

Seyed M. Marandi: Why Iran Won't Back Down?

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What happened yesterday, many people were arguing that the agreement was going to be announced between the two sides. Donald Trump was preparing for that. And then Iranians, even we had Donald Trump tweeting or posting on his social about how he was going to lift the blockade in the Strait of Hormuz. Nothing of that sort happened. He made a lot of comments in that post. So what was happening yesterday, and how close was it to reaching or announcing some sort of agreement?

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I don't know. I mean, it's Trump, and we don't know why he says things or what will happen afterwards. There was no final text when he made that truthful post, when he posted his comments. And yet, in certain respects, they were close. I mean, there has been progress. And the things that the Iranians have announced and I've also posted and discussed, those are all more or less agreed upon. And yet Trump keeps making statements that contradict those agreements or the texts that go back and forth. But even after he makes these comments, like he did a few days ago, still, the American texts that are sent to Iran are different from what he says.

So I don't know about today or since yesterday, but in the past, when he made comments that went against what was being discussed through the messages going back and forth—because there are no negotiations, there are no direct or indirect negotiations—they're all messages, written messages that go back and forth. In the past, he made similar outlandish comments, saying he won't do this, he won't do that, Iran has to do this, and so on. But that didn't change the way in which the U.S. negotiators were moving forward. So is this just for public consumption, or will he later on wreck the progress that's been made? Who knows? It's Donald Trump.

Anything that I say is just speculation. You know, I've been on—I've spoken with many people. You've spoken with many people on your show. I've been on your show many times. So have others who are much more knowledgeable about the workings of the U.S. government. And whenever we listen to different people, they all say the same thing: we don't know. No one knows what's going on

in the head of Donald Trump. And many say Donald Trump doesn't know what's going on in his own head. So it's unclear. But the fact is that the two sides are not that far apart, or they weren't at least until yesterday. I don't know about the last 24 or 48 hours, but the two sides are not that far apart, or weren't far apart. And the summary that I gave earlier about the Iranian assets that were confiscated or stolen, about the waiving of the energy sector sanctions for Iranian exports, about removing the siege, about a ceasefire and the halt in the genocidal attacks in Lebanon, and about ships moving freely through the Strait of Hormuz under Iranian authority—Iran did not negotiate anything about fees, and Iran is not going to give up authority over the Strait of Hormuz. That's a done deal. They shouldn't have attacked Iran. Iran had no ambitions to control the Strait of Hormuz before the war. I don't recall ever hearing it in the public sphere in Iran or in private conversations.

And yet, now it's very clear in the public sphere and in private conversations that Iran is not going to relinquish it for security reasons and because countries in the Persian Gulf did great harm to the Iranian people. So the things that we've discussed in the past, if I remember them all—I hope I haven't missed anything—but that's basically what the two sides are agreeing upon. And of course, Iran will give assurances. It will say that we are not going to develop weapons, which it has been saying for decades. And then the two sides will discuss sanctions and the nuclear program and others as we progress through the two months. That's basically what the two sides agreed upon.

There are still differences. There's not a single, there's not a final text that the two sides agree upon. But in general, these ideas are what exist in the text. But we'll have to see. I think that after what he said and the way he said it, he cannot sign an agreement, at least for a while, because it would look foolish for him to say one thing today and then sign an agreement tomorrow. So who knows? But, you know, Nima, I've spoken to people here who are knowledgeable about the situation. The belief here is that even if the United States signs the deal, they're not going to implement the deal and that we're going to reach, most probably, a dead end well before the end of the two months and that war could start again.

We're dealing with a dying empire that has, you know, whose leadership has lost its mind. And in their arrogance, they can't seem to, as they say, know how to back down when they should back down. They still think that they are the empire and that they have to defeat the other side. And it's just not going to happen. If the United States attacks Iran again, the results will be worse than last time around. I have no doubt about that. And in this siege warfare, they are harming the Iranian economy. There's absolutely no doubt about that. But the harm that they're doing to themselves and the global economy far outweighs what they're doing to Iran. Iranians will be patient. They'll be resilient. They'll see this through.

