

# Israel 'will not allow' Iran to get nuclear bomb amid uranium enrichment

Netanyahu says Iran's decision to enrich uranium to a greater purity 'cannot be explained in any way, other than a desire to continue realising its goal' of getting a bomb.



Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif

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Israeli leaders have vowed not to let Iran get a nuclear weapon after it said it was enriching uranium to 20 percent purity at Natanz and the secretive Fordow underground facility.

Tensions were mounting as a US aircraft carrier reversed its decision to leave the Gulf after Iran told the international nuclear watchdog of its scaled-up operation on Monday. It is installing 1,000 new centrifuges to speed up the process.

Enriching uranium to 20 percent - enough to make reactor fuel - is prohibited

under the nuclear deal negotiated in 2015, from which Donald Trump withdrew the US in 2018. Weapons-grade uranium is enriched to 90 percent.

However, leaders of the Islamic Republic are in combative mood following the assassination of senior Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh at the end of last year, the fifth atomic expert to be killed. Iranian leaders blame Israel.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif has said the US and Israel are plotting to instigate a “casus belli” - cause of war - in Trump’s final days as commander-in-chief. Trump is thought more likely to approve an attack on Iran than US President-Elect Joe Biden, who takes office in two weeks’ time.

In recent days, Trump reversed a “de-escalation” decision from his defence secretary and ordered the homeward-bound USS Nimitz back to the Persian Gulf, with Trump’s officials citing unspecified threats from Iran.

Benjamin Netanyahu said Iran’s move to enrich uranium to 20 percent purity “cannot be explained in any way, other than a desire to continue realising its goal of developing a military nuclear programme. Israel will not allow that.”

The Fordow announcement comes a year after Iranian General Qassem Soleimani was killed by an American drone in Baghdad on 3 January 2020. Thousands of Iranians marked his death on the streets of Tehran on Sunday.

Under the terms of the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran was limited to 3.67 percent enrichment, but after Trump withdrew the US, reimposed sanctions, and added additional measures, Iran has said it is no longer bound by its obligations.

US President-Elect Joe Biden is believed to be considering a renewal of the nuclear deal, despite US allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia being so vehemently opposed to it. Israelis say the sanction relief helps Iran fund groups like Hezbollah.

It comes as Iranian forces seized a South Korea-flagged ship, claiming that it was polluting Iranian waters. Analysts say the real reason is South Korea’s refusal to unlock frozen oil-revenue accounts.

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