
EU PARTICIPATION IN 'ANTI-IRAN SUMMIT' SHROUDED IN UNCERTAINTY

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The US-initiated Middle East summit to be held in Warsaw in mid-February has been touted as the most important event held in the city since the 2016 NATO summit. But Tehran has dismissed the meeting as a desperate anti-Iranian circus and the EU is struggling for a common position.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini will not attend the Iran conference, hosted by Poland and the US on 13-14 February in Warsaw, due to a busy schedule, a senior official told reporters in Brussels ahead of next weeks EU foreign affairs ministers meeting.

She does not like to de-commit from promises made, the EU diplomat said.

The announcement of Mogherinis absence added to recent reports that several EU foreign ministers are holding off confirming their participation in the Warsaw summit, which was confirmed by the senior EU official

According to Berlin sources, Germany is one of the countries that has yet to decide whether to send its representative to Warsaw.

The summit itself will not be on next weeks ministerial meeting agenda. Poland, as the host country, however, asked to present the summit and it is possible that the ministers might have a reflection on whether to participate, the EU diplomat added.

The EU has clear positions on all Middle East-related files, the European Commission told EURACTIV when asked about coordination on a common EU position during the summit.

EU leaders take joint position on Iran deal, US trade

European Union leaders agreed on Thursday (17 May) a united approach to salvage the Iran nuclear agreement and deal with the trade tariffs US President Donald Trump plans to impose on European steel and aluminium.

Sour Polish-Iranian relations

The Ministerial to Promote a Future of Peace and Security in the Middle East summit was first announced by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last Friday. According to him, it will mainly be

devoted to Iran.

Relations between Tehran and Washington have been tense following last years decision by US President Trump to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and reinstate sanctions on the country, including on Irans crucial oil sector.

The ministerial will address a range of critical issues including terrorism and extremism, missile development and proliferation, maritime trade and security, and threats posed by proxy groups across the region, a joint statement by the co-hosting countries read.

During the meeting, the Polish diplomat also heard that Tehran might decide to retaliate against Poland for co-hosting the summit. On Sunday, the Iranian Ministry of Culture announced that it was suspending a festival of Polish films planned in late January.

A reminder to the host/participants of the anti-Iranian conference: those who took part in the last US anti-Iran show are either dead, disgraced or marginalised, the head of the Iranian diplomacy, Javad Zarif, wrote on Twitter.

Zarifs tweet is a reference to Iran hosting more that 100,000 Polish refugees during the Second World War.

On Monday, the Polish presidents chief aide, Krzysztof Szczerski, told a public Polish broadcaster that Tehrans reaction was predictable and did not go beyond the repeatedly reiterated rhetoric of Iranian messages.

This is a conference aimed at seeking paths to peace, Poland is the place of its organisation precisely because it is neutral in terms of conflicts in which countries in the Middle East are involved, Szczerski told Polish press agency PAP.

In another meeting earlier this week, Polands Deputy Foreign Minister Maciej Lang told Irans ambassador in Warsaw, Edrisi Kermanshahi, that nearly 80 countries that represent different views and maintain different relations with Iran have been invited to participate in the summit.

The meeting between Lang and Kermanshahi took place at the request of the Iranian side, the Polish foreign ministry said. According to news reports, the Iranian diplomat again issued a note of warning, saying that the move by Warsaw would be met with a severe response.

Kaynak/Source: