

Iranian FM, Pakistan's top echelon meet amid diplomatic logjam with US



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (3rd L) meets with Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir (3rd R) in Islamabad, Pakistan, on April 25, 2026.
IRNA

International Desk

Iran's top diplomat on Saturday held talks with Pakistani officials amid diplomatic efforts by Islamabad to end the ongoing war between Iran and the United States.

Abbas Araghchi, who arrived in Islamabad on Friday, met with Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

at the prime minister's office where Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir were also present.

The efforts are aimed at launching a new round of talks between Tehran and Washington to end the ongoing aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

Araghchi, who also separately held

a meeting with Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir, said on Telegram that during the meeting he explained Iran's views on ending the war between the Islamic Republic and the US.

Araghchi did not offer further details, but said Tehran will continue engaging in the Pakistani-led mediation efforts "until a result is achieved."

The meetings came as the White House said President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were due to depart for Islamabad on Saturday morning for talks with Araghchi.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters that Iran had a chance to make a "good deal" with the United States.

"Iran knows that they still have an open window to choose wisely," he said. "All they have to do is abandon a nuclear weapon in meaningful and verifiable ways."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei posted on X that Iranian officials did not plan to meet US representatives and that Tehran's concerns would be conveyed to mediator Pakistan.

Washington and Tehran are at a cost-

ly impasse as Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries one-fifth of global oil shipments, while the US blocks Iran's oil exports. The conflict, entering its ninth week, has pushed energy prices to multi-year highs, stoking inflation and darkening global growth prospects.

Trump told Reuters on Friday that Iran planned to make an offer aimed at satisfying US demands but that he did not know what the offer entailed. He declined to say who Washington was negotiating with, "but we're dealing with the people that are in charge now".

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt claimed that the US had seen some progress from the Iranian side in recent days and hoped more would come this weekend, while Vice President JD Vance was ready to travel to Pakistan as well.

Araghchi's visit to Pakistan is part of a three-leg diplomatic tour which will also take him to Oman and Russia.

Iran has refused to participate in the second round due to the US violation of a Pakistan-brokered ceasefire by imposing a blockade on Iran's ports. The visit by the Iranian top diplomat

to Islamabad has raised optimism about the second round of the negotiations after the first round failed to lead to an agreement which could put an end to the tensions in the region which have been caused by the recent US-Israeli aggression against Iran. Iranian officials have blamed the US side for putting forward excessive demands and shifting its position at the negotiating table for the failure of the first negotiations.

The US and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several top military commanders.

Iran's Armed Forces responded with 100 waves of retaliatory strikes under Operation True Promise 4, launching hundreds of ballistic and hypersonic missiles, as well as drones, against American military bases across West Asia and Israeli positions throughout the occupied territories.

On April 8, a ceasefire was brokered by Pakistan between the two sides, though tensions remain high over a US naval blockade and Iran's firm control over the Strait of Hormuz.

Pezeshkian: Enemy plots to spur discontent by striking infrastructure



Masoud Pezeshkian
president.ir

International Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Saturday that the enemy's purpose for targeting infrastructure and imposing blockades on Iran is to create dissatisfaction among the people.

"The enemy plans to turn today's satisfaction of the people into dissatisfaction, and to counter the enemy's plot, we must not allow any grounds for public dissatisfaction to arise," Pezeshkian said during a visit to the country's Interior Ministry.

He also urged people to reduce their use of electricity after American and Israeli strikes damaged the country's energy infrastructure as the government aims to "control consumption"

of electricity.

"Instead of turning on 10 lights at home, turn on two lights. What is wrong with that?" he said.

The US and Israel launched a large-scale and unprovoked war against Iran on February 28, assassinating Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and several high-ranking military commanders despite indirect Tehran-Washington negotiations on Iran's peaceful nuclear program.

During their recent aggression against Iran, the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran's infrastructure and have imposed a blockade on Iran's ports aimed at forcing Tehran to accept their conditions in Pakistan-brokered negotiations.

The attacks began with targeting military bases and residential buildings. However, Iran's non-military infrastructure including communications centers, power plants, refineries, industrial sites, scientific centers and bridges was targeted after the aggressors failed to reach their objectives.

