

## **Analysis of “A Letter to Our Leaders on Iran’s Nuclear Program”**

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***There is less to the letter than a first reading might hint. First, these are all former government officials alienated from the current Tehran regime. It is a stretch to think that they speak for the regime, especially the rather secretive Supreme Leader. Second, the devil is in the details. Let me go through the paragraphs:***

Following the recent U.S. presidential election, the peoples of the world long for peace and international security, and along with many politicians, who oppose war, they expect from you responsibility, prudence and more pragmatism regarding a de-escalation of tensions over Iran's nuclear program.

Given the critically important timing of the negotiations, we the undersigned, former members of the Iranian Parliament, pursuant to our deeply held sense of duty and convictions, would like to underscore the following points:

\* At this juncture, we believe transparent and bilateral dialogue between the U.S. and Iranian governments regarding Iran's nuclear program would be beneficial and effective. We therefore support such a discussion. Furthermore, we believe continued direct talks without intermediaries could be elevated to the highest levels of both governments. By providing more guarantees in pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the conflict, the talks could create fertile ground for serious discussions on many outstanding and complicated problems between the two nations.

***Everybody knows that the real talks will be bilaterals between the United States and Iran, whether within the framework of the p5 plus 1 or out of it. Iran is refusing such engagement at this point (there was a key US-Iran bilateral in October 2009). So there is no need for Iran to send a hidden signal about being open to bilaterals because the United States is already convinced about the need for them and waiting for a "yes" from Tehran.***

\* The Iranian nuclear program is a vastly complex and controversial issue affected by international and regional problems including over three decades of hostile relations between the United States and Iran. In view of the abundance of goodwill between the peoples of both nations, we believe if the political leadership on both sides is resolute, finding a realistic and peaceful resolution of the problem is not beyond reach and will ensure success in the coming round of negotiations.

\* A basic principle of any effective negotiation is to explicitly acknowledge the goal of the negotiations is a win-win outcome. To resolve the conflict, therefore, we believe the following points must be taken into account:

\* According to international regulations and treaty obligations, Iran has a right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. This right must actually be explicitly recognized, which means Iran would be able to enrich uranium up to five percent.

***Russia wants this; many analysts want this. I believe the United States sees this as the endgame but the key is how to get there. The key is starting the process, and that is where we are right now.***

\* If the twenty percent enrichment of uranium is to be stopped, and 20% stock pile should be controlled by IAEA, a long-term guarantee should be given to Iran. This guarantee would provide the sufficient fuel to research reactors, which has only scientific and medical functions.

***This is no problem.***

\* Iran should take the confidence-building step of accepting the implementation of the Additional Protocol. Moreover, its nuclear program must be subject to technical and legal, and certainly impartial, inspections by the IAEA. Such a step would provide sufficient oversight by the IAEA.

***Now we get into the problem. Will Iran ratify (it has already signed) the Additional Protocol without asking for too much in return. The US position is that there is no reason they should not implement the protocol, period, without getting something in return, considering they have accepted the obligation by signing it. The larger question is that the sort of verification needed would probably be the Additional Protocol plus, that is with even tougher and more present inspections. And then there is the question what Iran does with its stockpile of enriched uranium. So there is more at stake than the above paragraph outlines.***

\* Concurrent with the halting of twenty percent enrichment process, the P5+1 should create a specific timetable to lift international sanctions imposed by UNSC, EU, USA related to the nuclear program. It is obvious that the Iranian nuclear program dossier has become a chronic, complex issue that if not resolved sooner, may endanger international peace and the long-term interests of Iran, the United States, and European countries.

***What does this mean? The devil here really is in the details. Iran wants the sanctions lifted in return for stopping 20 percent enrichment. But the United States would start to lift sanctions with the temporary suspension or reining in of enrichment in general, namely low level enrichment. Stopping 20 percent enrichment sets the stage for this; it is a prerequisite to a deal beginning to be made, not the deal itself. The Iranians of course reject this and think stopping 20 percent is the deal that will get them sanctions relief. The gap between the two sides is a substantive difference and more than just a question of timing.***