But the global economy, people across the world and in the United States, they'll be asking themselves, why are we paying this price for Netanyahu? Why are our lives being destroyed for these Zionists or genocidal people killing children every day in Gaza and in Lebanon? So this is a path to nowhere, the path or the road to hell for the United States. But so far, Trump does not have the ability to change course. I imagine that he does want to change course because there has been

a sense of urgency on the American side for negotiations. They want this deal done fast. But then when progress is made, Trump goes out and says these things. Obviously, the counterpressure from the Zionists or the neocons — they're one and the same — is enormous. And I think these statements that he makes are reflective.

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Two points that were mentioned in that post — one of them is the Strait of Hormuz. For many people who are arguing, the argument, by the way, on their part is that this is international waters. And I don't know how they are defining that. And what is the Iranian understanding? And what was the communication — how was the communication between the two sides to make them understand that this is not international waters? This is something related to Iran and Oman. It's not related to the United States to decide about it and the future of it. And it depends on the region, by the way. And how is that going to — is there any sort of communication between — because Donald Trump was mentioning that no tolls, no fees, nothing. They have to open up the Strait of Hormuz.

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Well, Nima, first of all, international law doesn't mean anything. I mean, when Trump murdered those 168 kids, those little girls in Minab, where was Iranian sovereignty? Where was the Iranian airspace? Where was Iranian territory important for the United States or the Zionist regime? Where was it important for the EU? Where was it important for the British or the Canadians or the Australians or New Zealand? All of them supported the United States. None of them condemned the United States. They all condemned Iran. Iran was the victim. During the 12-day war, it was the victim. Iran was condemned. During this war, Iran was the victim. Iran was condemned. So international law means nothing. It only means something when it suits their interests, but not the other way around.

Where is international law as a genocide is taking place in Gaza? The Israeli regime is slaughtering kids day and night in Lebanon. There's no meaning to international law; these are just empty words now. They meant something at least before — not that much, but still it was — but now we're living in the jungle, the jungle created by the West. International law, which they created, they dominated, they designed it in a way that benefited them rather than us. Now, in their decline, they feel that it's not working for them, so they're saying no more international law. The mask is off, and, you know, human rights and human equality — all that has been thrown out the window. And they're, you know, these regimes are being as ruthless as possible. So that's one thing.

But the second is that it's clear that the Strait of Hormuz is not wide enough to be international waters. These are territorial waters that are between Iran and Oman. And in the past, Iran never, as I said earlier, showed any ambition to do anything about it. But after this war, that changed. I mean, the West, whether they want to call it international waters or an international trade route or not, they should blame themselves for allowing this situation to take place. I mean, Trump and

Netanyahu have caused Iran to take control of the strait and impose its sovereignty over its own territorial waters. That's what has happened. Iran has not signed any international agreement or is not a member of any agreement that prevents Iran from being able to extract fees for countries to pass through its territorial waters.

So, you know, but your point that, you know, international law, when they're trying to destroy our country, you know, Western— I remember after a few days, when it was becoming clear that Iran was not going to lose the war, it was gradually becoming clear that Iran was going to win the war. I think a journalist from, I don't know if it was the BBC or Sky News, one of these mainstream Western media outlets, said to me—he asked this question and then said, “These are international waters,” you know, sort of with indignation. I was saying, you know, you're waging a war on us, your overlord is bombing our cities day and night, and you're trying to teach the Iranians about international law? This whole war is an affront to international law, to human dignity, to morality. But in their arrogance, they don't see the irony of what they say and what they do.

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The second point which was mentioned by Donald Trump is the nuclear, the so-called nuclear dust. He's talking about the enriched uranium in Iran. And he wants that to be, you know, he wants Iran to send that to the United States. And it seems that from what we've heard from the Iranian sources, there was no mention of this in the memorandum of understanding. The memorandum of understanding, that was that document that both sides were supposed to have agreed on, and they were supposed to announce it. And what do we know about that?

