

# **Biden Agreed Israel Will Keep 'Freedom of Action' Against Iran: Bennett**

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett revealed Monday that US President Joe Biden agreed in a phone call between the two on Sunday that Israel will maintain its freedom of action to deal with the threat from Iran, Hebrew-language outlet N12 reported.

"I made it clear, and I was happy that he also made it clear in an explicit manner, that Israel will retain its freedom of action in any situation," Bennett said of his conversation with Biden on the Iranian nuclear issue.

"We will retain our freedom of action regardless of what transpires," he continued, "with or without an agreement. These are things I have also told [Biden] in the past."

"I say this because it is a very important point that is at the core of our path regarding Iran," Bennett remarked.

The prime minister added that he invited Biden to visit Israel during the call, and that the president said he would be happy to come this year. "He is a true friend of Israel," said Bennett.

The prime minister declined to elaborate further on his talks with Biden, saying, "our stance is known."

On Sunday, Bennett told the weekly cabinet meeting that a new nuclear deal with Iran based on current parameters would "damage the ability to deal with the nuclear program" and potentially destabilize the region.

Touching on the possibility of Israeli military action against Iran's nuclear program, he said, "We are currently closing gaps and building up Israel's military strength for years and even decades to come. Israel will maintain freedom of action in any case, with or without an agreement."

A government source told N12 that Israel has undergone a strategic shift in its

policies on Iran, saying, “Until now the focus on Iran was only in regard to the nuclear program. In 2015 the [nuclear] agreement was signed and in 2018 the US withdrew from the agreement. We inherited a very deep pit, because we had no internal ‘Plan B.’”

“We have allocated hundreds of millions of shekels to close the gap,” the source said, “both in intelligence and operationally. We are closing the gap quickly.”

“Seventy percent of Israel’s problems originate in Iran,” he noted, particularly in Tehran’s support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. “They want us to be harassed, and we indeed have been harassed. We played into their hands.”

The source reflected that because of Israel’s focus on Iran’s proxies, “We did nothing regarding the root of things, when they are sitting at ease 1,000 kilometers [away] with no problem.”

This paradigm has now changed, with the goal being to weaken Iran itself in many fields, such as politics, economics, and intelligence, he said.

“The goal from our point of view is to harass them at home, so they will be dealing with themselves,” the source continued. This campaign, he added, “will be ongoing, it won’t happen in a year and not in two years.”

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Source:

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