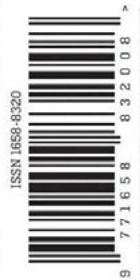


MONTHLY REPORT

Iran Case File

JULY 2025

Your window on Iran from inside and abroad





MONTHLY REPORT



Iran Case File

July 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During July 2025, Iran witnessed cascading events, extending across political, military, social and ideological domains. These events also extended to Iran's relations with both Arab countries and the broader international community, further complicating the scene.

On the domestic front, the Iran Case File (ICF) explores the new US sanctions on Iran as part of Washington's efforts to pressure Tehran into complying with its demands regarding the nuclear program — particularly the condition to halt uranium enrichment. This issue remains the main obstacle before any settlement as Iran considers domestic enrichment a red line that cannot be crossed and has firmly rejected these conditions. The file also discusses Iran's demand for compensation from the United States for the heavy losses it suffered during the 12 day war, along with guarantees to prevent similar attacks in the future. The nuclear issue has fallen into further obscurity following the remarks of Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. The official noted that he does not know the location and fate of the highly-enriched uranium stockpile, raising uncertainty about Iran's intentions and the possibility that it might resume enrichment and change its nuclear doctrine.

Militarily, the outcomes of the Iranian establishment's review of its military performance during the recent war with Israel have begun to emerge gradually. The first of these was the decision to establish a National Defense Council. Iran also continues its efforts to enhance its military capabilities, the latest of which was the launch of the Iranian communications and research satellite Nahid-2 into space in July 2025, with assistance from Russia. It appears that the Iranian establishment is preparing for a series of structural and leadership changes to confront upcoming threats, foremost among these is the possibility of renewed war.

Socially, the ICF spotlights the impact of the war with Israel on Iranian society. This is in addition to the Iranian postwar strategies to improve living conditions as well as preserve and strengthen social unity in preparation for potential future military confrontations and an ongoing economic war.

Ideologically, based on the fact that fatwas play a critical role in theocratic Iran, these religious rulings are often considered more important than statements by military commanders or politicians. Following the Israel-Iran war, the clerics have attempted to enhance the legitimacy of the political system and strengthen its hold through several moves, most importantly by issuing a fatwa calling for the assassination of US President Donald Trump. The fatwa was justified by claims of hostility toward Islam and threats to assassinate Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. They classified this as a form of *hirābah* (armed aggression), declaring his blood permissible. The fatwa, however, did not take into account the complex international and regional context or the broader lines of foreign policy. Instead, it appears to serve as a pressure tactic externally and a repositioning internally — aimed at reshaping the image of the supreme leader and the religious elite, whose standing was significantly affected during the war.

The second section of the ICF explores Iran's relations with Arab neighbors. In July, the nearing Iraqi parliamentary elections scheduled for November shaped key events. A power struggle has emerged among Shiite figures over leadership of the Shiite bloc. This includes efforts to strengthen existing alliances or forge new ones to reshape the political balance of power and secure the ability to nominate and form the next government. The

Iraqi prime minister is working to solidify his political leadership, positioning himself as a Shiite leader who governed Iraq during a period of intense regional tensions. During this time, he succeeded in uniting Shiite forces behind him in a way that could ensure his reelection for a second term.

In a troubling development, the Iran-backed Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah — designated by the United States as a terrorist organization — clashed with security forces in Baghdad. The confrontation resulted in the death of an officer and a civilian, and injuries to several other officers and personnel. The incident sparked negative reactions both domestically and internationally, with renewed calls for the Iraqi government to maintain exclusive control over weapons.

In Syria, relations with Azerbaijan witnessed a striking shift following a visit by President Ahmed al-Sharaa to Baku in July. The development could redraw regional dynamics in an alarming way for Tehran which does not perceive this visit as a natural step toward establishing relations between the two countries, but rather a reflection of deeper shifts in the long-established power balance and alliances in the region. Iranian anxieties are backed by the fact that the rapprochement came through Turkish coordination and mediation. Beyond diplomatic concerns, Iran's worries extend to economic and energy-related dimensions. Tehran views the agreement signed between the two sides to export Azerbaijani natural gas to Syria via Turkish territory as a direct undermining of its potential role as a regional energy corridor. However, Iran's greatest concern lies in the possibility of Israeli involvement in this rapprochement, with the aim of forming a hostile regional axis that repositions Israel clos-

er to Iran's borders — particularly in light of the strong security relations between Tel Aviv and Baku.

In Yemen, Houthi threats to maritime security in the Red Sea have mounted despite international alliances. The group has also intensified efforts to employ emotionally charged rhetoric related to the Palestinian cause as a tool for internal and regional mobilization. These efforts came in parallel to continued attempts to stall on any political settlement in Yemen, amid clear Iranian military and media encouragement. This has proved that the Houthis are a strategic tool within Iran's network of proxies, working to strengthen their standing and impose themselves as a disruptive regional actor rather than a partner in resolving the conflict.

The international section of the ICF opens with an examination of the nuclear talks between Iran the European Troika held in Istanbul. While Iran kept the door open to negotiations, it set conditions for a new nuclear agreement, including suspension of cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This move allows Iran to remain within the bounds of international law while denying opposing powers the leverage of monitoring its nuclear program or tracking enriched uranium. Yet, the troika's looming threat of triggering the snapback mechanism in case of failing to reach a nuclear settlement raises concerns of a potential escalation, especially amid the current clash of views.

DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS

The July 2025 ICF analyzes Iran's domestic situation through the following topics:

- Iran Dismisses US Pressures to Halt Uranium Enrichment
- Iran Establishes National Defense Council, Launches Military Satellite With Russia's Aid
- The Social Situation in Iran Post the 12 Day War
- The Recent Fatwa Calling for the Assassination of Trump

Iran Dismisses US Pressures to Halt Uranium Enrichment

The United States has intensified its pressure campaign against Iran by introducing a new set of sanctions and reaffirming its demand for a complete cessation of uranium enrichment activities within Iranian territory. In response, Iran has issued a firm rebuttal, coupled with demands that the Trump administration compensate for the extensive damage suffered during the recent 12 day conflict and offer credible assurances against any future military aggression. Meanwhile, the ultimate status of Iran's enriched uranium remains unresolved. Although President Donald Trump asserted that the material had been entirely destroyed, remarks by the secretary of state — who admitted to lacking precise knowledge about the location of uranium stockpiles or the scale of destruction — have only fueled speculation that Iran may have succeeded in relocating its stockpile and could be preparing to recommence its nuclear program. Against this backdrop, this file examines the escalation of US pressure on Iran, with particular focus on uranium enrichment and diplomatic negotiations, and highlights the persistent ambiguity surrounding the fate of Iran's enriched uranium.

