

## U.N. drugs chief rebukes Iran over "anti-Semitic" speech

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VIENNA (Reuters) - The U.N. drugs watchdog chief voiced "dismay and serious concern" in talks with an Iranian envoy on Tuesday over allegations by a senior government official in the Islamic state that Zionists were inciting narcotics trafficking.

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Yury Fedotov, head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, called for the meeting with the Iranian diplomat after "the anti-Semitic comments" of Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi, Fedotov's spokesman said.

Speaking at a global drug enforcement conference in Tehran last week, Rahimi said the Talmud - or canon of Jewish religious law - "teaches them how to destroy non-Jews so as to protect an embryo in the womb of a Jewish mother", according to excerpts published by Iran's semi-official Fars news agency.

Rahimi also accused "Zionists", a term the Iranian government usually applies to Israelis and their Jewish supporters abroad, of inciting drug trafficking.

The controversy came amid rising tensions over Iran's disputed nuclear program, with new European Union sanctions and an oil embargo coming into effect this month.

Arch foes Iran and Israel often engage in fierce verbal attacks against each other. On Sunday, Iran threatened to wipe Israel "off the face of the earth" if the Jewish state attacked it. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman last week likened Iran to Hitler's Germany.

Rahimi's June 26 comments at an event marking the U.N.-sponsored International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking drew a sharp response from Israel, which said Iran was governed by fanatical anti-Semites.

At Tuesday's meeting between Fedotov and Iranian charge d'affaires Behnam Bolourian in Vienna, the U.N official pointed out the conference in the Iranian capital was not a United

Nations event, his spokesman David Dudge said in statement.

Fedotov, a Russian national who serves as the executive director of the Vienna-based U.N. agency, "expressed his dismay and serious concern" about Rahimi's comments, it said.

Widely assumed to have the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, Israel has hinted at pre-emptive war to prevent Iran from getting the atom bomb. Iran denies having any such designs, though its often secretive nuclear program has stoked foreign suspicion and drawn increasingly tough sanctions.

(Reporting by Fredrik Dahl; Editing by Alessandra Rizzo)

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