

Lebanese Leader: No Negotiations While Israel Violates Ceasefire

BEIRUT (Dispatches) — Senior Lebanese politician Walid Jumblatt, former head of the Progressive Socialist Party, reaffirmed his firm opposition to negotiations with Israel on Monday, rejecting any talks under political pressure amid ongoing Israeli aggression.

Jumblatt’s stance comes as criticism mounts within Lebanon over Israel’s repeated violations of the ceasefire. The decision follows calls by Tom Barak, U.S. President Donald Trump’s special envoy for the Middle East, urging Lebanese participation in negotiations.

Local media reports indicate that most Lebanese political parties have united in rejecting dialogue with Israel, citing the country’s ongoing military violations.

Addressing recent developments in the Mechanism Committee, particularly the appointment of a civilian head for the Lebanese delegation—a move some view as a means to pressure Lebanon—Jumblatt emphasized that negotia-



Two women stand next to destruction in the city center of Tyre, following an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese port city.

tions under coercion are unacceptable.

He called for a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanese territory and stressed the importance of bolstering the Lebanese armed forces to maintain security south of the Litani River.

Jumblatt also met with Nabih

Berri, speaker of the Lebanese parliament, to discuss measures supporting the military and ensuring national defense.

The backdrop of Jumblatt’s remarks includes a sharp escalation in Israeli violations of the 2024 ceasefire. According to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

(UNIFIL), Israeli forces breached the agreement more than 10,000 times since November last year.

Reports from Lebanon’s National News Agency (NNA) detail repeated airstrikes targeting eastern and southern areas, including Shmustar near Baalbek, Taraya, Bnaafoul, and multiple sites in the Bint Jbeil district.

Jumblatt’s rejection of negotiations highlights Lebanon’s unified political resistance against Israeli coercion and underscores calls for international accountability for repeated violations.

The Lebanese leadership continues to push for sovereignty, military strengthening, and the preservation of national territory in the face of ongoing aggression, signaling that political concessions to Israel remain off the table.

This marks a critical moment for Lebanon, as political unity against external pressure contrasts sharply with ongoing security threats from Israeli military aggressions.

Gazans Starve as Israel Uses U.S. ‘Humanitarian’ Hub for Surveillance

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- Israeli intelligence has been conducting widespread surveillance of U.S. forces and allied personnel at a new U.S. military base in southern Israeli occupied territories tasked with overseeing so-called humanitarian aid to Gaza, The Guardian reported on Monday, citing sources briefed on the matter.

The so-called Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC), located in Kiryat Gat just 12 kilometers from the Gaza fence, has become a site of intense monitoring, with meetings between U.S. officials and aid groups allegedly recorded

without consent.

The U.S. commander, Lieutenant General Patrick Frank, reportedly confronted his Israeli counterpart, demanding the surveillance stop. Yet concerns persist among other foreign staff, who have been warned to avoid discussing sensitive topics due to the risk of Israeli collection and exploitation. Israeli authorities dismissed the allegations as “absurd.”

The CMCC, established in October under the guise of implementing U.S. President Donald Trump’s 20-point ceasefire plan, was meant to ensure aid deliver-

ies to Gaza, which Israel has long restricted. In practice, U.S. military logistics teams quickly found that Israeli-imposed controls on goods—from food and medicine to pencils, water purification chemicals, and school supplies—posed a bigger obstacle than technical challenges, prompting several staff to leave.

Despite its humanitarian pretext, the CMCC excludes Palestinians entirely. Palestinian organizations and authorities are barred from participation, with Israeli officials reportedly cutting off video calls when inclusion was attempted.

Planning documents systematically omit references to Palestine, instead referring only to “Gazans.”

The situation highlights a disturbing reality: Israel continues to enforce a near-total blockade on Gaza while using the U.S.-led CMCC to legitimize its control. Meanwhile, the United States presents itself as a humanitarian actor, yet effectively enables Israeli restrictions and surveillance. Rather than alleviating suffering, the CMCC functions as a mechanism to monitor, contain, and exploit Gaza’s population while sidelining those it claims to aid.

Taliban Auction Second Afghan Crude Shipment

KABUL (Dispatches) — The Taliban’s Ministry of Mines and Oil announced on Monday the successful auction of an 18,000-barrel shipment of crude oil, generating an estimated \$10.5 million in revenue, according to local media reports.

The crude was extracted from the Qashqari area in the province of Velayat. Officials said the sale, completed last week, represents the second transaction of its kind as the Taliban administration seeks to capitalize on Afghanistan’s natural resources. The first shipment, drawn from the Amu district and sold on Nov. 10, earned ap-

proximately \$4.5 million.

Since assuming power, the Taliban government has pursued policies to expand the extraction and commercialization of the country’s mineral wealth, seeking foreign investment and partnerships from countries including China and Russia to develop Afghanistan’s resource sector. However, progress in field development has remained limited.

Tensions have risen with Chinese firms over oil contracts. In August 2023, the Taliban signed an agreement with Xinjiang Central Asia Petroleum and Gas Co. for the extraction of oil in the

Amu Darya River basin. Taliban officials later accused the company of breaching the contract, while some Chinese employees working for AfgChin Oil and Gas Ltd., a joint venture managing the oil wells, described the Taliban’s actions as “robbery.”

In June, the Taliban formally terminated the agreement, citing repeated contract violations by the Chinese firm. Hamaun Afghan, spokesperson for Afghanistan’s Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, said the termination was approved by Taliban Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund.

The auction of the Qashqari

shipment highlights the Taliban’s ongoing efforts to monetize Afghanistan’s energy resources despite logistical, technical, and contractual challenges. Analysts note that securing reliable foreign investment remains critical for the government’s strategy to develop the country’s energy sector.

The ministry did not provide details on buyers or the terms of the sale. This transaction follows broader efforts by the Taliban to stabilize revenues amid international isolation and sanctions, which have constrained the country’s economic recovery.

Libya Rejects Greek Demand to Scrap Turkey Maritime Deal

BENGHAZI (Dispatches) — Libya’s parliament has sharply condemned recent Greek calls to annul the 2019 maritime boundary agreement with Turkey, describing them as a blatant violation of Libyan sovereignty.

Misbah Ouhida, the parliament’s second deputy speaker, criticized Greek Parliament Speaker Nikitas Kaklamanis’ remarks on Monday, calling them “unacceptable interference” in Libya’s internal affairs.

Ouhida expressed “astonishment and disapproval” over repeated Greek statements challenging the agreement, emphasizing that Libya, as a fully sovereign state, alone determines its national interests.

He asserted that international accords signed by Libya are “sovereign decisions governed by international law” and that no external actor has the authority to dictate

their continuation or cancellation.

The 2019 memorandum of understanding, signed between the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord and Ankara, delineates maritime jurisdictions in the Eastern Mediterranean, granting both nations access to resource-rich zones.

Greece has long opposed the pact, claiming it infringes upon its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf rights, fueling ongoing tensions with Turkey. Libya, however, has consistently defended the agreement, highlighting its legitimacy under international law.

Ouhida underscored the importance of “good neighborliness” and bilateral relations based on mutual respect. He called on Greece to exercise restraint, respect Libyan sovereignty, and refrain from attempts to in-

terfere in the country’s foreign policy. The firm Libyan stance signals Tripoli’s determination to maintain the maritime deal and resist external pressure.

The dispute has also intensified amid growing regional diplomatic realignments. Reports indicate that Greece is seeking closer ties with Israel and other nations opposed to Turkey, particularly as tensions escalate in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. Libya’s reaffirmation of the pact underscores its strategic partnership with Turkey and reinforces its position against foreign encroachment on its sovereign decisions.

The parliament’s statement sends a clear message: Libya will defend its international agreements and uphold its maritime rights, while urging neighboring states to respect its authority and independence.

