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## Senior Cleric Warns Iran Against Joining FATF

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Tehran's Friday prayers leader Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Movahedi Kermani warned against Iran joining the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), saying it would subject the country and the resistance front in the region to even harsher U.S. sanctions.

The FATF, founded by some countries like the U.S. and Britain 30 years ago in Paris, purports to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism, however, it is a tool of the U.S. government to make sanctions on Iran and the resistance movement even more poignant, Ayatollah Movahedi Kermani told worshippers.

The cleric went on to say that a U.S. Treasury official had admitted that the FATF is needed to put pressure on Iran and subject it to more suffering.

Earlier this month, Iran's Guardian Council said despite a recent

parliamentary amendment to an FATF clause, other problems of the regulation still remain.

The council's spokesman Abbasali Kadkhodaei said most of the bill's items are still contrary to the Iranian constitution and religious principles.

According to the Financial Action Task Force, Iran had until October to complete reforms that would "bring it into line with global norms or face consequences".

To fulfill FATF requirements, the Rouhani administration has proposed four bills to the parliament for approval, two of which are still undecided, including the Palermo Convention.

Iran's parliament in May adopted new amendments proposed by the government to the country's anti-money laundering (AML) law as part of efforts to improve connections to the international banking and trade system.

# U.S. Begins Prosecution of Press TV Journalist



This file photo shows American-born news anchor Marziyeh Hashemi at a studio in Tehran.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- An American journalist working for Iran's Press TV was to appear in a U.S. court on Friday after being detained without any explanation, the channel reported.

Iran has called for the immediate release of TV anchor and documentary film maker Marziyeh Hashemi, who was arrested on Sunday by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) at St. Louis Lambert International Airport.

The broadcaster on Wednesday quoted Hashemi's son as saying that the 59-year-old journalist, who had been living in Iran for more than a decade, was detained as a "material witness" to a criminal case and no formal charges had been made against her.

U.S. Federal law allows the government to arrest and detain a witness if it can prove that their testimony is material to a criminal proceeding and that it cannot guarantee their presence through a subpoena.

Hashemi was born Melanie Franklin in New Orleans and changed her name after converting to Islam. She had traveled to the United States to visit her ill brother, the channel said.

She has told her daughter that she was handcuffed and shackled and was being treated like a criminal. The journalist has also said U.S. prison wardens forcibly removed

her hijab and photographed her without a headscarf.

Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif condemned the arrest a "violation of freedom of speech and unacceptable".

"She is the wife of an Iranian citizen and we see it as our duty to defend the rights of our citizens" Zarif told Iran's Arabic-language state broadcaster Al-Alam news channel.

In a statement on Friday, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called on the Justice Department to disclose the reason for Hashemi's arrest.

Tensions have been high between Iran and the United States since U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of an international nuclear deal and reimpose sanctions on Tehran.

Suzanne Nossel, CEO of the PEN America group promoting literature and free expression, said she is concerned Hashemi might have been targeted for her documentary work on the Black Lives Matter movement or for political reasons.

"If there are other grounds for Hashemi's detention they must be made clear, otherwise she should be released immediately," Nossel said.

Collin Cavell, former lecturer at the University of Bahrain, said on Friday he suspected either U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

or U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton had ordered the arrest.

Hashemi went to the U.S. "to see her family and everything that she did in the United States was legal unlike American reporters or British reporters who come to Iran, who go and see ministers and who see key political figures," University of Tehran professor Muhammad Marandi told Press TV.

"The United States started the ordeal by detaining Marzieh Hashemi. If this Press TV journalist is not freed immediately, this ordeal will not end when the U.S. government desires," the Iranian parliament speaker's special adviser on international affairs Hussein Amir-Abdollahian tweeted on Friday.

Akbar Muhammad, a spokesperson for prominent Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan, said he planned to travel to Washington and speak to those who have caused this ordeal.

"A demonstration will be held on Friday and a women's march is planned for Saturday," he said.

University of Tehran professor and international relations expert Foad Izadi said Press TV's television programs are not accessible in the U.S. because of a government ban on the channel but Hashemi's detention and the subsequent media outcry have made many Americans aware of the channel and here activities over the past years.

The Holy Qur'an



Allah hath promised to Believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of Allah, that is the supreme felicity.  
The Holy Qur'an (9:72)

### PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	12:15
Evening (Maghreb)	17:37
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	05:45
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	07:12

## Gazans Get New Homes Built With Iran Funds

GAZA (Dispatches) -- Hamas said Thursday it had allocated new homes funded by Iran in Gaza to Palestinian former prisoners who had been held in Israeli jails.

The Prisoners Ministry said 26 apartments in a new building in southern Gaza had been given out in a lottery between 125 Palestinian former prisoners.

