

# Our warplanes can reach Iran, Israeli minister warns amid nuclear talks

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JERUSALEM: An Israeli cabinet minister sharpened his country's warnings against what it would deem a bad new nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, saying war with Tehran would be sure to follow.

As President Joe Biden explores a possible US return to the 2015 deal to contain Iran's nuclear program that his predecessor Donald Trump abandoned, Israel has stepped up calls for more sweeping curbs to be imposed on sensitive Iranian technologies and projects.

Iran, which this week resumed indirect talks with US envoys in Vienna on reversing its retaliatory violations of the deal in exchange for the removal of sanctions reimposed by Trump, has ruled out any further limitations on Iranian actions.

Reiterating Israel's position that it does not consider itself bound by the diplomacy, Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen said: "A bad deal will send the region spiralling into war."

"Anyone seeking short-term benefits should be mindful of the longer-term," he told Reuters. "Israel will not allow Iran to attain nuclear arms. Iran has no immunity anywhere. Our planes can reach everywhere in the Middle East – and certainly Iran."

Iran says its nuclear ambitions are peaceful.

Cohen said that in addition to denying Iran the means of enriching uranium and developing ballistic missiles, world powers should make it stop "destabilising other countries" and funding militants.

The Vienna talks have been overshadowed by what appeared to be mutual sabotage attacks on Israeli and Iranian ships, as well as an explosion at Iran's Natanz enrichment plant that Tehran blamed on Israel.

Cohen, in keeping with Israeli policy, declined all comment.

Israel sent senior delegates to Washington this week to discuss Iran with US counterparts. The White House said the allies agreed on the "significant threat" posed by Iran's regional behavior.

The Israeli ambassador to the United States, Gilad Erdan, said the Biden administration would consult with Israel about any new nuclear deal – the prospects for which he deemed hazy.

"We assess, to our regret, that the Iranians will refuse such a discussion," he told Israel's public radio station Kan, alluding to Iran's insistence on restoring the original deal, which Trump called too limited in scope and duration.

"But if it emerges that we were mistaken, and the Americans succeed in securing a discussion of a different, better deal, we will certainly be part of that discussion. We made that clear and the (Biden) administration welcomes this, of course."



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## [Turkish youth see EU membership as 'dream' chance for more freedoms, jobs: Survey](#)

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Thu, 2021-04-29 19:58

ANKARA: Turkish youth see possible future membership of the EU as a "dream"

chance for more freedoms and job opportunities in their country, a survey has revealed.

The German Marshall Fund of the US (GMF) study found that 66.2 percent of the 18- to 25-year-olds quizzed would welcome Turkey being accepted into the EU. But one-third of them believed it would never happen, and one-fifth felt that if it did, it would not be for at least another 15 years.

The survey titled, "Turkish Perceptions of the EU," was carried out for the American think tank by Istanbul-based Infakto Research Workshop over March and April and covered youth living in urban and rural areas.

More than half of those questioned (52.1 percent) thought the EU was deliberately delaying a decision on Turkey becoming a full member as it ultimately had no intention of allowing the country to join.

However, 67.2 percent of interviewees reckoned they would personally benefit from EU membership, and one-fifth considered acceptance would improve democracy in Turkey.

Prof. Emre Erdogan, co-founder of Infakto Research Workshop, told Arab News: "Prospective membership of the EU is seen by Turkish young people as a window of opportunity for more freedoms and options for their future.

"Young Turks are willing to seize every single opportunity to find jobs and get more freedoms, and their EU conception fits into this dream."

He said the EU was perceived by Turkish youth as a quasi-perfect model of a social welfare club that provided its citizens with additional support mechanisms during times of crisis.

"The economic fallout from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on Turkish youth who lost their jobs, was completely illustrative of this contraction between Turkish and EU models," Erdogan added.

Youth unemployment has reached alarming levels in Turkey, with almost 25 percent of 15- to 24-year-olds jobless and many struggling without any form of state support.

The economic constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic have further restricted Turkish companies from hiring often inexperienced young people.