Renewed US Pressure on Iran Over Uranium Enrichment and Nuclear Negotiations

The reinstatement of the maximum pressure policy at the outset of the second Trump administration manifested in an enhanced package of economic sanctions against Iran. However, following the recent direct conflict between Israel and Iran, the latest round of US sanctions specifically targets numerous individuals, entities and maritime shipping networks. The primary objective of these measures is to destroy Iran's financial capacity, with particular emphasis on its oil exports, a sector already experiencing

significant setbacks as a result of existing US restrictions on this economically critical industry. These sanctions form part of a broader, calculated effort to compel Iran to cease its uranium enrichment activities and to fully cooperate with inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), thereby laying the groundwork for a possible agreement on the country's nuclear program. President Trump's insistence on terminating domestic enrichment activities is rooted in his conviction that such a move represents the most effective and expedient means of ensuring that Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful and does not evolve toward the development of nuclear weapons.

Within hours of the announcement of the latest series of US sanctions, Tehran reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to uranium enrichment and categorically rejected the conditions set forth by the United States. This stance was articulated by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi during an interview with Fox News on July 21, 2025, in response to a question concerning whether Iran had resumed its enrichment activities following recent US airstrikes, and whether the program remained operational or had been entirely halted due to the extent of the damage. Araghchi stated that “Damages are serious and severe. But obviously we cannot give up (on) enrichment because it is an achievement of our own scientists. And now, more than that, it is a question of national pride...Our enrichment is so dear to us.”⁽¹⁾

Iran has also escalated its demands in response to mounting US pressure. Araghchi made it clear that Tehran would not re-engage in negotiations under the pretense that previous events could simply be overlooked, particularly in light of the successive attacks and assassinations it

endured during what it views as a war launched against it by both Israel and the United States. Araghchi insisted that any return to the negotiating table must be preceded by US compensation for the damage inflicted by the strikes as well as firm guarantees that such attacks would not recur during the course of any future nuclear negotiations.⁽²⁾

Iran appears to be operating within a constrained set of strategic options, a reality that has led it to elevate the scope of its demands. President Trump has threatened a return to military confrontation should Tehran continue uranium enrichment and attempt to prolong negotiations over its nuclear program. Meanwhile, Israel — convinced that Iran's nuclear infrastructure was not fully dismantled during the recent conflict and that the country continues to pose a nuclear threat — is seeking to draw the United States into another war with Iran. Tehran does not dismiss the possibility that Israel may initiate military action and entangle Washington in a new confrontation, particularly given Israel's significant influence over US regional policy and its capacity to shape developments and influence the direction of US strategic decisions in the Middle East. Beyond the United States and Israel, the European Troika has also increased pressure on Tehran by threatening to activate the snapback mechanism, which could result in the reimposition of UN sanctions should no agreement on the nuclear issue be reached by October 18, 2025. Collectively, these forms of pressure appear to signal to Iran that the crisis is on a path toward escalation, and that Washington is in no immediate rush to return to negotiations aimed at securing a peaceful resolution. In light of this dynamic, Iran seems to be responding with a strategy of

reciprocal pressure — anchored in its steadfast refusal to relinquish uranium enrichment. This strategy involves further raising its demands and even issuing threats of military preparedness, in an apparent effort to compel the United States to abandon its insistence on halting enrichment, thus paving the way for a negotiated settlement acceptable to all sides.

Conflicting Accounts Regarding the Fate of Iran's Enriched Uranium

The fate of Iran's estimated 408 kilograms of highly enriched uranium remains uncertain and opaque. During the course of the 12 day war, multiple Iranian officials asserted that Tehran had successfully relocated the enriched uranium to secure locations. In contrast, Trump claimed that US B-2 bombers had completely destroyed Iran's primary nuclear facilities at Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan, dismissing the possibility that the uranium had been transferred prior to the strikes.

Amid these conflicting accounts — US assertions of total destruction and Iranian claims of successful relocation — comments made by Araghchi added further ambiguity. In an interview with the Financial Times, Araghchi admitted that he lacked definitive knowledge regarding the fate of the stockpile of uranium enriched to 60%. He stated, "Honestly, I don't know, because it was in sites that were bombed." He further noted, "I don't have precise information or figures, but I generally know they were in facilities that were bombed."⁽³⁾

Though doubts persist regarding Araghchi's professed ignorance, the divergence in narratives — ranging from full relocation, to complete destruction, to partial damage — may serve to intensify Israeli concerns and potentially provoke another military confrontation, particu-

larly given Iran's continued refusal to halt uranium enrichment. This state of nuclear ambiguity, as expressed through the foreign minister's statements, could be interpreted by the United States and European powers as a strategic signal that Iran has, in fact, concealed part of its highly enriched uranium and is preparing to resume enrichment activities, possibly approaching the nuclear weapons threshold. Faced with such ambiguity, Western powers may find themselves forced into a binary choice: either make diplomatic concessions and re-engage with Iran at the negotiating table, or resort to military escalation and the reactivation of UN sanctions through the snap-back mechanism — thus deepening the crisis.

Conclusion

Given the uncompromising stances adopted by both the United States and Iran, the prospects for reaching a mutual agreement on Iran's nuclear program appear increasingly remote. The Trump administration continues to insist on its core condition that prohibits any uranium enrichment activity within Iranian territory, viewing this demand as the most effective safeguard against the transformation of Iran's nuclear program into a military one. Conversely, Tehran maintains that the right to enrich uranium is inalienable and regards it as a matter of national sovereignty and dignity. The postponement of negotiations and the imposition of preconditions by both the United States and European powers risk exacerbating the situation, potentially prompting Iran to adopt a more defiant posture — particularly under the mounting pressure exerted by "hardliners" who are actively urging Pezeshkian's government to categorically reject any future negotiations with the US administration. Moreover, the persistent differences between Washington

and Tehran over the issue of enrichment and the preliminary terms for resuming dialogue threaten to result in a complete diplomatic impasse. Should this deadlock endure, the likelihood of resorting to military confrontation as the only remaining means of resolving the nuclear crisis may significantly increase.

