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Trump: US had 'very good' talks with Iran, next round to be held early next week

White House says president enacted new tariffs on countries that import Iranian goods; Iran's FM insists country willing to discuss only nuclear program, not ballistic missiles

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:45 pm



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters as he flies aboard Air Force One from Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, to West Palm Beach, Florida, February 6, 2026. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

US President Donald Trump said Washington had "very good talks" with Tehran on Friday, after the two sides began indirect negotiations in Oman's capital Muscat that could avert a military escalation. "We... had very good talks on Iran. Iran looks like it wants to make a deal very badly, as they should," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One en route to his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida for the weekend. "We're going to meet again early next week," he added.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also said on Al Jazeera on Saturday that [the talks](#) were a "good start" and that the sides had agreed the next round "should be held soon," but added that no date had been set.

Despite the talks being indirect, "an opportunity arose to shake hands with the American delegation," said Araghchi, amid reports that he met face-to-face with US negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner in Muscat. But contrary to the US demand that the talks address Iran's ballistic missile programs and support for regional terror groups, Araghchi insisted Iran would discuss only nuclear issues.

Meanwhile, Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei called Trump a "liar," insisting on X that Iran "has not backed down from its red lines and will not do so."

"It is these Americans who, after the failure of their other options (military, economic, terrorist and so on), now have no choice but to accept the frameworks and the rights of the Iranian nation," said Rezaei, who is the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Trump's comments came as the White House announced he had signed an executive order on Friday imposing secondary tariffs on any country that imports goods from Iran. The US also announced new sanctions against numerous shipping entities and vessels, aimed at curbing Iran's oil exports.

More than a quarter of Iran's trade is with China, with \$18 billion in imports and \$14.5 billion in exports in 2024, according to World Trade Organization data.

The moves will place further economic strain on Iran, where millions took to the streets nationwide last month in anti-regime protests stoked by a cost-of-living crisis.

In this frame grab from footage circulating on social media shows protesters dancing and cheering around a bonfire as they take to the streets despite an intensifying crackdown as the Islamic Republic remains cut off from the rest of the world, in Tehran, Iran, January 9, 2026. (UGC via AP)

Trump has repeatedly threatened to use force to compel Iran to reach a deal on its nuclear program, after earlier ordering a naval buildup in the region amid Tehran's bloody crackdown on the protests, in which thousands of Iranians were killed and tens of

thousands detained.

The indirect talks on Friday were the first negotiations between US and Iranian officials since the US struck key Iranian nuclear facilities during the 12-day Israel-Iran war last June.



Speaking with Al Jazeera on Saturday, Araghchi reiterated Tehran's threat that it would strike US bases in the Middle East if it were attacked by the US forces that have amassed in the region.

Araghchi insisted that this should not be seen as an attack on the bases' host nations, which include Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.



"It would not be possible to attack American soil, but we will target their bases in the region," he said. "We will not attack neighboring countries; rather, we will target US bases stationed in them. There is a big difference between the two."

In this handout photo obtained from Iran's foreign ministry on February 6, 2026, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) arrives for a meeting in Muscat, Oman. (IRAN FOREIGN MINISTRY / AFP)

While both sides have indicated readiness to revive diplomacy over Tehran's long-running nuclear dispute with the West, Araghchi balked at broadening the talks, saying Iran's ballistic missile program was "never negotiable" because it relates to a "defense issue."

"Any dialogue requires refraining from threats and pressure. [Tehran] only discusses its nuclear issue ... We do not discuss any other issue with the US," he said.

This satellite picture by Planet Labs PBC shows Iran's underground nuclear enrichment site at Fordo following US airstrikes targeting the facility, on June 22, 2025. (Planet Labs PBC via AP)

He added that the nuclear program itself is Iran's "inalienable right and must continue," but said it was "ready to reach a reassuring agreement" on uranium enrichment, adding that "the Iranian nuclear case will only be resolved through negotiations."

Iran, whose leaders are sworn to Israel's destruction, has consistently denied seeking to acquire nuclear weapons and has claimed it halted uranium enrichment activity since the war with Israel.

However, the Islamic Republic has enriched uranium to levels that have no peaceful application, obstructed international inspectors from checking its nuclear facilities, and expanded its ballistic missile capabilities.



<https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-us-had-very-good-talks-with-iran-next-round-to-be-held-early-next-week/>

Diplomat: At talks with US, Iran refuses to end enrichment; missile capabilities not discussed



US said to want Tehran to show up to next meeting, expected in next few days, with tangible concession on nuclear issue; Israeli official sees deal unlikely

By [Agencies](#), [Tol Staff](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Today, 1:13 am

In this handout photo obtained from Iran's foreign ministry on February 6, 2026, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C) arrives for a meeting in Muscat, Oman. (IRAN FOREIGN MINISTRY / AFP)

Iran rejected calls by the United States to halt uranium enrichment on its territory during [negotiations in Oman](#) on Friday, as efforts to resolve the dispute over Tehran's nuclear program resumed.

A regional diplomat briefed by Tehran told Reuters Friday that while the Islamic Republic would not budge on its right to enrich uranium inside Iran, it was willing to discuss the “level and purity” of enrichment or a regional consortium.

The diplomat added that Tehran believed the US negotiators “seemed to understand Iran’s stance on the enrichment ... and they showed flexibility about Tehran’s demands.”

He added that Iran’s missile capabilities were not discussed during the talks in Muscat.

Iranian and US officials told the Axios news site that they expect further talks in the coming days.

US negotiators told their Iranian counterparts that they expect Tehran to come to the next meeting with a tangible

and significant concession related to the nuclear file, Channel 12 reported.

In this handout photo released by the Omani Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 6, 2026, US special envoy Steve Witkoff shakes hands with Oman’s Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad al-Busaidi as Jared Kushner looks on during a meeting in Muscat. (Handout/Omani Foreign Ministry/AFP)

The talks included an in-person meeting between US President Donald Trump’s top aides Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi, Channel 12 reported, citing two sources familiar. The rest of the talks were held indirectly, with Oman mediating.

CENTCOM Commander Gen. Brad Cooper also joined

the talks, outraging the Iranian delegation, in a move possibly aimed at intimidating Tehran, Channel 12 reported. The Iranians reportedly likened it to “conducting negotiations with a gun on the table.”

The network indicated the US will likely take additional steps to boost its military presence in the region on Saturday, improving Washington’s posture ahead of a potential strike if the talks fail.



Channel 12 cited an unnamed senior Israeli official who warned Iran against targeting the Jewish state, saying the response to such an attack would be “Operation Rising Lion on steroids,” referring to the name Israel gave to its June 2025 strikes on Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs, which also saw the IDF decimate Tehran’s air defenses.

Smoke billows in the distance from an oil refinery following an Israeli strike on the Iranian capital Tehran on June 17, 2025. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)

The network cited another Israeli official who speculated that Friday’s talks between the US and Iran in Oman will not lead to an agreement, as the gaps between the sides are too large.

