

New nuclear deal 'in sight,' US says as talks resume

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Wed, 2022-02-09 03:34

JEDDAH: A revived agreement to curb Iran's nuclear program is "in sight," the US said on Tuesday as international talks resumed in Vienna.

Negotiators from Iran, Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia returned to the luxury Palais Coburg hotel in the Austrian capital after a break last month for consultations with their governments.

The US is involved in the talks indirectly.

The aim is to restore the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which collapsed in 2018 when the US pulled out.

The JCPOA restricted Iran's nuclear development in return for the lifting of economic sanctions.

"A deal that addresses all sides' core concerns is in sight, but if it is not reached in the coming weeks, Iran's ongoing nuclear advances will make it impossible for us to return to the JCPOA," the US State Department said.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that answers that "the US brings to Vienna will determine when we can reach an agreement. We have made significant progress in various areas."

Eric Brewer of the US nonproliferation watchdog Nuclear Threat Initiative said there remained "a combination of issues that require resolution," including the scope of sanctions relief and what to do with nuclear equipment Iran had installed.

"They are the final sticking points for a reason – they are contentious and require concessions that neither side has been willing to make so far," he said.

Russian negotiator Mikhail Ulyanov said the negotiating teams were "five minutes away from the finish line.

A draft of the final document has been crafted. There are several points there that need more work, but that document is already on the table."

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said the talks were at "the decisive moment."

However, a powerful group of 33 Republican US senators warned President Joe Biden that they would work to thwart any new deal unless Congress reviewed it and voted on its terms.

Led by Sen. Ted Cruz, a long-time opponent of the 2015 nuclear deal, the senators told Biden they would use "the full range of options and leverage available."

The senators said any nuclear agreement with Iran was of "such gravity for US national security" that it would by definition be a treaty requiring the advice and consent of two-thirds of the Senate.

Any deal that fell short of a Senate-ratified treaty would probably be "torn up in the early days of the next presidential administration," they said.



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[2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#)

US grants sanctions relief to Iran as nuclear talks remain in balance
Iran nuclear talks pause as diplomats confer with capitals

[Authorities say fire strikes downtown Abu Dhabi](#)

Wed, 2022-02-09 01:56

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates: A fire struck downtown Abu Dhabi early Wednesday, with authorities initially blaming a gas cylinder for an explosion caught on camera in social media.

The blast struck Hamdan Street in the capital of the United Arab Emirates as it hosts the FIFA Club World Cup. Journalists from Brazil covering a match with Sociedade Esportiva Palmeiras reported on the blast.

The state-run WAM news agency described the fire as coming from “a gas cylinder explosion.” Some footage showed what appeared to be a fireball on the roof of a building as emergency service vehicles could be seen on the street.

The images seen in videos corresponded to known features in Abu Dhabi.

Authorities initially said by Twitter there were no injuries, but did not include that detail in a later update.

“The process of cooling and limiting the damage caused by the fire is underway,” the WAM report said.

The incident comes after Yemen’s Houthi rebels have launched several attacks targeting Abu Dhabi, including a recent attack that killed three people and wounded six.



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Abu Dhabi Ports sees strong debut after billion-dollar IPO Abu Dhabi approves regulations for implementation of new marriage, divorce law

[US envoy says Houthis should learn from their losses in Yemen and](#)

negotiate peace

Wed, 2022-02-09 01:41

LONDON: Yemen is in a “state of escalatory military action” and the Houthi militia must see that their recent losses indicate “there is no military solution and the only pathway forward is dialogue,” according to Tim Lenderking, the US special envoy for Yemen.

The Houthi offensive on the Yemeni province of Marib, including repeated attacks on civilian areas and against camps for internally displaced persons, “has been the primary obstacle to peace efforts,” he said.

Lenderking was speaking during a virtual discussion organized by the US Institute of Peace, in cooperation with the UN Development Program, to examine the latter’s recent report titled Assessing the Impact of War in Yemen: Pathways for Recovery.

The Yemeni civil war, which began in 2014, is considered one of the world’s worst humanitarian and developmental crises. The report predicts that, should the conflict continue through 2030, 1.3 million people will die as a result.

