

US-Iran deal on the verge of breakdown 48 hours after being signed

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The US-Iran agreement that US President Donald Trump signed at Versailles on Wednesday was on the verge of collapse Friday, 48 hours after it was signed. The first round of nuclear talks, scheduled to open in Switzerland, was scrapped before it began after Iran refused to send its negotiator in response to a wave of Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon.

Israel struck more than 80 targets across southern Lebanon on Friday, killing at least 47 people, according to the Lebanese health ministry. The bombardment hit Nabatieh and the surrounding region after a Hezbollah ambush killed four Israeli soldiers near the village of Kfar Tebnit. The strikes shattered a ceasefire that had taken effect in mid-April.

The memorandum requires the United States, Iran and their allies to end all military operations “on all fronts, including in Lebanon.” But Israel is not a party to the agreement and has refused to be bound by it. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called the deal “bad for Israel,” and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir declared that “the State of Israel is not a banana republic.”

Trump telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday and, according to US officials, pressed him to halt the attacks. By the afternoon, Israel and Hezbollah had agreed to renew their ceasefire. Israeli troops will remain in southern Lebanon, Netanyahu said, for as long as the country’s security required. US intelligence agencies have warned Trump that Netanyahu, who faces an election this autumn, is likely to keep undermining the deal.

Hours before the talks were called off, Axios reported that Steve Witkoff, Trump’s special envoy to the Middle East, was on his way to Switzerland, where “the first round of talks with Iran on a potential nuclear deal is expected to take place,” citing a US official.

Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law, was already in Switzerland. The meeting was cancelled before it began.

The agreement has drawn condemnation from broad sections of the US political establishment as having failed to establish US domination of Iran. Republican Senator Roger Wicker of Mississippi, who chairs the Armed Services Committee, said the memorandum “negotiates away the victories” of the war “in ways that are completely out of step with the president’s goals,” and warned that its \$300 billion reconstruction fund for Iran “would make President Obama’s 2015 deal look like a pittance by comparison.” Republican Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana called the deal “the worst foreign policy blunder in decades” and wrote that “Reagan is rolling over in his grave.”

The Democrats denounced it in the same terms. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the war had “left America worse off by every measure,” and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries declared that “Iran is stronger and America is less safe.” Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut called the agreement “essentially a surrender to Iran on Iran’s terms”—and then announced that he would support it.

Neither party opposed the war itself, a war of aggression launched in defiance of international law that killed thousands of Iranians and Lebanese. They faulted Trump only for having failed to win it.

Having failed to achieve the war’s objectives, Trump was forced to back down amid a deepening economic crisis. Iran had shut the Strait of Hormuz—the channel that carries one barrel in five of the world’s oil—driving crude above \$118 a barrel and lifting US inflation to a three-year high of 4.2 percent in May.

Asked why he had dropped his demand for Iran’s “unconditional surrender,” Trump pointed to the

markets. “I didn’t want to see economic catastrophe,” he said at the G7 summit in France. “If you kept this going, that could have happened.” He added: “The one president I did not want to be was the late, great Herbert Hoover.”

The economic crisis is far from over. Oil prices have fallen since the deal was signed, but gasoline remains a dollar a gallon above its prewar level, and central bankers are “not ready to call the all-clear,” the *Financial Times* reported. The \$300 billion fund Iran was promised is already unraveling: the Gulf states are reluctant to finance it, and Trump has denied that Washington will pay “ten cents.” Some 20,000 sailors remain stranded in the Persian Gulf, roughly 2,000 ships remain trapped, more than 100 days after the war closed the strait.

Iran’s new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, whose father was assassinated in the opening hours of the war, said Trump had signed “out of desperation” and warned that Iran would not submit to “excessive demands.”

The war was waged at enormous human cost. Iran’s health ministry reported 3,468 people killed and more than 26,500 wounded since the fighting began on February 28; the human-rights monitor HRANA put the dead at 3,636, more than 1,700 of them civilians. The opening strikes killed not only Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei but much of the Iranian state, including the secretary of its national security council and dozens of senior commanders. Inside the country, prices have risen 84 percent over the year and food costs by 131 percent.

Israel’s parallel offensive in Lebanon, which opened on March 2, has killed at least 3,711 people and wounded more than 11,000, according to the Lebanese health ministry; its deadliest day was April 8, when 357 were killed.

Thirteen US service members died and more than 380 were wounded, and a US strike on a tanker off Oman killed three Indian sailors. The United States burned through more than half its supply of several critical weapons, some of which will take years to replace.

The assault on Iran unfolded as Israel pressed ahead with its genocide in Gaza. More than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed there since October 2023, the Gaza health ministry reported this week, including 1,005 since a ceasefire took effect last October. United

Nations investigators reported this month that Israeli strikes had killed dozens of police directing traffic, calling the attacks possible war crimes.

Israeli forces now hold more than 60 percent of the territory and Netanyahu ordered the army last month to seize 70 percent, confining nearly two million people to the remaining sliver. The United Nations confirmed famine across Gaza last summer, and aid agencies say barely a third of the relief trucks promised under the ceasefire have been allowed in.



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