



By: TA | AP Brief

# US-Iran talks begin in Islamabad



A U.S. delegation led by Vice President **JD Vance** arrived in Pakistan on Saturday for high-level talks with Iranian representatives, the first such meeting since the war began more than a month ago that will test whether they can shore up a fragile ceasefire and pave the way for peace.

The **ceasefire** brokered by Pakistan still faces hurdles in the talks beginning Saturday, as Israel and Hezbollah militants have traded fire along the border of southern Lebanon and Iran has set conditions before negotiations can begin.

The Iranian delegation arrived early Saturday in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, led by Parliament Speaker **Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf**, who said on X that discussions will only take place if there is an Israeli ceasefire in Lebanon and the release of blocked Iranian assets.

U.S. President Donald Trump has posted repeatedly about the negotiations on social media, saying Iranian officials "have no cards." He accused them of using the **Strait of Hormuz**, a key artery for global energy supplies, for extortion.

Trump wrote, "The only reason they are alive today is to negotiate!"

The normally bustling streets of Islamabad were deserted Saturday morning as security forces sealed roads ahead of the talks.

Pakistani authorities urged residents to stay inside, leading the city to look like it was under curfew.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Friday that the conflict was entering a "difficult phase" as the sides try to shift from a temporary pause in fighting to a more lasting settlement, adding that they were at a "make-or-break" moment.

Vance is leading a negotiation with Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. Before his departure from Washington on Friday, Vance said he

believed the negotiations with Iran will be "positive."

But he added, "If they're going to try and play us, then they're going to find that the negotiating team is not that receptive."

## Israel and Lebanon will have direct negotiations

Negotiations between Israel and Lebanon are expected to begin Tuesday in the U.S. capital, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's office said Friday.

Beirut is keen to hold direct talks to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah, but under a ceasefire similar to the one with Iran.

Israel wants the Lebanese government to assume responsibility for disarming Hezbollah, much like was envisaged in a **November 2024 ceasefire**.

But it is unclear whether Lebanon's army can establish a monopoly on arms or confiscate weapons from the militant group, which has resisted efforts to curb its strength for decades.

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Israel's insistence that the ceasefire in Iran does not include a **pause in its fighting** with Hezbollah has threatened to sink the deal. The militant group joined the war in support of its backer, Iran.

The day the truce was announced, Israel pounded Beirut with **airstrikes**, killing more than 300 people, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. It was the deadliest day in the country since the war began Feb. 28.

Trump said Thursday he had asked Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to dial back the strikes.

Then on Friday, Israeli warplanes struck near a state security office in the southern town of Nabatieh, killing 13 officers, according to the Lebanese president's office.

Israeli forces said they also hit about 10 rocket launchers in Lebanon that had fired toward northern Israel.