.@josefkorbel’s @moyerjonathan is laying out the costs of continuing conflict in #Yemen, from @UNDP’s new report: <https://t.co/lh2mQIHBP> #Pathways4Recovery @UNDPYemen <pic.twitter.com/TS35ss9wXl>

– U.S. Institute of Peace (@USIP) [February 8, 2022](#)

The Houthis’ Marib offensive, launched last February in an attempt to take control of one of the last remaining strongholds of the internationally-backed government, has sparked widespread international condemnation as the energy-rich province had been the largest safe haven for displaced people who have fled the fighting since the conflict began.

Lenderking said the US is deeply concerned with the growing number of civilian casualties in Yemen, and called on all parties to ensure civilians are protected according to the provisions of international humanitarian law. “Let me be clear, when we speak of protection of civilians in the region we also include the tens of thousands of US citizens living in the Gulf, whose safety is the top US national security priority,” he added.

This was a reference to the near-daily cross-border attacks by the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen on targets in Saudi Arabia and, more recently, [the UAE](#).

Abdulrahman Al-Eryani speaks about the impact of the suspension of salaries in #Yemen. Notes it affects family, communities & youth development. It is key for dev orgs to develop livelihood projects to unentangle the war economy, including women’s role in agriculture. [@eryaniar pic.twitter.com/Bwtki4ed7p](pic.twitter.com/Bwtki4ed7p)

– UNDP Yemen (@UNDPYemen) [February 8, 2022](#)

Lenderking said this also includes the local Yemeni staff employed by the US in Sanaa that the [Houthis detained when they seized control of the former US embassy compound in the capital](#), “whose safe release we remain committed to.” The envoy said his country’s diplomatic efforts have translated into two important building blocks for peace in Yemen. The first is a “growing international consensus on the need for a cease-fire and a political solution,” and the second is “momentum around a more inclusive peace process that takes into account diverse views across Yemen” to end the fighting. Lenderking said he is hopeful that peace in the country remains possible but a durable Yemeni-led solution is required to end the conflict and address the humanitarian crisis. This year would bring new opportunities, he added.

“Hope for a better [#Yemen](#) goes in hand with [#women’s #empowerment](#) & there is a need for clear strategy for supporting & empowering women” says Jeehan Abdul Ghaffar in our [@USIP](#) and [@UNDP](#) event on [#Yemen @Jeehan2011 #YemenCantWait pic.twitter.com/AhhdyJTBam](#)

– UNDP Yemen (@UNDPYemen) [February 8, 2022](#)

Khalida Bouzar, UN assistant secretary-general, UNDP assistant administrator and regional director of the UNDP Bureau of Arab States, said the report confirms that if the war in Yemen continues until 2030, the effect on people’s lives will be even more disastrous and the recovery costs more enormous.

“The economic gain of peace is enormous,” she said. “However, peace alone is not enough, so it needs to be accompanied by a holistic and people-centered recovery approach, cutting across the humanitarian development spectrum and also ensuring national ownership, leadership of the Yemeni people and the commitment of the international community.”

The report predicts that deaths from indirect causes – such as lack of access to food, water, sanitation, health care and other basic services – amounted to 60 percent of annual deaths in Yemen in 2021, and this will increase to 75 percent by 2030. It said that a child below the age of five died every nine minutes last year, and that this rate will increase to every five minutes, with additional effects on gross domestic product, poverty and malnutrition in the future.

“In terms of the solution, there needs to be [#Yemeni](#) leadership and ownership with international support & aid with gulf partnership to support Yemen,” says Ambassador Barbara Bodine [@USIP](#) & [@UNDP](#) event on [#Yemen #Pathways4Recovery pic.twitter.com/gg5r6PDVX0](#)

– UNDP Yemen (@UNDPYemen) [February 8, 2022](#)

Auke Lootsma, the resident representative of UNDP Yemen, said despite the fact that billions of dollars have been spent on food assistance to the country, it has not been able to make a dent in the food security situation

in the past five years.

“From the UN’s perspective, we have realized that if we want to make a difference in Yemen right now, we need to change our tactic and approach and really do more,” he said.



