

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- Iran's permanent mission to the United Nations said Sunday the Islamic Republic might consider holding negotiations only if the objective is to ease concerns about the "potential militarization" of its nuclear program. "If the objective of negotiations is to address concerns regarding any potential militarization of Iran's nuclear program, such discussions may be subject to consideration," the mission said in a statement on X on Sunday. "Should the aim be the dismantlement of Iran's peaceful nuclear program to claim that what Obama failed to achieve has now been accomplished, such negotiations will never take place," it added.

TEHRAN -- The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says it has disbanded two takfiri terrorist teams in Sistan-and-Baluchestan province, southeast Iran. In a statement, the Quds Headquarters of the IRGC Ground Force said the two teams comprising nine terrorists were identified in the south of the province before they could carry out any sabotage act. A sizable amount of ammunition was seized from the takfiri terrorists as well, it added. According to the announcement, the terrorist groups were dismantled as part of an ongoing large-scale counterterrorism operation that was launched in November 2024.

Viewpoint

Israel's Atomic Arsenal Taboo for IAEA Inspectors

'Prophet Moses' Attracts Visitors at Qur'an Exhibition



Iran Advance to Final of Futsal Tournament in Brazil



Yemen Warns Israel of 'Blockade' If It Ignores Ultimatum on Gaza



Iran, China, Russia Begin Naval Drill

TEHRAN — The navies of Iran, Russia and China will hold military drills off the coast of Iran this week in a bid to boost cooperation, reports said on Sunday.

The three countries, which share a common desire to counter U.S. hegemony, have held similar exercises in the region in recent years.

The drills "will begin on Monday in the port of Chabahar," located in southeast Iran on the Gulf of Oman, the Tasnim news agency said.

"Warships and combat and support vessels of the Chinese and Russian naval forces, as well as the warships of Iran's naval forces of the army and the Revolutionary Guards" are expected to participate, according to Tasnim.

The exercises will take place "in the northern Indian Ocean" and aim to "strengthen security in the region and expand multilateral cooperation between participating countries," Tasnim said.

China's defense ministry said the exercises, called Security Belt 2025, aim to "deepen military mutual trust and pragmatic cooperation among the participating

countries' troops".

The drills will incorporate training courses including maritime target strike, VBSS (visit, board, search, and seizure), damage control and joint search and rescue operations, the ministry added.

Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka will attend as observers.

China will deploy "a destroyer and a supply ship," its defense ministry said on the WeChat social media network.

The Security Belt-2025 will be the fifth China-Iran-Russia joint naval exercise since 2019.

The Iranian army conducted drills in the same area in February to "strengthen defense capabilities against any threat."

China played a key role in rekindling diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that Tehran will not be "bullied" into negotiations, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump said he had sent a letter to the country's top authority to negotiate a nuclear deal.

People in Damascus Protest Massacre of Alawites



This combo shows people protesting the massacre of civilians by Syria's new rulers in Damascus.

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) — HTS militants of Syria's interim rulers on Sunday fired in the air to disperse those who had gathered here to mourn dead civilians, following the mass killings of Alawites.

The incident came after raids by HTS militants and takfiri terrorists in Syria's Alawite heartland that saw hundreds killed, according to a war monitor, in attacks targeting the religious minority.

Activists had called for a silent protest in Damascus "to mourn

the souls of the civilians and the martyrs among the security forces".

Hundreds gathered for the demonstration, some raising signs saying "Syrian lives are not cheap", before they were confronted by pro-takfiri elements who chanted anti-Alawite slogans and called for a takfiri state.

Bilal Abdullah, 37, said he joined that demonstration to mourn the souls of the martyrs who were killed recently on the coast and in the countryside.

Over the past three days, more than 1,000 people were killed in Syria's coastal region, according to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR).

According to SOHR, 231 HTS members and 250 fighters loyal for the former government were killed. The observatory also said HTS militants and allied terrorist groups killed 830 Alawite civilians in the provinces of Latakia and Tartus.

The violence against Alawites is the most brutal since takfiri-

linked groups toppled President Bashar al-Assad on December 8 following a foreign-backed lightning offensive.

An eyewitness near the Datour neighborhood of Latakia, who did not wish to give her real name, said that armed men went from house-to-house.

"My friend's fiance from Baniyas was shot. They didn't let anyone help him, so he died from the bleeding. They still haven't been able to bury him," the eyewitness told Middle East Eye.

"My aunt, in the village of Bustan al-Basha, all her neighbors were killed."

The eyewitness said "terrorist groups" searched their home too. A total of 20 cars were taken from the neighborhood. "Anyone who tries to leave or looks suspicious gets killed."

Some civilians managed to flee to Latakia's Russian-run Hmeimim airbase, but terrorist groups were waiting for them at checkpoints.

"The first question asked at the checkpoints is whether we are Alawite," said the eyewitness.

