

## 'IAEA report biased'

Syria seeks to engage Iran, West in 'constructive' talks

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, February 21, 2010

[The News](#) 22 February 2010

Region: [Asia](#)

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### Global Research Editor's Note

*Washington's overture to Damascus is intended to create divisions between Iran and Syria, which would leave Tehran isolated in regards to US NATO sponsored sanctions and military threats.*

DAMASCUS/TEHRAN: Syria is determined to help its ally Iran and the West engage in a "constructive" dialogue over Tehran's contested nuclear programme, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem said on Saturday.

"Sanctions are not a solution (to the problem) between Iran and the West," Muallem said during a joint press conference with visiting Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger.

"We are trying to engage a constructive dialogue between the two parties in order to reach a peaceful solution," Muallem said.

He also insisted that despite Western claims, "Iran does not have a nuclear military programme."

Western governments suspect that Iran's nuclear programme is cover for a drive for a bomb and are seeking to rein in its moves started earlier this month to enrich uranium to 20 percent level, seen as a milestone in that process.

Iran strongly denies it has any such ambition and maintains its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purpose.

Tehran has been slapped with three sets of UN sanctions and Western governments are pushing for a fourth round of sanctions after Iran's failure to heed Security Council ultimatums to suspend uranium enrichment and to agree to a UN-drafted deal for the supply of nuclear fuel.

Elsewhere Muallem said that a warming up of Syrian-US diplomatic ties is "extremely important to set up a launch pad which could one day help the resumption of direct negotiations between Syria and Israel."

Earlier this week, US President Barack Obama named a new ambassador to Syria, filling a five-year void amid a dispute over Syria's military and political involvement in neighbouring Lebanon.

Syria has been Iran's major regional ally for the past three decades, ever since taking its side in its 1980-88 war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

Meanwhile, Iran's former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani lashed out at the UN nuclear watchdog on Saturday for presenting what he said was a biased report against Tehran.

"It is clearly evident that a part of this report has been presented following recommendation and under the influence of foreign elements," Rafsanjani said, referring to Thursday's release of a report by the UN body expressing "concerns" that Tehran could be developing a nuclear warhead.

"It can not be said that this is the work of an independent international centre," the official IRNA news agency quoted Rafsanjani as saying about the International Atomic Energy Agency.

On Thursday, IAEA chief Yukiya Amano, in a blunt first report to the watchdog's board of governors, expressed concern Iran might be seeking to develop a nuclear warhead. "The information available to the agency... raises concerns about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile," Amano wrote. Iranian officials have dismissed the report and the country's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei again denied on Friday that Tehran was seeking atomic weapons.

Iran maintains its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purpose, but world powers suspect the Islamic republic is covertly aiming to develop a weapons capability.

Rafsanjani, who has been severely criticised by hardliners for backing groups inside Iran opposed to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said the report was a "psychological war by the United States and others" against the Islamic republic.

"The volume of threats and biased political suggestions which seek to generate a consensus against Iran have been unprecedented. But they will not prevail," he said. Foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast too criticised the IAEA report.

"We expect the IAEA to preserve its identity and reputation and not allow the political will of some countries to be imposed on the world community," Mehmanparast said, according to IRNA.

Denouncing the report as a Western attempt at politically pressurising Iran, Mehmanparast also questioned the position of nations that are not signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and have acquired nuclear weapons without similar levels of criticism.

"These countries have nuclear weapons, but nobody questions them," he said in a clear allusion to Israel, which has the Middle East's sole if undeclared nuclear arsenal.

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