

Tehran makes overtures to Trump, as he prepares to escalate Washington's war on Iran

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Iran's bourgeois-clerical regime is making overtures to the incoming Trump administration, in the hopes that it can strike a "peace" deal with the billionaire fascist. When he was last in the White House, Trump scuttled the Iran nuclear deal, waged economic war on Iran, and brought the US and Iran to the brink of war with the illegal drone strike assassination of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Commander Qasem Soleimani.

Tehran is signaling its readiness to bargain with Trump, even as he makes clear that he intends to deal with Iran even more ruthlessly than during his first term, and that he will do so working in the closest concert with Israel, which is already waging war against Iran in all but name.

Meanwhile, the principal European imperialist powers, angered by Iran's supplying of Russia with armaments to fight the Ukraine war, and anxious to placate Trump and pursue their own predatory ambitions in the Middle East, are intensifying pressure on Iran.

During the 14 months of the Gaza genocide, Israel has struck out against Iran and its allies across the region with increasing brazenness and violence, violating one Iranian "red line" after another.

Its ability to do so has been entirely bound up with US imperialist support—political, materiel, logistical, and financial. Within days of the outbreak of the Gaza war, the Biden administration deployed two aircraft carrier groups and a nuclear-armed submarine to the region to menace Iran.

On three subsequent occasions, the Pentagon undertook massive military mobilizations to provide Israel with an air shield to protect it from Iranian drones and missiles, and signal that it stands ready to act on its longstanding and constantly revised plans for all-out war with Iran.

After several days of intense debate within the Iranian regime, Tehran vowed that it would respond forcefully to Israel's October 26 air attack on multiple Iranian targets, including missile production facilities. "We have never left an aggression unanswered in 40 years," declared an IRGC leader.

However, everything indicates that following Trump's November 5 election victory there was a reappraisal. Plans to retaliate against Israel in demonstrable fashion and with the stated aim of restoring "deterrence" were shelved or at the very least put on hold, after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei bowed to pressure from countervailing voices.

Even as Israel has targeted IRGC personnel across the region, assassinated the political head of Hamas while an honoured guest in Tehran, and twice carried out air strikes on Iran, a significant faction of the Islamic Republic's leadership has been militating for rapprochement with Israel's US and European imperialist sponsors.

They argue that Iran can only get relief from the US-led economic sanctions that have strangled its economy, and access to vitally needed investments and technology if Tehran integrates itself into an imperialist

dominated Middle East. Left unsaid is that they see reconciliation with the US and EU powers as providing the best conditions for a restructuring of Iranian socio-economic life to eliminate what little remains of the social concessions made to working people in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 revolution that overthrew the US-backed Shah.

The current Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian, elected in a special election last June following his predecessor's death in a helicopter crash, has persisted in his appeals to the Europeans, and now Trump, to work with Tehran in ensuring order and stability across the Middle East, even as he has been forced to admit that all Iran's overtures to date have been rebuffed.

Tehran has employed multiple means to indicate its eagerness for talks with Trump. Senior officials have publicly declared that they believe they can negotiate with Trump, notwithstanding his previous belligerent opposition to Iran and his staffing the senior military-security and foreign policy posts in his incoming administration with notorious anti-Iran war hawks.

On November 11, Trump's billionaire whisperer-in-chief and the world's richest man, Elon Musk, met with Iran's ambassador to the UN, Amir Saeid Iravani, for over an hour.

The *New York Times* reported that it was told by an Iranian Foreign Ministry representative that Ambassador Iravani told Musk "he should obtain sanctions exemptions from the Treasury and bring some of his businesses to Tehran."

Iran's "moderate" and "reform" press, that is the media outlets closest to those elements in the regime arguing for rapprochement with the imperialist powers, greeted the news of the Musk meeting with unbridled enthusiasm. Blinded by their own fear and selfish class interests, many treated it as a diplomatic master strike.

Three days later, in what is a stark indication of the extreme crisis within the regime and the fraught relations between its rival factions, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced that there had been no meeting between Ambassador Iravani and Musk.

In a further and far more substantive signal to Washington that Tehran is anxious to "deescalate," as a prelude to redefining its relations with the imperialist powers, Iran pressured Hezbollah to agree to a 60-day truce with Israel on terms dictated by the Biden administration and largely favorable to its Zionist ally.

According to press reports, Hezbollah reversed its stance on withdrawing its forces between the Litani River and the Israeli-Lebanese border shortly after the arrival in Beirut of Ali Larijani, a senior Islamic Republic insider, who is an IRGC veteran and long served as the Speaker of Iran's parliament.

The truce agreement calls for Hezbollah to withdraw from all territory south of the Litani River ceding heavily fortified positions from which it

successfully repelled Israel's ground invasion, much as it had done in the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war.

