

# Iran nuclear chief announces completion of new facility to produce centrifuges



*Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (L) and Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation chief Ali Akbar Salehi address journalists at the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Bushehr on January 13, 2015*

**Mohammad Berno (Iranian Presidency/AFP/File)**

Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi on Sunday announced to state media that the Islamic Republic had completed construction of a facility capable of producing advanced centrifuges at its nuclear plant Natanz, fulfilling threats that it would continue nuclear production in the event that the US withdraw from the 2014 nuclear deal and slap heavy sanctions on the country.

"Khamenei ordered us to set up and complete a very advanced hall for the construction of modern centrifuges, and this hall has now been fully equipped and set up," said the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization to IRNA news agency,

according to Reuters.

In recent months, Iran has made known its plans to increase its uranium enrichment capacity. In May, following the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal, a letter was submitted to the Atomic Energy Agency “regarding the start of certain activities,” according to Salehi, indicating work had begun on the infrastructure for building advanced centrifuges at the Natanz facility.

However, Salehi vowed in the letter that the Islamic Republic’s nuclear activities would remain within the framework of the crumbling agreement.

“What we are doing does not violate the (2015 nuclear) agreement,” he said, noting that this was just the start of the production process and “does not mean that we will start assembling the centrifuges.”

Under the landmark deal, Iran can build parts for the centrifuges as long as it does not put them into operation within the first decade.

Salehi also emphasized that these moves “do not mean the negotiations [with Europe] have failed.”



*The Iran nuclear deal is among the multilateral agreements that Trump bashes as part of his “America First” stance. Here, Iranians gather next to a replica of a Ghadr medium-range ballistic missile during a demonstration in Tehran on November 4, 2017* **ATTA KENARE (AFP/File)**

The defiant move comes as European powers continue to scramble to preserve the hard-fought 2015 accord over Iran’s nuclear program following US President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the deal.

Israel along with the US has maintained steadfast opposition to the Iranian regime gaining influence in the region and possibly becoming a nuclear power.

The US National Security adviser John Bolton on a visit to Israel last month, reassured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that reeling in Iran’s nuclear power was a top priority for the United States.

“It’s why President Donald Trump withdrew from the wretched Iran nuclear deal, it’s why he is re-imposing economic sanctions, it is why we’ve worked with our friends in Europe to convince them of the need to take stronger steps against the Iranian nuclear weapons nuclear,” Bolton remarked.

On August 6 the first of two waves of restrictive American sanctions were re-imposed on Iranian industries. The effects already visible with Iran’s rial currency losing around half its value since Trump’s announcement, contributing to the already spiraling economic situation.



*Iran and six world powers were close to clinching an historic pact on Monday that would bring Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme,*

*but an Iranian negotiator said he could not guarantee a deal was imminent*

**Carlos Barria (Pool/AFP)**

The comments were also veiled reference to European countries, which are seeking to save the nuclear deal and have vowed to keep providing Iran with the economic benefits it received from the accord.

Following the US withdrawal, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo listed 12 demands to Iran that should be met in order for the US to engage in new negotiations.

Among the demands were that Iran must stop enrichment and never pursue plutonium reprocessing, as well as halt its activities across the Middle East which the US sees as destabilizing.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei responded to demands saying, negotiations with the United States are "useless" because they do not abide by agreements.

"The US seeks the return of the situation and their status before the (1979 Islamic) revolution in Iran. They are against the nuclear potential and the power of its (Iran's) enrichment, and its presence in the region," Khamenei said on Saturday.

The US has openly said that it seeks to target the Iranian government and not the people.

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