

U.S.-Iran talks expected to continue, Tehran warns of 'wall of mistrust'

Liza Rozovsky,
 Ben Samuels and Reuters

Iran and the United States held high-stakes negotiations in Oman on Friday in an effort to overcome sharp differences over Tehran's nuclear program, but a dispute over widening the agenda risks derailing diplomacy and triggering another Middle East conflict.

After some five hours, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the talks were over "for now," with no clear timeline for resumption. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi added that negotiators will return to their capitals for consultations, with talks expected to continue. He emphasized that "the wall of mistrust should be overcome" to allow progress. Donald Trump called the talks "very good," adding, "Iran looks like they want to make a deal very badly – as they should." Addressing reporters aboard Air Force One en route to Florida from Washington, the U.S. president said, "Last time, they decided maybe not to do it, but they probably feel differently. We'll see what

the deal is. It'll be different than last time."

When asked by reporters how long he is willing to wait before striking Iran, Trump said that the U.S. fleet heading to Iran "have to get in position."

"We have plenty of time. If you remember Venezuela, we waited around for a while. We're in no rush," he said, adding that the next

round of talks was set for "early next week." Trump said he prefers to reach a deal, but "they know the consequences if they don't."

Araghchi told Iran's state-run IRNA news agency that the talks focused solely on the nuclear issue and that Tehran will not negotiate other matters with Washington.

Iran's state media reported that Tehran has informed

the U.S. it will not give up its right to enrich uranium on its territory, calling it a "red line." Araghchi emphasized that Iran is willing to continue diplomatic efforts to prevent the possibility of a U.S. strike.

The U.S. was represented in Oman by Mideast special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will meet Trump on Wednesday to discuss developments in Iran, the Prime Minister's Office said on Saturday.

Before the talks began Friday, Trump issued an executive order imposing tariffs on countries that acquire any goods or services from Iran.

The White House said the order "imposes a system that

allows the United States to impose additional tariffs on imports from any country that directly or indirectly purchases, imports, or otherwise acquires any goods or services from Iran."

The 25 percent tariffs follow through on a threat made by Trump last month. The White House has said

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PM releases selective, redacted security records in bid to shift blame for Oct. 7

Jonathan Lis

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday released excerpts from security cabinet meetings in a document that reiterates the claim that, although the defense establishment failed in its security assessments ahead of the October 7 attack, he had fulfilled his responsibilities, in the latest attempt to distance himself from the state's failures on the day of the attack.

Netanyahu said the transcripts were part of a document he submitted in December to the State Comptroller's Office for its probe into the attack. The partially redacted transcripts, dating from the 2014 Gaza war up until the morning of October 7, 2023, include select quotes

from confidential security cabinet meetings.

Unlike Netanyahu, other participants in security cabinet meetings are not cleared to disclose what was said there or in sessions that the prime minister chose not to mention in the document.

The document highlights instances when Netanyahu requested the killing of Hamas and other terror group leaders, while defense officials argued Hamas had been deterred and pursued measures to ease civilian and economic restrictions to keep the front calm.

The released transcripts present Netanyahu as having warned others about a wide-scale attack by Hamas in the period leading up to the day of the attack.

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Analysis Amos Harel

Cherry-picked quotes aim to thicken fog

Benjamin Netanyahu had already pulled the trick he tried to repeat Thursday evening. In 2016, the state comptroller was about to release a harsh report on the neglect of the threat of Hamas' attack tunnels. From those conduits during the war two years earlier, the terror group launched a series of lethal raids.

The state comptroller at the time, Yosef Shapira, fell into the trap with his harsh report that didn't absolve

briefings, where he presented select quotes from security meetings. The goal was to convince the media that he hadn't taken part in the debacle; it was defense officials who were negligent in monitoring the threat, and Netanyahu had warned them about the danger.

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Protesters calling for a state commission of inquiry into the Oct. 7 disaster, in Tel Aviv on Saturday evening, following Netanyahu's release of excerpts from security cabinet meetings.

Itai Ron

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Emails: Ex-PM Ehud Barak stayed regularly in Epstein's NY flat



Ehud Barak at an anti-government protest last year.

Tomer Appelbaum

stayed in Epstein's apartment "from time to time."

According to hundreds of messages reviewed by Haaretz, Barak's visits to the apartment took place between 2015 and 2019 – after Epstein had been convicted of soliciting prostitution from a 14-year-old girl and served 13 months in prison, and before the former prime minister ran in Israel's 2019 Knesset election. Barak served as Israel's defense

minister until 2013 and left politics after that year's elections.

The correspondence shows that Epstein's maintenance staff and his personal assistant referred to the apartment as "Ehud's apartment." In September 2016, the apartment was mentioned in an email sent by one employee to Epstein. "Please find list of apartments that we are paying for," she wrote.

The correspondence also shows that Barak's wife, Nili Priel Barak, spoke frequently with Epstein and his employees, scheduled meetings between the couple and the convicted sex offender and kept contact details for some of his staff to reach them directly. Priel Barak updated the staff on the couple's arrival dates and, according to the messages, there were numerous visits. In July 2015, the couple informed Epstein's staff that they would be staying in the apartment for three months.

Epstein's employees corresponded with his personal assistant, Lesley Groff, about the frequent cleaning of the apartment, the couple's requests during their stays, and the items and groceries to be left for them upon arrival – such as flowers, coffee and food.

In an October 2015 exchange, one employee wrote to another: "Jeffrey is asking if you can get faster internet to apt 11J ... Ehud is requesting it ... looks like this slowly this is becoming his apartment!" In May 2019, Groff informed Priel Barak that 24 boxes belonging to the couple had been moved into the apartment.

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Attorney general:

Justice minister breaking law by failing to appoint judges

Chen Maanit

Israel's attorney general informed the High Court on Thursday that Justice Minister Yariv Levin is acting unlawfully and harming the public by blocking the appointment of judges to Israel's lower courts, despite the judiciary's heavy caseload.

Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara submitted her response to the High Court of Justice together with the Courts Administration, as part of a petition submitted to require Levin to convene the Judicial Appointments Committee.

She called on the High Court to require Levin to convene the committee to appoint judges to the unfilled positions in the magistrates' and district courts, and also asked the court to order Levin to act quickly to appoint justices to the Supreme Court as well – which has been functioning with only 11 out of 15 justices.

Levin called Baharav-Miara's arguments false. "During my term in the Justice Ministry, an enormous number of some 200 judges were appointed, and many new positions were added at my initiative," said Levin.

According to the minister, he is working to ensure judicial appointments are made with broad consensus, while "some members of the committee choose to refuse any compromise and impose a veto on worthy candidates such as Dr. Bakshi and Dr.

to overhaul the Israeli legal system. Levin has been trying for a long time to appoint Bitton – as well as Dr. Aviad Bakshi, the head of the legal department at the Kohelet

forum – as Supreme Court justices, but most of the members of the Judicial Ap-

pointments Committee oppose their candidacy. Baharav-Miara wrote in response to Levin that "the minister is neither permitted nor authorized to grant a total and exclusive weight to the consideration of broad consensus" in the appointment of judges.

Dr. Raphael Bitton is on the law school faculty at Sapir College, and was one of Levin's closest advisers on formulating the legislation

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Bitton, both for the Supreme Court and other courts," referring to Levin's preferred candidates for new Supreme Court justices, who also drafted the judicial overhaul legislation.

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