



## Jewish Community Relations Council

of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties

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### BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUES

# Iran's Nuclear Weapons Program:

## *What Can be Done About It.*

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### IRAN'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

The prospect of the Islamic Republic of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and obtaining the ability to launch missiles against countries throughout the Middle East and even Europe has alarmed the international community.<sup>1</sup>

The fear is Iran wants to “develop either a nuclear bomb or the ability to make one, even if it has not decided to build one right now.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, a consensus has emerged in the international community calling for Iran to stop all enrichment because the “same technology used for producing fuel for nuclear power can be used to enrich the uranium to a much higher level for producing fuel for a nuclear explosion.”<sup>3</sup>

According to this international consensus, if Iran succeeds in developing nuclear weapons, this will shift the balance of power in the Middle East, specifically in the oil-rich Gulf region, thereby dangerously destabilizing world oil markets. Further, a nuclear-armed Iran would pose a threat to Middle Eastern stability that could provoke a perilous nuclear arms race throughout the region.

Indeed, in response to Shi'ite Persian Iran's development of nuclear weapons predominantly Sunni Muslim Arab states – specifically Saudi Arabia,<sup>4</sup> Egypt,<sup>5</sup> and Jordan<sup>6</sup> – have already voiced grave concern and declared that they, too, may begin their own nuclear programs.

A nuclear-armed Iran will also negatively impact prospects for peace between Israelis and Palestinians given Iran's strong financial, military and political support for the radical Islamist groups Hezbollah and Hamas, which both reject making any kind of peace with Israel. Iran-sponsored terrorist networks, particularly Hezbollah, have a long history of targeting Americans and U.S. interests. In 1983, with Iranian support, Hezbollah killed 241 Marines as they slept in their barracks in Lebanon.

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<sup>1</sup> “Q&A: Iran and the nuclear issue,” BBC,

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/middle\\_east/4031603.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/middle_east/4031603.stm) (Retrieved Sept. 17, 2007)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> “Saudis consider nuclear bomb,” *The Guardian*, September 18, 2003

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/sep/18/nuclear.saudiarabia> (Retrieved July 18, 2008)

<sup>5</sup> “Egypt unveils nuclear power plan,” BBC, September 25, 2006 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/middle\\_east/5376860.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/middle_east/5376860.stm) (Retrieved July 18, 2008)

<sup>6</sup> “King Abdullah to Haaretz: Jordan aims to develop nuclear power,” *Haaretz*, January 20, 2008

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/815304.html> (Retrieved July 18, 2008)

In the last several years, under the leadership of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran has manifested increasingly threatening behavior and rhetoric toward the United States, other Western powers, Israel and the Jewish people. Not only has Ahmadinejad repeatedly called for Israel to be wiped off the map,<sup>7</sup> but in December 2006 his government, demonstrating its extremist character, convened an international Holocaust denial conference in Teheran, and staged a "Holocaust Cartoon Contest."<sup>8</sup>

Iran also continues to give Hezbollah and Hamas military and political support. These two groups are classified by the State Department as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," that are dedicated to the ultimate goal of destroying Israel.

### **The National Intelligence Estimate of November 2007**

While there is consensus in the international community that Iran's intent is to acquire the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons, there is disagreement, however, among various nations' intelligence agencies regarding the pace of nuclear weapons development.

For instance, American intelligence agencies issued their now famous National Intelligence Estimate of November 2007 which states "with high confidence" that in 2003 Iran "halted its nuclear weapons program," but also stated that Iran "at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons" and most importantly that, "Because of intelligence gaps... DOE and the NIC assess with only moderate confidence that the halt to those activities represents a halt to Iran's entire nuclear weapons program." The NIE also assesses that "Iran probably would use covert facilities— rather than its declared nuclear sites—for the production of highly enriched uranium for a weapon."<sup>9</sup>

### **Challenging the NIE: British and Israeli Intelligence**

Other intelligence services, notably the British and Israeli, arrive at differing conclusions. The *Sunday Telegraph* (UK), for instance, reports that:

*A senior British official delivered a withering assessment of US intelligence-gathering abilities in the Middle East and revealed that British spies shared the concerns of Israeli defense chiefs that Iran was still pursuing nuclear weapons. "It's not as if the American intelligence agencies are regarded as brilliant performers in that region. They got badly burned over Iraq."<sup>10</sup>*

More recently, the *Daily Telegraph* (UK), reported that

*Iran has resumed work on constructing highly sophisticated equipment that nuclear experts say is primarily used for building atomic weapons, according to the latest intelligence reports received by Western diplomats.*

*The work is aimed at developing the blueprint provided by Dr A. Q. Khan, the "father" of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, who sold Iran details of how to build atom bombs in the early 1990s.*

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<sup>7</sup> "As the Imam said, Israel must be wiped off the map," said Ahmadinejad, referring to the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini." Quoted in "Ahmadinejad: Israel must be wiped off the map," Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Oct 26, 2005, [http://www.iribnews.ir/Full\\_en.asp?news\\_id=200247](http://www.iribnews.ir/Full_en.asp?news_id=200247)

<sup>8</sup> "Iran displays Holocaust cartoons," BBC, August 15, 2007 [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4795709.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4795709.stm) (Retrieved July 18, 2008)

<sup>9</sup> "National Intelligence Estimate: Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capabilities," National Intelligence Council, November 2007

