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U.N. Live Updates: Iran's President to Address World Leaders After Trump Threat

Masoud Pezeshkian is the first leader whose country is at war with the United States to travel to New York to address the General Assembly. President Trump said he faced a choice over whether to “annihilate” the Islamic republic.



The United Nations secretary general António Guterres addressed the gathering of world leaders on Tuesday. Dave Sanders for The New York Times

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Farnaz Fassihi Reporting from the United Nations



Here's the latest.

Just seven months ago, President Masoud Pezeshkian of Iran was running his country from an underground bunker, trying to stay alive as U.S. and Israeli airstrikes rained down.

On Wednesday morning, he is scheduled to address world leaders in New York at the United Nations General Assembly, even as the United States is still at war with his country. Mr. Pezeshkian is being protected by the Secret Service, as per protocol. He has been cruising through Manhattan in convoys of S.U.V.s and holding a marathon of diplomatic meetings.

It is the first time in the world body's 81-year history that the leader of a country that is actively at war with the United Nations' host country has traveled to the United States to address the General Assembly.

On Tuesday, President Trump said in his own address that he was facing two choices: to strike a deal with Iran and help it become economically prosperous, or to "annihilate" it.

The United Nations provides Iran a stage it cannot afford to ignore. In a year when the country has been attacked by the United States and Israel, its top leaders assassinated, its schoolchildren killed by American bombs in Minab and its population subjected to severe economic hardships, Iran's president may well have much to say. The mere act of showing up in New York, analysts said, signaled to the world that Iran remained defiant.

"The U.S. has created this narrative that we killed Iran's top leader, and its government is weak," Sasan Karimi, a co-founder of an Iranian foreign policy think tank, PAIAB, said in an interview from Tehran. "The president coming to the U.N. to speak is highly symbolic. It projects resilience and stability of the country and its political system."

In an unexpected twist on Tuesday, Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, communicated through Qatari mediators with a U.S. special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner, a son-in-law of Mr. Trump's, on the sidelines of the General Assembly. They discussed how Tehran and Washington could resume peace talks, according to two Iranian officials. Esmail Baghaei, the spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, said the Iranians had demanded a halt to the war and the lifting of the naval blockade on ports, state media reported. It was the first meeting of American and Iranian representatives since a peace agreement fell apart in July.

Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, the top military adviser to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, told Iranian state television on Tuesday that the supreme leader had "right now decided to give the government an open hand to negotiate."

The United States and Iran have not had formal diplomatic relations since 1979, when revolutionary students raided the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took American diplomats hostage. For the past year, relations between the two countries have lurched between negotiation and all-out war, with Iran suffering widespread death and destruction while at the same time badly damaging American military bases and killing 18 U.S. servicemen.

Here is what else to expect:

- **Notable speakers:** Among the other leaders scheduled to address the General Assembly on Wednesday are Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky; President Ahmed al-Sharaa of Syria; President Javier Milei of Argentina and President William Ruto of Kenya.
- **A.I.:** The U.N. Security Council will convene a session of foreign ministers on the threat posed by artificial intelligence, specifically the use of A.I. weapons in conflicts. The event has gained more urgency after recent warnings by some A.I. developers that without significant oversight, the technology could pose a threat to humanity. In many parts of the world, however, most people feel positive about A.I., according to a new Gallup poll.
- **Climate change:** A summit hosted by António Guterres, the U.N. secretary-general, will take place in the afternoon, bringing together leaders of governments from countries most vulnerable to climate upheaval, as well as major energy producers and consumers.

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Christina Goldbaum

1 hour ago

Christina Goldbaum leads news coverage of Syria for The New York Times.



A strengthened Syrian leader grapples with new challenges.

President Ahmed al-Sharaa of Syria has met in person with President Trump several times since taking power in January 2025. Above, the two on the sidelines of a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, in July. Doug Mills/The New York Times

When President Ahmed al-Sharaa of Syria addressed the United Nations General Assembly last year, he was still in the throes of transforming his image from a rebel leader who once had ties to Al Qaeda into a head of state ushering in a new era in a country ruled for decades by dictatorship.

He returns to New York this year in a much stronger diplomatic position, and is scheduled to be the first speaker before the Assembly on Wednesday morning. Mr. al-Sharaa has secured significant sanctions relief, extended his government's authority across most of Syria and gained international acceptance among a broad spectrum of foreign leaders, including President Trump.

Now, Mr. al-Sharaa now faces a more difficult test: turning those diplomatic ties into tangible gains for Syrians as mounting economic and security challenges threaten to undermine the country's transition.

Syria's economy remains in crisis and the flood of foreign investment his government hoped would quickly follow sanctions relief has not yet materialized. The World Food Program estimates that the monthly cost of essential needs for a family of five — including food, utilities and basic services — rose by almost 33 percent between June 2025 and June 2026.

The rising cost of living has deepened public frustration with Mr. al-Sharaa's government. Last week, government increases in fuel prices triggered the country's most widespread protests since Mr. al-Sharaa took power nearly two years ago, forcing his government to partially reverse the increases.

Mr. al-Sharaa is also struggling to restore Syria's sovereignty in the face of Israel's increasingly entrenched military presence in the south. Earlier this month, a U.N. commission investigating Syria reported that Israeli military operations in southern Syria had deepened, with repeated incursions, patrols, raids and searches disrupting civilian life. It warned that some Israeli actions, including the detention of Syrian civilians, could amount to war crimes.

Israel's presence in southern Syria reflects its broader shift in defense strategy toward establishing military buffer zones beyond along its borders, including in southern Lebanon and Gaza. But its military activity in Syria is also bound up in a growing rivalry with Turkey, one of Mr. al-Sharaa's closest allies and a longtime supporter of the rebel movement he once led.

Relations between Turkey and Israel have deteriorated sharply since the war in Gaza began in 2023. Turkey's deepening military ties with Damascus have heightened Israeli concerns about the prospect of Turkish forces and equipment operating in Syria. Israel has struck Syrian military facilities that Turkey had assessed for possible use, underscoring the potential for Syria to become a flashpoint between the two regional powers.

Mr. al-Sharaa's government has broken with its predecessors to express an openness to engage with Israel and has taken part in U.S.-mediated talks with Israeli officials in the hopes of easing tension. But that diplomacy has not yielded a security agreement or an Israeli withdrawal from southern Syria. And at a U.N. Security Council meeting last week, Syria's permanent representative to the U.N., Ibrahim Olabi, also accused Israel of responding to Syria's efforts at diplomatic engagement with "airstrikes, incursions and violations."

"Israel penetrated our villages, displaced our people, bombed our facilities while we chose to spare the region further suffering," Mr. Olabi said.

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