Another eyewitness, who also did not give her name for security reasons, is from Latakia but currently lives in Germany. Her family lives in Baniyas, in Tartous.

"I almost lost them, but now they've moved to Parmaya, where they found bodies in the fields,"

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Iraq Faces Energy Crisis as U.S. Bans Iran Gas Imports

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) -- Iraq has no immediate alternatives to compensate for the energy imported from Iran, which will cause a significant problem in providing enough electricity to meet domestic consumption, especially in the summer, three energy officials, quoted by Reuters, said on Sunday.

"Government has started to implement urgent measures to reduce the impact of the U.S. decision on Iraq power supply," one senior electricity ministry official told the news agency.

The Trump administration rescinded a waiver on Saturday that had allowed Iraq to pay Iran for electricity, as part of President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran, a State Department spokesperson said.

"We urge the Iraqi government to eliminate its dependence on Iranian sources of energy as soon as possible," the U.S. embassy in Baghdad said in a statement.

Despite its oil and gas wealth, Iraq has suffered from decades of electricity shortages because of war and has become heavily

reliant on imported Iranian gas as well as electricity imported directly from Iran to meet its electricity needs.

Power outages are common, especially in the scorching summer months. Many Iraqis have to rely on diesel generators or suffer through temperatures that exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

The waiver that expired applied to direct electricity imports. It remains unclear whether Iraq will be able to continue to import gas from Iran for its power plants.

The U.S. embassy statement asserted that electricity imports from Iran were only 4% of electricity consumption in Iraq

But a spokesperson for Iraq's Ministry of Electricity, Ahmad Moussa, said that should gas imports also be forbidden it "would cause Iraq to lose more than 30% of its electricity energy" and that the government is looking for alternatives.

A senior official in the electricity ministry, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly,

said the ministry had not yet been officially notified of the U.S. decision regarding gas imports. He said Iraq could lose about 8,000 megawatts of energy from power stations operating on Iranian gas and another 500 megawatts of electricity supplied directly by Iran.

There are some 7.5 billion euros in an Iraqi bank account set aside as payment for Iranian gas and about 6.5 billion euros have already been disbursed since the beginning of the year, the official said. The funds are limited in how they can be used and are only released when Iran needs to purchase food, medicine or other humanitarian supplies.

The cancellation of the waiver comes as part of a U.S. campaign of aggressive sanctions against Iran. Trump has mainly pledged to crack down on Iranian oil shipments.

Tehran has blasted Washington for expressing a willingness to hold nuclear negotiations and, at the same time, resuming a full-fledged economic war against the country.

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All Flights Cancelled at Hamburg Airport Amid Strike

BERLIN (NY Times) -- The airport in Hamburg, Germany's second largest city, said it had canceled all flights on Sunday because of a one-day strike over pay by ground staff called by a labor union that started its action earlier than expected without little warning.

The airport had been expected to carry more than 40,000 passengers on Sunday, with 144 arrival flights and 139 departures, but only 10 flights took place before the strike took hold at 6.30 a.m. local time, Hamburg Airport said in a statement, which directed stranded passengers to contact their airlines. The airport said the strike, called by the labor union Verdi, had begun "without any notice" during a busy holiday.

"The union is paralyzing the airport and without notice right at the beginning of Hamburg's spring break," Katja Bromm, head of communications at the airport, said in a statement. The airport mainly serves European destinations.

The union, which represents public-sector service workers, said it had brought the strike forward by a day and minimized warning of the start time to maximize the pressure on the employer and to prevent the airport from bringing in nonunion workers.

"We are very much aware that this strike may have hit families who have saved money to go on holiday, but the employer has left us no other choice," said Lars Stubbe, the Hamburg representative of Verdi.

The strike at Hamburg is the first of more than a dozen planned actions at airports across Germany on Monday, including at the country's busiest airports, Frankfurt, Munich and Berlin Brandenburg, Stubbe said.

Around 510,000 people will be affected by the strike on Monday, with more than 3,400 flights canceled, according to A.D.V., the association of Germany's airport operators, German news media reported. The latest strike represents an escalation after Verdi, the full name of which

is the Unified Services Union, staged walkouts in February.

Stubbe said that its strikes aimed to increase pressure on employers over stalled collective bargaining talks to improve conditions for more than 25,000 employees in the aviation security sector. Among the union's demands are 30 days of vacation, additional vacation for shift work and an increase in the annual bonus. The next round of talks is scheduled for later this month.

The strikes come amid what is effectively an economic crisis in Germany, traditionally Europe's powerhouse. The country's economy shrank slightly last year and it has recovered less well from the pandemic than most of its European peers and the United States.

The centrist conservative party, the Christian Democrats, secured the most votes in a parliamentary election last month in a rebuke to the country's left-leaning government for its handling of the economy and immigration.