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[Auke Lootsma](#)

[Marib](#)

[United Nations](#)

Yemen army seizes parts of Haradh city from Houthis
US military commander praises UAE’s ‘effective’ air defense system against Houthi attacks

[With elections delayed again, Libya’s](#)

endless transition angers its people

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-09 00:11

TRIPOLI: As Libya's political institutions pushed ahead with plans to again extend a transitional period and delay any elections, Libyans across the country were filled with weariness, cynicism and anger.

Libya was meant to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in December, but arguments between factions and bodies of state over how they should take place meant the process collapsed days before the vote.

The parliament voted this week to approve a "roadmap" in which it will choose a new interim government, work with another institution, the High State Council, to redraft a temporary constitution and push elections back until next year.

"Unfortunately after a year there will be no elections. The transitional periods will continue in Libya and we, the people, are only manipulated," said Saad Mohammed, 35, in Benghazi in eastern Libya.

Nearly 3 million Libyans registered to vote in the December elections, a number that analysts said pointed to a clear national desire to choose their leaders.

"How many times will we postpone? We've been going for years and we've been postponing. And all we see is postponement, postponement, postponement," said Mohamed Gharyani, speaking on a street in Tripoli. Across the country in Benghazi, Khaled Ali, 46, agreed that politicians were merely trying to stay in power as long as possible. "There will be no elections for a year and a half," he said.

Eleven years of chaos, violence and division since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising against Muammar Qaddafi have left Libya with a series of political institutions that were originally meant to be temporary, but that have stuck around for years.

December's elections were meant to resolve this "crisis of legitimacy," as it has become known, by replacing all Libya's institutions with ones recently chosen by voters.

"Everything the parliament and the High State Council are doing is to procrastinate in order to stay in power," said Asma Fituri, a teacher, in a Tripoli market.

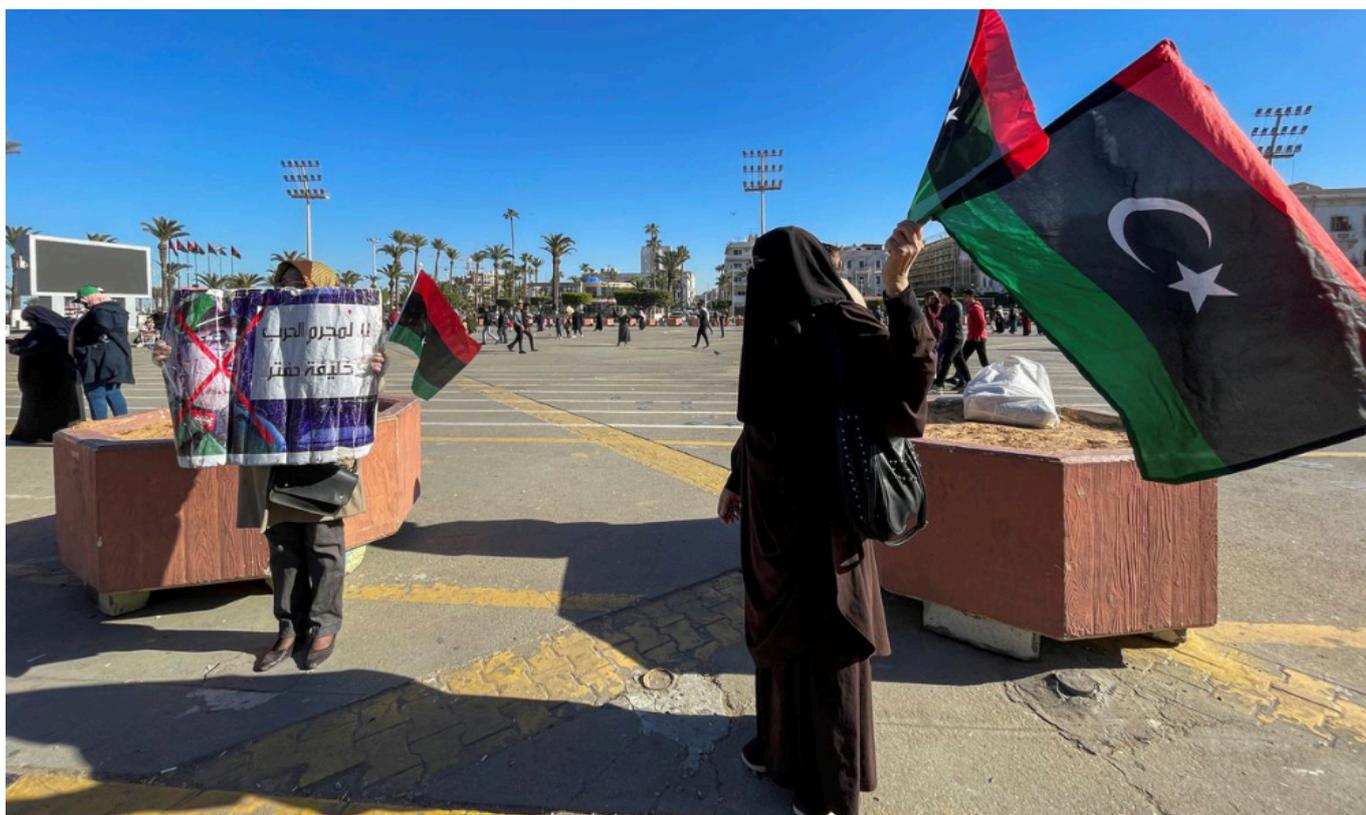
The HSC was formed from members of an interim parliament that was elected in 2012, but which refused to recognize elections to replace it two years later. A 2015 political agreement meant to end the civil war recognized the HSC as an official institution with consultative powers.

