
IRAQI PRESIDENT URGES US, IRAN TO DEFUSE REGIONAL TENSION

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Iraqi President Barham Salih has called on the United States and Iran to reduce tension and work on establishing security and peace in the region.

During a meeting with US Ambassador to Iraq Matthew Tueller at the As Salam palace in Baghdad, Salih called on Washington and Tehran to start constructive dialogue and bolster joint security cooperation to defuse tension in the region, the Iraqi presidency said in a press statement.

Salih held another meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Iraj Masjedi, during which they discussed means of promoting bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The meeting also tackled the latest developments at the regional and international levels, particularly the ongoing US-Iran crisis.

Earlier in the day, Gibraltar rejected a request by the US not to release Iranian tanker Grace 1 that was held by the British territory on July 4 on suspicion that it was carrying oil to Syria in violation of European Union sanctions.

Gibraltar, in a statement on Sunday, said it could not comply with the request because the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is not viewed as a terrorist organization by the EU, which Gibraltar is currently part of.

According to Iran's UK envoy, the tanker is due to leave Gibraltar later on Sunday.

The ship with its crew of 29 – from India, Russia, Latvia and the Philippines – was seized with the help of British marines on 4 July, after the government of Gibraltar suggested it was heading for Syria in breach of EU sanctions.

The move sparked a diplomatic crisis between the UK and Iran, which has escalated over recent weeks and saw Iran seize a British-flagged and Swedish-owned oil tanker, Stena Impero, in the Gulf.

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