



Prof. Mohammad Marandi : LIVE from Tehran, Iran - 8AM

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Professor Mohammad Marandi discusses US-Iran tensions, Trump's credibility crisis, and the strategic calculations behind Iranian restraint. He details the aftermath of alleged US strikes on Iranian civilians, the blockade of Iranian ports, and why Iran is waiting for Netanyahu to initiate the next phase of conflict rather than attacking first.

SAŽETAK

In this conversation with Judge Andrew Napolitano, Professor Mohammad Marandi of Tehran University provides an Iranian perspective on escalating US-Iran tensions under the Trump administration. Marandi argues that Trump's erratic behavior and broken commitments have destroyed American credibility with Iran and the broader region, making diplomatic solutions appear unlikely to ordinary Iranians. He examines a specific incident in which 167 schoolgirls and teachers were killed—an attack the US military attributed to Iran despite eyewitness testimony from Sky News journalists contradicting military claims about the location being a military base. Marandi explains Iran's strategic decision to refrain from attacking Israeli territory, citing the need to first dismantle American-built air defense systems and to avoid strengthening Netanyahu's position before internal Israeli crises intensify. He details the ongoing economic siege of Iran, recent Iranian missile strikes in response to US attacks, and Trump's threats of further military action. Marandi also describes life in Tehran as superficially normal but economically strained, discusses Ukraine's role in targeting Iranian vessels, and speculates on Iran's long-term objectives: ending the war decisively and forcing changes in Israeli and US policy toward Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

Trump has rendered himself completely lacking in credibility with Iran and regional leaders; Iranians believe diplomatic solutions are unlikely due to his erratic behavior, abusive language, and constant position changes.

The US military made false claims about a school struck in late February/early March being located on an active missile base, claims that were directly contradicted by Sky News journalists present on the ground in Minab.

Attacks on Iranian civilians and infrastructure have a unifying effect on the Iranian population rather than demoralizing them, similar to how Pearl Harbor unified American public opinion.

Iran has strategically refrained from attacking Israeli territory to avoid strengthening Netanyahu before the Israeli election in October and to allow time to dismantle American air defense systems protecting Israel.

The previous US-Iran agreement (JCPOA) was violated by the United States from day one, including failures to release Iranian assets, removal of sanctions on oil exports, and unauthorized opening of a corridor in the Strait of Hormuz that triggered Iranian retaliation.

If the United States strikes Iranian civilian infrastructure, Iran has stated it will target Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and potentially Oman and Jordan for their complicity in the war.

Iran would consider negotiations with the US only if the US demonstrates seriousness, and any new agreement would require stricter terms, upfront commitments, and resolution of issues in Gaza, Yemen, and the West Bank.

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American Credibility and Iranian Perspective

Judge Andrew Napolitano opens the discussion by asking about the effect of Trump's verbal threats on Iranian leadership. Professor Mohammad Marandi responds that Trump's bluster has only a negative effect, making people dislike the United States government even more. The erratic behavior, abusive language, and constant position changes make Iranians believe that a diplomatic solution is unlikely or impossible. What truly matters to the Iranian people is what happens on the ground—whether the United States will attack during weekends when markets are closed, or whether the siege on Iranian ports will allow food and exports through.

Marandi emphasizes a critical distinction in international relations: when leaders of Iran, Iraq, or Iran and Brazil reach an agreement through direct discussion, both sides understand it will be carried out without need for written documentation. However, Trump has rendered himself completely lacking in credibility. No one believes anything he says. This problem existed under previous administrations, including Obama and Biden, but is far more pronounced under Trump. Marandi attributes this partly to

American exceptionalism—the belief that the United States operates above international law—though the issue is dramatically worse with the current president.

The Schoolgirls Incident and Documented Denials

Napolitano references a specific incident from late February and early March involving 167 schoolgirls and their teachers killed in an attack. The United States has never apologized or taken responsibility for this incident. Instead, American officials have attempted to claim the footage is artificial intelligence, blamed Iran for the strike by falsely claiming these were Iranian missiles, and made absurd accusations that Iran had firebombed its own school. One military official—reportedly either General Keane or the head of CENTCOM—claimed the school was located on an active missile base.

However, Sky News, a mainstream outlet typically hostile toward Iran, had a reporting team on the ground in Minab at the time. The journalists there directly contradicted the military claim, reporting that they had been present for days, spoken with local people, and found no military base, no underground missile base, or any military installation whatsoever. The journalists were visibly angry at the falsehood. The lie was so egregious and transparently false that even Sky News, an outlet Marandi notes has never said anything positive about Iran, attacked the U.S. military official who made the claim. Trump subsequently claimed that Iran had purchased Tomahawks and firebombed its own school—assertions that Marandi says no one takes seriously.

