

## 2023 Theme: Actions for peace: Our ambition for the #GlobalGoals

Each year the International Day of Peace (IDP) is observed around the world on 21 September. The UN General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire. Never has our world needed peace more.

This year's theme is **Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals**. It is a call to action that recognizes our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace. Fostering peace contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will create a culture of peace for all.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said, "Peace is needed today more than ever. War and conflict are unleashing devastation, poverty, and hunger, and driving tens of millions of people from their homes. Climate chaos is all around. And even peaceful countries are gripped by gaping inequalities and political polarization."

2023 marks the mid-point in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2023 observance of the International Day of Peace coincides with the SDG summit (18 – 19 September) to mark the mid-point milestone.

The SDGs aim to bring us closer to having more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, free from fear and violence. But without the buy-in and contribution of a wide range of actors including the 1.2 billion young people alive, the goals will not be achieved. We invite you to join the United Nations' call to take action for peace: fight inequality, drive action on climate change, and promote and protect human rights.

2023 is also the 75th anniversaries of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. IDP 2023 encourages all youth to be ambitious in their engagement as positive and constructive social agents, to join the movement to reach the SDGs and contribute to building sustainable peace. Together we can help to lead our world towards a greener, more equitable, just, and secure future for all.

*For more information go to:*

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace>



Embrace the possible. That's the call of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, a blueprint for a better world. We don't have to wait for the future we want—we can create it right now. Everyone can join the global movement for change.

ActNow is the United Nations campaign to inspire people to act for the Sustainable Development Goals.

## 'Important step': What we know about tentative US-Iran prisoner deal

*Countries acknowledge initial step in deal expected to include prisoner swap and give Tehran access to frozen funds.*

From: Al Jazeera and News Agencies Published: 11 Aug 2023

More details have slowly begun to emerge of a tentative deal that would see the United States and Iran engage in a prisoner swap in exchange for giving the Iranian government access to billions of dollars in frozen funds.

News of the agreement first broke on Thursday as US news outlets reported that four American detainees had been transferred from Tehran's notorious Evin prison to house arrest in a hotel. A fifth prisoner had been released earlier.

Both US and Iranian officials later confirmed the first steps of the agreement but have given differing accounts of what it involves.

Barbara Slavin, a fellow at the US-based Stimson Center think tank, told Al Jazeera that the early details of the deal showed Tehran was at least partially willing to "de-escalate tensions" with Washington as it seeks a reprieve from crushing US sanctions.

She said that while the preliminary agreement "is an important step", particularly for the families of the detainees, it is unlikely to represent a larger change in US-Iran relations.

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(From page 1) **‘Important step’:**

“It doesn’t fundamentally change the nature of Iran’s relations with the United States or the international community,” Slavin said.

**What are the details?**

Citing sources familiar with the agreement, The New York Times newspaper and several news agencies reported on Thursday that the deal, which has been months in the making, will see the eventual release of the five US prisoners.

Three of the prisoners were named as Siamak Namazi, Emad Sharghi and Morad Tahbaz. The families of the two others have withheld their identities, but they are said to be a scientist and a businessman.

Jared Genser, a lawyer for Namazi, welcomed the transfer to house arrest but said “there are simply no guarantees” about what happens next. “While I hope this will be the first step to their ultimate release, this is at best the beginning of the end and nothing more,” he said.

As part of the purported deal, the US will free five Iranian prisoners in return for the release of the detained Americans, the news outlets reported.

Iran also will be given access to about \$6bn in oil revenue that was frozen in South Korea due to US sanctions. Under the scheme, the money would be transferred to Qatar to oversee.

Sources told several news agencies that Iran would be able to access the funds only for humanitarian purchases, such as food and medicine, and would not directly receive any money.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also said on Thursday that the funds would be in “restricted accounts” that can be accessed only for “humanitarian purposes”.

The restriction is an apparent attempt by the administration of US President Joe Biden to stem criticism that the released funds could be used to boost Iran’s government and weapons programme.

However, Iranian officials have offered a different characterisation, saying Tehran will decide how to use the funds.

The logistics of setting up a mechanism with Qatar also are expected to take weeks to sort out, given the complex nature of the scheme. Qatar worked with Oman and Switzerland in mediating the negotiations.

**What has Iran said?**

On Friday, Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement that the “process of releasing several billion dollars of Iranian assets which had been illegally frozen by the United States in South Korea has begun”, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

It added: “Iran will determine how to use these assets, and they will be consumed to meet different needs of the country as determined by the related authorities.”

Iran’s semi-official Tasnim news agency said the funds were first to be converted from South Korean won into euros and then sent to an account in Qatar that Iran could access.

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(From last column) **‘Important step’:**

An earlier statement from Iran’s mission to the United Nations said Tehran and Washington “agreed to reciprocally release and pardon five prisoners”.