Multiple rounds of negotiations with Iran were held before Israel launched its 12-day war on Iran. The US also joined the strikes, targeting underground nuclear facilities.

Before the June war, Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60 percent purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels. The UN nuclear watchdog — International Atomic Energy Agency — has said Iran is the only

country in the world to enrich to that level that wasn’t armed with the bomb.

Iran has been refusing requests by the IAEA to inspect the sites bombed in the June war, raising the concerns of nonproliferation experts. Even before that, Iran has restricted IAEA inspections since Trump’s decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw America from Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

This handout photo released by the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) on November 10, 2025, shows Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during a visit to a facility in Tehran. (Atomic Energy Organization of Iran / AFP)

Trump has repeatedly threatened to use force to compel Iran to reach a deal on the program after earlier sending the carrier to the region over Tehran’s bloody crackdown on nationwide protests that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands of others detained in the Islamic Republic.



Amid the talks, the US has completed the initial phase of its weapons buildup in the region and is expected to complete the second phase in the coming weeks, with all forces in place, Channel 12 reported. The US Central Command also published new footage of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, which arrived in the region last week.

“The Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group, accompanied by two military supply ships, and two US Coast Guard cutters, sailed together in the Arabian Sea today as aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 9 flew overhead,” CENTCOM wrote on X.

The aircraft carrier was moved to the Arabian Sea after Trump’s initial threats last month.

While Iran’s foreign minister described a “positive atmosphere” on Friday’s talks, it remains unclear just what terms Iran is willing to negotiate.

However, the Al Jazeera satellite news network reported that diplomats from Egypt, Turkey, and Qatar offered Iran a proposal in which Tehran would halt enrichment for three years, send its highly enriched uranium out of the country, and pledge “not initiate the use of ballistic missiles.”

Russia had signaled it would take the uranium, but Iran has said ending the program or shipping out the uranium were nonstarters.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that the talks needed to include Tehran’s nuclear program, its ballistic missiles, support for proxy terror groups around the region, and “treatment of their own people.”

“I’m not sure you can reach a deal with these guys, but we’re going to try to find out,” Rubio said.



A man takes a cellphone photo as missiles fired from Iran toward Israel fly over Syrian territory in Damascus, Syria, early on June 18, 2025. (AP/Ghaith Alsayed)

Gulf Arab nations fear a US attack on Iran could spark a regional war that would drag them in as well.

Iran has vowed a harsh response to any strike and, in addition to threatening Israel, has cautioned neighboring countries that host US bases that they could be in the firing line.

Days before Friday’s talks, US forces shot down an Iranian drone near the USS Abraham Lincoln, and Iran attempted to stop a US-flagged ship in the Strait of Hormuz.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-refuses-to-end-enrichment-talks-with-us-avoid-missile-capabilities-diplomat/>

Netanyahu-Trump meeting moved forward to Wednesday amid fear Trump backing off red lines

Netanyahu to fly to Washington and will miss Board of Peace meeting with Turkey and Qatar; Witkoff, Kushner meet directly with Iranian foreign minister and present the red lines, but Israel believes the gaps are unbridgeable amid fears of an American compromise

[Itamar Eichner](#) | Updated: 12:29

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump Wednesday in Washington, and will discuss with him the negotiations with Iran. The prime minister believes any negotiations must include limitations on ballistic missiles and a halting of the support for the Iranian axis.

The urgency follows Friday’s talks between the U.S. and Iran in Muscat, Oman, and Israel’s desire to influence Washington’s red lines. In Jerusalem, officials are closely monitoring the negotiations. The understanding is that while the talks did not collapse and another round is expected early next week, the chances of reaching an agreement remain low — the gaps are vast and nearly impossible to bridge.

Footage: U.S.-Iran talks mediated by the Omani foreign minister

(Photo: Oman News Agency) [Go to website for video](#) [rdb](#)

According to Israeli officials citing American sources, U.S. envoys spent eight hours in Oman in discussions with Iranian representatives, most of them conducted indirectly through Omani mediators. During that time, a direct meeting also took place, including handshakes between U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and his team.

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At that meeting, the Americans presented their red lines: halting uranium enrichment, removing enriched uranium, limiting ballistic missiles in both quantity and range, and ending funding for proxy forces. Iranian representatives rejected all of the demands and continue to insist on maintaining their right to enrich uranium.

The talks focused largely on conditions for negotiations, and here too no real breakthrough was achieved. The United States agreed to another meeting but made clear it expects a concrete Iranian proposal rather than delays. In an unusual step, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Admiral Brad Cooper participated in the talks — a move Iran reportedly interpreted as a threatening signal, almost like a “gun on the table.” At the same time, the United States is preparing military measures on the ground to demonstrate its seriousness, while continuing to

build up its war machine in the region in case of a prolonged confrontation.



'Not naive': Witkoff and Kushner with the Omani mediator, yesterday
(Photo: Omani Foreign Ministry)

Israel believes the Americans “are not naive” and will not allow Iran to stall. At the same time, there are concerns in Jerusalem that President Trump ultimately wants a deal and may compromise on at least some demands. “Israel will not give up its principles and hopes the Americans will stand firm on the basic conditions for a good agreement,” an Israeli official said.



Araghchi in Muscat(Photo: Omani Foreign Ministry)

At the same time, coordination between Israel and the United States continues to deepen in case the talks collapse; Israel is preparing for multiple scenarios, given the possibility it could be attacked by Iran; the assessment in Jerusalem is that there is a high likelihood Iran would strike Israel if it were attacked by the United States; in that context, Israel is preparing a very severe blow against Iran, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned — far beyond Operation Rising Lion — in what was described as “a strike the Iranians cannot imagine.”

Israeli officials also assess that the next meeting, not yet scheduled but likely to take place during the coming week, will be the most decisive; from it, it should become clear whether the United States is moving toward military action

or whether there is still a chance for continued negotiations; in any case, time is short — perhaps days, at most a few weeks; the Americans cannot afford to keep the military armada they have built in the region for long, both because of cost and because it would project weakness across the region.

Trump said overnight that Iran “very much wants a deal,” but Israeli officials interpret the situation differently, believing Iran is trying to buy time while hoping Qatar, Turkey and Egypt will persuade Washington to accept a “thin” agreement. Ultimately, all understand the decision on military action will be Trump’s, based on recommendations from his envoys Witkoff and Kushner. Israeli officials who met Witkoff came away convinced the Americans “are fully engaged” and will not yield easily.

If the U.S. decides to strike, it will likely include Israel, and possibly other countries such as Britain. Coordination is also underway for an international effort to intercept potential attacks on Israel and U.S. assets. Unlike the 12-day war, multiple countries may participate in interception efforts — as occurred during Iran’s attacks in April and October 2024.

Sanctions and the signal: 'Peace through strength'

Alongside the negotiations, the United States is increasing military and economic pressure on Iran. On Friday, President Trump signed a new executive order expanding economic penalties against Iran, including the possibility of additional tariffs on imports from countries maintaining trade ties with Tehran.



