

**Pezeshkian: State Affairs Not Tied to Nuclear Talks**

TEHRAN — President Masoud Pezeshkian said here Wednesday that indirect negotiations between Iran and the United States is progressing in a normal and routine manner, without delaying or hindering the country's affairs.

Addressing a cabinet session, Pezeshkian said the Iranian nation would certainly welcome if the talks yield an agreement. "Not even for a second have the country's affairs been delayed due to these negotiations," he added. Pezeshkian thanked Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who emphasized on Tuesday that the nation's affairs must not be tied to talks with the U.S.

**IRGC Chief Hails IRGC-Army Strategic Partnership**

TEHRAN — The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Chief Major General Hussein Salami on Wednesday described the Iranian Army and IRGC as a strong fortress to defend the country.

Salami said the strategic partnership between the two forces has strengthened the country's defense capabilities and frustrated Iran's enemies, who are against Iran's independence and progress. The Iranian Army has evolved into a modern, formidable, and effective force, demonstrating a clear and precise understanding of defense needs and excelling in deterrence and combat readiness, he added.


**Viewpoint**

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## Role of Arab Monarchies in Israeli Genocide

LONDON (The Cradle) -- The Persian Gulf states' silence – and in many cases, complicity – during Israel's ongoing war on Gaza has not come as a shock. These governments, long detached from the Palestinian struggle, have for years cultivated warm, if discreet, ties with Tel Aviv.

While Bahrain and the UAE made normalization of ties with Tel Aviv official through the U.S.-brokered 2020 Abraham Accords, other states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar have played quieter but equally pivotal roles. Riyadh, often described as the architect behind normalization, and Doha, hiding behind its "mediator" label, have each aided the occupation state in crucial ways.

Though much of this assistance remains behind the scenes, it has been repeatedly acknowledged by U.S. and Israeli officials. During his first term, U.S. President Donald Trump once warned that "Israel would be in big trouble without Saudi Arabia," while Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Arab leaders now view Israel "not as their enemy, but their greatest ally," adding that they "want to see us defeat Hamas."

Such statements offer a glimpse into the vast, opaque network of regional cooperation propping up the occupation state's war machine.

Despite overwhelming popular support throughout the Arab world for Palestine, and growing calls for grassroots boycotts, Persian Gulf-Israeli trade has only surged. The UAE now ranks as Israel's top Arab trade partner, while Bahrain's commerce with Tel Aviv spiked by a staggering 950 percent during the first 10 months of the Gaza war.

Even amid war and boycott efforts, "kosher-certified" goods from Arab countries continue to enter Israeli markets. UAE-based brands like Al Barakah Dates and Hunter Foods, along with Saudi Arabia's Durra (a sugar supplier), have maintained trade channels.

Qatar has exported crude materials for plastics used in Israeli industries. Bahrain went so far as to officially recognize goods produced in illegal West Bank settlements as Israeli in origin.

More insidiously, Persian Gulf investments are directly fueling Israeli settlement expansion. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar have funneled money into Avenue Partners, a firm chaired by Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who re-

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## Iran: Uranium Enrichment Non-Negotiable



In this photo, President Masoud Pezeshkian, center, listens to head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami as they visit an exhibition of Iran's nuclear achievements in Teheran, April 9, 2025.

Tehran -- Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Wednesday that Iran's uranium enrichment as part of its nuclear program is "non-negotiable," after U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff said the processing program must be dismantled as part of any deal between the sides.

"Iran's enrichment is a real, accepted matter. We are ready

to build confidence in response to possible concerns, but the issue of enrichment is non-negotiable," Araghchi told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

Witkoff's comments Tuesday were themselves a reversal of those he made a day earlier, contrary to Israel's position, that Washington would be satisfied with a cap on Iranian

nuclear enrichment and would not require the dismantling of its nuclear facilities.

Araghchi and Witkoff are due to meet again in Oman on Saturday, a week after they held the highest-level indirect talks between the two countries since U.S. President Donald Trump abandoned a landmark nuclear deal in 2018.