Those taking part in the survey said the focus for improving ties between Ankara and Brussels should be on visa-free travel to EU countries, cooperation against terrorism, and joint action to resolve the refugee crisis.

Results showed that around half of young Turks thought Turkey and the EU had diverging interests on refugees, the situation in the eastern Mediterranean, the civil wars in Syria and Libya, the fight against Daesh, and relations with Cyprus.

Azerbaijan was viewed by almost half of those polled as Turkey's most important partner (46.1 percent), followed by Russia (18.6 percent), and Germany (13.5 percent). The US was considered as the biggest threat to Turkey's national interests (60.6 percent), followed by Israel (24 percent), and Russia (19 percent).

A total of 42 percent felt Turkey should cooperate with EU countries, followed by Russia (14.3 percent). On trusted institutions, the European Court of Human Rights gained a 57.3 percent vote of confidence, with the EU on 52.3 percent, and the International Court of Justice getting a 48.3 percent trust rating.

Dr. Kadri Tastan, senior researcher at GMF, told Arab News that despite the shaky and pragmatic relationship between Ankara and Brussels over the years,

young people still looked to the EU as a future anchor for the progress of freedoms and democracy in Turkey.

“These survey results once again reminded us that Turkish youth rely on Western democracies and take them as their reference models.

“On the other hand, their personal motivations for the EU membership bid are directly connected to the visa liberalization promises of Brussels, as they want to freely travel to Europe and to set up a new life,” Tastan said.

Generation Z, those born between the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2010s, could well hold the key to Turkey’s future governance, as at least 5 million will vote for the first time in their lives at the upcoming general and presidential elections in 2023.

Erdogan said: “Most of the political parties in Turkey are concerned about being considered as pro-EU because the nationalist paranoia, dubbed as Sevres syndrome, still haunts the political landscape in the country.

“Those who draw a rosy picture about EU membership are quickly demonized because outside powers, such as the EU, are mostly seen by the ruling politicians as intent on using several tools to subvert and break up Turkey from within.”



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## Shakeup in Iran's presidential office after leaked tape

Author:

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TEHRAN: Iran's president has replaced the head of a think tank that recorded an interview with the country's foreign minister that leaked out this week, a tape that provided a rare glimpse into the theocracy's power struggles and set off a firestorm in Iran.

In the recording of the conversation between Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and an economist at the Strategic Studies Center, the think tank associated with Iran's presidency, Zarif offers a blunt appraisal of diplomacy and his constricted role in the Islamic Republic.

Iran's presidency announced the former chief of Strategic Studies Center resigned and Ali Rabiei, who already serves as the Cabinet spokesman, would replace him.

The audio tape, leaked earlier this week to London-based, Farsi-language news channel Iran International, set off political controversy across Iran ahead of the country's June 18 presidential election. While Zarif has said he does not want to run in the election, some have suggested him as a potential candidate to stand against hard-liners in the vote.

Zarif's leaked remarks included cutting references to the limits of his power and those of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a top commander in Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard who was killed in a drone strike in Baghdad.

Earlier this week, Zarif expressed regret that the recording had leaked out as the country's president portrayed the breach as an incident intended to derail ongoing talks over the return to Iran's tattered nuclear deal with world powers.



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## [Blinken says Turkey, others, should refrain from new purchases of Russian weapons](#)

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WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned Turkey and all US

allies on Wednesday to refrain from making further purchases of Russian weaponry, saying this could trigger more sanctions.

US-Turkish relations have been strained over issues ranging from Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 air defense systems – over which it was the target of US sanctions – to policy differences over Syria, human rights and a US court case targeting Turkey's majority state-owned Halkbank.

"It's also very important going forward that Turkey, and for that matter all US allies and partners, avoid future purchases of Russian weaponry, including additional S-400s," Blinken said at a virtual event at Washington's Foreign Press Center.

"Any significant transactions with Russian defense entities, again, could be subject to the law, to CAATSA, and that's separate from and in addition to the sanctions that have already been imposed," he said, referring to the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act, which is designed to dissuade countries from buying military equipment from the NATO foe.

