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Iran rejects Obama nuclear call before Netanyahu speech



Javad Zarif said Mr Obama's remarks were intended for domestic consumption

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Iran has rejected as "excessive and illogical" a demand by US President Barack Obama that it freeze sensitive nuclear activity for at least 10 years.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif was quoted saying Mr Obama spoke in "unacceptable and threatening" terms.

Mr Zarif said talks on Iran's nuclear programme, which are nearing a critical 31 March deadline, would continue.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to urge the US Congress on Tuesday to oppose a deal.

He was invited to speak at the US Capitol by Republican House Speaker John Boehner, angering Democrats.

Mr Netanyahu - who faces domestic elections in two weeks' time - will not meet Mr Obama during his visit to the US.

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Obama says the US-Israel discord is a distraction from stopping Iran's sensitive nuclear programme

In his interview [with Reuters news agency](#), the US president said disagreements over Iran would not be "permanently destructive" to the US-Israel relationship.

But Mr Netanyahu had been wrong on Iran before when he opposed an interim nuclear agreement struck last year, Mr Obama said.

Mr Obama also said Iran should agree to freeze sensitive nuclear activity if it wants to strike a deal with the US. However, he said, the odds were against talks with Iran ending in agreement.

In a response quoted by Iran's semi-official Fars news agency, Mr Zarif said his country would "not accept excessive and illogical demands".



The Swiss town of Montreux was the setting for John Kerry's latest meeting Mr Zarif. He added that Mr Obama's comments were aimed at public opinion in the US, and intended as a counter to the "propaganda" of those who opposed the negotiations - including Israel's prime minister.

US Secretary of State John Kerry met Mr Zarif in Switzerland on Tuesday, as part of ongoing talks ahead of a 31 March deadline for a framework agreement. The aim is then to secure a final deal by 30 June.

In remarks to reporters after the meeting, Mr Zarif emphasised both sides were committed to reaching a deal.

"There is a seriousness that we need to move forward," he said. "We need the necessary

political will to understand that the only way to move forward is through negotiations."

Analysis: Jeremy Bowen, BBC Middle East editor



Benjamin Netanyahu said his visit was not intended to "disrespect" Mr Obama. Mr Netanyahu is due to be presented with a bust of Winston Churchill by the Republican speaker John Boehner, who controversially invited him to speak in Washington without discussing the matter with the White House.

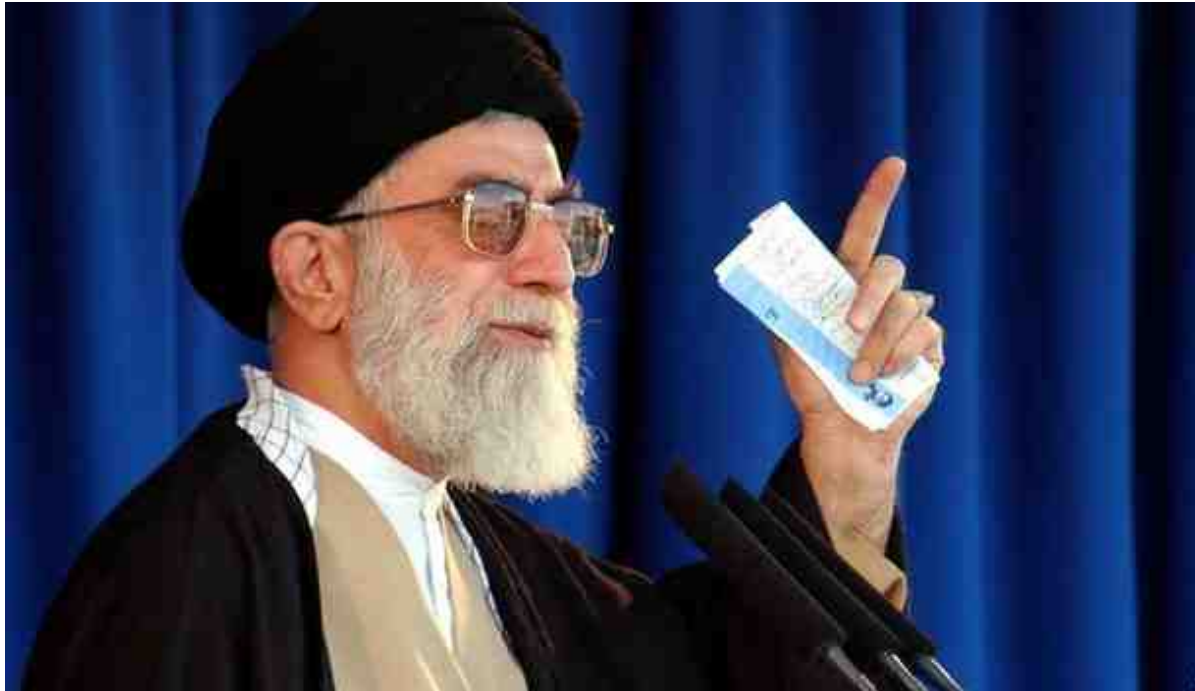
The Israeli prime minister sees himself as Churchill's heir, warning against Iran as Churchill warned against the Nazis.

