

Initial Iranian Response to Assassination of Its Top Nuclear Scientist

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Iranian parliamentarians responded swiftly to last Friday's assassination of nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh — more from the country's ruling authorities highly likely.

According to Iran's Intelligence Ministry, Fakhrizadeh was martyred by at least one explosion and gunfire from a number of assailants.

Condemnation followed by senior Iranian political and military officials, vowing retaliation.

Over the weekend, Iranian parliamentarians responded by overwhelmingly adopting legislation that includes the following provisions:

1. Voluntary implementation of the IAEA's Additional Protocol (pertaining to verification of nuclear safeguards) to cease.
2. Producing and storing at least 120 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20% purity. More on this below.
3. Enriching amounts above 20% for legitimate industrial uses.
4. Requiring the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to increase legitimate uranium enrichment of varying purity levels to at least 500 kilograms monthly.
5. At least 1,000 IR-2M centrifuge machines to be operating at the Natanz nuclear facility within three months.
6. Requiring at least 164 IR-6 centrifuges for R & D to be operating at the Fordow nuclear facility — increasing the number to 1,000 by March 2021.
7. Monitoring of Iranian nuclear sites will be allowed only according to Additional Protocol provisions.
8. Restoring the 40-megawatt Arak heavy water reactor to its pre-JCPOA condition.
9. If Iran's earlier banking relations with Europe and EU oil purchases aren't restored within three months of the new law's adoption, voluntary adherence to the Additional Protocol will cease.

If P5+1 countries don't don't fully implement JCPOA provisions, further Iranian steps may be adopted.

Iranian parliamentarians called the new law a "strategic measure for the removal of

(illegally imposed US and Western) sanctions.”

On Sunday, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said the following:

“The enemies of the Iranian people, once again by resorting to terror, proved that they are scared of the increase of Iran’s power and chose to remove our scientists to confront the nation.”

US-led Western countries won’t likely take positive steps toward Iran without its firm response to Fakhrizadeh’s assassination, he stressed.

Iranians have been harmed by the West “for more than four decades, and experience has proven that they have continued the path of their martyrs stronger than before,” Qalibaf added.

A “strong response that both deters them from possible future mistakes and takes revenge from them for these crimes” is necessary.

“(I)n addition to revenge from the perpetrators and commanders of the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh, all relevant forces and organizations are duty-bound to turn the threat of this tragic loss into an opportunity to strengthen various economic, security, defense and nuclear fields.”

In response to unlawful Trump regime “maximum pressure” and breach of JCPOA provisions by Brussels, Iran exercised its legal rights under agreement.

JCPOA Article 36 states that if actions by its signatories “constitute significant non-performance, then (Iran) could treat the unresolved issue as grounds to cease performing its commitments under this JCPOA in whole or in part and/or notify the UN Security Council that it believes the issue constitutes significant non-performance.”

Article 26 states that if the US imposes new nuclear-related sanctions on Iran, it will constitute “grounds (for its authorities) to cease performing its commitments under this JCPOA in whole or in part.”

Because the JCPOA is binding international law, all world community nations are required to observe it.

In May 2018, the Trump regime illegally abandoned the landmark agreement.

EU JCPOA signatories Britain, France and Germany failed to fulfill their legally required obligations.

Increased uranium enrichment beyond the amount and level stipulated by the JCPOA is Iran’s legal right under Articles 26 and 36, as well as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

According to World Nuclear.org, “uranium used for nuclear weapons would have to be enriched in plants specially designed to produce at least 90% (purity) U-235.”

“Although 13 countries have enrichment production capability or near-capability, about 90% of world enrichment capacity is in” the US, Britain, France, Russia, and China.

Uranium enriched to 20% purity and other amounts above this level for industrial applications cannot be used for nuclear weapons development and production.

According to the Tehran Times on Sunday, “(s)everal Iranian officials called for an end to Iran’s cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA),” adding:

Parliament Energy Committee head/former AEOI chief Fereydoun Abbasidavani tweeted that Fakhrizadeh’s martyrdom will change Tehran’s policies on the nuclear issue.

Separately, he said parliamentarians will focus on four issues:

- “1. (S)tarting 20% (uranium) enrichment.
2. (E)xpelling all (IAEA) inspectors.
3. (E)nding cooperation with the Agency.
4. (W)ithdrawing from the JCPOA” — if the US, Britain and France continue breaching their obligations under its provisions.

The ball is in their court. Survival of the landmark agreement may depend on what actions they take — or don’t take — going forward.

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