Unification Through External Threats

Napolitano asks whether such events demoralize the Iranian people and government, or whether they actually energize and unite them. Marandi confirms they energize and unite Iranians. He draws a historical parallel to Pearl Harbor: on December 6, 1941, 80 percent of the American public did not want the United States to enter World War Two. On December 9, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, this had reversed almost completely, with 80 percent supporting entry into the war. Similarly, when innocent children are killed, the impact on the Iranian public produces a unifying effect rather than demoralization.

Marandi also references his own evolving perspective on September 11. For many years, he accepted the narrative that al Qaeda was responsible. However, after watching documentaries and Tucker Carlson's reporting, his views have evolved. He now believes Western intelligence agencies or Mossad likely had involvement. Regardless, the aftermath of 9/11 showed how dramatically the United States changed as a society—people with no interest in military service joined the armed forces and deployed to Afghanistan. The Iranian response to external threats operates on similar psychological and social principles.

Strategic Restraint and Regional Calculations

When asked why Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps did not attack American bases in Israel during its recent response, Marandi clarifies that first, the United States never declared a ceasefire, and Iran did not declare one either. When Iran struck after 13 days of U.S. attacks and three days of quiet, it was because the Americans remained active at the base and Iran felt threatened. Moreover, the ongoing siege of Iran constitutes an act of war.

Iran has refrained from striking the Israeli regime for three strategic reasons. First, Iranians generally refrain from initiating war. Second, they have been occupied destroying the defensive shield America created for Israel—specifically radar systems, missile defense systems in Iraq, across the Persian Gulf, and extending into Jordan and western Saudi Arabia. Once these defenses are dismantled, future Iranian strikes using both missiles and drones will face far less resistance. Third, Iran is responding to the critical political situation inside Israel, where society is deeply divided with tensions sometimes reaching talk of potential civil war. Iran does not want to initiate an attack before the Israeli election in October, as doing so would potentially benefit Netanyahu. Instead, Iran wants to pressure Netanyahu and allow internal Israeli crises to evolve and intensify.

However, Marandi makes clear that if the Israeli regime attacks Iran, Iran will respond very hard—much harder than during the 40 Days War four or five months earlier—specifically to hurt Netanyahu's position. Iran will wait for Netanyahu to start the war this time.

Trump's Threats and Potential for Escalation

Napolitano references a July 29 statement from Fox News Israeli correspondent Trey Yingst, who described a phone call with President Trump. Yingst reported that Trump said, "We are going to beat the effing s out of them" and that "we'll be hitting them hard" and "they're going to get a beating." The statement indicates the United States plans to respond to what Trump described as a surprise Iranian attack.

Marandi responds that the two countries are not at peace. The United States has engaged in war against Iran, and this war has not ended. An MOU that existed was thrown out the window by the United States, making an Iranian strike a natural response. Some Iranian missiles did get through the American defenses, as evidenced by satellite footage showing damage to U.S. assets. Whether the United States strikes again remains uncertain. Marandi notes that Trump likes killing people on weekends, so a massive American assault tonight after markets close, or tomorrow, is quite possible.

If the United States strikes Iran's civilian infrastructure, Iran has stated it will strike back at countries assisting the United States: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates,

Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, possibly Oman, and possibly Jordan. Since these countries are complicit in the war against Iran, they will become targets. If these nations lose their critical infrastructure, they could collapse. This scenario would likely trigger panic on global markets. Trump has made similar threats repeatedly in the past—saying he will obliterate Iran, send it back to the Stone Age, and wipe out its civilization. Yet these threats provoke no protests in Western or European parliaments, which Marandi notes have shown no willingness to condemn him for such rhetoric.

Current Life in Tehran

When asked what life is like in Tehran on this Friday in summer, Marandi describes it as very normal on the surface. Restaurants are full, coffee shops near his home are packed with people, and markets appear normal. However, this surface normalcy does not reflect the complete reality. He compares it to how someone unfamiliar with New York might walk down a main street during a recession and think everything appears fine, but shop owners would report declining sales. Similarly, in Tehran, if one looks around the city, everything appears to be thriving and developing, and it is indeed a pretty and well-developed city. But if one asks restaurant owners and shopkeepers, they would report that conditions are not as great as appearances suggest.

Regarding physical destruction, if someone is driven around Tehran, they will not see widespread destruction. They must be driven to specific locations to witness damage. Marandi himself drove past one such location that day—an apartment building near his house where the former foreign minister used to live. The building was destroyed in an attack intended to kill him. His wife was also killed in the strike. The entire building was brought down, and it has since been demolished. The government is currently funding the reconstruction of destroyed buildings and housing the surviving families in hotels at government or city expense for the time being.

Daily Life in Tehran

You wouldn't see the destruction and damage if you simply walk around Tehran. It looks very normal—like traveling to Moscow or anywhere else. It's a nice, clean city. The city takes out the rubbish and trash every night. The traffic is chaotic, which is something specific to Tehran, but otherwise it appears unremarkable on the surface. However, buildings have been brought down, people have been killed, and families are living in hotels. But again, you wouldn't notice these hardships if you were in Tehran for the first time.