Iran Establishes National Defense Council, Launches Military Satellite With Russia's Aid

Iran's overall military capabilities remain in a deteriorated condition, with the notable exceptions of its naval forces and its stockpile of short-range ballistic missiles. In the aftermath of Israeli strikes on Iranian territory, Tehran established a new institution tasked with reassessing national defense and security strategy and working to revive its military strength. In a less confrontational move, Iran also launched Earth observation satellites using a Soyuz-2.1b rocket from Siberia. This file addresses two central developments: the establishment of the National Defense Council (NDC) and the deployment of the Nahid-2 satellite into orbit.

Forming the National Defense Council

Bypassing Parliament, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) formally established the NDC in accordance with Article 176 of the Constitution. Like the SNSC and its subordinate agencies,⁽⁴⁾ the NDC operates under the direct supervision of the supreme leader. In the aftermath of the 12 day war, the council was tasked with reviewing national security plans, including the reorganization, expansion and strengthening of the armed forces. Chaired by the Iranian president, the council includes the heads of the three branches of government, two representatives of the supreme leader on the SNSC, the minister of intelligence, the chief of staff of the armed forces, the commander-in-chief of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the

commander-in-chief of the army and the commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Construction Headquarters. The formation of the council signals an effort to create a mechanism for unified command between the army and the IRGC. It stands as a more centralized entity at the apex of Iran's security governance structure, integrating coordination, defense decision-making and strategic policy formulation.

Iran Uses Russian-made Missile to Launch Nahid-2 Satellite Into Space

Russia successfully launched Iran's Nahid-2 communications and research satellite into space on a multi-payload mission that also included Russia's Unispher-M3 and M4 satellites, along with 18 satellites from other countries.⁽⁵⁾ The Soyuz rocket also deployed other Iranian satellites, such as Khayyam, Fars-1, Kowsar and Hodhod. Nahid-2 is designed to remain in orbit for five years and is equipped with a domestically produced propulsion system capable of adjusting its altitude by up to 50 kilometers — an essential feature for maintaining its orbital position and operational stability. Iran now plans to launch a second model of the Nahid-3 communications satellite using its indigenous Simorgh rocket. According to an Iranian official, the Simorgh rocket can place satellites weighing up to 300 kilograms into low Earth orbit. Meanwhile, the Iranian Space Agency is also developing heavier launch vehicles, including the Sarir and Soroush series, designed to carry larger payloads.

The Qaem-100 rocket, with a payload capacity of 100 kilograms, successfully launched the Thuraya satellite last year.⁽⁶⁾ Meanwhile, Iran is expanding the Chababhar space launch site to widen access to various orbital paths and reduce reliance on foreign facilities. Hassan Salarieh, head of the Iranian Space Agency, stated that Chababhar would allow Iran to con-

duct more frequent launches year-round, using both domestic and international options.⁽⁷⁾

Conclusion

Iran's security apparatus is currently assessing the impact of the recent war while tracking down the enemy intelligence network operating inside its territory — an element seen as instrumental in Israel's effective targeting. Even before the war, Iran's military posture had suffered major setbacks following two confrontations with Israel, the isolation of Hezbollah and the collapse of the Assad regime. Iran's drone fleet and missile systems are reportedly out of service and its air defenses remain limited. The number of foreign intelligence and military aircraft traversing its airspace remains unclear. The creation of the NDC underscores a comprehensive review of Iran's security policy, military doctrine and the operational capacities it requires to fulfill its strategic objectives. The outcome of this review is expected to shape the internal debate over Iran's future regional role. While space-based surveillance offers Tehran some monitoring capabilities, the more formidable challenge lies in restarting domestic space missile launches — an undertaking not anticipated to resume this year.

The Social Situation in Iran Post the 12 Day War

Iranian media has spotlighted the social developments that unfolded in the aftermath of the 12 day war between Iran and Israel — a conflict that had wide-reaching repercussions across all segments of Iranian society. These consequences compelled the establishment to act swiftly in an effort to contain the fallout, minimize losses and restore a sense of balance and stability. This file examines the most significant social ramifications of the war and the Iranian establishment's response.

The Social Repercussions of the War

Iran has entered a new phase following the announcement of a ceasefire with Israel — one that demands a close examination of the war's social consequences. The conflict left behind approximately 1,062 fatalities and around 5,800 individuals with physical and psychological injuries. It also caused significant damage to healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, further worsening the state of medical services.⁽⁸⁾ Many families were displaced, their homes reduced to rubble. The Iranian public emerged from the war fatigued, fearful and disoriented — grappling with both daily hardship and an uncertain future. Living standards have plummeted amid worsening economic conditions, high unemployment, widespread poverty and a 53% surge in commodity prices.⁽⁹⁾ A pervasive sense of insecurity has taken hold, fueled by fears of renewed conflict, growing concerns about internal traitors and spies and rising tensions among ethnic minorities and refugees. Political strains have also deepened, especially with neighboring Afghanistan, following deportations and allegations of espionage. In June 2025⁽¹⁰⁾ alone, Iran deported more than 234,000 Afghans, while roughly 2,000 individuals have been arrested on charges of spying for the enemy since the war began.⁽¹¹⁾

The Establishment's Strategies to Maintain Social Cohesion

Although the war between Iran and Israel produced results that defied the enemy's expectations — sparking strong national unity and demonstrating widespread support for the establishment — it also triggered far-reaching repercussions across Iranian society. These consequences fueled widespread protests, further undermining the country's internal security and stability.

The Iranian establishment has sought to maintain and reinforce social cohesion

by protecting national interests and implementing internal reforms aligned with the demands of the people who supported it during the war — efforts aimed at achieving popularity. It has also worked to devise strategies to mitigate the war's impact and safeguard the public.

On the economic front, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf emphasized the need for a national economic program that aligns with the Seventh Development Plan.⁽¹²⁾ However, he failed to consider the possibility that the proposed program may fall short in addressing the economic crisis and would likely require a comprehensive review in light of post-war developments across all sectors.