But he's also been accused of political calculation - helping out his Republican friends and making the speech part of his campaign in the Israeli general elections a fortnight from now.

The Obama administration is countering by pointing everything it does for Israel, from \$20bn in military aid since President Obama was first elected to the use of the veto in the UN Security Council to protect Israel diplomatically.

8 February 2015 Last updated at 14:54

Iran nuclear talks: Ayatollah Khamenei says 'no deal better than bad deal'



Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has the power to overrule laws

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Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says he would rather see no deal on the country's nuclear programme than one that undercuts Iranian interests.

He would back an accord, but only if neither side got everything it wanted, he said in a statement.

The comments came as the US and Iran held further talks in Munich.

Iran and six international powers are aiming to reach a framework agreement in March and a final deal by 30 June.

The world powers want Iran to curb its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions.

Ayatollah Khamenei said he backed President Hassan Rouhani's line that "negotiations are all about trying to reach a common stand".

This meant that no side could end up getting everything it wanted, he said, warning that "it's better to have no deal than one that goes against our national interests".

He also expressed reservations about the current plan of reaching an agreement in two stages, first on general issues and then on details.

"We don't approve of this as we don't trust the other side. They would use the general agreement to put pressure on us on details. Any agreement should be reached in one stage," he

said.

Iran would consider the deal unfavourable if sanctions were not lifted with immediate effect after a comprehensive accord, Bozorgmehr Sharafedin from the BBC's Persian service reports.

Currently, the final agreement aimed for by the end of June foresees a phased lifting of sanctions in return for Iran curbing its nuclear ambitions.



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held two bilateral meetings with US Secretary of State John Kerry at the Munich security conference

The statement by Iran's supreme leader came as Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif met US Secretary of State John Kerry for a second time on the sidelines of the international security conference in Munich.

"We need to seize this opportunity," Mr Zarif said afterwards, adding that he did not think a further extension to talks would be productive.

"We are reaching the point where it is quite possible to make an agreement and I do not believe anything will be different in a year down the road."

The talks had previously been due to end in November 2014, but were extended to June 2015 after the parties failed to reach a comprehensive agreement.



Iran says it is not seeking nuclear weapons but wants atomic energy

The West suspects Iran is covertly seeking nuclear weapons capability. Iran denies it has a nuclear arms agenda and insists it is using uranium enrichment purely for energy purposes.

The dispute which has been going on for over a decade has left Iran isolated and suffering from international economic sanctions.

Mr Rouhani, who took office in 2013, has tried to make a fresh start in negotiations but is coming under pressure from hardliners in parliament.

Iran plus its six international interlocutors - the US, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China - are currently working on the basis of an interim agreement which allows them until 30 June to reach a final accord.

Iran to turn uranium into reactor fuel under extended deal: source

By [Fredrik Dahl](#)

VIENNA Mon Dec 1, 2014 12:29pm EST



Iranian workers stand in front of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, about 1,200 km (746 miles) south of Tehran October 26, 2010.

Credit: Reuters/Mehr News Agency/Majid Asgaripour

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(Reuters) - Iran will convert more of its higher-grade enriched uranium into reactor fuel under an extended nuclear deal with world powers, making the material less suitable for building atomic bombs, a diplomatic source and a U.S. think-tank said on Monday.

Iran and the United States, France, Germany, Britain, China, and Russia failed to meet a Nov. 24 deadline for resolving their dispute over Tehran's nuclear program. They gave themselves until the end of June for further negotiations.

It was the second time this year they had missed a self-imposed target for a comprehensive agreement under which Iran would curb its nuclear program in exchange for an end to sanctions hobbling Tehran's economy.

As a result, a preliminary accord reached in late 2013 will remain in force. Under its terms, Iran halted its most sensitive nuclear activity in return for limited easing of sanctions.

Accordingly, Iran earlier this year eliminated its stockpile of uranium gas enriched to a fissile concentration of 20 percent, a relatively short technical step away from weapons-grade material. A large part of it was processed into oxide.

When the deal was first extended in July, Iran undertook to move further away from potential weapons material by converting 25 kg of the uranium oxide - a quarter of the total - into nuclear fuel during the initial four-month extension.

The diplomatic source said Iran would now continue this work and he suggested around 5 kg would be converted per month.

The U.S.-based Arms Control Association said 35 kg of uranium oxide would be turned into fuel over a seven-month period. It said Iran had also made specific commitments limiting its development of advanced centrifuges to refine uranium.

In July, a U.S. official said that once the oxide had been turned into fuel plates, Iran would "find it quite difficult and time-consuming" to use it in any effort to develop a bomb.

In a letter seen by Reuters on Monday, Iran and the six powers asked the U.N. nuclear watchdog to continue checks that Tehran is honoring its undertakings, including "monitoring of fuel fabrication" for a Tehran research reactor.

The governing board of the U.N. atomic watchdog agency will hold an extraordinary meeting in Vienna on Dec. 11 to discuss its monitoring of the nuclear deal extension.

Iran denies seeking a nuclear weapons capability, saying its atomic energy program is meant to generate electricity.

(Editing by [Mark Heinrich](#))