“The transfer of these prisoners ... out of prison marks a significant initial step in the implementation of this agreement,” it said.

It remains unclear which Iranian prisoners are part of the tentative deal. The New York Times reported on Thursday that “a handful of Iranian nationals serving prison sentences for violating sanctions on Iran” would be released.

**What has the US said?**

Blinken has called the transfer of the prisoners “the beginning of the end of their nightmare and the nightmare that their families have experienced”.

Speaking on Thursday, the top US diplomat added, however, that “there’s more work to be done to actually bring them home”.

Blinken also denied that the deal amounted to “sanctions relief” for Iran.

“We will continue to enforce all of our sanctions. We will continue to push back resolutely against Iran’s destabilising activities in the region and beyond. ... None of these efforts take away from that,” he said.

Still, Republicans quickly attacked the administration of Biden, a Democrat, as news of the potential deal emerged, saying it would ease economic pressure on Iran. Senator Tom Cotton accused Biden of a “craven act of appeasement” that would “embolden” Iranian leaders.

There has been no indication that the prisoner deal would spur movement on restoring the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, which saw Tehran scale back its nuclear programme in exchange for a lifting of international sanctions against its economy.

Former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the agreement unilaterally in 2018 and instead pursued a “maximum pressure” policy against Iran, heaping sanctions on the country.

While the Biden administration initially expressed optimism about restoring the pact, it has more recently dismissed prospects of a breakthrough after efforts to revive the deal collapsed. Biden also has continued to impose new sanctions on Tehran.

**Who are the US prisoners?**

Namazi, a businessman in his early 50s with dual US-Iranian citizenship, was detained in 2015 while visiting his family in Tehran.

Months later, his ailing father, Baquer, was detained after returning to Iran to visit his jailed son. They were both sentenced in 2016 to 10 years in prison for spying and cooperating with the US government, charges that Washington has rejected as false.

Baquer Namazi, a former Iranian provincial governor and former UNICEF official who also has dual citizenship, was put under house arrest in 2018 on medical grounds and left Iran last year for medical treatment.

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### Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

**BPI web site:** [www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org](http://www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org)

For info contact Laura at (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email: [L4peace@telus.net](mailto:L4peace@telus.net).

### UN International Days

- Sept. 5:** International Day of Charity
- Sept. 7:** International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies
- Sept. 8:** International Literacy Day
- Sept. 12:** UN Day for South-South Cooperation
- Sept. 15:** International Day of Democracy
- Sept. 16:** International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
- Sept. 17:** World Patient Safety Day (WHO)
- Sept. 18:** International Equal Pay Day
- Sept. 21:** **International Day of Peace**
- Sept. 26:** International Day for the Total Elimination Of Nuclear Weapons
- Sept. 28:** International Day for Universal Access to Information
- Sept. 29:** International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste
- Sept. 30:** **Day of Truth and Reconciliation in Canada**

#### (From page 2) 'Important step':

Sharghi is also an Iranian-American businessman. He was first arrested in 2018 when working for the Saravan Holding tech investment company after moving with his wife from the US to Iran.

He was released on bail after eight months and cleared of spying and security-related charges but was banned from travelling. He was summoned by a separate court in 2020 and then sentenced to 10 years for espionage.

Tahbaz, an Iranian-American environmentalist who also holds British citizenship, was arrested in 2018. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2019 for "assembly and collusion against Iran's national security" and "contacts with the US enemy government ... for the purpose of spying".

### Is the Iran Nuclear Deal Dead or Alive?

By Thalif Deen: December 30, 2022

In Depth News <https://www.indepthnews.net/>

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) — U.S. President Joe Biden's off-the-cuff remark, describing the nuclear deal with Iran as "dead", has led to widespread speculation about the future of the landmark agreement—and of the potential emergence of new nuclear powers in the horizon.

"It is dead, but we're not going to announce it," Biden said before adding, "long story".

Biden's quote was on a video circulating on social media filmed during an election event in November—and disclosed in December.

The White House did not dispute the authenticity of the video but refused to comment—as did the State Department, leaving in doubt the future of Iran's nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The agreement, which was reached in Vienna in July 2015, included Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely, the U.S., UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany, together with the European Union (EU).

The 159-page document, with five annexes, also lifted some of the crippling sanctions on the Iranian economy in exchange for limitations on Tehran's nuclear programme.

In May 2018, the United States withdrew from JCPOA as President Donald Trump announced he would negotiate a better deal. But that never happened.

If Iran eventually ends up going nuclear, it is most likely that Saudi Arabia, its political rival in the Middle East, would stake its claim to go nuclear as well, perhaps followed by Egypt.

Currently, Israel is the only undeclared nuclear power in the Middle East.

A lingering question remains: Will Iran eventually emerge as the world's 10th nuclear power, along with the existing nine, namely, the UK, U.S., Russia, China and France—the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—plus India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

Asked about the future of the JCPOA, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters on December 19: "I have always believed that the JCPOA was a remarkable diplomatic achievement".

"I was very frustrated when the JCPOA was put into question, and we will do everything we can, in the context of our limited sphere of competence, to make sure that the JCPOA is not lost, recognising that we are, at the present moment, in a serious risk of losing the JCPOA, which in my opinion, would be a very negative factor for peace and stability in the region and further afield," declared Guterres.

Joseph Gerson, *President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security and Co-Convener of the Peace & Planet International Network*, told IDN the "death" of the JCPOA brings the world face to face with the possible end of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, vastly increasing the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation, and nuclear war itself.

"With the Biden Administration's announcement of the death of the JCPOA process, we are confronted by the dangers and enormity of Donald Trump's ignorant and reckless withdrawal of the U.S. from the critically important JCPOA and the failures of the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligation to engage

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## WHAT'S UP?

**International Day of Peace in Grand Forks, Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> @ 1 pm:** panel discussion on Iran and Canada with 3 Iranians. Come to the Holy Trinity **Anglican Church** on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. Admission by donation to cover rental.



**Day of Truth and Reconciliation in Grand Forks on Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>.** Watch for details.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Go to the Government of Canada website for MP email and phone contact at: <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524 or 250-442-0434** or email **L4peace@telus.net**.

The BPI is an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Pledge Union, Abolition 2000, CNANW and works with various local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

### (From page 3) **Is the Iran Nuclear Deal Dead or Alive?**

in good faith diplomacy to eliminate their nuclear arsenals," he said.

Gerson said that former IAEA head and Nobel Peace Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei decried the dangerous hypocrisy and double standard of the nuclear weapons states.

And Joseph Rotblat, the Nobel Peace laureate who earlier quit the Manhattan Project, warned that the failure to eliminate the world's nuclear arsenals would lead to global proliferation. No nation, he observed, would long tolerate what it experiences as an unjust imbalance of power/terror.

"This in no way exempts the Iranian government from condemnation for its nuclear program that has brought it to the brink of nuclear weapons production and the threats implicit in the program," said Gerson.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters on December 22 that Iran is engaging in destabilizing activities, dangerous activities, support for terrorist groups and destabilizing actions throughout the region.

"We've been focused and engaged. That also does not take away from the proposition that it is profoundly in our interest that Iran not acquire a nuclear weapon. And President Biden is committed to ensuring that Iran not acquire a nuclear weapon. We've continued to believe that the most effective way, the most durable way to do that was through diplomacy."

And when the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, was actually enforced, said Blinken, it did exactly what it was designed to do.

"It put Iran's nuclear program in a box. It was verified not only by international inspectors, it was verified by our own people, Iran's compliance with that, including by the previous administration."

"And in our judgment, it was a grievous mistake to pull out of that agreement and to let Iran's nuclear program out of the box. But that's the reality that we inherited and that we've had to deal with."

"So, on the diplomacy, again, as I said, we think that's the best solution. But despite the efforts that we've made, even as we've been pushing back against Iran's other egregious actions, despite the efforts that we've made and our partners in Europe have made, Iran has not been willing or able to do what's necessary to come back into compliance with the agreement."

"So, we will continue to look and act on ways to make sure that, one way or another, Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon."

Elaborating further, Gerson told IDN that the new crisis, created by the inability of U.S. and Iranian negotiators to find common ground to restore the Agreement, must be understood in its deeper contexts, beginning with the injustices of decades of coercive U.S. hegemony across Southwest Asia, as well as the Iranian government's ambitions to replace the Western hegemon.

"These include the 1953 Anglo-American overthrow of the Mosaddegh government, backing of the Shah's brutal dictatorship, support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran to overthrow an "Islamic" government, and repeated U.S. threats and preparations to initiate nuclear war to reinforce its hegemony."

He also pointed out that Israel's nuclear arsenal and the double standard practised by the U.S. and other nations turning a hypocritical blind eye to Israel's nuclear arsenal are also significant factors.

"It is increasingly expected that if and when Iran becomes a nuclear weapons state that it will follow the Israeli model, not publicly acknowledging its arsenal while wielding its nuclear weapons as a coercive and potentially genocidal force."

This, in turn, will likely lead Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to develop nuclear arsenals of their own, he predicted.

"We also face the possibility that, with or without explicit U.S. backing, before or soon after Iran produces its first nuclear weapon, its nuclear infrastructure will be attacked by Israel. This, in turn, will generate a wider regional war with devastating consequences for all involved."

It is thus imperative that despite their differences, all governments that can exercise diplomatic leverage to save the JCPOA. Gerson declared that it is near the top of our urgent and common interests.

*Editor's note: Sadly the only development is that there is no development.*