

UN chief urges diplomatic solution on Iran

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White House: IAEA report is "very alarming"; EU mulls imposing Iran sanctions as experts discuss options for increasing pressure.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on Thursday for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear standoff with Tehran, in an apparent reaction to media speculation that Israel might attack Iran's atomic facilities.

"[Ban] reiterates his call for Iran's compliance with all relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency," UN spokesman Martin Nesirky told reporters. "The secretary-general reiterates his belief that a negotiated rather than a military solution is the only way to resolve this issue."

Ban's position is that "the onus is on Iran to prove the peaceful nature of its nuclear program," Nesirky said.

The United States and Israel have refused to rule out any option to prevent the Islamic Republic from acquiring a nuclear arsenal.

Israel appealed to the international community on Thursday to halt Iran's nuclear program by speedily issuing much stiffer sanctions against Tehran.

Its emissaries in world capitals were given information regarding the [International Atomic Energy Agency report](#) released on Tuesday, which said that Tehran had worked to design nuclear bombs. The Foreign Ministry instructed the emissaries to talk with their counterparts about introducing harsh economic measures against Iran.

The report shows how Iran has violated all agreements and has worked over the years to develop components for a nuclear weapon, said Yoaz Hendel, director for communication and public diplomacy at the Prime Minister's Office.

"Israel expects the world to take immediate action to stop Iran's nuclear progress and to prevent this threat to the world."

On Sunday, the cabinet will discuss the report, in advance of an IAEA board meeting in Vienna next Thursday and Friday.

Israel expects the issue will then move to the UN Security Council for action, despite Russia's and China's objections to additional sanctions on Tehran by that body.

The White House said on Thursday that this week's IAEA report was "very alarming" and that the US would continue to pressure Tehran to "change its behavior."

"They need to get right with the world and live up to their obligations with regards to their nuclear program. We will continue to pursue that going forward in the wake of this very alarming report," White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

France has spoken out strongly in the past few days in support of Israel and the need for sanctions against Iran.

"We have to act quickly in the United Nations and the European Union to tackle this very serious threat," French Ambassador Christophe Bigot told Channel 1 on Thursday.

"Israel is not alone on this issue," said Bigot, whose country is one of the 15 Security Council members. "The clock is ticking" on Iran's nuclear program and a way must be found to prevent it, he said.

France and a lot of countries are with Israel on the issue of increased sanctions, he said.

"We will do it with, or without Russia and China."

Bigot told Channel 1 that if as a last resort Israel decides to attack Iran, "we understand such a move."

Both Russia and China, which have veto power at the Security Council, have expressed reservations about imposing additional sanctions.

Since 2006, the council has adopted six resolutions demanding that Iran halt its nuclear enrichment program, four of them imposing sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

In the past, the US and the EU have separately imposed sanctions of their own.

At a meeting in Moscow, Russian and Chinese diplomats expressed "the mutual conviction that the application of new, additional sanctions against Iran will not lead to the desired result."

With UN sanctions uncertain, the European Union is looking to take further economic steps of its own against Iran.

Diplomats in Brussels said preliminary discussions among EU capitals on new measures had begun and plans may be ready for EU foreign ministers in Brussels to approve on December 1.

"Experts are discussing a number of options on the table, but it is difficult to

foresee the outcome of the debate,” one EU diplomat said. Another said he expected a formal decision to be reached on December 1.

Still, some EU governments are wary of inflicting economic pain on the Iranian people or of closing potential communication channels by targeting Iranian officials. Others fret about the damage oil sanctions could do to their own economic interests.

A senior Iranian official warned Israel on Thursday that a military strike against Iran would create a threat to its own survival.

“If the Zionist regime allows itself such an oversight, a question of its existence will arise – not a question of its legitimacy but a question of its existence,” Ali Baqeri, deputy secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council, said through an interpreter during a visit to Moscow.

Baqeri’s remarks echoed a warning by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said military action against Iranian nuclear sites would be met with “iron fists,” Iranian state television reported.

Baqeri said Iran does not believe Israel will launch an attack, saying the Zionist state “is in the worst condition since its creation... in political, economic and social terms, and in terms of security issues.”

He said “the people of these countries [in the Middle East] want to chase Israel from the region. And so now the Zionist regime has very many weak points.”