

# WebMemo



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## Ten Practical Steps to Liberty in Iran

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Whether it concerns human rights abuses or nuclear weapons programs, the daily news emerging from Iran is grim.

Just last month, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported heightened concern that, because of “extensive” and “credible” information “in terms of the technical detail, the time frame in which the activities were conducted and the people and organizations involved,” it believed Iran may have advanced in its “development of a nuclear payload for a missile.”<sup>1</sup>

This development will hopefully shake the Obama Administration from its “let’s sit down and talk” mode. On March 1, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told an audience in Argentina that a new draft U.N. Security Council resolution levying sanctions on Iran was in the works and might be ready for a vote within a couple of months.<sup>2</sup> But much of the momentum for sanctions on Iran is waning at the U.N. due to continued Chinese opposition. Another option openly debated is a military strike on the known Iranian nuclear facilities.

But both of those options have downsides, particularly for the people of Iran, who are overwhelmingly opposed to the actions of their regime.

A broader strategy is needed to help drive change within Iran on multiple fronts—economic, political, security, and human rights. Toward that end, The Heritage Foundation recommends these 10 steps:

**Step 1: Impose and Enforce the Strongest Sanctions.** The U.S. must take the lead and push other concerned countries to enforce the strongest possible unilateral and multilateral sanctions target-

ing the Iranian regime, including sanctions imposed through the U.N. Security Council, to the greatest degree possible. Such sanctions should penalize the Iranian regime for:

- Its continued aid to terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah;
- Its illicit nuclear weapons program;
- Its gross violations of human rights, particularly of opposition figures after the presidential elections; and
- Its meddling in neighboring countries such as Iraq and Lebanon.

In order to weaken the regime’s violent grip on power, sanctions should specifically target the internal security organs of the regime, especially the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, the intelligence services, police, and Basij militia. Washington should also press all allies and other interested countries to ban foreign investment in Iran, halt any subsidized trade with Iran, deny Iran loans and credits, halt the export of gasoline and other refined petroleum products to Iran, deny visas to Iranian officials, and recall their ambassadors from Tehran.

At the same time, Washington should strive to explain these actions to the Iranian people, who are increasingly disillusioned with the regime. Such

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sanctions are intended to help rein in a brutal and hostile regime, expose its corruption, and prompt responsible Iranian leaders to choose a path toward liberty—which is in the interests of the Iranian people as much as for global security.

**Step 2: Drop Opposition to U.S. Gasoline Sanctions.** The Obama Administration should follow Congress's lead and drop its opposition to U.S. sanctions against firms that export gasoline and other refined petroleum products to Iran. Both houses of Congress voted by large bipartisan majorities to pass bills that impose gasoline sanctions, but the White House continues to drag its feet on such sanctions, arguing that they would impede diplomatic efforts at the U.N. Security Council, even though that body is not likely to approve crippling sanctions.

**Step 3: Target Public Diplomacy to Expose the Regime's Human Rights Abuses.** The U.S. public diplomacy strategy should highlight the Iranian regime's violations of human rights. For example, the recently released "2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices" documents that Iranian security forces "were implicated in custodial deaths and the killings of election protesters and committed other acts of politically motivated violence, including torture, beatings, and rape. The government administered severe officially sanctioned punishments, including death by stoning, amputation, and flogging."<sup>3</sup> Elements of such a public diplomacy strategy should include:

- Documenting Iran's human rights abuses and getting more aid to the victims;
- Increased broadcasting by Radio Farda and support for independent Iranian broadcasters outside the country so Iranians can hear about activities censored by the government;
- Exposing corruption by officials in the regime;
- Exposing Iran's significant financial assistance to terrorist groups in other countries, including the

rebuilding of housing in Lebanon, while Iran's citizens are being forced to tighten their belts; and

- Educating Iranians about the necessity of reforming the Iranian constitution to give genuine representative democracy a chance and do away with the office of Supreme Leader.

**Step 4: Facilitate Communications Among Dissidents.** The U.S. government should help opposition groups communicate securely with each other through Web-based groups outside Iran and through the use of Bluetooth technology that can evade government control.

**Step 5: Aid Opposition Groups.** U.S. intelligence services should find ways to provide covert financial and material assistance to democratic opposition groups similar to the help America extended to the Polish Solidarity movement during the Cold War.

**Step 6: Reduce Iran's Meddling in Iraq.** The U.S. should maintain the strongest troop presence Iraq would permit, consistent with the status-of-forces agreement, to aid the Iraqi government in containing and reducing Iranian influence. A stable, democratic Iraq offers an alternative model of government that can help de-legitimize Iran's Islamist system.

**Step 7: Target Covert Actions to Discredit the Regime.** U.S. intelligence services should also mount covert actions to sow distrust and disunity within the regime and drive a wedge between the regime and the Iranian people. For example, they could distribute printouts of the foreign bank accounts and other assets of Iranian officials, as well as pictures of their mansions and villas both inside and outside Iran, and they could circulate accounts of those officials' special privileges and wealth created from corruption.

**Step 8: Modernize the U.S. Nuclear Arsenal.** The prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran should drive the U.S. and its friends and allies in the region to

1. Mark Heinrich and Steve Holland, "IAEA Fears Iran Working Now on Nuclear Warhead," Reuters, February 18, 2010, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE61H4EH20100219> (March 11, 2010).
2. Lachlan Carmichael, "Clinton Appears to Extend Timeline for Iran Sanctions," AFP, March 1, 2010, at <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hiQjABaVFkUQC1-FDU-YPTmjd5Jw> (March 11, 2010).
3. U.S. Department of State, "2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," March 11, 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/index.htm> (March 11, 2010).

adopt strategic postures that are more defensive in nature. The purpose of such a posture would be to convince the Iranian leadership that any attempt to use nuclear weapons would likely fail to achieve any political and military objectives.

Therefore, the strategic postures of the U.S. and its allies require a mix of offensive and defensive weapons that are capable of holding Iran's means of strategic attack at risk. For the U.S., this means developing and deploying a new generation of nuclear weapons, both tactical and strategic, that are able to meet these requirements.

**Step 9: Expand U.S. Military Capabilities to Defend U.S. Interests and Allies.** The Defense Department should expand American expeditionary capabilities so as to threaten and hold the Iranian regime at risk of retaliation for any aggressive military action. If the regime provokes a crisis by sponsoring a terrorist attack, the U.S. should target the regime's top leaders, its nuclear weapons programs, and its internal security forces for devastating attacks while sparing Iranian civilians to the greatest degree possible.

**Step 10: Deploy a Robust and Comprehensive Missile Defense System.** Fielding a robust set of defensive weapons that include land-, sea-, and space-based missile defenses is critical to protecting the U.S. and its friends and allies from an Iranian nuclear breakout. This means:

- Placing land-based and sea-based regional defensive systems, like the Patriot and the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3), in the region;

- Defending the U.S. homeland and troops abroad against Iran's planned long-range missiles, including using ground-based midcourse interceptors in Alaska, California, and Europe (as the Bush Administration proposed) and giving the SM-3 missile the capability to counter long-range missiles; and
- In the longer term, developing and deploying missile defense interceptors in space.

A system of land-, sea-, and ultimately space-based systems that can defend against any Iranian ballistic missiles would minimize Tehran's ability to threaten America and its allies.

**An Effective, Multifaceted International Response.** Responding to the growing threat of a nuclear Iran need not mean simply relying on sanctions or a military strike. The U.S. can lead an effective multifaceted international response to help convince the leaders of Iran that the best path forward is not nuclear weapons and totalitarianism but representative democracy and human rights for Iran's people.

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