Iran... (Continued From Page One)

In addition to talks with President Aliyev and Foreign Minister Bayramov, Araghchi met with the Azerbaijani parliament speaker, Sahiba Garova, to discuss bilateral legislative cooperation and continued diplomatic coordination.

These discussions are part of Tehran’s broader strategy to institutionalize dialogue and strengthen multifaceted ties with Azerbaijan, covering political, economic, and security dimensions.

The delegation highlighted that the combination of historical ties, high-level political engagement, and infrastructure projects like the Rasht–Astara railway provides a robust framework for expanding relations.

Araghchi noted that practical cooperation in trade, transport, energy, and border security complements the broader goal of regional stability under mechanisms such as the 3+3 initiative.

Since Pezeshkian’s election as Iran’s president, Tehran–Baku relations have significantly increased. Pezeshkian himself visited Baku twice prior to Araghchi’s trip, signaling a clear shift toward deeper, more predictable, and pragmatic cooperation with Iran’s northern neighbor.

Analysts note that major infrastructure projects, including the North–South international transport corridor and the Aras corridor, have become central to Tehran’s renewed focus on regional connectivity. These corridors are seen as relatively resilient, revenue-generating, and strategically strengthening Iran’s role as a regional logistics hub.

Araghchi, a seasoned diplomat with extensive high-level negotiation experience, has emerged as a key figure in advancing these projects. Analysts suggest that his Baku visit marks the beginning of a coordinated Iranian strategy to accelerate the implementation of these corridors, manage investment challenges, and address technical obstacles—efforts that are integral to Iran’s broader economic resilience strategy under Western sanctions.

The discussions also touched on security concerns linked to recent Israeli attacks on Iran in June, amid reports that some in Tehran speculated drones could have operated from Azerbaijani territory. Araghchi firmly dismissed such claims, emphasizing that unsubstantiated accusations could harm bilateral ties.

His measured response signals that Iran’s new administration seeks to avoid unnecessary confrontation, particularly with close neighbors, and pursue a balanced, pragmatic foreign policy.

The visit comes amid ongoing geopolitical competition and influence in the South Caucasus. Tehran aims to fully understand Baku’s position to ensure stability along key transport routes, safeguard economic interests, and monitor the potential role of external actors, including the United States, in shaping new transit corridors.

Analysts stress that while U.S. involvement might influence the Armenian segment of these routes, the Azerbaijani sections remain fully under Baku’s control—a position aligned with Iran’s strategic interests.

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strategic depth to retaliate in ways Israel cannot easily neutralize. While Tel Aviv boasts of its military prowess and technological edge, the missile attacks revealed serious gaps in the illegal entity’s air defense and crisis response mechanisms.

More importantly, the Israeli regime now bears the public and private cost of its own policies, funding expensive temporary accommodations for displaced settlers and facing logistical and legal disputes over building permits and reconstruction timelines.

Compounding the issue, the northern tower’s repair is delayed by bureaucratic hurdles, as municipal authorities insist on formal permits for major rehabilitation work, while residents demand immediate action.

This bureaucratic friction, coupled with the extensive engineering and structural damage, underscores how far-reaching Iran’s retaliation has been—impacting Israel economically, politically, and socially.

Even Israel’s real estate market, long considered a symbol of its urban resilience and wealth, has been rattled. Luxury apartments in the Da Vinci Towers, some valued at over \$5 million, are now tied up in a web of temporary housing costs, stalled sales, and investor uncertainty.

Apartments that were part of regime-subsidized rental programs have seen dramatic price cuts—almost 60% in some cases—demonstrating the broader economic reverberations of the strikes.

The Iranian missile campaign thus delivered more than just military impact; it exposed vulnerabilities in Israel’s urban planning, fiscal priorities, and civilian infrastructure protection. The illegal entity, which often positions itself as the unassailable power in the region, now finds itself paying for the settlers’ displacement while facing mounting criticism over delays in reconstruction and the sheer scale of repair costs.

