

COUNTERING IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

INTRODUCTION

B'nai Brith Canada believes that the threat of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons is a matter of the gravest concern and utmost urgency to the world.

Canada and its allies should utilize all diplomatic and economic measures necessary to deter Iran from continuing its quest for nuclear weapons. Economic measures to achieve this should include sanctions, including Magnitsky-like sanctions, for Iranian leaders and officials who defy efforts to constrain the country's nuclear weapons ambitions and violate human rights norms.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), never a sufficiently comprehensive agreement to begin with, has had no impact on stymieing Iran's radical behaviour in the Middle East, nor its public commitment to Israel's destruction.

THE CONTEXT

On May 8, 2018, Canada's Minister of Foreign affairs stated the government's position concerning the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), particularly that:

- a) **Canada believes the JCPOA** is essential to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability;
- b) **G7 foreign ministers are committed** to permanently ensuring that Iran's nuclear program remains exclusively peaceful;
- c) **Canada condemns Iran's** ongoing development of its ballistic missile program, and;
- d) **Canada continues to oppose Iran's** support for terrorist organizations, its threats towards Israel, and its support for the Assad regime in Syria.

In a troubling subsequent message, on June 3, 2018, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei posted this message on social media:

"Our stance against Israel is the same stance we have always taken. [#Israel](#) is a malignant cancerous tumor in the West Asian region that has to be removed and eradicated: it is possible and it will happen."

A number of Arab states, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan, have warned that Iran's development of nuclear weapons poses a threat to Middle East stability and could provoke nuclear arms proliferation throughout the region.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said that Iran's stockpiles of low-enriched uranium are still growing in violation of the 2015 JCPOA, and has confirmed that Iran is now enriching uranium at its underground Fordo facility, which is also prohibited by the nuclear agreement. Iran continues to enrich uranium up to 4.5%, above the 3.67% allowed by the JCPOA.

As recently as November 11, 2019, the IAEA said that its inspectors have discovered signs of nuclear activity *"at a location in Iran not declared to the agency."* On March 9, 2020, IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi stated *"The Agency has identified a number of questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities at three locations that have not been declared by Iran"*.

Still worrying, following the United States drone strike that killed Qassem Soleimani and several Iraqi militia leaders backed by Tehran, Iran announced that it would no longer limit its uranium enrichment (but would not expel IAEA inspectors in the country). Iran announced that it would no longer limit itself to the restrictions contained in the JCPOA.

The announcement said *"Iran will set its limits based on its technical needs,"* essentially rendering the JCPOA redundant if technically still alive. This means Iran no longer recognizes any limits on the operational aspects of its nuclear program; including in enrichment capacity, the extent (or degree) of enrichment, and nuclear research and development.

B'NAI BRITH CANADA'S POSITION

B'nai Brith Canada believes that the threat of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons is a matter of the gravest concern and utmost urgency to the world. We advocate that Canada together with the leadership of the United Nations, particularly the permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as other relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions, utilize **all diplomatic and economic measures necessary to deter Iran from continuing its quest for nuclear weapons**, while respecting the humanitarian needs of the Iranian people. Economic measures to achieve this should include sanctions, **including Magnitsky-like sanctions** for Iranian leaders and officials who defy efforts to constrain the country's nuclear weapons ambitions.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that efforts to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power should be of **the highest priority for Canada and the international community**. Iran's efforts to develop nuclear weapons should forcefully be condemned. Iran must abide by its commitment to grant IAEA inspectors full, unrestricted access and cooperate fully with the investigation of Iranian nuclear activities.

B'nai Brith Canada believes that **the JCPOA was never a sufficiently comprehensive agreement to begin** with and that the world deserves a more durable agreement that will permanently halt Iran's nuclear program.

The **JCPOA has had no impact on stymieing Iran's radical behaviour in the Middle East**, nor its public commitment to Israel's destruction. The veracity of this observation is borne out through Ayatollah Khamenei's tweet and numerous statements since then by Iranian leaders. More must be done **to link the limitations imposed by the JCPOA to a broader spectrum** of Iranian behaviour and intentions.

We urge Canada to contribute to articulating a plan that will include a **series of strong, targeted steps, to be executed in collaboration with our allies and partners, that will ensure Iran does not develop nuclear weapons, and to more effectively combat the Iranian regime's hostile internal and external policies**. This may require considerations that go beyond the current letter and intent of the JCPOA, currently under stress through Iran's actions to exceed its constraints.

Given latest developments, we would implore Canada to move quickly to help craft a series of measures that will further address the threatening policies of the Iranian regime. These should be developed in cooperation with, for example, Canada's G7 partners, based on a determination to work together to apply maximum pressure against the Iranian regime - including through nuclear-related sanctions, Magnitsky-like sanctions, and additional sanctions targeting other aggressive behaviors, along with a continuing **strategic focus on human rights in Iran**.

Such steps could include:

- 1. Recommitting the international community's determination** that the Iranian regime never be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons, including through a more robust and intrusive inspections mechanism, and application of other diplomatic and financial tools. Based on Iranian behavior over the past three years, including its sponsorship and training of terror groups around the region and its unending support for the brutal regime of Bashar Assad in Syria, it has become abundantly clear that an empowered Iran threatens its neighbors and endangers civilians across the region.
- 2. Implementing more measures to combat the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).** The IRGC has been the direct patron of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah Palestinian Islamic Jihad and has worked to subvert other governments in the region. This is enabled in part by IRGC interests which control much of the Iranian economy. Additional steps to deter foreign businesses from transactions that enrich the IRGC are needed. Canada can and should list the entirety of the IRGC as a terrorist entity without further delay.
- 3. Additional sanctions to ensure iron-clad constraints** on the Iranian government's nuclear-capable ballistic missile program. These sanctions should hinder, and prevent if possible, Iran's development of ballistic and cruise missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

Iran's developing missile program also has serious conventional military implications in the region and for technological proliferation to Hezbollah and Hamas.

4. **Pursuing a strong, united diplomatic front** to ensure Iran not be permitted to establish a permanent civilian or military presence in Syria, with a specific emphasis on Russia. Iran's expanding military presence in the country not only harms the Syrian people but also directly threatens Israel. We should consider new sanctions and other measures to prevent Iranian entrenchment in Syria and creation of a geographic bridge extending to the Mediterranean coast.
5. **With our allies and partners, targeting propaganda tools of the Iranian regime through sanctions** against Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). This entity is a crucial regime propaganda tool often used to portray human rights activists as treasonous and threatening to national security. IRIB also is used as a tool to spread the regime's ideology of supremacy and antisemitism across the Middle East and beyond.
6. **Encouraging, and contributing to, greater international financial support for Iranian human rights NGOs** inside and outside Iran. At a time when the Iranian regime is arresting Iranian dissidents and ordinary civilians simply for exercising their voice and expressing a desire for freedom, we can play a more significant role in supporting these important voices.

Constraining Iran will require a strategic and comprehensive policy in cooperation with our international partners. We urge Canada to exert leadership on this file and to take immediate steps to articulate, cooperate in, and help implement such a policy. **Constraining Iran's nuclear and related military activities must be part of a broader strategy.**

MAY, 2020