

ICJ's Myanmar finding shifts dial on grounds for guilty verdict in genocide case

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President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in the holy city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran, on November 25, 2026.
president.ir

Iran attacks highlight need for new IAEA mechanisms

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INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

As a member of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran has maintained close cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). However, US-Israeli attacks on its nuclear facilities have complicated matters, with Tehran making an end to hostilities, the removal of military threats and credible guarantees preconditions for full cooperation. Speaking to Iran Daily, international affairs expert Hanif Ghafari said the attacks had underscored the need for the IAEA to develop supplementary mechanisms for responding swiftly to attacks, conducting independent safety assessments, protecting nuclear materials and personnel, and ensuring that inspection data is not used for future threats or targeting.



Hanif Ghafari

IRAN DAILY: What approach couldv be adopted to manage the current dispute in a way that both safeguards Iran's nuclear rights and prevents the emergence of a new consensus against the country at the IAEA Board of Governors or the UN Security Council?

GHAFARI: First, I must stress that since Rafael Grossi took office as director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, he has turned this ostensibly international organization into a platform for completing the puzzle of the United States' maximum pressure strategy against Iran. Under these circumstances, Iran's cooperation with the agency beyond its safeguards obligations has been suspended, given the IAEA's politicized conduct, the recent war and the agency's complementary role in aligning itself with the United States.

Clearly, the continuation of safeguards cooperation also requires compliance with protocols tailored to the emergency and security conditions prevailing in our country. In other words, the agency cannot expect Iran to behave like an ordinary member under normal, peacetime conditions. We should not forget that the involvement of the IAEA director general and the Board of Governors in the security crisis created against our country leaves no room for the agency to make one-sided demands.

Iran has not withdrawn from the NPT. However, because of the current state of neither war nor peace, which has yet to come to an end, as well as its concerns over the IAEA's negative and politicized conduct toward the country, Iran has imposed certain restrictions on its relations with the agency, particularly regarding access.

The way to manage differences over safeguards cooperation is for the IAEA to take into account the extraordinary and wartime context. Such efforts must be shaped in line with Iran's security considerations. Iran is a member of the NPT and pursues its safeguards commitments within that framework. However, the current circumstances cannot be considered normal. When a country's nuclear facilities have come under attack and the possibility of further military threats remains, the way cooperation is carried out must also take this state of emergency into account.

As a first step, a clear distinction can be drawn between safeguards obligations and cooperation beyond those obligations. Beyond-safeguards cooperation, including access that goes beyond legally binding commitments, should remain suspended under the current circumstances. However, regarding safeguards obligations, there is room for discussions on special technical and safety arrangements.

In this regard, it is also necessary to ensure that safeguards confidentiality is upheld for our country. Such cooperation must take place within a reciprocal framework and should not be interpreted as acceptance of normal conditions or disregard for existing security threats.

What legal, political and security implications would Iran face if it agreed to the IAEA's request to resume inspections and access to nuclear facilities, as opposed to withholding such access?

Unfortunately, the political conduct of Grossi and the Board of Governors has led Iran to conclude that even if safeguards cooperation takes place, it will not be reflected in the IAEA director general's quarterly reports or help prevent the Board of Governors from pursuing decisions that are entirely devoid of a legal basis.

Continued monitoring of nuclear materials and activities covered by the safeguards agreement could prevent further uncertainty about their status. However, agreeing to limited access as part of broader cooperation should not be taken to mean that security conditions and the risks arising from the recent attacks can be ignored.

Protecting sensitive information and preventing inspection data from being exploited for security purposes are of fundamental importance to Iran. From a legal standpoint, too, a distinction must be made between suspending cooperation beyond safeguards obligations and restricting the implementation of safeguards commitments. The legal consequences of these two are not the same, and not every restriction can automatically be considered a breach of obligations.

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