



[Iran Nuclear Talks Resume in Vienna as Negotiations Enter the Final Stages](#)

On Tuesday of this week, delegations from Iran, China, Russia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States reconvened in the Austrian capital city of Vienna to take part in the final stretch of the current Iran nuclear deal talks. The negotiations are aimed at reviving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the 2015 nuclear agreement that the United States abandoned under the previous Trump administration. In the latest series of talks so far, which have been ongoing for 10 months since April of 2021, there have been enough signs of progress to show that negotiations are entering a critical phase. There are still several unresolved issues that could throw a wrench in the talks including the scope of sanctions relief for Iran, the order in which concessions will be made, the mode of verification, Iran's compliance process, and a guarantee that the United States will not back out of the agreement this time. The most recent sign of progress came with the restoration of sanctions waivers, and the U.S. State Department is hopeful that this will further help aid talks in Vienna. The Biden administration has indicated a February deadline to salvage the agreement, or otherwise they may revert back to more aggressive tactics in their dealings with Iran's nuclear program.

One of the significant challenges that the United States currently faces in the talks is the refusal of Iran to speak directly with American diplomats. Instead, they have only spoken with intermediaries, saying that they will refuse to speak with the U.S. directly until they offer a "good agreement." Iran is also using four Iranian-American prisoners as bargaining chips to try and get a more favorable deal. Additionally, there are some demands by Iran to lift sanctions that were imposed because of human rights violations, which could be bad optics for the Biden administration since it has consistently tried to prioritize human rights considerations as a major foreign policy objective. Iran has its apprehensions about the United States backing out of the deal in the near future as well.

The United States also faces obstacles domestically at home, as congressional opposition is likely mounting. Several members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, have shown signs of concern, wondering if it is worth salvaging a deal that will expire in the coming years. Some Democrats remain cautiously optimistic but would like to hear more regarding the parameters of the deal. There are also Republicans threatening to block the deal entirely if it does not go through the Congressional approval process, and certain members of the Foreign Relations Committee did not seem optimistic about the United States reaching an agreement after a classified briefing on Wednesday.

Earlier today, the German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock indicated that the nuclear talks had entered the final phase in a press conference. Germany is a party in the original agreement and is involved in ongoing negotiations that are taking place. Other participants include China, Russia, the United Kingdom, and France. Baerbock also spoke of how the agreement would make the region safer, in a bid to counter opposition to the deal in Israel. Officials there have been opposed to the deal, saying that a nuclear Iran is a threat to Israel and the world. Diako Hosseini, a Tehran-based foreign policy analyst, expressed that a real understanding can be achieved in these talks as long as neither side oversteps in their final efforts to gain more concessions.