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FM Amir-Abdollahian Tells Spanish Counterpart: Iran, One of Strongest Democracies in West Asia



Ebrahim Raisi attends a rally in Tehran in April 2017.

TEHRAN – The Iranian foreign minister has dismissed as unacceptable any European interference in the country's domestic affairs, saying Iran has one of the strongest democracies in the West Asia region.

Hussein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone conversation with his Spanish counterpart José Manuel Albares on Thursday, during which the two top diplomats exchanged views on issues of mutual interest.

Amir-Abdollahian censured Western governments for the revocation of the Islamic Republic's membership in the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) earlier in the month, and said the move revealed attempts aimed at destroying the opportunity for dialogue.

"In our region, Iran has one of the strongest democracies, and it is not acceptable for us that Europe tends to see a lopsided view of events

and continues to interfere" in Iran's internal affairs, Amir-Abdollahian added.

The top Iranian diplomat also congratulated the Spanish government and people on the New Year, expressing hope that 2023 will be a year filled with peace and stability for all people around the world as well as prospects for further development of Iran's relations with Spain.

The Spanish foreign minister, for his part, expressed his views on issues of mutual interest and congratulated Iranian Christians on the New Year.

Albares stressed that Madrid will make every effort to continue negotiations and develop ties with Iran.

On December 14, Iran was ousted from the UN Commission on the Status of Women following a draft proposal by the United States over what it claimed to be "policies contrary to the rights of women and

girls" in the country.

Twenty-nine members voted in favor of Iran's expulsion from the United Nations women's body, eight countries voted against and 16 abstained.

Iran censured the move, saying Washington and its allies are "in no position" to advocate women's rights while supporting decades-long Israeli crimes against Palestinian women and children.

Separately on Thursday, Amir-Abdollahian and his Omani counterpart Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi spoke on the phone as they exchanged views on the most important issues of mutual interest.

Discussing the latest regional and international developments, the two top diplomats underlined the need for constant consultations on issues of common concern and matters that fall within the interests of the two countries and regional states.

Envoy: China Respects Iran's Territorial Integrity

TEHRAN – Chinese ambassador to Tehran Chang Hua says Beijing considers ties with Iran "strategic" and "decisively" supports and respects Iran's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"China decisively supports Iran against foreign intervention and for preserving its national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national dignity," the ambassador said during an event in southeastern Iran.

He made the remarks at the inauguration ceremony of the Chinese consulate in Bandar Abbas, southern Iran's Hormozgan Province.

China sees ties with Iran from a strategic point of view, he said, reaffirming Beijing's determination to expand its strategic partnership with Iran based on agreements between leaders of the two countries as well as the 25-year comprehensive cooperation agreement between China and Iran.

The remarks came days after a joint statement by China and states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) made controversial claims about three Iranian islands in the

Persian Gulf.

The statement affirmed support for efforts, including the initiative and endeavors of the United Arab Emirates, to reach a "peaceful solution to the issue of the three islands through bilateral negotiations in accordance with the rule of international law and to resolve this issue in accordance with international legitimacy".

The strategically-positioned islands of Abu Musa, the Lesser Tunb, and the Greater Tunb have always been part of Iran, the proof of which can be corroborated by countless historical, legal, and geographical documents in Iran and other parts of the world.

Tehran has on numerous occasions categorically rejected claims made by other Persian Gulf countries to the three Iranian islands, saying that they definitely belong to Iran and will remain sovereign Iranian territories forever.

Reacting to the statement, Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian last Saturday noted that Iran would never compromise with any country

on the importance of respecting its territorial integrity.

"The islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf are inseparable parts of the pure land of Iran and belong to this motherland forever," he said during the Tehran Dialogue Forum.

On Monday, the minister said that Beijing had corrected "an error" made in the joint statement.

The GCC-China statement has been used as a tool by anti-Iranian media to downplay strategic relations between Iran and China.

The two countries signed a landmark 25-year comprehensive strategic partnership agreement in March 2021 in defiance of the US unilateral sanctions.

The deal officially documents the Sino-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that was announced during a visit by Xi to Tehran in 2016. It sets the outlines of their cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains for the next 25 years.

The Holy Qur'an

And if every soul that has done injustice had all that is in the earth, it would offer it for ransom, and they will manifest regret when they see the chastisement and the matter shall be decided between them with justice and they shall not be dealt with unjustly.

