



[The JCPOA Remains in Limbo as the Stalemate Between the United States and Iran Continue](#)

In 2015, Iran, China, Russia, the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the European Union signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which aimed to restrict Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Unfortunately, the Trump administration unilaterally withdrew from the agreement in 2018 and imposed the toughest penalties yet, which remain in effect today. Iran began to exceed some of the deal's limits in response to the US withdrawal and the reimposition of sanctions. This decision was highly controversial and has had severe repercussions for both the US and the international community. The restoration of the JCPOA has been facing ups and downs, yet neither side has been ready to call the agreement off for good. There has been no public indication of progress, and Western parties continue to encourage Iran to step up its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). For months, there has been discussion about a possible visit by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi to Tehran, as Iran continues to accuse the nuclear watchdog of being exploited as a "political instrument" by opponents of the nuclear agreement. Grossi, in the past, has described the current state of the nuclear deal as an "empty shell," but has emphasized the importance of granting more inspection and monitoring access to verify the peacefulness of Iran's nuclear program. According to Bloomberg, agency inspectors recently discovered uranium enriched to 84 percent in Iran, which is the highest amount ever detected in the country and is close to the 90 percent necessary for an atomic weapon. Iran, however, insists that it does not desire a nuclear weapon. The discovery of highly enriched uranium has raised concerns among Western powers, which have been trying to revive the nuclear deal that was abandoned by the US in 2018. The situation is complicated by the fact that Iran is currently in the midst of a presidential election campaign and massive protests. The country's conservative politicians have been critical of the nuclear deal and of the IAEA's monitoring activities. Nevertheless, the IAEA has stressed the importance of dialogue and cooperation to resolve the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program. The effects of these sanctions are also having a stifling impact on Iran's economy.

Iran's national currency has reached an all-time low, and food and other item prices continue to rise. Iran has been facing significant economic struggles due to a combination of factors, including international sanctions, internal economic mismanagement, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The recent devaluation of the national currency is a clear indicator of the severity of these economic challenges. The JCPOA, also known as the Iran nuclear deal, was seen as a way to lift international sanctions and revive the Iranian economy. The recent announcement of additional EU sanctions against Iran is likely to further exacerbate the country's economic woes. The goal in doing this is to pressure the Iranian government to concede to a new deal, but this strategy has so far proven ineffective. Iran has been very resourceful in blunting the effects of the sanctions. In response to the depreciation of the national currency, the central bank governor announced the creation of a new currency and gold exchange hub

to stabilize prices. However, it remains to be seen whether this measure will be effective in the long term.

The rising prices of basic goods such as meat and vegetables, as well as the government's attempts to provide basic food goods at cheaper rates, are indicative of the impact of inflation on the country's citizens. Overall, Iran's economic struggles are likely to continue as long as international sanctions remain in place, and the country continues to face internal economic challenges. While the creation of a new currency and gold exchange hub may provide some temporary relief, a more comprehensive approach is needed to address the root causes of Iran's economic difficulties. The JCPOA remains a topic of concern and could offer a potential path for lifting sanctions and revitalizing the Iranian economy, but its fate is uncertain in the face of ongoing political tensions.

The restoration of the Iran nuclear deal has been a tumultuous journey, marked by numerous highs and lows. The past year has been particularly challenging, with many reports of near collapses and supposed breakthroughs. While a final text was hashed out in September based on a European offer, it ultimately fell through due to a lack of commitment on both sides.

The stalemate that followed has been accompanied by significant changes both within and beyond Iran. Western powers have imposed several rounds of sanctions on top Iranian officials and organizations, alleging their involvement in supplying drones to Russia during the Ukrainian war. Iran denies any involvement and maintains that it sold drones to Russia months before the conflict began, asserting its opposition to the war. Large-scale protests have also broken out across Iran following the murder of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman, who died in police custody. Iran accused the West of orchestrating the unrest, while the West retaliated with a barrage of human rights sanctions in response to Tehran's handling of the demonstrations. As the negotiations for the restoration of the Iran nuclear deal continue, these challenges are a reminder of the complex political dynamics at play.

The status of the talks surrounding the restoration of the JCPOA remains a topic of concern and speculation for many. Despite receiving backchannel signals for a potential deal, the US has stated that reinstating the agreement is not currently a priority. Iran has responded by accusing American officials of hypocrisy and inconsistency. Both sides have proposed their own versions of a "plan B" in the event of a breakdown in negotiations, sparking concerns of a potential military conflict. Thus far, there has been no public indication of progress in the discussions. Western powers are urging Iran to increase its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to allay fears of nuclear proliferation. In the midst of the negotiations, the US and Iran have also been discussing the exchange of inmates held on various charges. While the nuclear talks have been intertwined with this issue at times, it is possible that progress could be made on the prisoner exchange separately from the larger diplomatic efforts. As the world watches and waits for progress to be made in the JCPOA discussions, all parties must remain committed to finding a mutually beneficial solution that will prevent further escalation and promote regional stability. Any misstep in these delicate negotiations could have dire consequences for all involved.