The current parliament, the House of Representatives, was elected in 2014.

While it did not have a set term, it was supposed to oversee a short transition to a new constitution that would be written by another body elected that year, but which was never completed.

Meanwhile, the latest Tripoli administration, the Government of National Unity, was installed last year as part of a UN-backed roadmap with a mandate to oversee the run-up to elections.

Its leaders were chosen by the 75 members of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum who were themselves picked by the UN to represent the main factional and regional groups. The LPDF roadmap said the GNU's mandate would run until elections on Dec. 24, 2021, but did not say what would happen if they did not take place.



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Libyan parliament interviews prime minister candidates
Security council extends Libya mission till April 30

[**Door reopens to candidates after Iraq**](#)

president vote fails

Author:

Wed, 2022-02-09 00:06

BAGHDAD: Iraq's parliament announced on Tuesday the reopening of registration for presidential candidates, a day after it called off a session to vote in a new head of state.

One of the two frontrunners, former longtime Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, was "temporarily" suspended by a court, citing years-old corruption accusations after a complaint was filed against him.

His eligibility for the post is being reviewed, with his party announcing it is sticking with his candidacy and that a verdict is expected within days.

Iraq's political timeline for electing a head of state and forming a government, in the wake of last year's general election, has been derailed amid political infighting.

Monday's voting session was not held due to the lack of a quorum after several key political blocs and parties announced boycotts – against the backdrop of competing claims to a parliamentary majority.

The office of Parliament Speaker Mohamed Al-Halbussi announced on Tuesday the "reopening of registration for candidates for the post of president of the republic from Wednesday, February 9 and for a period of three days."

But a date has yet to be announced for a new voting session in parliament.

Only 58 MPs attended Monday's session – well below the quorum of two-thirds of the 329-seat chamber.

The largest political bloc led by firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, as well as the allied Sovereignty Coalition led by Halbussi and the Kurdistan Democratic Party – from which Zebari hails – all announced boycotts ahead of the session.

Legal expert Ali Al-Tamimi denounced Tuesday's announcement as "unconstitutional," noting that the legal deadline set to elect a president "cannot be broken, except by a decision from the Federal Court or an amendment of the law."

Zebari was tipped as one of two frontrunners, out of a total of 25, for the presidency. The other is incumbent President Barham Saleh of the KDP's rival party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

In response to his suspension, the head of the KDP's parliamentary bloc, Vyan Sabri, told the state news agency INA on Tuesday: "Mr. Zebari is still our sole candidate."

She denounced the "malicious complaint" leading to his suspension, affirming

that his case “will be decided in the next two days.”



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Chaos in Iraq over vote for president
Iraqi court suspends Zebari's presidential bid -state news agency