit mountains, according to the National News Agency (NNA). The air raids also left several shops damaged in the Baalbek Souk in Tall-et-al-Ajami. In October 2023, Israel initiated strikes against Lebanon, which intensified into a full-blown war by September 2024. This war has resulted in the killing of over 4,000 indi-



viduals and left around 17,000 others injured. Under the truce agreement, Israeli forces were expected to withdraw from southern Lebanon by January 2025. However, the withdrawal has been only partial, with a continued military presence at five border outposts.

Ceasefire breaches by Israel have resulted in the deaths and injuries of hundreds of Lebanese citizens.

In a report published by UNIFIL on December 12, 2025, more than 10,000 violations by Israeli armed forces have been documented since the ceasefire agreement, including air and ground aggressions that have breached Lebanese sovereignty.

Lebanon has filed a complaint with the UN about the repeated Israeli violations, urging the UN Security Council to push the regime to end its attacks and fully withdraw from the country.

Militant groups fuel ...

Another factor behind these clashes, particularly their persistence, is the power vacuum that has emerged in the region. No order-maintaining power is currently present in Central Asia or the Indian subcontinent. At one time, the United States played that role; at another, the Soviet Union. These conflicts were manageable then. There is a power gap now which the Tehran summit has failed to fill. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan effectively disregarded the summit and did not attend. Instead, it expanded relations with India, which further provoked Pakistan.

A temporary ceasefire between the two sides was brokered in October 2025 with the mediation of Qatar and Turkey, but it did not hold. What were the main reasons for its failure?

Well, A mediator must be a country that has potential shared interests with both sides between whom it mediates. Neither Turkey nor Qatar possesses such capacity. They lack serious potential common interests with both parties that could be used as leverage to manage behavior and keep the ceasefire in place. That is the primary reason. Qatar's role was more functional when Afghanistan was under US occupation. Turkey has economic and at times security-related shared interests with Pakistan, but it does not have extensive ties with Afghanistan.

Moreover, other powers and more substantial actors should at least have participated in the mediation process, such

as Iran and India. Had other countries entered the process and a kind of consortium or regional conference been formed for mediation, it might have achieved some success. In its existing form, however, the ceasefire's instability was evident from the outset.

Some Pakistani officials have accused the Taliban of becoming a tool in India's hands. How do you assess India's actual role in this conflict?

The statements made by Pakistani officials are largely propaganda. The claim that Afghanistan has become India's arm is somewhat far-fetched. However, whether India is dissatisfied with the situation—certainly not. Pakistan being preoccupied with its northern borders is entirely desirable from India's perspective.

Besides, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan has now become a group that provides logistical and training services to Baloch separatist groups inside Pakistan, many of which were effectively shaped by the Indian security system known as RAW. Evidence for this claim lies in the similarities that have emerged between the behavior of separatist groups and the TTP, as well as certain statements made in Afghanistan indicating that connections have been established. From these two perspectives, India is benefiting. However, describing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as a mere instrument of India is an exaggeration and appears largely propagandistic.



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