Regarding psychological and social impacts, a report from the Iranian Ministry of Health confirmed that one of the war's most troubling outcomes is its demoralizing and disheartening effect on the population — particularly its psychological and social repercussions. These call for urgent psychiatric intervention and the development of targeted policies in coordination with relevant institutions. In this context, President of the Iranian Psychiatric Association Vahid Shariati proposed several actionable measures, including: national planning to promote mental health through preventive and conciliatory approaches; reviewing social and cultural policies that influence public mental health; factoring in the psychological effects of livelihood concerns in economic planning; encouraging civic participation and social dialogue; and finally, promoting a narrative of solidarity and national identity within society.⁽¹³⁾

Psychologist Dr. Sima Ferdowsi also underscored the need for government financial and psychological support for the

Iranian population, stressing the importance of establishing institutions and centers that offer free counseling and mental health services.⁽¹⁴⁾ The rate of emergency phone consultations reportedly rose by about 20% compared to normal periods.⁽¹⁵⁾ Since both state and social media play a role in spreading fear and anxiety among Iranians and shaping public sentiment, the establishment quickly enacted stricter punitive laws and launched a Cyberspace Protection initiative — an effort that drew opposition from nearly 16 million citizens.⁽¹⁶⁾ State censorship and restrictions on cyberspace and social media platforms have worsened internet quality and enabled hacking activity, prompting users to adopt circumvention tools. In response, the authorities moved to crack down on cyber espionage and hacking operations allegedly facilitated by foreign nationals. This raised sensitive issues involving ethnic minorities, leading to swift and controversial actions by the establishment, including deportations and executions of suspects.

Conclusion

Although Iranian society exhibited unity during the war, the post-war period brought deeper suffering due to the war's direct impact, fears of renewed conflict and the looming threat of fresh sanctions. The compounding crises and their social fallout, alongside persistent military threats, have compelled the Iranian establishment to reassess past strategies. This includes launching reforms across multiple sectors and devising actionable plans aimed at preserving national unity, addressing public needs and fostering sustainable opportunities. Yet, the success of these efforts hinges on resolving the country's economic difficulties and internal political rifts.

The Recent Fatwa Calling for the Assassination of Trump

Following the end of the 12 day war between Iran and Israel, Iran's clerical establishment swiftly mobilized to reassert control and recalibrate the domestic situation, which had teetered on the brink during the conflict. At the height of the war, Israeli assessments suggested that public frustration could erupt into mass protests or even challenge the establishment's grip on power. While such upheaval did not materialize, the episode left a noticeable dent in the establishment's standing, especially given the public perception that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei had retreated to a secure location amid threats from both the United States and Israel.

In the aftermath, religious seminary (hawza) circles and clerical networks have undertaken efforts to restore the ideological and political credibility of the system of Wilayat al-Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist). Central to these efforts has been the issuance and amplification of a fatwa by a prominent marja-i taqlid (source of emulation), calling for the assassination of US President Donald Trump and the annihilation of Israel. While such pronouncements have been magnified through clerical and political channels, their real function appears more symbolic — aimed at repairing the establishment's tarnished image and rallying the base around perceived resistance credentials.

This file explores the context of the fatwa and its endorsement by key religious figures as well as whether it represents more than just rhetoric.

Renewed Calls for Trump's Assassination and the Annihilation of Israel

Clerics have once again reiterated threats to erase Israel and assassinate Trump. In Sari, Friday prayer leader Mohammad Ba-

gher Mohammadi Laeini declared, “Erasing Israel from the face of the earth is the philosophy of the revolution, the specific goal of the people, and the resolve of the supreme leader.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Such rhetoric is frequently recycled to serve media propaganda and reinforce the ideological posture of “conservatives” and the far right. Otherwise, why did Iran not eliminate Israel during the most recent war — or even attempt to? It did not close the Strait of Hormuz and even expressed willingness to resume negotiations on the nuclear file. In reality, this discourse serves an internal function: to improve the status of the establishment and propagate an enhanced narrative regarding its power and the stature of its leader — largely detached from reality.

As for the threats against Trump, some marjas have issued fatwas declaring him guilty of *hirābah* — armed aggression or violent rebellion against the state — and subject to *ihdār al-dam* — a declaration that one’s blood may be lawfully shed, effectively sanctioning his killing.⁽¹⁸⁾ Last month, when threats were directed at Khamenei, the establishment and its supporters labeled the conflict as a religious war and a call for bloodshed. Now, a figure close to the establishment has declared, “Whoever brings Trump’s head will receive a reward of 100 billion tomans [approximately \$1 million].”⁽¹⁹⁾

Speaking to Tasnim News Agency, Hojatoleslam Saleh Mirzaei, a member of the Assembly of Experts, affirmed the fatwa on *hirābah* issued by the religious authorities against those who have insulted Islam and threatened the supreme leader, “The Quran clearly states, ‘Fight the leaders of disbelief.’ These are the leaders of disbelief and arrogance who have stood against the front of truth throughout history.” He then endorsed the killing of Trump and European leaders, “From the

principles of Islam, the blood of these people is worthless. If a believer is able to avenge the blood of the martyrs and eliminate these threats from our country, then this action is a religious duty.”⁽²⁰⁾ On July 13, 2025, more than 400 members of the General Assembly of the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom signed a statement in support of the fatwa, authorizing the application of the punishment for *hirābah* against those who threaten Khamenei with assassination — most notably, Trump.⁽²¹⁾ The truth is that this fatwa also falls within the same context of an attempt to inflate Iranian power and restore the image of the leader in the Iranian collective mind and cumulative memory, which has been severely affected by the war.

A New Approach by the Ruling Elite

The issue did not stop with the clerics; political officials echoed the same tone. In an interview, Kamran Ghazanfari, a member of the Committee on Internal Affairs and Local Councils, threatened to implement the fatwa to kill Trump. He explained that Khamenei himself had previously issued a fatwa calling for his death, “The supreme leader himself declared during Trump’s previous presidency, after Qassem Soleimani was assassinated by order of the US president, that the killer and those who issued the orders must be punished.”⁽²²⁾ Accordingly, Khamenei’s fatwa authorized Trump’s assassination. Regarding President Pezeshkian’s statement to the US press that the fatwa did not target Trump, Ghazanfari asserted that Pezeshkian was ill-informed and naive. Therefore, the fatwa was exploited by “conservatives” and “hardliners” not only to restore the image of the leader and consolidate the revolutionary foundations of the state, but also to distort the image of the “reformist” president and undermine his strategy before the public. The battle

then turned into a political showdown between “reformists” and “conservatives.”

Symbolic or a Serious Threat?

At the official level, it is unlikely that Iran would seek to assassinate Trump, but it might manage the situation from behind the scenes if the opportunity arises. The extensive endorsement of this fatwa prevents the singling out of an individual marja, lest he be accused of terrorism and violence. The matter would be presented as an ideological consensus that Trump must be assassinated. If the fatwa was fulfilled, the Iranian government could not be held accountable. In order to evade culpability, a lone wolf operation would be most favorable for Iran, similar to the mode of attack perpetrated by ISIS and sometimes al-Qaeda. This type of operation cannot be predicted or controlled because it lacks central planning or hierarchical oversight.