Iran has publicly endorsed the truce agreement, including Hezbollah's dropping of its demand that an end to the fighting in Lebanon and Hezbollah missile and drone attacks on Israel be tied to a cessation of Israel's genocidal war on the people of Gaza.

As in Gaza, Israel, with the full support of the US, carried out monstrous war crimes in its invasion of Lebanon, slaughtered thousands of Lebanese civilians, and decimated the political and military leadership of Hezbollah, a communo-nationalist movement with deep roots in Lebanon's historically oppressed Shia community.

No sooner did the truce come into effect, than Israel carried out a wave of fresh attacks on Gaza.

Iran reportedly provided Hezbollah with assurances that it will help it rearm in exchange for it agreeing to the 60-day truce, whose expire date coincides conveniently with Trump's formal assumption of the US presidency.

But this is dependent on Iran's ability to maintain an arms-supply corridor through Iraq and Syria that the Israelis, with the support of US forces, including those occupying south-eastern Syria, are intent on eliminating. According to the BBC, under the terms of the US brokered and supervised truce, the Biden administration has provided Israel with a letter authorizing it to renew its war on Hezbollah if it "looks to be preparing an attack."

Increased European imperialist pressure on Iran

The principal European powers, meanwhile, have opened a new front against Iran. Last weekend Britain, France and Germany spearheaded the adoption of a motion at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) censuring Tehran for not cooperating with IAEA inspectors and otherwise violating the Iran nuclear accord that Trump torpedoed in 2018. The motion requires the IAEA to prepare a comprehensive report within three months on Iran's compliance with the nuclear accord. The drafting of such a report is viewed as the necessary diplomatic first-step in initiating a campaign for the "snap-back" re-imposition in full of punishing UN economic sanctions against Iran.

According to Iran, the IAEA head director general, Rafael Grossi, had assured them he would be able to stave off adoption of the censure motion, but the European powers would have none of it as they were determined to intensify pressure on Iran.

In an interview with the *Guardian* published Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, a strong supporter of Tehran's overtures to the western imperialist powers, warned that there is growing sentiment in Iran for overturning the Islamic Republic's oft-stated disavowal of any intention to develop and deploy nuclear weapons.

Noting that the imperialist powers have repeatedly moved the goal posts in the nuclear talks to place additional demands on Iran, while economically strangling it, Araghchi said, "So I can tell you, quite frankly, that there is this debate going on in Iran, and mostly among the elites – even among the ordinary people – whether we should change this policy or not, whether we should change our nuclear doctrine, as some say, or not, because it has proved insufficient in practice."

He warned that if European countries were to re-impose sanctions on Iran at the UN Security Council, "then they [will] have convinced everybody in Iran that, yes, your doctrine has been wrong."

For the first time in two years, a senior Iranian diplomat met with representatives of the European powers that are signatories to the Iran nuclear accord — Britain, France, Germany and the EU — in Vienna on

Friday. But a tense exchange Thursday at a preparatory meeting further indicated that the talks will go nowhere unless Tehran signals its readiness to make massive concessions.

Following Thursday's meeting, EU foreign affairs diplomat Enrique More arrogantly tweeted that there had been a "frank exchange... on Iran's military support to Russia that has to stop, the nuclear issue that needs a diplomatic solution, regional tensions (important to avoid further escalation from all sides) and human rights."

The Mideast war and the crushing US sanctions on Iran's economy have further intensified the crisis of the Islamic Republic and exacerbated the longstanding and deep fractures within its ruling elite. The Iranian bourgeoisie and its representatives in the Shia clerical-political establishment find themselves caught between Washington's drive to assert unbridled imperialist hegemony over the region, with the assistance of its Israeli attack dog, and a restive working class that is balking at their attempts to place all the burdens of the confrontation with imperialism on working people.

Striving solely to increase their own possibilities for exploitation, the Iranian national bourgeoisie is organically incapable of making any progressive appeal to the workers and oppressed toilers of the region, Persian, Kurd, Turkish, Arab and Jewish, to unite in a struggle against imperialism, and for national and social equality for all. The past 14 months have seen massive protests in all the imperialist countries against the crimes of Israel and its US sponsor, but Tehran with its sectarian Shia populist ideology is neither interested in nor capable of appealing to the working class of the West.

Instead, the Iranian regime oscillates between pleas for a reactionary bargain with imperialism, at the expense of the Iranian masses and the Palestinian people, and military threats. The regime's brinkmanship over its civilian nuclear program has only served to cause confusion among working people globally. Were it ever to act on its threat to reverse its nuclear doctrine, it would only provide a pretext for Israel and the imperialist powers to launch a catastrophic war.

In the Middle East, as around the world, the struggle against imperialism and the developing global war is entirely dependent on the struggle to mobilize the working class on a socialist internationalist program uniting the toiling masses behind it in opposition to capitalism and the reactionary nation-state system in which it is embedded.



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