The Holy Qur'an (10:54)

PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	12:04
Evening (Maghreb)	17:17
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	07:12
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	05:42

Tehran Urges Taliban to Remove Ban on Female Students

TEHRAN – Iran has expressed regret about a recent decision by the Taliban-run administration in Afghanistan to close universities to female Afghan students, calling on the de facto government's authorities to reverse the ban.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani made the remarks on Thursday, a day after female university students in Afghanistan were banned entry to campuses following a directive from the Taliban that women would be suspended from higher education across the country until further notice.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a neighbor of Afghanistan which is interested in peace, stability and development in the country, is saddened to hear the news obstacles to girls and women's higher education in Afghanistan," Kanaani said.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran hopes that the relevant authorities in Afghanistan will swiftly remove the obstacles and provide the ground for resuming the education of the country's female pupils and students in all levels so that they can play a more effective role in the development and prosperity of Afghanistan while benefiting from the right to education," he added.

On Thursday, dozens of female students staged a protest near Kabul University in the west of the capital, calling for women and girls' access to education and work.

Students in Nangahar University in eastern Afghanistan also protested and male medical students walked out of exams in protest at their female classmates being excluded.

The de-facto Taliban government's education minister said several issues had prompted the decision, including female students not wearing appropriate attire and interaction between students of different genders.

Warning to Zelensky: Iran's Strategic Patience Not Endless

TEHRAN -- Iran on Thursday hit out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for his continued accusations — backed by the U.S. and Europe — that the Islamic Republic is providing attack drones to Russia for mass use in strikes on Ukraine.

Addressing the U.S. Congress on Wednesday, Zelensky railed at Moscow's increasing use of missiles and drones to target Ukrainian cities out of Russian artillery range.

"Russia found an ally in this, in this genocidal policy: Iran," he said. "Iranian deadly drones sent to Russia in hundreds and hundreds became a threat to our critical infrastructure. That is how one terrorist has found the other."

Responding to Zelensky's "repeated accusations and rude remarks," Iran's foreign ministry again denied supplying drones or other military equipment to Russia for use in Ukraine and asserted that Tehran respects all countries' territorial integrity.

"Mr. Zelensky had better know that Iran's strategic patience over such unfounded accusations is not endless," spokesman Nasser Kanaani was quoted as saying in a ministry statement.

The statement said Kanaani also recommended that Zelensky learn "from the fate of some other political leaders who contented themselves with the U.S. support."

Both the United States and European Union have sanctioned Iranian firms and entities, basely accusing them of being involved in the transfer of drones to Russia.

On Sunday, Kanaani said Iran would not "seek permission from anyone" to expand ties with Russia, dismissing U.S. concerns over a growing military partnership between Tehran and Moscow.

Earlier this month, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Muhammad Reza Ashtiani said Ukrainian experts had failed to produce any evidence for Kiev's claims that Russia has employed Iranian military drones in the war in Ukraine.

He noted that experts from Iran and Ukraine have held a meeting to discuss the allegations.

"In the technical meeting, the Ukrainian side did not present any document about Russia's employment of Iranian drones in the war with that country (Ukraine) and shelved it for the next sessions," the general said.

Intel Ministry Dismantles Four Teams Linked to Mossad

TEHRAN -- Iran's intelligence ministry says it has dismantled four operative teams affiliated with the Israeli spy agency Mossad which were planning to carry out terrorist attacks in some parts of the country.

In a Thursday statement, the ministry said all members of the teams have been arrested.

It added that the criminal Zionist regime has sought to take advantage of the recent riots in Iran and lead operative teams to conduct "hybrid" terrorist operations in the country but all the terrorists have been arrested before any act.

The ministry noted that it has also obtained information about a Mossad ring-leader in one European country, saying more details will be given immediately after the completion of investigation.

The intelligence ministry announced last week that it has identified and arrested members of a spy network who were planning to sabotage the country's defense industry through front companies and security marketing.

Iran's army chief played down Israel's military threats, saying the regime is unable to take an Iranian response to any hostile act that it may carry out given the political tensions it faces inside the occupied territories and its sense of insecurity in the broader region.

Addressing a meeting with senior army commanders, Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi said Iran is closely and constantly monitoring all the enemy's

moves, and that the Armed Forces are fully ready to counter any threat at the earliest.

"We will give a crushing response to any place from which an attack might originate against the security of the Islamic Republic and its interests or help is provided to the Zionist regime," he added.

He said Zionist officials have resorted to saber-rattling following the intensification of political divisions and the emergence of an internal legitimacy crisis, on the one hand, and the feeling of insecurity in the region, on the other.

"The Zionist regime is currently facing a political and security crisis and is under immense internal and external pressures. Corruption as well as financial and morality scandals gripping the regime's officials in addition to insecurity caused [for Israel] by the rising power of Palestinian fighter groups have all put the Zionist regime in a critical situation," Mousavi said.

The army commander added that the internal rift, fear and insecurity have prompted the Israeli rime to step up both violence against the Palestinians and saber-rattling against Iran while being fearful of the Islamic Republic.

The Zionist regime is hated more than ever by the public opinion in the world due to its widespread violations of international law, crimes against the Palestinian people and continuous evil acts in the region, he said.