Blinken also said that given President Joe Biden's widely-known views, his declaration on Saturday that the 1915 massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire amounted to genocide should not have come as a surprise.

Turkey's presidential spokesman said on Sunday Biden's declaration was "simply outrageous" and Turkey would respond over the coming months.



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## [Christian parties demand restoration of Lebanon's sovereignty from Hezbollah](#)

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BEIRUT: Christian parties in Lebanon called for the collective resignation of Parliament on Wednesday, accusing Hezbollah of dominating the country.

The head of the Independence Movement, Michel Moawad, a former MP and son of former President Rene Moawad, said at a press conference: "With each passing day, we are more convinced that we are dealing with a criminal, corrupt and conspiratorial authority.

"The Lebanese are paying the price of the coexistence between the state and the statelet," he added, demanding Hezbollah "leave us alone."

Moawad, who resigned from Parliament following the Beirut Port explosion on Aug. 4, noted that "retaking the state from the mafia and the militia happens through the restoration of sovereignty over all our borders and regaining control over the decision making.

"What interest do we have in belonging to one axis against the other? What interest do we have in being hostile toward countries that do not attack us? What interest do we have in being hostile toward Arabs or the international community and fighting in Yemen and elsewhere? What interest do we have in exporting rockets, militias and drugs? How do we build a productive economy? How do we protect Lebanese nationals abroad?"

He added: "Sovereignty means enforcing the Lebanese state's authority, using its own capabilities, over the entirety of the territory. This means that there should not be guarded areas, illegal weapons inside or outside of refugee camps, weapon warehouses, rockets, camps to train Houthis and non-Houthis and Captagon factories."

Moawad called for "the formation of a clear, capable and united opposition to face the mafia and the militia and focus on retaking the state."

After meeting Maronite Patriarch Bechara Al-Rahi, the parliamentary bloc of the Lebanese Forces' MPs renewed their calls for the holding of early parliamentary elections.

Sethrida Geagea MP expressed her support for Al-Rahi's call for neutrality.

"Our country is a small one located in a troubled region. It was not wise to place it in the middle of the region's conflicts, leading to it being completely isolated from its Arab surroundings and its international friends. "There is no hope from any government that the ruling majority forms because,

even if formed, it will be an exact replica of the ones that came before, which means that true reforms are not an option with this majority. The solution resides in reproducing the ruling class in order to put an end to this parliamentary majority's hegemony over the country following the disastrous situation they lead us to. This can be done through the only practical step available, which is the holding of early parliamentary elections."

The Kataeb Party's political office stressed that "the prevailing state of chaos confirms the blatant collusion between the mafia and the militia, which is aimed at turning Lebanon into a failed state, dragging it into agendas that serve foreign interests at the expense of the country's identity and historic role, and isolating it from countries that can help it overcome the current crisis in order to further stifle it.

"The situation will not change as long as Lebanon has a parliament that has surrendered to Hezbollah's will, is unable to prevent violations and has lost its national legitimacy."

Camille Chamoun, new head of the National Liberal Party, added "Lebanon is in trouble."

Arab News asked the former opposition MP Fares Saeed if the steps being taken by Christian political parties are an attempt to establish a new Lebanese Front in the face of the authorities and Hezbollah, which would be similar to the Lebanese Front that was established during the civil war.

"The steps taken by these parties are natural. However, I think that the main goal should be to put an end to the Iranian occupation of Lebanon, and anything else would be less than what is required," Saeed answered.

"What is required is for Hezbollah to hand over its weapons in line with the constitution and the resolutions of international legitimacy. This solution is not feasible currently, which is why Al-Rahi called for an international conference to be held to ensure Lebanon's neutrality. This is a serious proposition that could lead us to the desired solution. Late Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir demanded the departure of the Syrian forces that were occupying Lebanon in 2000. This demand was fulfilled in 2005," he added. Regarding the Free Patriotic Movement's position in light of the Christian parties' call to restore Lebanon's sovereignty away from Hezbollah, Saeed said there is no doubt that Hezbollah still has a lot of supporters among the Christians due to the alliance in place. "If this alliance is broken, the political scene could change."



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