“National emergency.” Trump announces additional sanctions on Iran (Photo: Anna Moneymaker/AFP, KHAMENEI.IR/AFP)

Under the order, the U.S. may impose tariffs of up to 25% on goods originating from countries that purchase, import, or receive — directly or indirectly — goods or services from Iran. The White House said the order builds on the “national emergency” declared in 1995 over what was described as an extraordinary threat posed by Iran to U.S. national security, foreign policy and economy. According to the president, that threat persists today and has expanded through additional executive actions covering energy,

finance and human rights.

The new directive authorizes Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, in coordination with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and other officials, to determine which countries maintain trade ties with Iran. Based on those findings, Rubio — in consultation with the Treasury, National Security Council and U.S. Trade Representative — will recommend whether additional tariffs should be imposed and at what level.

The White House said the order is intended to strengthen the effectiveness of existing sanctions and increase economic pressure on the Islamic Republic.

Against this backdrop, the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group sailed together in the Arabian Sea yesterday, accompanied by two military supply ships and two U.S. Coast Guard vessels, with aircraft from Carrier Air Wing 9 flying overhead. “Peace through strength!” CENTCOM wrote on X. Today, Witkoff and Kushner visited the carrier alongside CENTCOM commander Brad Cooper. The signal to Iran was clear: accept an agreement on our terms — or face the consequences. <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/8657f5aee#autoplay>

Trump is far more predictable than you think

Contrary to claims that the U.S. president is difficult to read, both distant and recent experience suggest that even in the current negotiations with Iran, he will prefer to secure a deal and avoid seeking a decisive outcome through military confrontation

Doron Hadar |12:49

Claims that “Trump is unpredictable” and that “no one can know what he will do” are repeated constantly; but that is not entirely accurate; an analysis of the man suggests that overall he is fairly predictable, and his moves can be anticipated; to understand his conduct, one must examine his personality profile, his actions over the years and the specific situation at hand.



US President Trump (Photo: AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

In 1987, when Trump was a successful businessman, he published his bestseller “The Art of the Deal”; the title was no coincidence, echoing the famous “The Art of War”, written in the sixth century BCE and long a source of inspiration for military leaders, statesmen and strategists; in those years Trump sought to position himself as a master negotiator and a model for leaders, politicians and business figures aiming to maximize outcomes and achieve success in deals.

In his book, Trump outlined five principles for success: think big; make sure you do not lose; use leverage; control the narrative and public perception; and act aggressively; from a psychological perspective, according to the DSM, often called the “Bible” of psychologists, the U.S. president fits many traits associated with a narcissistic personality type — grandiosity, preoccupation with power and image, a sense of being “special,” a strong need for admiration, limited empathy, feelings of superiority, envy, and arrogance.

When civil protests erupted in Iran, Trump tweeted that “help is on the way”; the protesters who expected assistance received none; thousands were killed by Revolutionary Guard forces, and criticism of Trump grew both inside Iran and in the United States, where the phrase “Trump Always Chickens Out” (TACO) resurfaced.

Yet the criticism overlooks a pattern: his behavior has often been consistent — reflected in the lack of a U.S. response when Iran attacked Saudi Aramco’s oil and gas facilities in 2019 during his first term; in the swift

agreement he reached with the Houthis in May 2025 after a brief armed clash; and even in the limited strike on Fordow during the Rising Lion war campaign, after which he quickly declared the war over and pushed both sides toward an end.

Alongside avoiding prolonged wars, Trump has repeatedly sought deals and regional agreements; early in his current term he worked to end the “Swords of Iron” war and the Russia–Ukraine war, helped secure an agreement between India and Afghanistan, and even proposed a settlement between Egypt and Ethiopia; therefore, given his character, his comfort zone and the authority he holds as commander in chief, it is likely he will use his tools not to pursue decisive military victory but to secure a deal that reinforces the image he seeks to cement as his legacy; even if force is used, it would likely be limited — signaling rather than toppling — aimed at returning the parties to negotiations rather than overthrowing a regime.

Any agreement he ultimately reaches will likely be wrapped in gold, presented as the best in the world, and himself portrayed as the greatest dealmaker in the universe.

Col. (res.) Doron Hadar served as commander of the Crisis Management and Negotiation Unit.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/opinions-analysis/article/ngc3h0rk8>

US plans Board of Peace meeting on Feb. 19 to fundraise for Gaza reconstruction

Diplomats say 26 countries invited to meeting, overlapping with Netanyahu’s Washington visit; doubts persist over Hamas disarmament, Israeli withdrawal and Gaza postwar governance

By [Jacob Magid](#)

Today, 9:32 am



Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (3L), Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani (C-R), Argentina's President Javier Milei (R), applaud as US President Donald Trump (C) holds a signing founding charter at the 'Board of Peace' meeting during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 22, 2026. (Fabrice Coffrini/AFP)

The US plans to hold the first working meeting of the Board of Peace on February 19 in Washington, two Arab diplomats told The Times of Israel on Saturday.

The US sent out invitations to the 26 other countries represented on the panel on Friday afternoon, the diplomats said, confirming a report on the Axios news site.

The date is set to coincide with the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, which may complicate Muslim leaders' plans to attend.

The US held a signing ceremony for the Board of Peace on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last month.

But while several dozen countries were invited, less than two dozen participated in the ceremony, amid discomfort



with the Board of Peace's [charter](#), which envisions the initiative as a means of usurping the United Nations, and amid Washington's spat with Western countries over Greenland.

US officials have sought to assure allies that the Board of Peace will first deal only with Gaza, in line with a UN Security Council resolution that granted the panel a mandate to oversee the postwar management of the Strip for the next two years.

Children walk past tents and makeshift shelters in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on February 3, 2026. (Eyad Baba / AFP)

The February 19 conference will be used to fundraise for

the initiative, which will need at least several billion dollars to get off the ground.

It is unclear how much buy-in there is, given that many countries remain hesitant to get involved due to skepticism that Hamas will disarm and that Israel will agree to further withdraw from the Strip.

While Mideast mediators of the Gaza conflict — Egypt, Qatar and Turkey — have been discussing potential disarmament plans with Hamas for months, no formal proposal has been presented to the terror group.

The mediators envision a gradual disarmament process that begins with heavier weapons and offers jobs or money to those who agree to give up their arms in addition to amnesty, in a process that will likely take several months. Israel is unlikely to back this more drawn-out process, one of the Arab diplomats said.



Nickolay Mladenov, high representative for the Board of Peace, speaks at the board's meeting during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on January 22, 2026. (Fabrice COFFRINI / AFP)

Moreover, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, which is supposed to replace Hamas in governing the Strip, has yet to enter the enclave since being established last month.

The Board of Peace Gaza envoy Nickolay Mladenov has been working to put together a package of steps easing the humanitarian situation in Gaza that can give the national committee the tools to be able to enter the Strip with a degree of legitimacy, the Arab diplomats said.

