Araghchi attacks the US over OPCW arrears as Iran chemical-weapons allegations circulate

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Washington's unpaid OPCW dues hand Tehran a ready-made rebuttal

During the OPCW annual conference in The Hague, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called Washington hypocritical, sharing a Reuters report that US arrears have left the organisation facing a budget crisis. The US has reportedly paid only about a fifth of its roughly $17m 2026 dues, which make up a fifth of the $90m budget. Araghchi also repeated his denial of a CNN report, citing seven US officials, that Iran is drawing up options for a radiological or chemical attack on officials in Washington. Israel had earlier shared intelligence on Iranian chemical delivery planning; US officials are reportedly divided.

On the nuclear file, Iran is non-compliant with IAEA safeguards obligations. By contrast, under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Tehran is casting itself as the treaty's compliant defender, as this stance is less likely to invite OPCW inspections and verification on Iranian soil. Indeed, the CWC's sharpest instrument, the challenge inspection, has never been invoked. Starving the Secretariat of cash weakens that deterrent instrument further, and hands Tehran ammunition to attack Washington's credibility as an arms-control enforcer, allowing Iran to argue that the US demands strict compliance at the IAEA while neglecting its own treaty obligations.

Most analysis points to Iran possessing latent capabilities, though Washington calls it an active programme. Washington accused Iran of failing to declare historical production facilities and of developing pharmaceutical-based agents (PBAs)- such as fentanyl-derived incapacitants– for offensive use. But because PBAs sit in the treaty's law-enforcement grey zone and require dual-use civilian equipment rather than chemical plants, they leave a smaller verification footprint. Until Washington either funds the watchdog or forces an inspection, chemical allegations against Tehran will remain unverified, allowing Iran to potentially keep developing grey-zone capabilities behind the shield of procedural outrage.

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