The US has also imposed a naval blockade on Iran's ports and has so

far seized three Iranian commercial vessels.

On April 14, Iran's Ambassador to the UN Amir Saeid Iravani in a letter to the UN chief Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the US move as a flagrant violation of Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity, calling it an illegal act of aggression that threatens regional and international peace and security.

He stressed that the US action constitutes a clear breach of Article 2, paragraph 4, of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force, and represents a textbook example of aggression under international law.

The ambassador added that the illegal blockade also seriously violates the fundamental principles of the international law of the sea.

"By attempting to prevent maritime traffic to and from Iranian ports, the United States is illegally interfering in the exercise of the sovereign rights of the Islamic Republic of Iran and violating the rights of third states and legitimate maritime trade in accordance with international law," the letter stated.

Iran's military warns of decisive response to continued US naval siege

National Desk

Iran's top military command warned that the continued naval "piracy, blockade, and banditry" by American forces in the region will be met with a decisive response from the Iranian Armed Forces.

"If the aggressive US military continues its blockade, piracy, and maritime banditry in the region, they can be certain that they will face the reaction of Iran's powerful Armed Forces," the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters said in statement on Saturday.

The headquarters emphasized that Iran's military possesses "greater strength and readiness" than before to defend the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national interests.

It reminded Washington that parts of the US military had already experienced Iran's offensive power and capabilities during the latest US-Israeli aggression against Iran, which began on February 28.

The statement further declared the country's resolve to monitor enemy movements in the region while maintaining full control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

"We are ready and determined to inflict even more severe losses on American-Zionist aggressors in the event of any new violation," the statement added. Spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry Reza Talei Nik said on Saturday that the "enemy, whose objective of crippling Iran's missile and military capabilities has failed, is now seeking an honorable exit from the quagmire of war."

"Iran is today in firm control of the Strait of Hormuz," he added.

Talei Nik also said stressed that a significant portion of Iran's missile capabilities remains unused.

Tensions have been running high over a so-called naval blockade the US has enforced on Iranian ports and ships as well as American attempts to conduct mine-sweeping operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iranian officials have said the blockade is unlawful and a breach of a ceasefire that took effect on April 8 and was again unilaterally extended by US President Doland Trump hours before it was set to expire on April 22.

Iran says it will not accept diktats or conditions imposed by the United States and will not negotiate under the shadow of threats.

Hezbollah says ceasefire 'meaningless' as Israel's attacks continue in south

International Desk

Lebanon's Hezbollah said a US-mediated ceasefire in the war with Israel was meaningless a day after it was extended for three weeks, as Lebanese authorities reported two people killed by an Israeli strike.

US President Donald Trump announced the three-week extension on Thursday after hosting Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors at the White House. The ceasefire agreement between the governments of Lebanon and Israel had been due to expire on Sunday, Reuters reported.

While the ceasefire has led to a significant reduction in hostilities, Israel and Hezbollah have continued to trade blows in southern Lebanon, where Israel has kept soldiers in a self-declared "buffer zone".

Responding to the extension, Hezbollah



REUTERS

lawmaker Ali Fayyad said "it is essential to point out that the ceasefire is meaningless in light of Israel's insistence on hostile acts, including assassinations, shelling, and gunfire" and its demolition of villages and towns in the south.

"Every Israeli attack ... gives the resistance the right to a proportionate response," he added.

Hezbollah is not a party to the ceasefire agreement, and has strongly objected to Lebanon's face-to-face contacts with Israel.

The April 16 agreement does not re-

quire Israeli troops to withdraw from the belt of southern Lebanon seized during the war. The zone extends 5 to 10 km (3 to 6 miles) into Lebanon.

Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel reignited on March 2, when the group opened fire in support of Iran in the regional war. The ceasefire in Lebanon emerged separately from Washington's efforts to resolve its conflict with Tehran, though Iran had called for Lebanon to be included in any broader truce.

Nearly 2,500 people have been killed in Lebanon since March 2, the Lebanese Health Ministry says.

Lebanon's Health Ministry said an Israeli airstrike killed two people in the southern village of Touloun on Friday. Hezbollah also shot down an Israeli drone, the group and the Israeli military said. Hezbollah identified it as a Hermes 450 and said it had downed it with a surface-to-air missile.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON

