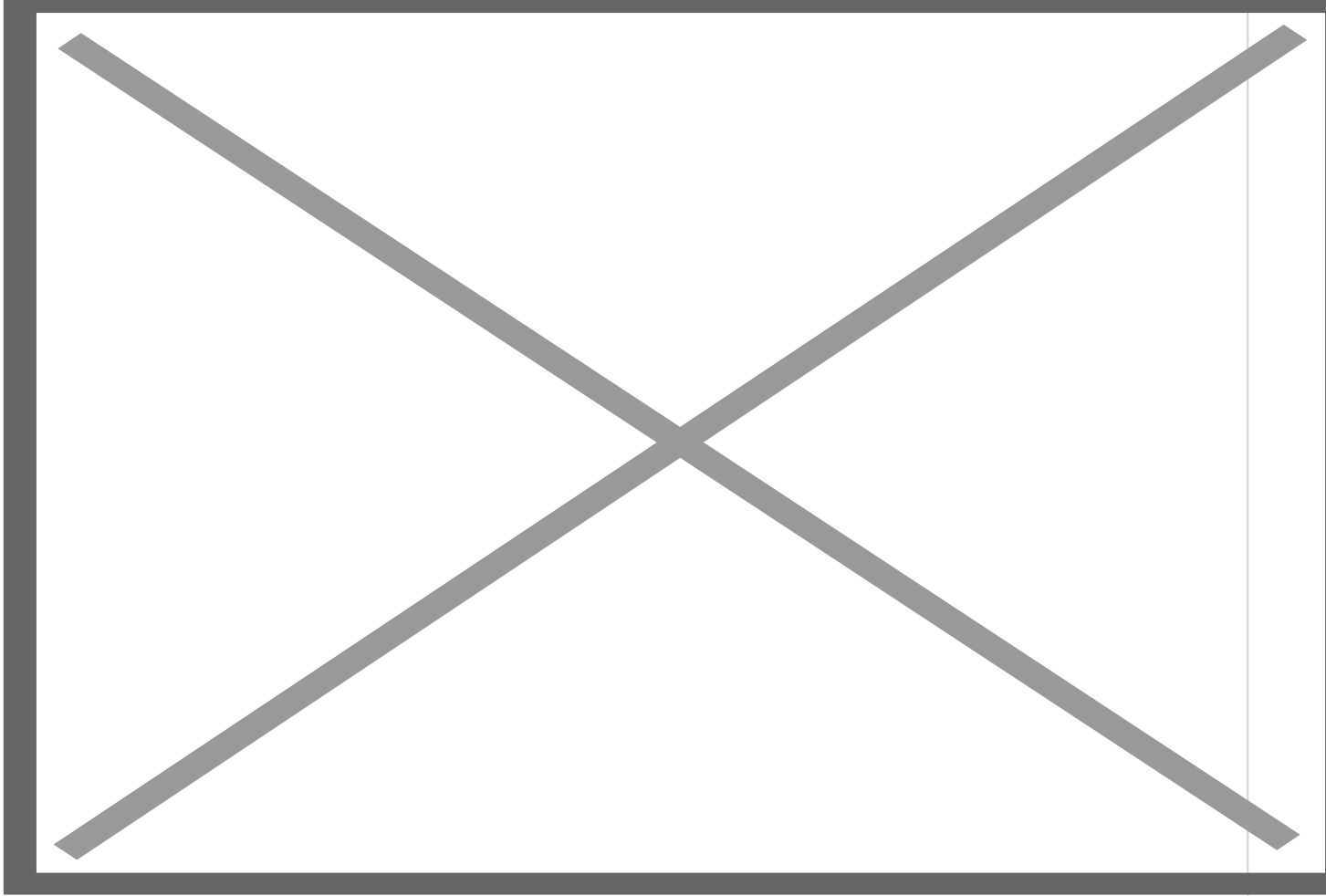


Israeli foreign minister says Tel Aviv reserves the right to act against Iran

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Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid spoke alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyanin in Washington, DC. [Andrew Harnik/Pool via Reuters]

Washington, October 13 (RHC)-- Israel “reserves the right” to act against Iran, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has said, suggesting that “force” may be necessary to stop the Iranian nuclear program.

Speaking at a joint news conference in Washington, DC with his Emirati and U.S. counterparts on Wednesday, Lapid said the “civilised world” should make it clear that Iran will not be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon.

“Secretary of State [Antony] Blinken and I are sons of Holocaust survivors; we know there are moments when nations must use force to protect the world from evil,” Lapid said.

Lapid’s remarks came at a time when indirect talks between Washington and Tehran to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal are on pause, with the Biden administration calling for negotiations to resume as soon as possible.

The multilateral agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), saw Iran scale back its nuclear programme in exchange for a lifting of sanctions against its economy.

Lapid said Iranians will “race to the bomb” if they do not believe that the world is serious about stopping them. “Israel reserves the right to act at any given moment in any way,” he said. “That is not only our right; it is also our responsibility.”

Iranian officials deny that the country is looking to build a nuclear bomb. Israel’s critics often point out that the country is suspected to have its own covert nuclear arsenal and that unlike Iran, Israel is not a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

On Wednesday, Blinken reiterated the US administration’s support for a “diplomatic path” to resolve concerns about Iran’s nuclear program, but he said Tehran’s lack of response to Washington’s calls for talks has not been encouraging.

“It takes two to engage in diplomacy,” Blinken said, cautioning that time is running out to revive the deal. “We’re getting closer to a point at which returning to compliance with the JCPOA will not in and of itself recapture the benefits of the JCPOA,” he added.

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