Fatwas calling for assassination have proliferated since 1979, targeting anyone deemed a threat to the ruling theocracy's structure and ideology. It is likely that this overwhelming clerical support for the fatwa was directed by Khamenei, especially since most clerics adhere to the loyalist line that believes in the absolute Guardianship of the Jurist. For if a jurist views the ruling guardian as someone who meets the conditions for issuing fatwas and legal rulings, then he is not permitted to issue a judicial ruling or penalty — such as *hirābah* — without prior permission or subsequent approval from the guardian jurist.⁽²³⁾

Conclusion

Fatwas calling for assassination have been an integral part of the mindset of Tehran's ruling elite since 1979. Religious authorities issued a fatwa calling for the assassination of Trump, but none of them discussed the implications of this fatwa for Iran's international and regional situation. This was either because they were unaware of the seriousness of such fatwas or because they wanted a unilateral assassination operation whose consequences the establishment would not bear. Therefore, they issued the fatwa publicly, detached from the planning of the relevant agencies, which they did not want to implicate in such a move. The fatwa may have been issued solely within the context of pressure and threats, but the question remains: what if someone fulfilled this religious edict? Therefore, it is likely that the Iranians truly desire the fatwa, but at the same time, they do not want to bear its consequences. In general, the ruling elite after the war seeks to restore the image of the supreme leader in the Iranian collective mind, as a result of their deep resentment over his hiding during the war following Israeli declarations calling for his assassination. He has been the leader and guardian of Islam and Muslims in the eyes of his followers for more than 30 years. These developments are also reflective of Iran's factional rivalries, with “hardliners” exploiting the domestic situation to denounce “reformists” as naive and subservient to the West, arguing that only they can skillfully negotiate with the West.

IRAN-ARAB INTERACTIONS

Developments in July 2025 are analyzed via the following topics:

- Shiite Political Rivalries Intensify Ahead of Iraqi Parliamentary Elections
- Syrian President's Visit to Azerbaijan: Geopolitical Challenges Raise Tehran's Concerns
- The Houthis: From an Iranian Lever to a Sustained Regional Threat

Shiite Political Rivalries Intensify Ahead of Iraqi Parliamentary Elections

Amid preparations for the parliamentary elections set for November 2025, Shiite leaders and political figures are competing to solidify existing alliances or forge new ones, aiming to reshape the balance of power and secure the largest bloc capable of nominating a prime minister. Yet questions remain: What is driving the contest for leadership of the Shiite faction within the Coordination Framework itself? Why has Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani formed a new alliance, separate from the influential figures within the Coordination Framework who backed his appointment? And what are the consequences of the rise of the pro-Iran Kata'ib Hezbollah militia, which has clashed with security forces, attacked state institutions and caused casualties in their ranks?

The Struggle for Shiite Leadership

With each election cycle, the contest among Shiite leaders for dominance within the Shiite bloc resurfaces — growing more intricate as new players enter the fray. Sudani recently launched a new political alliance, the Reconstruction and Development Coalition, comprising groups from both within and outside the Coordination Framework. These include the Ataa Movement led by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Chief Falih al-Fayyadh, the Iraqiya Alliance led by Iyad Allawi and the Karbala Creativity (Ibda') coalition led by Karbala Governor Nassif al-Khattabi, in addition to a number of independent Shiite figures, tribal leaders and businessmen.

Sudani aims to solidify his leadership of the Shiite political scene — positioning himself as a unifying figure during a period of extreme regional turbulence — and to rally Shiite forces behind him in hopes of securing the largest parliamentary bloc, paving the way for a second term as

prime minister. This move marks a significant shift in intra-Shiite politics. Sudani is also betting on his ability to shield Iraq from becoming a battleground for regional conflict, especially amid three rounds of direct and escalating confrontation between Iran and Israel, while pursuing a more flexible, pragmatic foreign policy. He appears increasingly willing to recalibrate Iraq's regional posture, partly due to a growing degree of independence from Iran — whose regional setbacks have been considerable. Allawi's alignment with Sudani adds further weight to the coalition, as he remains a major Shiite political figure and a key architect of Iraq's post-2003 political order.

However, Sudani's coalition also faces several challenges — including the fallout from his government's failure to fulfill its electoral promises, particularly regarding the disarmament of militias. His coalition has also struggled to advance civil legislation such as the general amnesty law, and he has failed to rally all Coordination Framework factions behind him. Notably, State of Law Coalition leader Nouri al-Maliki and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq leader Qais al-Khazali have both refused to join the coalition and plan to run on separate electoral lists. Basra Governor Asaad al-Eidani, a rising Shiite political figure, also declined to join. These defections weaken Sudani's chances of forming the largest parliamentary bloc. They also point to a potentially serious split within the Shiite camp over who will lead in the next phase — potentially signaling major realignments in Shiite alliances before and after the elections. Still, some analysts suggest this apparent fragmentation may be a calculated move by the Coordination Framework to regroup after the vote and secure the majority bloc.

The inclusion of a figure like Fayyadh — who is under US sanctions — in the coalition casts a negative light on its image both at home and abroad. Moreover, forming the largest parliamentary bloc hinges on internal Shiite consensus, especially given the strong influence of the Coordination Framework factions. This makes it extremely difficult for anyone to monopolize power or claim leadership of the Shiite camp — even if Sudani's coalition wins the necessary number of seats, as has often been the case in Iraq's past electoral experiences.

