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# Iran

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## Iran to join Syria-Turkey normalisation talks mediated by Russia

On 31 January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stated that a relevant agreement had been reached for involving [Tehran in the normalisation talks](#) between Ankara and Damascus, currently being mediated by Russia. On 23 January, Syrian Minister of Defense Major General [Ali Mahmoud Abbas](#) visited Tehran and held meetings with Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri, chief of staff of Iran's Armed Forces, Major General Hussein Salami, Commander-in-Chief of the IRGC, and President Ebrahim Raisi. Abbas's visit to Tehran came on the heels of Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein [Abdollahian's visit to Damascus](#) on 15 January, during which he met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and called for developing long-term framework for developing bilateral relations. As Syria and Turkey, with mediation of Russia, have been engaged in talks aimed at normalising ties, Abdollahian had expressed support for these normalisation efforts. In his meeting with Abbas, Bagheri stressed the need for staging a joint military exercise between Iran and Syria. [Raisi](#) told Abbas that "the Islamic Republic of Iran is a true friend of the Syrian nation, because just as it stood by the Syrian nation and government during the resistance against terrorism, it is ready to stand by them during the reconstruction period by strengthening all-round economic cooperation". In this meeting, General Salami expressed the IRGC's readiness to share its experiences in the spheres of cyberwarfare, intelligence and information warfare, and electronic warfare.

## Third Meeting of Commission on Parliament Cooperation between Iran and Russia held in Tehran

On 23 January, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the Speaker of the Islamic

Consultative Assembly of Iran and the Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin held the third Joint High Commission of Parliamentary Cooperation between Iran and Russia in Tehran. The parliamentarians discussed issues of legislative support for trade and economic cooperation in the fields of energy, transport and agriculture, issues of cooperation in the Caspian Sea, regional security, and countering terrorism and extremism. Ghalibaf noted that the "Joint High Commission is being held when both sides have reached a common understanding of sensitivities and cooperation." He emphasised that the two countries must implement the [25-year agreement](#) as soon as possible. Volodin noted that "an example of good development of relations and efforts for mutual understanding is set by the presidents of our countries", and "for our part, we should do everything to [provide legislative support](#) to the decisions reached at the highest level. And, of course, we should contribute to the development of relations within the parliamentary dimension."

## Qatari Foreign Minister delivers message from the West to Iran regarding the nuclear negotiations

On 30 January, Iran's Foreign Minister in a joint press conference with [Qatari Foreign Minister](#) Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in Tehran noted that he had received messages from other parties of the nuclear agreement through his Qatari counterpart. Without going into any detail, Abdollahian stated that Iran welcomes Qatar's diplomatic moves to assist the JCPOA parties to resolve remaining issues in the efforts to achieve the goal of lifting U.S. sanctions on Iran. Al-Thani's visit aimed at relaying messages from Iran's Western interlocutors comes amid deteriorating ties between Iran and European Union, as the [European Parliament](#) approved a resolution

calling on the bloc to consider designating Iran's IRGC as a terrorist organisation. Further, Israel and the US carried out all-domain joint exercises [Juniper Oak 23.2](#), which is aimed at increasing the interoperability their forces, and also widely seen as sending a message to Iran. Earlier in June 2022, Qatar had hosted indirect talks between US and Iran to bridge differences which had stalled the negotiations and later Qatari foreign minister had visited Tehran in another effort to move along the negotiations to revive the nuclear agreement.

### **Azerbaijan evacuates its Embassy in Tehran**

After a [shooting incident](#) at Azerbaijan's embassy in Tehran on 27 January led to the death of the head of security staff and injured two other guards, the embassy suspended operations and later evacuated the staff to Baku. The police chief of Tehran said that the assailant was arrested and that the investigation pointed to "personal and family-related problems" as the motive of the attack. Following the attack, both Raisi and Abdollahian spoke to their Azeri counterparts promising close cooperation between security authorities of the countries investigating the attack and noting that they should not allow the incident to affect their bilateral relations. Azerbaijan's foreign ministry, however, alleged that Iran tried to 'prevent' the country's push for international organisations to condemn what it called a '[terrorist attack](#)'. A day before Baku evacuated embassy staff on 31 January, Iranian parliament speaker [Bagher Ghalibaf](#) stressed that no proof was found for considering the incident a terrorist attack. He warned Baku against 'emotional decisions' regarding Iran-Azerbaijan ties are what the common enemies of the two countries and the ill-wishers of the Islamic world, especially the Zionist regime, are

wishing for. Azerbaijani [consulate in Tabriz](#) in northern Iran remains functional.

### **Iran blames Israel and Iraq-based 'Kurdish groups' for drone attack targeting defence workshop in Isfahan**

On 28 January, several micro aerial vehicles (MAVs) attempted to target a [defence ministry workshop](#) complex in Isfahan in central Iran. According to a statement from Iran's defense ministry, 'two of the MAVs were trapped in its defensive traps and detonated, while the other one was brought down by the complex's air defense fire'. Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN [Amir Saeed Irvani](#) in a letter to the Secretary-General of the Security Council noted that 'early investigations suggest that the Israeli regime was responsible for this attempted act of aggression'. The letter stated that "Iran reserves its legitimate and inherent right, under international law and the UN Charter, to defend its national security and respond resolutely to any threats or wrongful actions by the Israeli regime, whenever deemed necessary". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated in an interview on 1 February that Israel has already been active in working to thwart Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons, it is also [targeting the production of Iranian weapons](#) that could be sent to Russia for use against Ukraine. *Nour News*, which is affiliated with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said the Kurdish groups smuggled the equipment used in the attack from Iraqi Kurdistan. This is the second time Kurdish groups get the blame for an act of sabotage orchestrated by Israel. In July 2022, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence had announced that it [arrested members of a Kurdish group](#) trained by Israel's spy agencies to target an important military facility in Isfahan.