However, he has had a difficult time convincing the Israeli government to cooperate, with Jerusalem insisting that only life-saving aid be allowed into areas where Hamas is still located. Nearly all of Gaza's population of 2 million is living in those areas.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is slated to be in Washington from February 18 to 22 on a trip that will overlap with the scheduled Board of Peace meeting.



US President Donald Trump, right, shakes hands with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a news conference at Mar-a-Lago, December 29, 2025, in Palm Beach, Florida. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

He was unable to attend the signing ceremony in Davos due to the international arrest warrant he faces.

While Netanyahu expressed opposition over the Trump administration's inclusion of Qatar and Turkey on the Board of Peace's Gaza Executive Board, the Arab diplomats speculated that he will have little choice but to attend the Washington gathering, given that not doing so when he is already in town would be viewed as a snub of the US president.

US President Donald Trump and Netanyahu are slated to meet at the White House a day before the Board of Peace meeting, said one of the Arab diplomats who is familiar with the planning. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-plans-board-of-peace-meeting-on-feb-19-to-fundraise-for-gaza-rebuild/>

Visiting Israeli border, Lebanese PM vows to expand state authority against Hezbollah

While lamenting near-daily IDF strikes as a 'blow to our dignity,' Nawaf Salam pledges reconstruction, restoration of public services during trip to heavily damaged towns

By AFP and *Tol Staff* Today, 9:16 pm



Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, center, tours areas in southern Lebanon along the border with Israel in the village of Tayr Harfa, February 7, 2026. (AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari)

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam visited heavily damaged towns near the Israeli border on Saturday, pledging reconstruction and lamenting the frequent strikes on the area as a "blow to our dignity."

It was his first trip to the southern border area since the Lebanese army said in early January that it had completed its mission of disarming Hezbollah south of the Litani River.

Under the November 2024 ceasefire agreement, the Iran-backed terror group was required to withdraw and disarm south of the river, but Israel alleges that the group remains entrenched in the area, leading to near-daily IDF strikes. "The challenges today are great, but they do not push us to retreat; rather, they increase our determination to overcome the obstacles," he said about the security situation in the country's south, according to Lebanese media reports.

“Border towns are being attacked on a daily basis, and this is a blow to our dignity,” Salam said, emphasizing that his visit was meant to underscore the presence of the Lebanese state in the south of the country, which was been a stronghold of Hezbollah for decades.

Expanding state authority, he said, means not only deploying the army and restoring security but also restoring public services for residents.

Lebanon’s government has committed to disarming Hezbollah, and the army last month said it had completed the first phase of its plan to do so, covering the area between the Litani River and the Israeli border about 30 kilometers (20 miles) further south.

Visiting Tayr Harfa, around two miles from the border, and nearby Yarine, Salam said frontier towns and villages had suffered “a true catastrophe.”

He vowed authorities would begin key projects, including restoring roads, communications networks and water in the two towns.

Locals gathered on the rubble of buildings to greet Salam and the delegation of accompanying officials in nearby Dhayra, some waving Lebanese flags.

In a meeting in Bint Jbeil, further east, with officials including lawmakers from Hezbollah and its ally the Amal movement, Salam said authorities would “rehabilitate 32 kilometers of roads, reconnect the severed communications network, repair water infrastructure,” and power lines in the district.

Last year, the World Bank announced it had approved \$250 million to support Lebanon’s post-war reconstruction, after estimating that it would cost around \$11 billion in total. Salam said funds, including those from the World

Bank, would be used for the reconstruction and rehabilitation projects.

People gather as Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam tours areas in southern Lebanon along the border with Israel that the Lebanese army says it has been cleared of the armed presence of the Hezbollah terror group, in the village of Yarine, February 7, 2026. (AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari)



On Friday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot [visited](#) Beirut, and said that Lebanon’s army must be given the means to disarm Hezbollah and replace the United Nations peacekeeping force after its mandate ends this year.

“France’s vision for Lebanon is that of a strong, sovereign state holding a monopoly on arms,” Barrot said, adding that “the

Lebanese government has shouldered its responsibilities by launching and carrying through to completion the first phase of this disarmament plan.”

“The second phase must now begin, and the plan associated with this phase is to be presented in the coming days, and in any case before the conference is held,” he continued, referring to the March 5 meeting in Paris.

The second phase concerns the area between the Litani and the Awali rivers, around 40 kilometers south of Beirut. Hezbollah has so far refused to hand over its weapons north of the Litani.

The Israel-Hezbollah war began when the terror group began firing missiles across the border on October 8, 2023 — a day after the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel.

The November 2024 ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel followed an Israeli ground invasion and concurrent air assault that severely degraded the group and killed much of its leadership.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/visiting-israeli-border-lebanese-pm-vows-to-expand-state-authority-against-hezbollah/>

French FM says Lebanese army must be given ‘means’ to disarm Hezbollah



Barrot says Lebanese army should replace UN peacekeepers; French source sees window for progress with ‘weakening of Iranian regime’; Hezbollah’s senior security chief resigns

By Agencies and Tol Staff 6 February 2026, 9:56 pm

Lebanon’s President Joseph Aoun (R) receiving France’s Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot (L) at the Presidential Palace in Baabda, east of Beirut, on February 6, 2026. (Lebanese Presidency Press Office / AFP)

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Friday that Lebanon's army must be given the means to disarm the terror group Hezbollah and replace a United Nations peacekeeping force after its mandate ends this year.

On the final stop of a regional tour that has taken him to Syria and Iraq, Barrot was meeting senior officials in Beirut, with discussions expected to address preparations for a March conference in Paris in support of the Lebanese army.

"France's vision for Lebanon is that of a strong, sovereign state holding a monopoly on arms," Barrot told AFP. "The first step to fulfill this mission is to give the Lebanese Armed Forces the means to continue the work of disarming Hezbollah," he said.

The Iran-backed terror group emerged weakened from its latest war with Israel, which ended in a November 2024 ceasefire agreement.

A French diplomatic source said "the regional context makes the issue of Hezbollah's disarmament particularly sensitive," adding that "there is a window for progress on this matter" given the "weakening of the Iranian regime."



Hezbollah supporters hold portraits of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a rally to show their solidarity with Iran, in the southern suburb of Beirut on January 26, 2026. (Photo by Anwar AMRO / AFP)

Iran and the United States held talks in Oman on Friday that were seen as a critical chance to avert any new escalation between the foes.

Iran had insisted the talks would be centered solely on its nuclear program, although the United States wanted to discuss issues including Tehran's backing for terror groups in the region.

Barrot said Lebanon's army should "replace" the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) "when the time

comes for the withdrawal" of the peacekeepers.

"We must now prepare for the post-UNIFIL" stage, he said.

Last year, the UN Security Council decided to conclude the mandate of the force — which has been mandated to act as a buffer between Israel and Lebanon for decades — at the end of this year, after the US and Israel sought its departure.