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Well, you're right. I mean, the Iranians in this statement, in this document, will say that we will not pursue nuclear weapons, which is not new, and that this and other issues will be discussed after this deal is implemented. And of course, what are the other issues? They invaded the country. They killed thousands of people. They destroyed our infrastructure. What about compensation? In addition to that, and more important than anything else, the sanctions. They've imposed sanctions on every aspect of Iranian life. So the sanctions have to go. So we have more to put on the table than the Americans. They want to negotiate about the nuclear program? Fine. We'll be negotiating about a lot of things.

And the Americans will have to deliver. And if they can't deliver, then they shouldn't expect us, the Iranian side, to deliver anything. We did not carry out aggression. We did not violate international law. If Iran wants to enrich uranium at 99.999%, it can do so in accordance with international law. It's Iran's right. So there's nothing that the Americans can complain about. Of course, the Iranians have, from the very beginning, enriched uranium at 60% for a reason. And that is because the

United States and Iran had signed a nuclear deal in 2015, and the Americans began violating the deal from day one under Obama. And as they violated the deal, the Europeans violated the deal with the Americans.

When the Americans would implement those sanctions.

All of these were gross violations. And it got worse and worse and worse until the last day of Obama's presidency. He was doing Iran no favors. It was not a good deal for Iran because he was cheating Iran. And that's why the Iranians are negotiating in a different style this time. They're saying that we have to see you give the concessions. We have to see the benefits of your concessions before we reciprocate. Not like last time around, where we did everything and you did nothing and you cheated us. This time around, we have to see the U.S. actually implement its side of the bargain, implement its commitments.

But back then, that's what Obama did. Then when Trump came, he ultimately did the same, and then he exited the deal, as we all know. And then what did the Europeans do? They obeyed Trump. They were violating all of their commitments. And Iran waited for two years before fully restarting all those elements of the nuclear program, all those aspects of the Iranian nuclear program that were shut down due to the 2015 deal. They waited. And so after two years, the Iranians restarted their program in full, and then they began enriching uranium at 60%. Why? Because they wanted to put pressure on the Americans and Europeans to go back to their obligations, to abide by their obligations. So there was a reason why Iran did this. Iran did this because the other side was violating the deal. But they pretend as if Iran enriched uranium at 60% because it wants to build a nuclear bomb. No, that was never the intention. It was a direct response to their gross violations of their commitments. So they have no one to blame but themselves.

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Do you think the difference continues on the frozen Iranian assets as well, or is there some sort of understanding between the two parties on that issue?

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I can't say for sure right now where things stand. And after Trump spoke yesterday, I don't know what sort of communications have been going back and forth since then. But as I said earlier, there was a broad agreement about a deal. Now, for the Iranians, the financial issue, which is stolen Iranian money, it's no gift. And when Trump spoke about giving a billion dollars or, I don't know, a billion, \$900 million in cash to Iran, he wasn't doing Iran any favors. That was confiscated Iranian money. That was stolen Iranian money.

#Nima

Which is against international law, by the way.

#Seyed

Of course, yes. I mean, it's not as if they pretend they're giving us gifts. They steal our stuff, and then Iran forces them to give a bit of it back, and then they pretend as if they're doing us a big favor.

And this is the money of 90 million people. But in any case...

I don't know where it stands right now, the talks, where things are. But for the Iranians, a key issue is the transfer of Iran's wealth. Because the Americans, as we've seen so many times, they'll write something down on paper, but then they won't implement it. So the Iranians are saying, look, we don't want to go, we're not going to accept again the United States writing something down and then saying, oh, we couldn't do it for this legal reason or that technical reason. So the Iranians want to make sure that the Americans, as I said earlier, carry out their obligations.

So there are two, I guess, two problems here, major problems. One is we have to see if the Americans come to an agreement, because Trump, every day he says something different. And what he says is very different from what his negotiators are writing down on paper, at least last time I knew, I heard. And the second is, of course, the issue of implementation. The Americans have a very bad history when it comes to implementation. They're deceitful, they're dishonest, and it's not just Trump. Different administrations have always been that way when it comes to you.