Trump reimposed sweeping

sanctions in a policy of "maximum pressure" against Tehran, which he has reinstated since returning to office in January.

Both sides described Saturday's meeting as "constructive."

On Tuesday, Witkoff said Iran must "stop and eliminate" its enrichment of uranium as part of any nuclear deal.

"A deal with Iran will only be completed if it is a Trump deal," Witkoff said in a statement from his office's official X account.

Speaking to Fox News on Monday, Witkoff had said Iran "does not need to enrich past 3.67 percent."

"In some circumstances, they're at 60%, in other circumstances, 20%. That cannot be," he said. "You do not need to run — as they claim — a civil nuclear program where you're enriching past 3.67%."

His statement on Tuesday appeared to reject any uranium enrichment.

On Tuesday, Trump convened top U.S. officials at the White House to discuss the nuclear talks, Axios reported.

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## Sectarian Killing of Syrian Alawites Continues Under HTS

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- A month after HTS forces massacred some 1,700 Alawites in Syria's coastal regions, the killing, abduction, and robbing of members of the religious minority continue.

According to the so-called Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), 42 people have died in sectarian killings since the end of Ramadan on March 30. Incidents have spread from Latakia to Tartous and inland to Homs.

"The killings did not stop, but now they are individual acts," said Rami Abdurrahman, who heads London-based SOHR.

The regime in Syria, led by former Al-Qaeda in Iraq commander Abu Muhammad al-Jolani, has justified the killings, characterizing them as "mistakes" committed as part of a counterinsurgency crackdown on so-called remnants of the former government.

However, an Alawite who lives in the Latakia area told AP there are still regular attacks targeting Alawites, most of whom had nothing to do with the government of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad or his security

forces.

"Everyone from the government or close to it fled a long time ago," he stated, speaking on condition of anonymity out of fear for his life.

He said HTS guards killed a 20-year-old factory worker at a local checkpoint. He was the breadwinner of his family and had not served in the army under Assad.

"He would pass the checkpoints on his motorcycle every day. He and the guards would even greet each other," he added.

Activist Muhammad Saleh, a former political prisoner, told AP that 18 of his Alawite friends who opposed Assad were massacred by HTS forces last month.

Saleh said he is worried that Syria is turning to a dictatorship. "What we want is to have a serious national army and security agencies whose job is to protect everyone, and that they include everyone and not be made up of one sect or one religion," Saleh said. "There cannot be a state for everyone when security agencies belong to one sect."

Many young Syrian women have also been abducted and re-

main missing.

Syria is witnessing a disturbing wave of enforced disappearance and kidnapping at the hands of unknown militants, SOHR reported on Tuesday.

At least 17 women, among them minors, have recently disappeared in mysterious circumstances, and their fate is still unknown, according to SOHR.

Amnesty International Syria researcher Diana Semaan documented cases during the March 7 massacres where attackers explicitly blamed victims for Assad-era abuses. "They asked if they were Alawite or Sunni and said they were paying for what happened under the regime," she noted.

Hundreds of videos have been posted to social media, taken by members of fighting units belonging to Syria's so-called General Security and Ministry of Defense themselves, showing the brutal execution of unarmed Alawite men between March 7 and 9.

In some instances, unarmed men were forced to crawl and bark like dogs in the street before their execution.

On March 9, Jolani purportedly tasked a fact-finding committee with producing a report within 30 days that would help determine the perpetrators and hold them to account.

However, on April 11, Jolani extended the deadline for the committee to produce its report for three additional months.

Reuters noted that Alawite residents of the coastal province of Latakia, where much of the violence took place, expressed concern that the investigation is not sincere.

Firas, a 43-year-old Alawite who only gave his first name out of fear of retribution, told the news agency that the extension was an attempt to "stall and buy more time." He said there was little hope the committee's work would lead to real accountability.

In 2015, while serving as the head of the Nusra Front, the official Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, Jolani, in an interview with Al Jazeera, called for Alawites to convert to Sunni Islam or be killed.

Meanwhile, approximately 30,000 Alawites have fled to Lebanon, citing fear of further violence.