

Peres Puts Faith in Obama to Contain Iran

"I have no doubt that if diplomatic talks fail with Iran and Tehran doesn't stop accelerating its nuclear development—U.S. President Barack Obama will conduct a military attack against Iran," President Shimon Peres told Israel Hayom this week. Peres spent a great deal of time with his American counterpart during the latter's visit to Israel last month.

"Preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon isn't only an Israeli interest, but a global and an American interest. As long as the U.S. is in the lead—why shouldn't we use its assistance?" Peres said during an interview with Israel Hayom ahead of the country's 65th anniversary celebrations next week.

"It could be that the Iranians are trying to buy time, but they are also losing. The situation in Iran is greatly deteriorating, the economy is collapsing, and the people understand this very well," said Peres. The full interview will be published in Monday's special holiday edition.

The latest round of international discussions with Iran over its nuclear program ended in Kazakhstan this past week without any breakthroughs and the sides even failed to set a new date and time for a resumption of talks.

On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told Peres in a meeting that "President Barack Obama is not bluffing when he says he will stop Iran's nuclear program."

"We understand the nature of the threat of Iran. And as the President has said many times—he doesn't bluff. He is serious. We will stand with Israel against this threat and with the rest of the world, who have underscored that all we are looking for is Iran to live up to its international

obligations. No option is off the table. No option will be taken off the table," Kerry said.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel is scheduled to arrive in Israel on April 21 for a meeting with his Israeli counterpart Moshe Ya'alon.

Iran on Tuesday marked its National Nuclear Technology Day by announcing the opening of two new uranium mines and a new plant capable of producing 60 tons of raw uranium (also known as "yellow cake") per year.

Western nations have "tried their utmost to prevent Iran from going nuclear, but Iran has gone nuclear," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in a speech on Tuesday.

"They caused restrictions and issued threats, thinking that the Iranian nation cannot achieve nuclear energy ... The best way for you is to cooperate with Iran," he said.

In the interview with Israel Hayom, Peres said he intends to serve the public even after his tenure as president ends in the summer of 2014.

In what capacity? That's less important to him. And no, he has no plan to return to the political arena and vie for the premiership. Israel's number one citizen expresses a determined and uncompromising stance toward acts of violence toward the elderly and women in Israel, and also hints that he has no intention of pardoning his predecessor, Moshe Katzav (currently serving a jail sentence for rape).

This summer you'll turn 90. How is your health?

"My bodyguards tell me they're jealous of me in every regard. I have no health problems. I think my optimistic spirit influences my health. People who are sick are generally unhappy. People who are healthy are generally happy. I'm generally happy."

With your popularity being what it is today, wouldn't you want to be prime minister again?

"No. I did that enough. Being out of government allows for more action and initiative. That doesn't mean we don't need a prime minister. Ever since I can remember myself I've thought that the real question in life isn't what to be, but what to do."

And what about the claims made against him during the last election campaign that he tried interfering on behalf of the center-left bloc?

"I didn't interfere in anything, God forbid," he stressed. "If I see a burning issue—my moral obligation is to voice my opinion. My obligation is to interfere if I see a disaster about to happen, but I don't give the government orders."

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