The Vienna Talks are at a Difficult Stage

As the complex Vienna talks and desperate disputes among their participants proceed, unconcealed threats against Iran are heard from Tel Aviv several times a day. The growing hysteria and multiplication of Israeli military threats against Tehran suggest that the Israeli regime has forgotten that Iran is a powerful state with a modern, well-equipped army and more than capable of striking Israeli territory from anywhere.

Well-informed and reflecting the official opinion of Israel, Yedioth Ahronoth authoritatively stated that Israel's latest strike on Syria is a “direct message” specifically to Iran and its actions in the region. For some reason, neither Tel Aviv nor Western capitals remember that the Syrian Arab Republic is a sovereign state. They continue to behave in Syrian territory as if it were their backyard. Israeli media are already reporting that the Israeli Chief of the General Staff has ordered an increase in the Air Force and intelligence units to prepare for an attack on Iran. Furthermore, there is also considerable funding from the Israeli budget for this venture. Accordingly, it can be considered that an Israeli strike on Iran is a done deal, and the question now is: when will it happen?

Yedioth Ahronoth reported that one of Israel’s challenging demands on the US, along with banning Iran from developing a nuclear industry, is a complete halt to Iran’s ballistic missile development and production program. This was the demand voiced by Defense Minister Benny Ganz and the head of the Mossad spy agency David Barney during their last visit to Washington. According to the American and Israeli press, it was favorably accepted by Washington. The newspaper also reported that Israeli military experts are concerned that it will take Iran a short time to strike Israel, and already, according to the newspaper, it takes the Iranian military no more than an hour to launch missiles at Israel. According to the Israeli newspaper World Israel News, this state of affairs is unacceptable to Israel. Its leadership should do everything possible to force the current American Administration to stand firm on
Chief of Staff of Iran’s Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Bagheri said Tehran never underestimates the enemy’s threats. He noted that the military is at maximum vigilance and readiness commensurate with the enemy’s situation. At the same time, the Major General explained: “At the strategic level, we do not intend to hit anyone, but at the operational-tactical level, we are ready for a decisive response, a quick and brutal offensive against the enemy.” Bagheri said the fact of the missile strike on a US airbase in western Iraq and the shooting down of a US strategic drone was noticed and praised by many in the military, and these actions will teach a lesson to “enterprising enemies.”

In December, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) reaffirmed that it would conduct a large-scale exercise over the Mediterranean Sea in the spring, involving dozens of aircraft, simulating a strike against Iran’s nuclear program. According to the IDF, the exercise will be one of the largest ever conducted by the Israeli Air Force. It will include dozens of aircraft, including F-15, F-35, and F-16 fighters, Gulfstream G550 reconnaissance aircraft, and refueling planes. The planes will conduct the exercise far over the Mediterranean Sea to simulate the distance, more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) that the aircraft would need to cover when striking Iran’s nuclear facilities. In other words, a military strike on Iran is being practiced, which is welcomed in Western capitals.

And what about the hypocritical statements by Western politicians, including those from the US, about their desire for peace in the Middle East region? Apparently, in their mind, peace is when civilians in Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya are destroyed by Western, predominantly American weapons.

All of these threats and brazen moves come when Iran and the G4+1 countries (Russia, China, France, Britain, and Germany) are in Vienna to explore ways diplomatically to lift illegal sanctions on Tehran. The signing of a new agreement in Vienna would pave the way for lasting peace in the region, thereby easing tensions in that critical region for the whole world. But this runs counter to the aggressive plans of the rulers in Tel Aviv, who have already seen themselves as some kind of arbiter, deciding the fate of millions of people at their discretion. At the same time, these destructive Israeli actions are no secret to the negotiators and are being actively used by the West to pressure and brutally blackmail Tehran. But it is unlikely that Iranians, who have been under the oppression of unjust and law-breaking sanctions since 1979, will give up today.

In this regard, it is worth noting the telephone conversation that Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett had with Germany’s new Chancellor Olaf Scholz. According to Israeli state TV, they first discussed the Vienna talks in detail, and apparently, the Israeli gave some kind of instructions to the chancellor. According to a statement from Bennett’s office, they talked about the importance of coordinating efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining weapons. Israel receives huge annual shipments of the most advanced weapons from Western countries, especially the United States, which is silenced globally for some reason. Western figures also remain silent about the fact that Tel Aviv has amassed hundreds of nuclear warheads and missiles capable of delivering them not only to Iran but, as the Israeli military boasted, to European capitals as well. And all this only because Israel has not signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Not a single IAEA inspector has visited a single nuclear weapons factory or the bases where these deadly weapons are kept in full operational readiness. Why?

Or is it believed that Israeli nuclear weapons are some kind of pure benchmark and that civilians who would be destroyed by these weapons would only be grateful to Tel Aviv?

Germany has now taken a “tougher stance” on Iran since Scholz came to power on December 8. Meanwhile, Berlin teamed up with London to cooperate with Israel during the Vienna talks, which many political analysts believe aims primarily to end the military component of Tehran’s nuclear research. In other words, if a new treaty was signed with Iran, tensions would be eased, and Tehran would be allowed to develop a “peaceful atom.” But it appears that the scenario at the Vienna talks will take a slightly different path unless the US President is determined to follow through on the promises he made during his campaign, which helped him, not in a small way, defeat Donald Trump. In his article for the New York Times, Thomas Friedman wrote: “President Donald Trump’s decision to tear up the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 — a decision urged on by his secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, and Israel’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu — was one of the dumbest, most poorly thought out and counterproductive US national security decisions of the post-Cold War era.” On this basis, restoring the nuclear deal would benefit not only Iran but also the United States.

Tehran Times writes on this occasion that there is no need to remind “the illegal Israeli regime of Iran’s defense capabilities. And yet it has some things to remember.” Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Hosseini Khamenei responded to all Israeli threats in 2013 by saying: “Sometimes the leaders of the Zionist regime even
threaten us; they threaten to launch a military strike, but I think they know that, and if they don’t know that, they should know that if they make a mistake, the Islamic Republic will destroy Tel Aviv and Haifa.” Since then, the military capabilities of the Iranian army have increased dramatically, and any conflict unleashed by hotheads could lead to a widespread war in which Israel would be forced to turn to the use of its illegally acquired nuclear weapons.

That may be an exaggeration. But one might recall 1973 when the US Ambassador begged Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir not to use nuclear weapons against the Egyptians. The situation was then resolved at the last minute, and the world lived almost 50 years without using these deadly weapons in the Middle East. No politician will tell you how it will all turn out now, but the region is on the brink of very dangerous events.

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