

Rising tensions over Iran's nuclear programme and renewed military threats have pushed the United States and its allies into high-stakes negotiations with Tehran, even as airstrikes and diplomatic manoeuvres raise fears of a wider Middle

BY BBC

The justification for the US and Israeli attack on Iran will be the subject of intense debate in the hours and days ahead.

Trump first threatened to bomb Iran last month as security forces brutally repressed anti-government protests, killing thousands of people. But since then, his focus has largely turned to Iran's nuclear programme, although he has not fully explained why the issue has become an emergency requiring the use of military action.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) says its air force is conducting "a broad strike on a number of military targets" in western Iran.

Earlier yesterday morning, explosions were reported in the western cities of Kermanshah and Tabriz.

For decades, the US and Israel have accused Iran of trying to secretly develop a nuclear weapon. Iran has repeatedly denied it is seeking a bomb and says its programme is only for peaceful

Trump's threats and nuclear talks: How did we get here?



Smoke rises following an explosion, after Israel and the US launched strikes on Iran. PHOTO/REUTERS

purposes, though the country is the only non-nuclear-armed state to have enriched uranium at near weapons-grade level.

Iran says its enrichment activity stopped after its nuclear facilities were

hit by the US during the war with Israel last year, although it has not allowed inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to access the damaged sites. President Trump has repeatedly said the facilities had been

"obliterated" in the attacks.

Three rounds of talks between the US and Iran for a deal were held this month, and further negotiations were expected next week. Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi, who medi-

ated, met with US officials in Washington yesterday, a day after discussions were held in Geneva, in what could have been a desperate last-ditch attempt to prevent a strike.

In an interview to CBS News, Albusaidi said a deal was "within our reach" and that "substantial progress" had been made in the talks, asking for more time for negotiations. Publicly discussing details of Iran's proposal for the first time, he mentioned Iran's offer that it would never again have a stockpile of enriched uranium, the commitment to an irreversible downgrade of the existing stockpile and to verification by the IAEA.

Albusaidi described the proposal as better than the nuclear deal signed with Iran under the Obama administration in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Trump pulled out from the agreement in his first term at the White House, in 2018.

Prior to the talks, Iran had already rejected US demands to discuss limits its ballistic missile programme as well as ending its support for proxies in the region, saying those demands were a breach of its sovereignty. Albusaidi said Iran was "open to discuss everything", and that non-nuclear issues could be discussed separately with Iran's neighbours.