

## Iran: Tehran Under Pressure Ahead Of UN Sanctions Talks

**The international spotlight is back on Iran's nuclear program ahead of six-country talks in Berlin on possible new UN economic sanctions against Tehran.**

China is urging Iran's leaders to return to the negotiating table, while host Germany is seeking international unity to stop Iran from developing nuclear-weapons technology when global powers convene on January 22.

Chinese officials urged top Iranian nuclear negotiator Said Jalili in Beijing last week to resume negotiations with the international community. The call from China's Foreign Ministry came as senior diplomats from both Iran and the United States were lobbying Beijing for support ahead of this week's key meeting.

Jalili said after the talks in Beijing on January 17 that his country and China have a "basically similar" stance on Iran's nuclear program. Jalili said China and Iran also agree on arms control, nuclear nonproliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear power.

China -- like fellow permanent members Britain, France, Russia, and the United States -- has the power to veto any UN [Security](#) Council resolution and has been reluctant to back a U.S. drive for further sanctions on Iran.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told Jalili in Beijing that the Iranian nuclear issue has reached a "crucial moment." He also said China hopes all concerned parties, including Iran, will make efforts to resume negotiations as soon as possible in order to resolve the issue.

Germany and the five permanent Security Council members are to meet in Berlin on January 22 to discuss a possible new round of UN sanctions against Iran. Beijing has not said whether it will support a new UN sanctions resolution against Iran when the powers meet in Berlin.

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met in Beijing on January 16 with visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, who is seeking Chinese support for a new UN resolution on Iran that would contain binding sanctions. Negroponte says UN-backed sanctions are necessary because Iran has refused to suspend uranium enrichment in line with two existing UN resolutions.

The European Union troika of Britain, France, and Germany have been leading efforts to persuade Iran to suspend uranium enrichment in order to prove that it is not trying to acquire nuclear weapons.

Iran denies that it is seeking nuclear arms and insists that its nuclear program is aimed only at producing electricity for peaceful, civilian purposes.

Iran's state news agency IRNA has quoted Jalili as saying that Tehran expected continued support from China.

After International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Muhammad el-Baradei visited Tehran in early January, Iran agreed to clear up all outstanding issues about its nuclear program within four weeks. Despite a four-year probe, the IAEA has so far been unable to confirm Iran's [claim](#) that its nuclear program is strictly peaceful.

The United States has argued most vociferously that Iran has secretly sought to develop nuclear weapons, although a declassified National Intelligence Estimate in November also suggested that the U.S. intelligence community believed with a "high probability" that Tehran had suspended the military aspect of a nuclear program in 2003.

Meanwhile, Iran last week received a third shipment of nuclear fuel from Russia for a nuclear power plant being constructed with Russian assistance in the southern Iranian port of Bushehr. Iranian state radio reported that the 11-ton consignment of nuclear fuel arrived at the Bushehr power plant on January 18. That report said the remainder of the Russian fuel shipment was due to arrive in five separate deliveries during the coming months.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has condemned the nuclear-fuel shipment. Speaking in Moscow on January 17, Livni said Russian deliveries of nuclear fuel could help Tehran develop nuclear weapons and said that "in order to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons we need to use all means, from United Nations sanctions to other measures."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has defended the fuel deliveries, saying they are a step that should convince Tehran to stop its own uranium-enrichment program. "It is extremely important to do everything possible to broaden, not limit, the opportunities for the International Atomic Energy Agency to continue working in Iran," Lavrov said.

Iran received the first two shipments of nuclear fuel from Russia on December 17 and December 28 after months of dispute between the two countries, allegedly over delayed construction [payments](#) for the Bushehr reactor.

Iranian officials have said Bushehr, the country's first nuclear reactor, will begin operating in the summer, producing half of its 1,000-megawatt capacity of electricity.