Army plan

In line with the 2024 truce, the Lebanese army announced in January that it had completed the first phase of a government plan to disarm Hezbollah, covering the area between the Litani River and the Israeli border about 30 kilometers (20 miles) further south.

"The Lebanese government has shouldered its responsibilities by launching and carrying through to completion the first phase of this disarmament plan," Barrot said.

"The second phase must now begin, and the plan associated with this phase is to be presented in the coming days, and in any case before the conference is held," he continued, referring to the March 5 meeting in Paris.

Lebanese army soldiers secure the site of a drone attack that Israel said targeted a Hezbollah operative on the road of the southern Lebanese village of Ansariyeh on February 2, 2026. (Mahmoud ZAYYAT / AFP)

The second phase concerns the area between the Litani and the Awali rivers, around 40 kilometers south of Beirut.

Hezbollah has so far refused to hand over its weapons north of the Litani.

The Israel-Hezbollah war began when the terror group began firing missiles across the border on October 8, 2023 — a day after the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel.

The November 2024 ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel followed an Israeli ground invasion and concurrent air assault that severely degraded the group and killed much of its leadership.



Israel has been skeptical of claims of the terror group's disarmament and has continued to carry out strikes, which it says are against Hezbollah violations of the ceasefire.



The remains of a large fire caused from rockets fired from Lebanon burns near a home in the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, June 4, 2024. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)

Barrot is also set to meet Lebanese army chief Rodolphe Haykal, who this week held meetings with officials in Washington.

The United States is applying intense pressure on Lebanon to speedily disarm Hezbollah.

On Thursday, influential Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said he cut his meeting with Haykal short after asking him whether the Lebanese military considered Hezbollah to be a "terrorist" organization.

Graham said that Haykal replied, "No, not in the context of

Lebanon."

Hezbollah also accepted the resignation of senior security official Wafiq Safa on Friday, the first time an official of his rank has stepped down, sources familiar with the group's thinking told Reuters.



Hezbollah's security chief Wafiq Safa (L) and Muhammad Mahdi Nasrallah (C), son of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in Beirut's southern suburbs, July 6, 2025. (Anwar Amro / AFP)

Safa, who heads Hezbollah's liaison and coordination unit responsible for working with Lebanese security agencies, survived an Israeli assassination attempt in October 2024. A source said "the resignation and its acceptance were part of an internal restructuring move" following losses Hezbollah sustained in last year's war with Israel, adding that southern commander Hussein Abdullah was appointed to replace Safa.

Safa, whom Middle East media reports said was born in 1960, was sanctioned in 2019 by the US Treasury Department, which described him as Hezbollah's interlocutor to the Lebanese security forces.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/french-fm-says-lebanese-army-must-be-given-means-to-disarm-hezbollah/>

Gallant: PM a 'liar' who undermined security chiefs, built false narrative of Oct. 7

Ex-defense minister joined by Lapid in upbraiding Netanyahu for cherrypicked quotes, shirking accountability in his response to state comptroller's now-frozen Oct. 7 investigation

By [Sam Sokol](#)

Today, 10:14 pm



Then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant is seen with officers at the IDF Southern Command during a security assessment on October 9, 2023. (Defense Ministry)

Former defense minister Yoav Gallant accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of stirring up his government ministers against Israel's security chiefs as they led their troops on the front lines against Hamas and lying about the events of October 7, 2023.

"I did not think I would have to come here to the studio and say, 'We have a liar for prime minister. The prime minister is a liar,' Gallant said in a caustic Channel 12 interview on Saturday, in which he

repeatedly castigated his former boss.

"After the huge failure on October 7, when the IDF and Shin Bet, led by the chief of staff and the Shin Bet chief, were courageously fighting back, when they were at the front, Netanyahu stabbed them in the back and stirred up all the government ministers against them and presented it all to the public," Gallant charged.

The former Likud MK, who was fired as defense minister in late 2024, accused Netanyahu of claiming that a delay in the IDF entering the southern Gaza city of Rafah in early 2024 was due to the supposed fear of the IDF leadership, when in reality it was because the IDF had been replenishing its supplies after allocating ammunition for potential conflict in the north.

“Netanyahu’s first priority is himself, then his government, and then the country,” Gallant said, adding that the premier “takes credit for actions after they are completed, if they succeed.”

“If they don’t succeed, it’s someone else’s responsibility,” claimed Gallant.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, right, and then-Defense Minister Yoav Gallant attend a vote at the Knesset plenum in Jerusalem, March 13, 2024. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Gallant’s criticism of Netanyahu came two days after the premier [attempted to distance himself from the failures of October 7](#) by releasing a 55-page document of his answers given to the State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman as part of the ombudsman’s investigation into the attack.

Among the selective citations provided by Netanyahu were quotes that appeared to be aimed at pinning the failure to prevent the onslaught on

political rivals and security chiefs, including Gallant, while painting himself as more hawkish on Hamas than his political adversaries.

It cited deliberations in the month prior to the massacre, including a cabinet meeting on September 12, 2023, in which Gallant was quoted as saying the security situation in Gaza is “stable,” and that Israel should “hold back its forces” against Hamas.

Netanyahu’s response to the state comptroller, Gallant charged, “is a case of engineering the narrative — taking fragments of discussions, sentences, from lengthy periods, putting them together, turning them into a news item.” Rather than the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, “Netanyahu doesn’t tell the truth, certainly not the whole truth, and certainly not nothing but the truth,” his former defense minister said.

Gallant also rejected Netanyahu’s claim at a January press conference that IDF soldiers were killed in the war against Hamas because of a Biden administration “embargo” that left ground forces lacking essential ammunition. “That’s not correct,” said Gallant, “[though] the Americans made it difficult for us.”



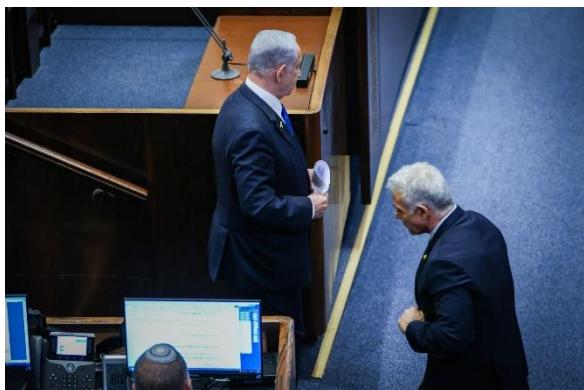
Defense Minister Yoav Gallant speaks with officers and soldiers in southern Gaza's Rafah, October 30, 2024. (Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry)

Netanyahu and Gallant frequently clashed after the government took power at the end of 2022, with the prime minister firing him in March 2023 — after he had warned of the security dangers stemming from the national rift over the government’s judicial overhaul agenda — only to reverse the move shortly afterward amid intense public objection.

Gallant resigned from the Knesset in January 2025, several months after Netanyahu fired him from his cabinet for the second and final time in late 2024. The Likud party has since

launched proceedings to expel Gallant from its ranks.