The Dimensions of Kata'ib Hezbollah's Clashes With Security Forces

In a troubling but presaged development, Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah militia — an Iran-backed group designated as a terrorist organization by the United States — clashed with Iraqi security forces on July 27, 2025, in the Saydiya neighborhood southwest of Baghdad. The confrontation left a security officer and a civilian dead and several officers and personnel wounded. The violence erupted after state authorities attempted to replace the director of agriculture in Baghdad's Karkh district, Iyad Kadhim —who was backed by Kata'ib Hezbollah — with a new appointee. When the new director tried to assume his post, an armed group linked to the militia opened fire on security forces called in by government staff. The attack drew widespread condemnation at home and abroad. Iraq's prime minister ordered a high-level investigation, firmly rejecting the notion that any group could stand above the law or act in place of the state. The Joint Operations Command arrested roughly 14 fighters, later confirmed to be affiliated with the 45th and 46th Brigades operating under the PMF umbrella. The al-Abbass Combat Division — aligned with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani — also criticized the brigades for taking up arms against the state. The Coordination

Framework bloc condemned the incident, calling it a breach of law and a clear defiance of state authority.⁽²⁴⁾

The PMF's response was marked by caution and ambiguity, "We will not tolerate any individual who violates orders or contravenes established security protocols,"⁽²⁵⁾ without directly naming Kata'ib Hezbollah. Similarly, Hussein Mounes, leader of Kata'ib Hezbollah's political wing and head of the Rights Movement, issued a highly provocative statement condemning the clashes — yet stopped short of condemning Kata'ib Hezbollah's involvement in defying state institutions. He even went so far as to shift the blame to the Joint Operations Command, releasing a statement that held it responsible.⁽²⁶⁾

The latest escalation reflects the growing anxiety among militias over Iran's waning regional influence amid a shifting geopolitical landscape that has seen Tehran incur significant setbacks. Simultaneously, they are wary of the Iraqi government's diplomatic overtures toward regional actors in a bid to balance foreign relations. In response, these factions appear intent on sending a stark message: they retain the capacity to upend internal dynamics and exact a cost for drifting from the Iran-aligned axis. Moreover, the Agricultural Directorate in Baghdad's Karkh district is viewed by militias as materially advantageous. Southern Baghdad's fertile agricultural lands, in particular, are an attractive target in this context.

These groups sustain themselves through a network of revenue streams that includes control over border crossings, international highways and vital commodity supply routes. Their operations are underpinned by entrenched relationships with officials across government service sectors — including agriculture, transportation, electricity,

water and irrigation — enabling a mutually beneficial system of patronage.

This nexus of political power and material gain has been exposed repeatedly in recent years. Numerous reports have highlighted how militias leverage their ties with officials to secure access to key infrastructure and lands in exchange for protection. One notable example involves allegations against senior PMF official Hussein Faleh al-Lami, known as Abu Zainab al-Lami, who stands accused of using armed force to seize expansive agricultural estates.⁽²⁷⁾

Conclusion

The struggle for power appears to take precedence for Shiite leaders over a genuine shift toward a state-centered model — making that transition their lowest priority. A defining feature of states where non-state actors challenge the government is when those actors perceive a conflict between their interests and those of the state. In such cases, they consistently prioritize their own agendas. In most countries where non-state armed groups exist, we find these groups turning their weapons against the state when they feel threatened. Ultimately, the state bears primary responsibility for the emergence of such militias and suffers the greatest losses when these groups expand and challenge national authority. This is why establishing a monopoly over arms remains a top priority for states.

Syrian President's Visit to Azerbaijan: Geopolitical Challenges Raise Tehran's Concerns

Amid evolving geopolitical dynamics in both the Middle East and the South Caucasus, the recent rapprochement between Syria and Azerbaijan has emerged as a de-

velopment with potentially far-reaching implications — which may be particularly troubling for Tehran. From the Iranian perspective, this emerging alignment is not solely the result of converging interests between Damascus and Baku, but also indicative of deeper transformations in the regional balance of power and long-standing alliance structures, especially in the aftermath of Syrian regime change.

This file explores the strategic significance of the Syrian-Azerbaijani axis through diplomatic, economic and security lenses, offering an in-depth analysis of the sources and dimensions of Iran's growing apprehensions regarding this realignment.

Iran Fears an Emerging Axis Which Reshapes Energy Dynamics and Encircles It

The rapidly advancing diplomatic rapprochement between Syria and Azerbaijan — proceeding under tacit Turkish sponsorship — has elicited growing concern in Tehran, which perceives these developments as a direct challenge to its geopolitical standing and regional influence. Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa's official visit to Baku in July 2025 was especially significant, occurring amid internal shifts in Syria that have undermined Iran's traditional foothold following the collapse of the Assad regime. The new Syrian leadership has severed diplomatic ties with Iran and discontinued the logistical corridors that previously traversed Syrian territory to supply Hezbollah, thereby inflicting a substantial blow to Tehran's strategic influence in the Levant.

The normalization of relations between Damascus and Baku — previously suspended during Assad's rule — and the signing of wide-ranging political and eco-

conomic cooperation agreements are interpreted as part of a broader Azerbaijani initiative to expand its geopolitical footprint in the Middle East, with evident backing from Türkiye. From Tehran's perspective, this development is embedded within a larger Turkish agenda aimed at projecting Ankara's influence across both the South Caucasus and the Middle East. Such maneuvers, Tehran believes, are designed to impose a new geopolitical order on Iran's western and northern frontiers, at a time when Iranian regional influence — especially in Syria — has markedly declined.

Iranian concerns are not confined to the diplomatic sphere but extend deeply into economic and energy-related dimensions. Tehran regards the agreement to export Azerbaijani natural gas to Syria via Turkish territory as a direct challenge to its longstanding aspiration to serve as a central energy corridor in the region. This development effectively sidelines Iran's traditional geographical advantage and diminishes its capacity to leverage energy supply routes as instruments of political and economic influence.

At the same time, it consolidates Türkiye's status as a key transit hub for energy flows from Central Asia to Europe, thereby expanding Ankara's regional influence. Iran views this shift as part of a broader strategy to constrain its regional role — whether through initiatives such as the Zangezur Corridor or through the creation of a geopolitical axis encircling Iran from the South Caucasus to the Mediterranean.⁽²⁸⁾ What particularly alarms Tehran is the emergence of a potentially cohesive tripartite alignment among Syria, Azerbaijan and Türkiye — an axis that could evolve into a powerful structure ca-

pable of redefining the regional energy order and systematically excluding Iran from its strategic calculations. Such an exclusion would have far-reaching consequences for the regional balance of power and would curtail Iran's maneuverability on critical fronts, including its roles in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria.