<sup>10</sup> "Iran 'hoodwinked' CIA over nuclear plans," *Sunday Telegraph*, December 10, 2007 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1572019/Iran-%27hoodwinked%27-CIA-over-nuclear-plans.html>

*Iran's Revolutionary Guard, which has overall responsibility for the country's nuclear program, has set up several civilian companies to work on the program whose activities are being deliberately concealed from the United Nations nuclear inspection teams.*

Specifically, the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report of May 26, 2008 "shows continued non-compliance" with UN Security Council resolutions 1737, 1747<sup>11</sup>, and 1803 and "includes two important findings. The first is that Iran is making significant progress on developing and operating its centrifuges. The second is Iran's lack of cooperation with inspectors in addressing its alleged nuclear weapons-related work, which the IAEA calls a 'matter of serious concern.'"<sup>12</sup>

Peter D. Zimmerman, a nuclear physicist and emeritus professor of science and security at King's College London, wrote in the *Boston Globe*<sup>13</sup> that the IAEA May 26, 2008 report states that Teheran refuses to answer specific questions. Among these queries are:

- Why is Iran using high explosives to implode a hemispherical shell of heavy metal? The only known use for such tests is to perfect a lightweight nuclear bomb.
- Why is Iran developing the kinds of detonators needed in an atomic weapon?
- Why is Iran designing, or redesigning, a ballistic missile warhead so that it can contain a nuclear weapon?

Furthermore, Zimmerman notes that,

*Iran announced months ago that it is installing 6,000 centrifuges in its uranium enrichment plant, in addition to the 3,000 in operation. These activities increase Iran's near-term ability to make nuclear weapons, especially since the new ones have twice the capacity of the originals.*

#### **Talking with Iran: A shift in U.S. policy?**

In mid-July, the Bush Administration announced it would send a senior level diplomat to Geneva to participate in a multi-lateral parley on Iran's nuclear program at which Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, will be present. Other participants were Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany.

According to news reports, Jalili rejected suggestions that Iran would halt its uranium-enrichment process as part of a six-week "freeze-for-freeze" period in which diplomatic and economic sanctions against it would also be suspended. The Iranians were given a two-week period to give Iran the space to come up with the answers that will allow the negotiations to continue, or to face new sanctions and deeper isolation.

Speaking to the Knesset in July, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown declared,

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<sup>11</sup> UNSC Resolution 1747, for instance, "deploring that, as indicated therein, Iran has failed to comply" with previous resolutions call therefore calls for sanctions against Iran by all member states and international financial institutions by refusing to "enter into new commitments for grants, financial assistance, and concessional loans, to the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, except for humanitarian and developmental purposes."

<sup>12</sup> See "May 26, 2008 IAEA Safeguards Report on Iran: Centrifuge Operation Improving and Cooperation Lacking on Weaponization Issues," by David Albright, Jacqueline Shire, and Paul Brannan, Institute for Science and International Security, May 29, 2008

<sup>13</sup> "Time for Iran to face more sanctions," by Peter D. Zimmerman, professor of science and security at King's College London and the former chief scientist of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Boston Globe*, July 6, 2007, [http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/oped/articles/2008/07/06/time\\_for\\_iran\\_to\\_face\\_more\\_sanctions/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2008/07/06/time_for_iran_to_face_more_sanctions/)

*"Iran has a clear choice to make: suspend its nuclear weapons program and accept our offer of negotiations or face growing isolation and the collective response, not just of one nation, but of all nations around the world," Brown added, emphasizing that the UK would be ready and willing to impose further sanctions against Teheran should the need arise.<sup>14</sup>*

The US, too, is reviewing new financial consequences against Iran that would target everything from gasoline imports to the insurance sector. Sanctions may also include measures to obstruct Iranian shipping in the Persian Gulf, and it's banking activities in the Middle East and Asia.

#### **JCRC's position on the Iranian nuclear crisis:**

The Jewish Community Relations Council:

- urges the President, members of Congress, leadership of the United Nations, and key international powers to use all diplomatic, financial and economic means necessary, including use of meaningful and effective sanctions and offers of incentives, to deter Iran's regime from continuing its quest for nuclear weapons, and encourage peaceful development and positive international engagement;
- encourages any and all diplomatic efforts toward the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, toward the final goal of bringing Iran back into the family of nations so as to avert a greater catastrophe;
- seeks to ensure the continuation of the flow of humanitarian supplies as the well being of the Iranian people must be emphasized;
- supports divestment initiatives targeted at the Iranian regime (not the Iranian people) by local and state government entities, unions, universities and others.

#### **Local Action Taken by JCRC: The California Public Divest from Iran Act**

JCRC was one of the principle parties involved in successfully advocating the California Legislature on the California Public Divest from Iran Act (AB 221), which unanimously passed the State Assembly on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 after already being unanimously passed by the State Senate the week before. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the bill into law on October 14, 2007, making California the third state in the country to pass such legislation.

Introduced by Assemblyman Joel Anderson, AB 221 prohibits the state's public pension funds from investing in companies with business ties to Iran's petroleum, natural gas, nuclear, or defense sectors. Depriving Iran of investment in these sectors of their economy will send a clear message to Tehran that they must give up their nuclear weapons program.



*JCRC is a beneficiary of the*

- ***Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties***
- ***Jewish Community Federation of the Greater East Bay***

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<sup>14</sup> "UK to lead fight against nuclear Iran," *Jerusalem Post*, July 21, 2008  
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1215331041261&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull> (retrieved July 21, 2008)