Officials from Hamas said the program was the first of its kind funded by Iran. A second building will be constructed in northern Gaza, the ministry said, adding the project aimed to "reduce the suffering of our freed prisoners."

Iran has long been a strong backer of Hamas and its ally, Islamic Jihad, providing them moral support.

In the summer of 2017, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh thanked Iran for its support of the Palestinians. In October, deputy Hamas leader Salah al-Aruri led a delegation to Iran.

In December of 2018, senior Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar and a delegation of Hamas leaders visited Tehran.

The delegation met with Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, who predicted that widespread corruption will annihilate the Zionist regime, while also praising Palestinian "resistance" against Israel.

Around 6,500 Palestinians are currently in Zionist prisons, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club.

## FM Zarif on Bolton: 'Same Bull, Same Bully'

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif on Friday compared U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton's war-mongering remarks 10 years ago with those of today, calling him the "same bully".

"Same bull. Same bully. Same delusion," Zarif said on his Twitter account.

The tweet came after recent reports that Bolton had asked the Pentagon to prepare plans for a U.S. military strike against Iran in September.

Bolton made the request after a mortar attack at Baghdad's diplomatic quarter, which houses the U.S. embassy, according to a report by the Wall Street Journal.

Tensions between Iran and the U.S. have escalated since U.S. President Donald Trump walked away from the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers in May and reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Zarif, who paid an extended tour of Iraq this week, responded to his American counterpart on Thursday, saying the United States has no right to interfere in bilateral relations between Tehran and Baghdad.

U.S. Secretary of State visited Iraq on January 9, telling Iraqi leaders that Iran's influence must be reduced in the country.

Zarif told reporters in Najaf that Iran's relations with Iraq

are much older than the United States, according to IRNA.

Iran's foreign minister also expressed optimism about the future of political and economic relations with Iraq, saying relations will be "brilliant".

Iraq purchases a large quantity of Iranian fuel to generate electricity and the U.S. has extended a waiver from sanctions allowing Baghdad to continue imports from Iran.

It is a delicate balancing act for Washington to maintain good relations with Iraq but gradually put pressure on Baghdad for reduction of relations with Iran.

Zarif arrived in Iraq on Sunday for talks with senior officials in Baghdad and the country's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region on ways to enhance cooperation in different areas, over a year after Iraq managed to clear its entire soil of Daesh terrorists with Iran's assistance.

"Honored to be in Najaf and Karbala: home of the Sacred Shrines. Moved by people's sentiments. As brave Iranian youth stood with Iraqi brothers in fight against extremist terror, our private sectors will stand together in mutually beneficial endeavors to improve the lives of all," he tweeted.

He described his trip to Iraq as his "lengthiest ever" to a foreign country, hailing it as a sign of "special relations" between the two nations. "I can confidently

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## Azerbaijan, Iran to Strengthen Military Ties

BAKU (Dispatches) -- Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Muhammad Baqeri said here Thursday the Islamic Republic is resolved to strengthen its military ties with Azerbaijan Republic.

The top general, who was heading a top military delegation to Azerbaijan, made the remarks in a meeting with Azerbaijan's parliament speaker Ogtay Asadov.

During the meeting, the Iranian military commander called for strengthening of ties with Azerbaijan in all areas as he underlined the need for peaceful resolution of regional disputes and protection of Iranian borders and expressed the Islamic Republic's support for Azerbaijan's sovereignty.

"Today the development of mutual ties between Iran and Azerbaijan is highly significant," he said.

Asadov described the ties between Iran and Azerbaijan as friendly and said there are lots of commonalities between the two sides. "There are appropriate grounds for strengthening mutual ties based on good faith and common values," he said.

Asadov reminded that the presidents of Iran and Azerbaijan have made 12 reciprocal visits to Tehran and Baku and held extensive talks on mutual interests in the past five years.

"The high-level talks have had positive effects on the two sides' relations so much so that the trade volume of the two sides increased from \$257 million in 2017 to \$400 million in the first nine months of 2018," he noted.

Asadov expressed hope that the operation of the International North-South Transport Corridor would help the two sides further develop their trade ties.

On Wednesday, Baqeri and Azerbaijan's Defense Minister Zakir Hasanov signed an agreement aimed at boosting defense and military cooperation between the two neighbors.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, Baqeri said both sides explored ways to bolster bilateral defense ties during the meeting.

He said Iran reiterated its support for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and underlined the need for expanding cooperation in the fields of logistics and training as well as an exchange of military experiences.

Hasanov said the two sides discussed "highly important" issues. He also expressed confidence that the visit would further enhance "bilateral military cooperation to the highest level."