Iran's Concerns About the Emerging Syrian-Azerbaijani-Israeli Axis on Its Borders

Iran's apprehensions regarding the Syrian-Azerbaijani rapprochement extend beyond the diplomatic and economic realms to encompass profound security-related concerns rooted in the region's sensitive geography and the evolving configuration of regional alliances. From Tehran's perspective, Syria's deepening partnership with Azerbaijan is perceived as offering political legitimacy to a hostile regional axis, one that reintroduces Israel into a theater long considered within Iran's traditional sphere of influence. This is particularly troubling given Israel's growing security cooperation with Azerbaijan. These concerns have been compounded by increasing reports suggesting the possible redeployment of fighters from the Syrian battlefield to the South Caucasus — directly adjacent to Iran's borders — posing a potential threat to its frontier stability and the broader regional security equilibrium.⁽²⁹⁾ Iranian anxieties have further escalated in light of recent low-intensity confrontations with Israel and credible reports that Israeli drones may have operated through Azerbaijani airspace. Adding a new layer of strategic complexity is the United States' proposal to engage in the development of the Zangezur Corridor — a move that could physically sever Iran's land connectivity with Armenia. For Tehran, this initiative reinforces the perception that its geopolitical environment is un-

dergoing a deliberate transformation that endangers both its national security and stability.

Conclusion

Tehran perceives the emerging rapprochement among Syria, Azerbaijan and Türkiye as an escalating challenge to its broader regional environment. The normalization of relations between Damascus and Baku is not viewed as a temporary alignment of interests, but rather as a development that fundamentally reshapes dynamics in areas that are particularly sensitive for Iran. At present, Iran finds itself in a state of strategic disorientation. Its influence in Syria has waned, its capacity to assert control over regional energy transit routes has been curtailed, and it faces mounting pressure along its northwestern frontier as a result of new infrastructure projects and transit corridors that threaten its traditional geopolitical depth. As Tehran attempts to reassert its relevance in the evolving regional order, it is confronted with a growing network of alternative routes, emerging alliances and clear signals that its strategic significance is diminishing.

The Houthis: From an Iranian Lever to a Sustained Regional Threat

Against the backdrop of ongoing regional transformations and heightened international tensions, the political crisis in Yemen persists, with the Houthis functioning as a central instrument in Iran's indirect strategic engagement in the country. This has elevated the internal Yemeni conflict from a domestic political dispute to a broader regional and international security concern, particularly due to the Houthis' threat to the freedom of global maritime navigation, the international economy and the overall security and stability of the region.

Although US-led international coalitions in the Red Sea — along with direct

military strikes targeting Houthi military infrastructure prior to the current truce — resulted in a temporary reduction in attacks on commercial vessels, the core elements of the Houthi threat remain intact. Their continued presence poses a serious risk to regional security, international shipping routes and global economic stability.

Simultaneously, the Houthis are mobilizing their political, cultural and economic capacities to entrench their internal authority while actively undermining any substantive efforts toward a negotiated resolution of the Yemeni conflict. In this context, this file examines three key aspects: the persistent Houthi threat to international maritime navigation, their instrumentalization of the Palestinian cause for their own strategic ends and their ongoing obstruction of meaningful domestic political settlement in Yemen.

Threatening Global Shipping Lanes and the Continued Houthi Danger

The redesignation of Ansarallah as a terrorist organization and the ensuing US airstrikes on targets in Sana'a, Sa'dah and Hodeidah have failed to neutralize the group's Red Sea threat. On March 15, 2025, the US President Donald Trump revealed that over a dozen attacks had been launched against US-flagged vessels and confirmed that the last American warship to cross the Red Sea came under sustained assault. He also reiterated that the group receives direct funding from Iran. Despite the intensity of US strikes, officials admit the Houthis' offensive capacity remains intact, with one warning of exhaustion in ammunition, fuel and deployment stamina. The threat is not idle: attacks near Eilat have disrupted Israeli maritime traffic, forcing shipping giants to detour via the Cape of Good Hope, at considerable time and financial cost.⁽³⁰⁾

Houthi Escalation Impacts the Yemeni Crisis

The Houthi escalation is unfolding alongside extensive media campaigns centered on the Palestinian cause, framed as acts of “support for Gaza.” This narrative aims to forge an emotional and symbolic bond between Sana’a and Gaza, positioning the group within the “Axis of Resistance.” The timing is notable, as Yemen faces both political paralysis and a worsening economic situation. The group appears to be using this symbolic rhetoric to deflect attention from domestic crises and consolidate its support base. This is echoed in remarks by Ahmed al-Imam, the Houthi representative in Tehran, who claimed the group launches missiles toward Israel every two days in coordination with Hamas. He reaffirmed that “the Palestinian cause is our foremost issue” and described the mobilization of over a million people for what he called a “media and jihadi war against the enemy.”⁽³¹⁾

This strategy reflects a broader effort by the Houthis to deflect attention from Yemen’s internal collapse and bolster their popular legitimacy domestically and externally — particularly in Iran, where voices such as MP Mohammed Taqi Naqd Ali have praised the Houthis’ ideological resolve, urging Iranians to emulate Yemeni morale. Yet, the use of the Palestinian cause in this context is widely seen as instrumental, serving to obscure the Houthis’ reluctance to pursue a political resolution and facilitating Iranian regional ambitions cloaked in transnational religious slogans.⁽³²⁾

The Houthis — A Central Hurdle to Reaching a Political Settlement in Yemen

Although regional and international actors continue their efforts to revive the Yemeni peace process, the Houthi group

remains the primary obstacle to a comprehensive resolution. For years, it has persistently evaded international proposals and resisted genuine negotiations. This intransigence is attenuated by the group’s growing military strength, bolstered by external support. Intelligence assessments, including US sources, confirm that the Houthis now possess advanced missile technology and precision-guided drones — an evolution that cannot be understood without acknowledging the technical expertise and backing provided by Tehran, despite its repeated denials of direct military involvement.⁽³³⁾

Official Iranian statements, including Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani’s letter to the UN Security Council, reject US accusations of violating Resolution 2216 and reaffirm Tehran’s support for a “comprehensive Yemeni-led political solution.” Yet this diplomatic posture contrasts with the reality on the ground, which reflects evident military and media coordination between Tehran and Sana’a.⁽³⁴⁾

Coordination between the Houthis and other members of the “Axis of Resistance” persists, with group representatives touting joint operations against Israel and a unified media front aligned with Tehran’s strategic aims. This rhetoric benefits the Houthis by distancing them from political settlement efforts, reinforcing their grip on power and justifying further militarization and taxation at the public’s expense — deepening their role as a regional and international threat. Their continued control of Sana’a and the port of Hodeidah grants them critical economic and administrative leverage, allowing them to dictate terms and obstruct efforts to rebuild a unified Yemeni state. Their presence, therefore, often fuels the crisis rather than contributing to its resolution.