What is clear is that Iran’s strikes were not symbolic gestures—they were calculated, precise, and strategically disruptive.

For Israel, the ongoing economic and infrastructural fallout from the Da Vinci and Elite Towers is a humbling reminder that its regional aggressions come with direct consequences. The narrative of

invulnerability has been shattered, replaced with a costly reality in which the state must confront the very vulnerabilities it long denied.

In short, Iran has turned its retaliation into a strategic masterstroke: inflicting measurable economic strain, highlighting security failures, and undermining Israel’s domestic and international narrative of control.

As the months stretch on and residents remain displaced, Israel’s leadership faces a question that cannot be answered with rhetoric alone: how does an entity that prides itself on military dominance reconcile with the tangible, disruptive consequences of its adversary’s retaliation?

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their education and secure better employment, she said.

She added that lifestyle changes have reduced the acceptance of traditional family structures. “In the past, people married even without stable jobs or housing, often living with extended families. That model has faded over time,” she said.

She noted that the number of countries below replacement fertility is expected to rise from about 90 today to nearly 130 in the near future.

According to Dastjerdi, Iran’s total fertility rate has fallen dramatically. “In the mid-1980s, around 1986–87, the average number of children per woman was 6.8. By 2024 this number has dropped to below 1.5,” she said, calling the shift a “serious decline with a steep downward slope.”

Marriage rates have followed a similar pattern. “Between 2011 and 2013, about 800,000 marriages were registered annually. In 2024 this figure fell to 480,000 – a 60 percent reduction,” she said.

As marriage declines, she added, fertility naturally drops, while age at marriage increases and the time between marriage and the first child grows longer.

Dastjerdi said new data shows significant delays in childbearing. “The average marriage age for Iranian women is 24.5 years. The time between marriage and the first child is now about 4.5 years, and the gap between the first and second child has reached nearly six years,” she said.

She added that Iranian women have their first child at an average age of 27.5, and in Tehran this rises to about 30, reflecting the deeper demographic challenges facing large cities.

One of the most striking trends, Dastjerdi said, is the surge in permanent singlehood. “In 1986, only about 1.1 percent of women aged 50 had never married. In 2023, this number reached 7.7 percent – a sevenfold increase,” she said.

She warned that widening singlehood, falling marriage rates and declining births together form a “critical demographic picture” requiring policy attention.

Palestinian... (Continued From Page 2)

Abu Taha said she feels “a heavy burden” to convey the realities her family and others face. “As a medical student, I must succeed so I can help the wounded in my country.”

Staitan said he hopes to contribute to reconstruction. “My country needs me,” he said.

Abu Taha reflected on the role of Palestinian women, describing them as central to sustaining family life and political identity.

“A Palestinian woman must be a daughter, a mother, and a wife,” she said. “She carries the weight of a country on her shoulders. My mother gave us love for Palestine with her milk. We must build a generation strong enough to stand against occupation.”

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the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, and the Eurasian Economic Union, emphasizing that these bodies provide valuable economic opportunities for the country.

He added that government agencies are currently drafting joint operational programs with member states to make targeted use of these economic and trade capacities.

Gharibabadi stressed the importance of Iran’s active presence in international organizations, noting that one priority is to prevent the formation of consensus against Iran while creating consensus condemning hostile actions against the against the country.

He cited a recent disagreement in the UN Security Council over the snapback mechanism, noting that unlike in the past — when sanctions resolutions against Iran were passed unanimously — this time six countries voted differently, and four, including two permanent members, voted against. “This achievement is the result of Iran’s diplomatic efforts,” he said.

Referring to the long history of threats, sanctions, and hostile measures against Iran, Gharibabadi stated that since the Islamic Revolution, the country has faced pressure due to its independence and development.

“Political independence comes at a cost, but the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued its path with strength,” he said.

He added, “Some countries cannot stand against major powers, but the Islamic Republic of Iran has not retreated in defending the rights of its people, and this is intolerable for some countries.”