



IRGC: Drills forced Israelis to halt empty anti-Iran threats

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EXCLUSIVE 6 Iran is a land that cannot be unloved

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Iran seeks guarantees new sanctions won't be imposed after JCPOA revival: FM

France: Parties can reach deal

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Iran seeks assurances at ongoing talks with world powers in Vienna that no sanctions will be imposed on the country when they are removed.

"We demand guarantees that include not imposing any new sanctions, and not reimposing sanctions after lifting them under any pretext," Amir-Abdollahian told Al Jazeera in an exclusive interview aired on Thursday.

An eighth round of negotiations between Iran and other signatories to the landmark 2015 nuclear deal – France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China (P4+1) – is underway in the Austrian capital in order to restore the tattered pact from which former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew in 2018 and reinstated and reinforced sanctions on Iran.

The US, which is taking part in the talks indirectly, wants to rejoin the deal, known as the JCPOA.

Iran demands the complete lifting of US sanctions, as well as guarantees that the US will not pull out of the accord again. It also wants a period of time to be given to verify that sanctions are effectively lifted.

Amir-Abdollahian said an agreement can be reached to revive the JCPOA if Western parties have the will and intention to do so.

"The eighth round of Vienna talks is on the right path ... [and] achieving a good agreement is possible if the Western sides show serious determination," the top diplomat said.

"Lifting sanctions means lifting all forms of sanctions stipulated in the nuclear agreement, and the sanctions that Trump reimposed contradict the terms of the agreement," he added.

The Iranian official said the most "practical model" for the removal of sanctions would be when it comes to Iran exporting oil and obtaining revenues through the country's own banking system.

"There's an informal and an indirect exchange of message with the Americans in Vienna – we hear good words from that delegation, but what is important to us is to see practical and serious American actions," said Amir-Abdollahian.

Progress in Vienna talks

France's foreign minister said on Friday progress has been made regarding the Vienna talks although time is running out.

"I remain convinced we can reach a deal. Bits of progress have been made in the last few days," Jean-Yves Le Drian told BFM TV and RMC Radio, according to Reuters.

"We have been heading in a positive direction in the last few days, but time is of the essence, because if we don't get an accord quickly, there will be nothing to negotiate."

Western diplomats have indicated they are hoping to have a breakthrough by the end of January or early February. Iran has rejected any deadline imposed by Western powers.



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Iran bids farewell to 250 unidentified martyrs of imposed war

Leader pays tribute to martyrs

Iranians held large funeral processions nationwide for 250 unidentified martyrs of the war imposed by the former Iraqi regime on the Islamic Republic in the 1980s.

Out of the 250 martyrs, whose remains had been newly recovered, 150 were laid to rest in Tehran Province and the remaining in 24 other Iranian provinces.

Thursday's ceremonies, coinciding with the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Fatima (PBUH), the daughter of Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), marked the largest such event in recent years.

From outside of University of Tehran, trucks piled high with flag-draped coffins made their way through the streets

of the capital. Men and women in black thronged the coffins, many weeping for those lost in the bloody war started by Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein and his Baath Party in 1980 less than two years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The war ended in 1988 with a cease-fire deal, with the Iraqi dictator failing to achieve any of his goals and Iran not conceding an inch of its territory, Press TV wrote.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranians lost their lives or went missing during

the war.

Over the years, the Islamic Republic has carried out numerous search operations to recover the remains of its fallen soldiers.

'Well-known in heavens'

In a message, Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei paid tribute to the martyrs and said the coincidence of the funerals with the martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Fatima (PBUH) "brings

the good news that their memory will last forever".

"Peace be upon the unknown martyrs; those unknown among the earth's inhabitants but well-known in the heavens," the Leader said.

"I send my greetings to the pure souls of these martyrs and to the waiting eyes and hearts of their fathers, mothers and wives, and I pray for God's ever-increasing grace and mercy for all of them," Ayatollah Khamenei added.

Speaking at the event in Tehran, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf praised the bravery of the martyrs during the war, which is known as "the Sacred Defense".

Kazakh president gives shoot-to-kill order to restore calm, vows to destroy 'armed bandits' Iran calls for peaceful settlement amid protests over fuel prices

Kazakhstan's president on Friday rejected calls for talks with protesters after days of unprecedented unrest, vowing to destroy "armed bandits" and authorizing security forces to shoot to kill without warning.

He said earlier that order had mostly been restored across the country, after protests this week over fuel prices escalated into widespread violence, especially in main city Almaty.

"Terrorists continue to damage property... and use weapons against civilians. I have given the order to law enforcement to shoot to kill without warning," President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said in his third televised address to the nation this week, AFP reported.

He dismissed calls from abroad for negotiations as "nonsense".