Conclusion

The July 2025 developments in Yemen highlight the growing centrality of the Houthi group within Iran's regional strategy, especially as Tehran contends with the erosion of its traditional spheres of influence. Far from acting as a mere local force, the Houthis are now positioned at the heart of the regional power contest. Their continued disruption of maritime navigation in the Red Sea, intensification of missile activity and politicized use of the Palestinian issue underscore this shift. Despite increasing US-led military

pressure, the group has shown a pragmatic adaptability —deepening political and media ties with anti-Western actors while escalating field operations that obstruct a Yemeni political settlement. Against this backdrop, the Houthis appear to be filling the void left by a retreating Iranian front, reaffirming their role as a destabilizing but strategic tool within Tehran's recalibrated regional agenda. Interpreting their actions, therefore, requires situating them within the broader political context of Iranian proxy realignment amid a shifting regional landscape.

IRAN'S RELATIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL POWERS

Iran and the European Troika convened a pivotal meeting in July in Istanbul — an effort by the European side to offer Tehran a final opportunity before potentially activating the snapback mechanism. If triggered, this mechanism would reinstate all UN sanctions that had been imposed on Iran prior to the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Drawing the Snapback Sword — Europe Intensifies Pressure on Iran

Diplomacy between Iran and Europe remains stalled on most issues, except for efforts to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Direct talks between Iran and the E3 (Germany, France and the UK) in Istanbul took place amid expectations of triggering the snapback mechanism. Tehran agreed to meet with the Europeans only after enacting a newly approved law that suspended all routine cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and demanded guarantees against any military action before resuming negotiations. By blocking access to its nuclear facilities, Tehran has effectively created a new obstacle to nuclear talks. The current Iranian leadership also faces pressure from “hard-liners” who not only seek an end to UN inspections and monitoring but are also calling for withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As a result, the country’s internal debate over whether to continue its nuclear program or stop uranium enrichment is intensifying by the day. This file examines two key issues: the Istanbul talks as Iran’s final opportunity before sanctions are reinstated and the steps being taken to activate the snapback mechanism.

Istanbul Talks: Iran’s Last Chance

On July 25, 2025, Iranian negotiators held face-to-face talks with representatives from the UK, France and Germany at the Iranian consulate in Istanbul. During the four-hour session, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi, who headed the Iranian delegation, focused on the potential reimposition of international sanctions that had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, which limited Iran’s uranium enrichment activities in exchange for sanctions relief.⁽³⁵⁾ Deep-seated mistrust and the lack of a clear negotiating framework persist on both sides. For the Europeans, the Is-

tanbul talks aimed to lay the groundwork for future negotiations. For Iran, however, the meeting offered a chance to quell pressure over the snapback mechanism and gain more time. The significance of these discussions lies in the fact that they are the first to take place following the US-Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. They also took place amid heightened mistrust between Iran and Western powers, particularly after Iran accused the three European parties of failing to uphold their commitments on the nuclear issue following the US withdrawal from the 2015 agreement.

Therefore, the European aim in meeting with Iranian representatives in Istanbul was to give Tehran a chance to prove its seriousness — particularly given that IAEA inspectors are no longer operating inside Iran to monitor nuclear facilities, and US-Iran talks remain deadlocked. This impasse significantly hampers the prospects for a final resolution. As such, the meeting can be viewed as a way to test the waters and gauge each side’s demands, especially in light of Iran’s recent statements and positions rejecting any suspension of uranium enrichment — an issue that remains the primary hurdle to reaching a new nuclear agreement.

Measures to Reactivate the Snapback Mechanism

The snapback mechanism is an emergency provision built into the 2015 JCPOA — a distinctive clause that enables the swift reimposition of UN sanctions on Iran if it breaches its nuclear commitments. Also referred to as the automatic reinstatement of UN sanctions by October 18, 2025, this mechanism ensures the rapid return of Security Council measures in the event of noncompliance. It was originally conceived and proposed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and

incorporated into UN Security Council Resolution 2231.⁽³⁶⁾

As October 18, 2025 — the 10th anniversary of the JCPOA — draws near, debate in Iran is intensifying over the possible reactivation of the JCPOA's snapback mechanism. Resolution 2231, which followed the JCPOA, lifted six prior Security Council resolutions and most UN sanctions. Under its provisions, any current JCPOA participant — France, the UK, Germany, China or Russia — may initiate the snapback within days by alleging Iranian non-compliance. Though the United States withdrew from the deal, Germany, despite not being a permanent Security Council member, could still urge other members to act. The mechanism bypasses the veto system: once triggered, the Security Council president has 10 days to call a vote on a draft resolution either to continue or terminate the suspension of sanctions. A 30-day window follows for a decision, during which no state may veto the outcome — effectively ensuring that sanctions can return automatically.

An extension of sanctions relief can only be approved if the resolution secures at least nine affirmative votes in the Security Council, with no vetoes from any permanent members. Abstentions count as votes in favor. The Security Council president is responsible for drafting a resolution confirming the continuation of international sanctions relief on Iran. If diplomacy fails, the snapback mechanism — triggered by one or more parties to the nuclear deal, such as the European Troika — would ensure the automatic reinstatement of previous resolutions and the reimposition of sanctions. This would reactivate the provisions of Resolutions 1696, 1747, 1803 and 1835, as well as the

more severe Resolution 1929, which authorizes military measures to prevent Iran from advancing its nuclear program.

To avoid renewed sanctions, Iran would need to not only moderate its political rhetoric but also take concrete confidence-building steps. These could include repealing laws that suspend its cooperation with the IAEA, agreeing to resume inspections at both damaged and operational nuclear sites and providing answers to the agency's unresolved questions. The United States and the three European powers could also introduce a resolution to extend the current nuclear agreement for a defined period — a move unlikely to be blocked by China or Russia. By taking such measures, Tehran could delay the activation of the snapback provision, allowing space for negotiations on uranium enrichment and the framework for a future deal.

Conclusion

Tehran is clearly no longer in a position to speak from exaggerated strength, while the three European powers appear determined to pressure Iran into returning to the negotiating table and reaching an agreement that addresses their concerns over its nuclear program. Forfeiting the chance to trigger the snapback mechanism would effectively give Iran — and, by extension, Russia and China — a free hand, as both countries are expected to veto any future UN actions against Iran, even if it withdraws from the NPT. The snapback mechanism, however, would bypass any veto and take effect automatically one month after activation, intensifying the pressure on Iran. As such, August and September 2025 represent Tehran's final window to avert sanctions and growing global isolation.

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