Trump's Silence on Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank

Why is Trump suddenly silent on the genocide in Gaza, the slaughter in Lebanon, and the theft of property and murders in the West Bank? I think he's stuck. I think he doesn't know what to do. On the one hand, I don't think he has the leverage to force

the Israeli regime to withdraw from Lebanon or to end the slaughter in Gaza. It was his ceasefire, and he brought in all these regional leaders as guarantors, but none of them did anything to stop the killing, nor did he. In the West Bank, things are horrific—worse than they've ever been before. I think he doesn't have the leverage or the ability to tell Netanyahu to stop this. And in order to get a deal with Iran, these things are going to have to happen. He knows that the Iranians have said very clearly that without these issues being resolved in one form or another, there won't be a deal.

Iranian Interest in Negotiations

Are the Iranians interested in resuming negotiations with the Americans, whether directly or through the Pakistanis? Not now, I'm sure. But if the United States shows that it's serious in some way or form, then yes. However, the Iranians will demand more than what was in the original agreement. Iran will be more specific about Yemen and Gaza, and it will want some things upfront. We have to remember that in the previous agreement, the United States violated all of its commitments from day one. They were supposed to release Iran's stolen assets but refused to do so. They were supposed to refrain from expanding the sanctions regime, but they expanded it. They were supposed to force the Israelis to leave Lebanon and end the war, but the Israeli regime didn't budge. The United States was also supposed to remove the sanctions on Iranian oil exports, which they did for a few days and then reversed. Ultimately, what led to the current situation was that the United States, in violation of article five, opened their own corridor in the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz was supposed to be under Iranian control during that period. It's not ambiguous—it's clear that the United States is not named in article five. The Iranians were supposed to normalize trade, and then the United States, with the collaboration of the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and the Emiratis, opened a separate corridor after days of warnings from Iran. When these countries failed to listen, Iran hit three ships, and then the United States relaunched the war.

The Critical Window Missed

The extraordinary thing about all this is that we are now in the second month of the agreement. If the United States had not opened its own corridor in violation of the agreement, right now the trade through the Strait of Hormuz would have been normalized, even though the United States had refrained from carrying out its other commitments. If they had just waited a few more days, the Strait of Hormuz would have normalized trade, like it was before the war. But Trump refused to do that. He wanted to undermine Iran instead of having a decent deal. And now we're in a situation where we're moving closer and closer to a crisis.

Current Status of the Strait of Hormuz

Last night, the United States tried to get four or six ships to cross through the strait, and the Iranians hit two of them. The other four retreated. Also, yesterday, a tanker from Qatar with LNG passed through the Iranian corridor to go to Pakistan. Now the Americans have blocked that tanker because it used the Iranian corridor—even though Pakistan is an American ally. That's quite unusual.

Ukraine's Involvement in the Iran Situation

Regarding the bizarre involvement of Ukraine in the Iran situation, if I understood what was said correctly, there's some confusion about the direction of support. In one instance, it was claimed that Russians were giving Iranian drones to Iran, but in a previous interview, when justifying an attack, it was said that Iranians were giving the Russians drones. So it's hard to figure out what's actually being said—whether he's confused himself or confused with the language.

As for military contact between Iran and Ukraine, the Ukrainians did strike an Iranian ship. That ship, by the way, was not carrying military hardware. One of the sailors who survived took footage of it as it was burning, and it was clear it had nothing to do with the military. The targeting had to have U.S. support. The CIA was definitely involved because Ukraine does not have that capability. All the targets deep inside Russia are done with U.S. help, and even NATO, as far as I know, without the United States can't do it. So this ship was targeted with U.S. help, but I doubt that the White House supported this. Later, after Zelensky said this was a great idea, the foreign minister of Ukraine contacted the Iranian foreign minister and effectively apologized. It was around the time when he was supposed to meet the U.S. president. I think probably the White House said we don't want this position to be taken. I guess Zelensky wants to merge the two wars together, but probably the White House does not want this. It was a strike on a civilian target. The Iranians were saying that they were going to retaliate, and I don't know what their plans will be after the phone call with the Ukrainian foreign minister.

Iran's Grand Strategy Toward Trump

I don't know if there's a unified vision regarding Iran's grand strategy for dealing with Trump. There are different people with differing views. But I think in general, what the Iranians want to do is make sure that this war ends in a way in which no one ever again thinks about attacking Iran for decades to come. That, I think, is the ultimate objective. Also, the Iranians will make sure that the situation in Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen changes for the better and that the Israeli regime is forced to change its policy. But ultimately, in my opinion—and this is just my speculation, not any official Iranian policy—I would imagine that a smart thing to do would be to hurt Trump enough so that he would lose badly in the midterm elections. But that's, I think, a tactic.

#US-Iran relations and tensions

#Trump administration foreign policy

#American military credibility and broken agreements

#Israeli-Palestinian conflict and regional wars

#Iranian strategic calculations and deterrence

#International diplomacy and sanctions

#Strait of Hormuz and maritime security