

## IRAN



### History & Ideology

The Islamic Republic of Iran emerged in 1979 with the overthrow of the Shah, who was replaced by a theocratic government headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini's theocracy is based on clerical supremacy and an Islamic order.

### State Sponsor of Terrorism

The radical regime in Iran has sponsored terrorism against the United States, Israel and the West for decades. The State

Department has repeatedly designated Iran as the world's leading state sponsor of terror, noting its support for groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Recently, Tehran has also sponsored the insurgency in Iraq, supplied arms to the Taliban and hosted al-Qaeda terrorists. Iran has sponsored airplane hijackings, lethal attacks against U.S. soldiers stationed in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, kidnappings of Americans and Europeans, and a restaurant bombing in Spain. Hezbollah has openly expressed its alliance to Iran. Hezbollah's 1985 platform states, "We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, those of our tutor and jurist who fulfills all the necessary conditions, [Ayatollah] Khomeini."

One example of Iran's role as a state sponsor of terror is the 1994 AMIA bombing in Argentina. The **AMIA bombing** was an attack on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA; Argentine Israelite [i.e., Jewish] Mutual Association) building in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994, that killed 85 people and injured hundreds. INTERPOL has issued extradition warrants against six of the suspects seven of which are Iranian and one who is a member of Hizbullah.

### Incitement of Genocide

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has consistently denied the Holocaust, called for the destruction of Israel and led Iranians in 'death to America' and 'death to Israel' chants. According to Canadian Member of Parliament and international human rights scholar Irwin Cotler, there is significant factual evidence of state-sanctioned incitement to genocide (as defined by the Genocide Conventions) in Ahmadinejad's Iran.

The incitement to genocide is part of an effort to return to the original themes of the 1979 Islamic revolution, which has disturbing Messianic elements. The Iranian ayatollahs speak often of the re-emergence of the "Twelfth" or "Hidden Imam," sometimes referred to as the "Mahdi." According to their beliefs, after a stormy period of apocalyptic wars, the clouds will part, and the "sun" (the Mahdi) will be revealed. They believe that when he is released from his imprisonment, the entire world will submit to Islam.

### Nuclear Proliferation

Iran is rapidly overcoming technical obstacles and significantly increasing its uranium enrichment capabilities. According to the February 19, 2009 report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Iran has enough low-enriched uranium (1,100 kg) to make one atomic bomb—at least theoretically. Iran already has exhausted most of its stock of uranium concentrate, known as yellow cake, in order to produce 357 metric tons of uranium hexafluoride at its facility at Isfahan. This is far from sufficient for a power program but is enough feed material for at least three dozen weapons. A key U.S. policy challenge is how to build a barrier between the latent nuclear weapons capability and actual weapons production. This is difficult when, in Iran's case today, the distinction is blurred almost to the point of invisibility.

**According to the 2-19 IAEA report:**

- "There remains a number of outstanding issues which give rise to concerns about the existence of possible military dimensions to Iran's military program"
- Iran has refused to permit IAEA inspectors access to additional locations related to the manufacture of centrifuges, research and development on uranium enrichment, and uranium mining and milling.
- Unless Iran implements transparency measures and the additional protocol, the IAEA will not be in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran.
- Iran has not suspended its enrichment-related activities or its work on heavy water-related projects.

### **Nuclear Arms Race**

The prospect 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. Since 2006, 15 countries in the Middle East have announced new or revived plans to explore civilian nuclear energy. They have justified their interest in terms of electricity needs, energy diversification, a desire to conserve oil and gas for export earnings, and the role of nuclear energy in retarding global warming. They do not talk openly about it in strategic terms and do not say they want nuclear energy as the building block for an atomic bomb, but they do see nuclear energy as a status symbol and a way to keep technological pace with Iran. 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.

### **International efforts to deter Iran from continuing its quest for nuclear weapons**

U.S. efforts to synchronize its policies with the European Union in pressing for tougher sanctions and diplomacy against Iran have achieved some success in the last year. But the trade void is being filled by other nations, particularly Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, and the United Arab Emirates. In order for sanctions to be successful, these nations need to participate fully, especially since financial sanctions are necessary for diplomacy to work. Locally investors have been doing their part as well. In June of 2009, New York State's retirement fund announced it will divest from nine companies doing business in Iran. Most states have passed legislation which divests state pension investment from Iran. Bob Haynes, head of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, also voiced support for legislation in Massachusetts. "There ought to be a moral code related to pension investments," he said. On a national level, AFL-CIO President James Hoffa started urging the union's pensions funds to shed all shares they own in companies doing business in Iran in 2007.

At a time when oil prices have dropped significantly causing increased pressure on an already severely depressed Iranian economy, the timely use of diplomatic and economic measures remain critical to defusing this crisis.



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