"We are dealing with armed and trained bandits, both local and foreign. With bandits and terrorists. So they must be destroyed. This will be done shortly."

Call for peaceful resolution

Iran said on Thursday it was closely monitoring the developments in Kazakhstan.

"We believe that the wise government and nation of the friendly, brotherly and neighborly country can resolve their problems and disputes peacefully and through dialogue, without foreign interference and based on their own national interests," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. He also cautioned Kazakhstan against

attempts by foreign parties to exploit the unrest and meddle in the country's affairs.

Long seen as one of the most stable of the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia, energy-rich Kazakhstan is facing its biggest crisis in decades.

Protesters stormed government buildings in Almaty on Wednesday and fought running battles with police and



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the military, with officials saying 748 security officers were wounded and 18 killed.

Tokayev said Almaty had been attacked by "20,000 bandits" with a "clear plan of attack, coordination of actions and high combat readiness."

He gave his "special thanks" to Russian President Vladimir Putin after the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) sent troops to Kazakhstan to help quell the unrest.

The Interior Ministry said Friday that security forces had taken all the country's regions "under increased protection" and that 26 "armed criminals" had been killed and 18 wounded in the un-

rest.

Tokayev earlier declared a nationwide state of emergency and appealed for help from the CSTO, which includes five other ex-Soviet states, to combat what he called "terrorist groups" that had "received extensive training abroad".

Local media reports said late on Thursday that security forces had cleared demonstrators from the square and other key government buildings.

The first units of Russian forces from the Russia-led peacekeeping force had arrived in Kazakhstan, the Russian Defense Ministry said, after Tokayev appealed for assistance on Wednesday.

It marked the alliance's first major joint action since its founding in 1999.

Russia said it saw the unrest as "an attempt inspired from outside to undermine the security and integrity" of Kazakhstan.

The Interior Ministry said Thursday it had detained about 2,300 people.

Officials said more than 1,000 people had been wounded in the unrest, with nearly 400 admitted to hospital and more than 60 in intensive care.

Protests spread across the nation of 19 million this week in outrage over a New Year increase in prices for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), which is used to fuel many cars in the country.

Thousands took to the streets in Almaty and in the western province of Mangystau, saying the price rise was unfair given oil and gas exporter Kazakhstan's vast energy reserves.

Iran says daily COVID death toll below 20 after 22 months

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Iran urges South Korea to release frozen funds regardless of Vienna talks

International Desk

Top negotiator Ali Baqeri Kani on Thursday urged South Korea to release Iran's frozen funds and not to await the outcome of ongoing talks in Vienna for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Whatever the result of the negotiations in Vienna, the South Korean government has a duty to unblock Iran's frozen funds, and the unilateral American sanctions cannot justify non-payment of these debts," Baqeri Kani told South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun in the Austrian capital, according to IRNA.

He also underlined that South Korea's "unjustifiable" refusal to repay its debts to Iran would be "a dark spot in the history of relations between the two countries", adding that Seoul should act as soon as possible to unfreeze Iran's assets.

Last year Iran warned that it would take legal action unless South Korea released more than \$8 billion in frozen funds for oil shipments.

Iran had been one of South Korea's main suppliers of crude before the 2018 US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement and the reimposition of sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Iranian authorities have said on several occasions that they expect South Korea to do more on the release of the assets blocked at two South Korean banks under the pretext of the United States' sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

The meeting between Iran's deputy foreign minister and his South Korean counterpart was not directly linked to

the negotiations underway in Vienna to restore the nuclear agreement, JCPOA, and took place at the request of South Korea.

Pointing to the significance of Seoul-Tehran relations, Choi, for his part, offered explanations about Iran's blocked funds in South Korea and said his country is making efforts to repay its debt to Iran.

In a tweet on Thursday, Choi said he "had a good meeting" with Baqeri Kani in Vienna.

"We exchanged views on our bilateral relationship including the frozen fund," he said, AFP reported. "Korea and Iran will work together and preserve our historically important relationship."

'Urgent manner'

In a statement on Tuesday, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said its delegation aimed to "explore ways to resolve the issue of frozen Iranian assets in Korea on the sidelines" of the nuclear talks.

Choi and Baqeri Kani "agreed that the release of the frozen assets should take place in an urgent manner," the statement said.

"The two sides agreed to hold working-level talks between experts to discuss technical issues related to the transfer of the frozen assets."

In addition to consultations with Iran, this would involve "close coordination and communication" with the US, European Union, France, Germany and Britain, the South Korean statement said.

France, Germany and the UK are participating in the talks about the 2015 deal, along with Russia and China, while the US is indirectly involved.



Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Baqeri Kani (R) and South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choi Jong-kun fist-bump after a meeting in Vienna, Austria, on January 6, 2022. TWITTER