

France Says Iran Not Respecting UN Text on Ballistic Missiles

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French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Brussels: France's foreign minister accused Iran on Monday of not respecting part of a UN resolution that calls on Tehran to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to carry nuclear warheads.

Speaking on arrival at a European foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, Jean-Yves Le Drian also said the 28 ministers would reiterate their concerns over Iran's activities in Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, which he described as destabilising.

"We will also have the opportunity of underlining our firmness on Iran's compliance with United Nations Resolution 2231, which limits access to ballistic capacity and which Iran does not respect," Le Drian said.

Under the UN resolution enshrining the 2015 nuclear deal with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, Iran is "called upon" to refrain from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons for up to 8 years.

Some states say this phrasing does not make it an obligatory commitment.

Iran has repeatedly said its missile programme is purely defensive and denied they are designed to carry nuclear warheads.

Le Drian on Sunday said he would travel to Iran in March and that France had begun talks with Tehran to discuss its missile programme and regional activities.

But Iran's foreign ministry spokesman on Monday dismissed the suggestion of talks on either issue.

"If there is such a quote (from the French foreign minister) that we held talks, we deny it. We have not had any negotiations about our missile and defence capabilities and will not talk about these issues with others," Bahram Qasemi was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency on Monday.

With the US President Donald Trump warning of a last chance for "the worst deal ever negotiated", Britain, France and Germany have begun talks on a plan to satisfy him by addressing Iran's ballistic missile tests and its regional influence while preserving the 2015 accord.

"The French foreign minister is not familiar with Iranian society yet," Qasemi said. "Iran has proved that it would not change course under pressure.

"We should surely discuss Iran's influence in the region because it has been a positive one and everyone has benefited from it. Without Iran's influence, terrorists (would have) captured Damascus and Baghdad," he said.

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