In his own 12-page response to the prime minister released on Saturday evening, Opposition Leader Yair Lapid



came out strong against Netanyahu’s document, accusing him of trying to erase his culpability in the October 7 failure.

According to Lapid, the premier omitted from his response to the state comptroller, Shin Bet and IDF recommendations to prepare for flare-up scenarios in Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Opposition Leader Yair Lapid attend a “40 signatures” debate at the Knesset plenum, Jerusalem, June 24, 2024. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

Lapid said he attended a briefing with Netanyahu in August 2023 in which intelligence materials “clearly indicated a risk of flare-ups at levels completely different from anything we’ve known in years.”

This led Lapid to warn at a press conference the following month that “we are approaching a violent, multi-front confrontation”—without predicting a full-on invasion from Gaza. “If the opposition leader knew, how can the prime minister claim he didn’t know?” Lapid asked.

He further accused Netanyahu of working to strengthen Hamas as a counterbalance to the Palestinian Authority, insisting such a policy led to the October 7 onslaught.

This unspoken policy was characterized by a series of squandered opportunities to assassinate Hamas leaders, the continuous channeling of Qatari funds to Gaza and utter disregard for intelligence warnings that the cash was funding Hamas’ military wing, Lapid claimed.

In his submission to Englman, Netanyahu tried to obfuscate while “relying on a series of manipulations of secret documents, deliberate deceptions, false versions and a consistent attempt to place the blame on his subordinates,” the opposition leader added.

Englman has not released any findings from his investigation, which the High Court of Justice ordered him to freeze in December. The comptroller’s probe was controversial from the get-go, facing claims that it is severely flawed, would taint evidence and the investigative process, and that only a state commission of inquiry could properly

investigate the disaster.



State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman attends a meeting at the Knesset in Jerusalem on May 12, 2025. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Netanyahu released a video last week at the same time as his document, in which he insinuated that the High Court was motivated by political considerations in freezing Englman’s probe. The prime minister has repeatedly called for a commission of inquiry into October 7 that would have half its members chosen by the government and half by the opposition, rather than a state commission of inquiry, whose members would be appointed by the judiciary.

The opposition has rejected Netanyahu’s bid to set up a political

inquiry, but the coalition is aiming to move ahead with that process anyway, which is already underway in the Knesset.

Lazar Berman and Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.

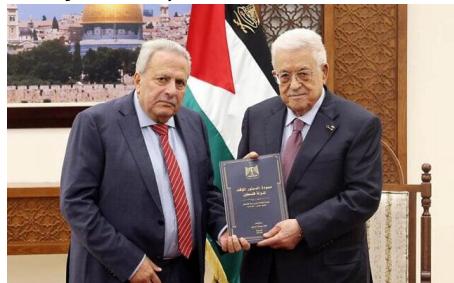
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/gallant-pm-a-liar-who-undermined-security-chiefs-built-false-narrative-of-oct-7/>

Abbas receives draft constitution that aims to transition PA to full-fledged state

Document must be approved by public referendum, which PA president may hold off on scheduling to avoid punitive measures from Israel, which is already withholding billions in funds

By [Jacob Magid](#)

Today, 11:09 pm



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas receives a draft of the State of Palestine's interim constitution from counselor Muhammad al-Hajj Qasim in Ramallah on February 5, 2026. (Wafa)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas received a draft constitution on Thursday that aims to transition the PA to a full-fledged state, Ramallah’s official Wafa media outlet said.

The PA already refers to itself as a full-fledged state, but this would be the first time the transition would be embedded in a constitutional framework. To

date, the PA has been operating under the Palestinian Authority’s basic laws.

If adopted, it would likely have a limited impact on the ground for Palestinians, as Israel still maintains overall security control of the territories between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. However, the formal transformation to statehood status — one already recognized by over 160 countries around the world — may boost the PA’s legitimacy in certain international arenas.

Thursday’s submission of the 70-page constitution by drafting committee chairman Muhammad al-Hajj Qasim followed seven months of consultations on the matter. Abbas ordered that the draft constitution be submitted to the Palestine Liberation Organization’s Executive Committee for review before being made available for public feedback, a process that could take months to over a year, a Palestinian official told The Times of Israel.

It will then have to go through a public referendum and receive a majority support in order to come into effect. However, Israel would likely seek to block such a vote from being held as it opposes the unilateral transformation of the PA into a state. Doing so would also likely be seen as a violation of the Oslo Accords, which envision Palestinian statehood resulting from direct negotiations between the parties. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long opposed such negotiations, however, and Jerusalem has accused the PA of rejecting previous statehood offers.



Israeli troops check the identity cards and permits of Palestinians at a checkpoint in Bethlehem in the West Bank, on route to take part in the first Ramadan Friday noon prayers at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound atop the Temple Mount on March 15, 2024. (Hazem Bader / AFP)

No date has been set for a referendum on the draft constitution, and analysts speculate that Abbas is not likely to rush the move in order to avoid punitive measures from Israel, which is already withholding several billion dollars in tax revenues that belong to Ramallah, significantly hampering its effort to pay public sector employees and continue to function.

But Abbas is also facing pressure both domestically and

from the international community to reform the PA, and Ramallah is framing the new constitution as a key part of that process.

The draft constitution stipulates that if approved, some of its provisions would take effect before a presidential election is held, while other provisions would take effect afterward.

Qasim said in a statement that the draft constitution “preserves political pluralism and the separation of powers, while also empowering the legislative branch to exercise oversight and legislative authorities.”

The PA’s main parliamentary body, the Palestine Legislative Council, has not convened since 2007, when splits between Abbas’s Fatah party and Hamas rendered the body inoperative.

The draft constitution maintains the main elements of the existing hybrid parliamentary-presidential system, but stipulates that the latter position has a limit of two four-year terms.



Interim Palestinian leader and the front-runner in the upcoming Jan. 9, 2005 presidential election Mahmoud Abbas talks during his first official campaign speech in the West Bank town of Ramallah, Saturday Dec. 25, 2004. (AP Photo/Nasser Nasser, File)

Abbas is currently serving in the 21st year of his first term after canceling several planned elections over what he says was Israel’s refusal to allow balloting in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem. The decision is widely understood to also be due to fears of Hamas gains.

No date has been set for either the parliamentary or presidential elections

in the PA.

However, PA municipal elections are slated for April and the first-ever direct, popular elections for the PLO’s Palestinian National Council are scheduled for November. The latter body selects the members of the PLO’s Executive Committee.

The PLO is supposed to be the overarching umbrella body representing Palestinians worldwide, whereas the PA is supposed to be a transitional administrative body providing services for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-receives-draft-constitution-that-aims-to-transition-pa-to-full-fledged-state/>

UN's Albanese says humanity has 'common enemy' in Israel at Al Jazeera forum

United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese claimed that "international law has been stabbed in the heart" and accused Israel of being the "common enemy" of humanity.

By DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD FEBRUARY 7, 2026 18:50 Updated: FEBRUARY 7, 2026 19:36



United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese speaks during an interview ahead of the conference on "A Cartography of Genocide: Israel's Conduct in Gaza since October 2023", an investigative project on Israeli-Palestinian conflict, at the Roma Tre University, in Rome, Italy, October 6, 2025. (photo credit: REUTERS/REMO CASILLI)

Humanity "now has a common enemy," [United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese](#) told the Al Jazeera Forum via video link on Saturday night during her speech condemning Israel.

Albanese, appearing at the same conference as Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal and [Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi](#), spoke during the panel "The Palestinian Cause in a World Moving Toward Multipolarity."

During the panel, she condemned countries for maintaining relationships and arms trade with the Jewish state and alleged global inaction during the two-year [Israel-Hamas War](#).

"The fact that most of the media in the Western world has been amplifying ... the [genocidal narrative](#) is a challenge. But at the same time, here also lies the opportunity," she said. "Because if international law has been stabbed in the heart, it is also true that never before has the global community seen the challenges that we all face."

She stressed that humanity "now has a common enemy ... And the respect for fundamental freedoms is the last peaceful avenue, the last peaceful toolbox that we have to gain our freedom."



Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur for Palestine, at an Emergency Conference of States, hosted by Colombia and South Africa, to discuss measures against Israel, in Bogota, Colombia, July 15, 2025; illustrative. (credit: REUTERS/LUISA GONZALEZ)

"We need to stand up, we need to do the right thing," she said.

Albanese inclusion a 'profound failure'

Danny Danon, Israel's Ambassador to the UN, responded to the reveal in his own X post on Thursday, calling Albanese's inclusion a "profound failure" of the system.

"Francesca Albanese exploits her position at the UN to echo terrorist propaganda and antisemitism," Danon's post read. "And if what she has done so far was not enough, she is expected to speak at the Al Jazeera forum alongside the chief murderer who heads the Hamas terrorist organization, Khaled Mashaal."

Ambassador of Israel to the European Union Avi Nir-Feldklein also condemned her appearance, writing, "UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres], How do you justify the UN's Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, appearing at a forum run by Al Jazeera, the Muslim Brotherhood propaganda arm, alongside the foreign minister of Iran's terror regime, fresh from killing and executing its own citizens, and alongside a senior leader of Hamas, one of the world's deadliest terrorist organizations, responsible for the October 7th massacre?"

Araghchi's 'profound question'

Araghchi also dedicated most of his speaking time to discussing "the profound question of our region: Palestine." "Palestine is not one issue among many. Palestine is the defining question of justice in West Asia and beyond...The strategic and moral compass of our region," he claimed. "It is a test of whether international law has meaning, whether human rights have universal value..."

Araghchi did not comment on the domestic issues in Iran, not mentioning the thousands of protesters who have been killed since demonstrators erupted in response to the economic crisis.

"What we are witnessing in Gaza is not merely war...It is the deliberate destruction of civilian life on a massive scale, it is genocide," he claimed, adding that Israel's war has "shaken the heart of the Muslim world."

Araghchi claimed that the "impunity" Israel experienced in Gaza has deeply damaged the global legal order and "Israel's expansionist project has had a direct and destabilizing impact on the security of all countries in the region."

He demanded that Israel be sanctioned, the global community put in place an immediate arms embargo, and the suspension of military and intelligence cooperation, as well as an immediate right of return for all Palestinians who left the territory.

Later, turning his attention to the negotiations with the US, Araghchi told Al Jazeera in an interview excerpt that Uranium enrichment is our inalienable right and must continue. Even with bombing, they could not destroy our capabilities. We are ready to reach a reassuring agreement on enrichment."

"Iran's sovereign position is opposition to transferring uranium abroad," he said. "The Iranian nuclear case will only be resolved through negotiations."

Miriam Sela-Eitam contributed to this report. <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-885877>

EU ‘only hurting itself’ by Russia sanctions – Slovak PM

The bloc should focus on internal issues rather than imposing more punitive measures on Moscow, Robert Fico has said

7 Feb, 2026 20:16



Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. © Maryam Majd/Getty Images

The European Union should prioritize its own internal problems over imposing more sanctions on Russia, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has said.

Unlike most other EU member states, Slovakia under Fico has refused to provide weapons to Ukraine and has repeatedly voiced opposition to the bloc’s sanctions against Russia.

Commenting on the European Commission’s 20th package of punitive measures targeting Moscow, Fico said the “*EU has more important obligations and priorities than sanctions against Russia.*” Speaking to STVR on Saturday, he added that all previous EU sanctions packages had brought no benefit to member states.

“*We are only hurting ourselves,*” Fico argued. The Slovak prime minister said the EU is “*going downhill,*” citing “*worrying*” economic trends and declining competitiveness across much of the bloc.

Fico said that at next Thursday’s informal EU summit, he would urge fellow leaders to tackle the bloc’s most pressing issues first: “*Let us put the economy in order. Let us put foreign policy in order. Let us have the courage to say that some commissioners are not doing well in the European Commission and let us replace them.*”

The latest sanctions package drafted by the commission envisages a full maritime services ban for Russian crude oil, as well as measures targeting a number of Russian banks and export restrictions on metals, chemicals and critical minerals.

Fico recently sharply criticized the bloc’s REPowerEU plan to completely phase out Russian gas imports by November 2027, describing the scheme as “*suicide.*” The Slovak prime minister announced that Bratislava would sue Brussels over the ban.

Last month, Fico warned that the EU was in a “*deep crisis*” and called for the removal of the bloc’s foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, known for her hardline anti-Russian stance. He said that the bloc cannot be led by people with whom “*decisive global players do not meet and do not consult seriously*” – an apparent reference to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio having repeatedly refused to meet Kallas.

<https://www.rt.com/news/632158-slovak-pm-fico-eu-sanctions-against-russia/>

OP ED

The Somali Muslim Network in the ICE Riots

Thu, 5 Feb 2026 5:36 AM PST by Daniel Greenfield



“I think this is the end for ICE,” Jaylani Hussein, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Minnesota (CAIR-MN), bragged, as the violent riots against immigration enforcement continued. “This is the moment where we continue to double down.”

The Somali Muslim leader’s aggressive rhetoric showed the role that his people were playing in the campaign to protect illegal alien criminals, some of them fellow Somali Muslims, from deportation as part of a network of extreme groups engaging in intimidation against ICE.

A left-wing media story described one of the Somali anti-ICE patrols featuring Kamal Yusuf, who doesn’t speak English, but wears a “F___ ICE” vest and tracks federal law enforcement.

This was linked to the Somali-American Leadership Table (SALT) organization co-founded by Imam Yusuf Abdulle, a director of the [Islamic Association of North America \(ISNA\)](#). ISNA was founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood and is an unindicted co-conspirator in funding Islamic terror linked groups. “We are fighting,”

Imam Abdulle bragged.

ICE has taken into custody multiple [Somali rapists and pedophiles](#), including Sahal Osman Shidane (criminal sexual conduct fourth degree of a victim 13 to 15 years old and Abdi Gelle Mohamed (sexual abuse of a minor) as part of a larger [Somali rape crisis in Minnesota](#). The state has seen horrifying Somali assaults on women and children go unpunished a man who assaulted a teenage girl in a college bathroom stall (and is already out), a man who [assaulted a 4-year-old girl](#) and was given no prison time, and a Somali pedophile who assaulted a 10-year-old girl in 1998 and whom the federal government has been trying [to deport since 2001](#).

So it was no wonder that Somali Muslim groups rallied to oppose immigration enforcement.

Ayada Leads, a Somali Muslim organization, boasted that “Rep. Ilhan Omar is the first woman Ayada Leads recruited to run for office.” Since then, Ayada has taken credit for State Sen. Zaynab Mohamed, State Rep. Hodan Hassan, and Mayor Nadia Mohamed of St. Louis Park, MN whom it describes as “the youngest elected official trained by Ayada Leads”.

These days, Ayada Leads tweets messages urging its supporters to report ICE federal immigration law enforcement officers while warning “Remember SALUTE when reporting.” SALUTE is a military acronym meaning ‘Size, Activity, Location, Unit, Time, Equipment’.

Habon Abdulle, a Somali immigrant from Mogadishu who was [honored by Rep. Omar](#) on the House floor and invited as her guest to the State of the Union address in 2020, heads Ayada Leads (originally the WOW Network) and has been doing a media tour complaining about the impact of immigration enforcement and immigration laws on Somali migrants in Minnesota.

Ayada Leads has been listed as part of the anti-ICE coalition, its social media has promoted protests as “revolution” and “resistance”, and urged support for the pro-illegal mobs, promoted bail funds for the arrested rioters and suggested that some serve as ‘emergency contacts’.

The Somali Muslim group even defended the church rioters who disrupted a service at Cities Church in St. Paul.

Abdulle expressed [her appreciation](#) to the Headwaters Foundation. Headwaters is [headed by Bilal Alkatout](#), a Kuwaiti immigrant and gay ‘Palestinian’ who has “never stepped foot in Palestine”. Headwaters is a notorious local operation that helped fund BLM during the riots and more recently provided funding to pro-Hamas groups like ‘Students for Justice in Palestine’.

Headwaters has called for eliminating ICE and offered six figures to build “a future without ICE”. It had urged support for anti-ICE groups like MIRAC which have defended the use of violence.

The Headwaters Foundation funded a number of Islamic groups including the local chapter of the Council on American–Islamic Relations (CAIR), which is also involved in the anti-ICE coalition, took part in rallies calling for an end to immigration enforcement and demanded that Minnesota investigate “federal agents for terrorizing Somali & other immigrant communities”.

CAIR is an unindicted Hamas terror funding co-conspirator whose leadership praised Oct 7.

Nausheena Hussain, a former deputy director of CAIR-MN, and Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment (RISE), who also works for the Brooklyn Park Islamic Center, had served as a committee member at Headwaters, and reposted a message stating that “Minnesota is under occupation by federal agents.”

CAIR MN also retweeted a message from State Sen. Omar Fateh complaining that Gov. Tim Walz still hadn’t visited a mosque to show support for Somalis, along with an invite to a ‘Somali Bar Association’ event offering “practical guidelines for encounters with ICE”.

Jaylani Hussein, the executive director of CAIR-MN, a Somali Muslim migrant, had previously blamed the exposure of Somali fraud on the Jews, appearing to argue that discussing Somali fraud, which in Minnesota is estimated to reach into the billions, [was](#) “Israel First” and praising Tucker Carlson and Candace Owens, even as liberal Jews were trying to defend Somalis.

The Somali Muslim leader [had taken part in](#) a campaign to get an art professor fired for displaying Islamic art that he had considered blasphemous and [had protested](#) the death of Dolal Idd: a Somali Muslim criminal who was shot after opening fire on police officers.

Hussein and State Sen. Zaynab Mohamed had reportedly handed out cards to Somalis telling them not to talk to federal law enforcement. Anisa Hagi-Mohamed, one of the Bush fellows and a Somali migrant, claimed that the fighting against ICE feels like a “civil war.”

The Bush Foundation (no relation to the presidential family) has been responsible for funding many of the radical groups involved in anti-ICE activities. While the Bush Foundation was started by an engineer who died in the

1960s, the organization has become an extreme organization with little relation to its founder. Its grantmaking coordinators include at least two Somalis, Ramla Bile and Farhiya Abdulkarim, (the Bush Foundation has currently hidden its list of key people).

“Being a Minnesota Somali is a profoundly special identity for me and many others, and we wholeheartedly belong here. Our belonging is not contingent upon meritocracy or our material contributions,” Bile argued. The Somali [had previously been](#) furious at an officer wearing a hijab as a costume, denouncing the officer, “I was literally sick to my stomach.” Bile recently promoted the creation of an ‘Immigrant Rapid Response Fund’ for “mobilizing and organizing”.

Somalis have become so disproportionately represented in the Bush Foundation that nearly a third of its 2025 fellows are Somali Muslims, four times as many as Latinos and Asians, to the extent that Bush is becoming a Somali organization. And one aimed at fighting ICE.

The Minneapolis riots helped divert attention from the massive Somali Muslim fraud that has topped over \$1 billion. While the city burns, the ongoing investigation into Somali fraud is being sidelined and the efforts to suppress further arrests of Somali illegal aliens is running into riots.

Daniel Greenfield is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center. This article previously appeared at the Center's [Front Page Magazine](#).

<https://bkdvk-zgpvh.campaign-view.com/ua/viewinbrowser>



STEP BY STEP

STEP BY STEP: Good news is that many friends and supporters of Lev U'Neshama (Heart and Soul) donated towards the Education Fund project to provide basic school supplies for actually 350 children within our Lev U'Neshama families.

We are grateful that the school supply part of our effort has been successful.

According to the Israel Population and Statistics office, Tzfat's population is about 40,000, and one third live at the poverty level. We do what we can so at least the children within our struggling LUN families can get the things they need.

Every week we are providing new sport shoes and eye exams/eyeglasses to the children on our request list. However, previous donations are rapidly dwindling. I am reaching out now before the fund has been emptied and we will have to say "no" to additional requests.

We work with two local shoe merchants who give Lev U'Neshama a discount but they advised us the cost of the shoes has increased. Also, we work with an accredited optician in town who also gives us a discount but his cost is stable.

Lev U'Neshama is an Israeli registered non-profit charity organization, volunteer run, no business expenses whatsoever and every \$ goes into our programs.

Shoes: \$45 per pair regular and \$60 for First Steps, baby shoes.

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

Or use the Zelle US to US bank transfer system (contact me at mortsмо@aol.com for bank information.

US Donors may also send checks made payable to

Simcha Smolensky, my son, who is also a volunteer. Send to:

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

Your support will be appreciated.

Yaffa Smolensky