



Congressional Briefing

IRAN POLICY

NEW ADMINISTRATION, CHALLENGES & OPTIONS

JANUARY 24, 2017





REP. ELIOT ENGEL (D-NY)

House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member

Excerpt:

First of all, it's so good to see so many friends. And before I begin, I really want to thank and for being such great good friends to me and all of you for being such good friends to freedom.

We are all united in this—democrats, republicans—we're all united because we won't stop until we see a free Iran and we won't stop till we're able to walk down the streets of Tehran arm in arm in a new democratic Iran.

I was very pleased several months ago to go to Tirana, Albania where I met many of the people who left Camp Liberty and was told that the people who were still behind in Camp Liberty were in danger. So I worked behind the scenes, we couldn't tell anybody at the time, to speed up the process and make sure that every last person at Camp Liberty was allowed to leave free and safely, and I'm very, very proud of the work we did.

You know, if you look at everything in a geo-political way, and I'm a ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I've done this stuff for many, many years, Iran should be the traditional and natural U.S. ally in the region, not the number one enemy of the U.S. in the region. That is a perversion of the Iranian people and that is what this regime has done. So in the U.S., we have to remember who our friends are and we also have to remember who our enemies are. It isn't a matter of people, mullahs, or whoever was running Iran, whether it was Ahmadinejad or any of the others that we don't like them, so they're our enemies. We don't like what they stand for, not because they oppress us but they oppress their own people, the people of Iran want freedom and the people of Iran want to be free and the people of Iran love the United States and it's reciprocal.

You know, when that tape surfaced of Ayatollah Montazeri, sort of from the dead, talking about (mass) executions of MEK members and other members back in 1988. It shows that everything that MEK has been saying has been proven to be true, and so we're going to (helping you). (It's saying that) you know this year we've had democrats and we've had republicans talking and all saying the same thing. So please know that those of us in Congress that have worked with you are committed to not stopping until the Iranian people are totally free and one day we'll stroll together in a free and independent Iran which cares about its people, not oppresses them. Thank you





REP. ILLEANA ROS-LEHTINEN (R-FL)

House Foreign Affairs Committee Senior Member
Middle East and North Africa Sub-committee Chair

Excerpt:

The last administration was way too lenient in its attitude, way too lenient in its actions toward Iran. Naïvely engaging with and making concessions to a regime that has only become more repressive and more dangerous since this terrible misguided nuclear deal was signed. The regime's abysmal human rights record speaks for itself. You know it and I know it as well. More executions are being carried out under the so-called moderate Rouhani than at any time in the past 25 years, more executions. Women and ethnic and religious minorities are persecuted. They're denied equal rights. Journalists are forced to self-censor or else face jail time.

For too long the previous administration did not take the proper steps to limit the IRGC and its benefactors in Tehran, refusing to implement or enforce the sanctions that we in Congress provided and instead allowed the regime to gain in power. It is time that we put the tools that we have created and we have at our disposal to use, including broadening our sanctions so that they include IRGC controlled businesses and its subsidiaries. We must target the regime at every turn, not only enforcing the sanctions that would have been too long neglected, but expanding their scope whenever and wherever possible.

Iran must be held accountable for its violation of international law, for its abysmal human rights record, for its terror, for any additional violations of the nuclear deal. We cannot let this regime keep growing in strength.





REP. BRAD SHERMAN (D-CA)

House Foreign Affairs Committee Member

Excerpt:

Human rights abuses in Iran are not a new phenomenon. We learned how in 1988 Iran executed tens of thousands of political prisoners. In last Congress, I co-sponsored with Chairman Royce and ranking member Engel the bill condemning the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the 1988 massacres of political prisoners and calling for the justice of the victims of that massacre.

The MEK is working today as a counter-terrorist organization, opposing the world's number one state sponsor of terrorism. Maryam Rajavi is leading an organization that is helping the world expose and deal with the terrorism of the Islamic Republic, starting with the great debt the entire world owes to the MEK for exposing Iran's nuclear weapons program right at the beginning. And that's why I join you behind #FreeIran.

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REP. TED POE (R-TX)

House Foreign Affairs Committee Member
Terrorism, Nonproliferation Sub-committee Chair

Excerpt:

You have come a long way since 1979 from the revolution and now we have a situation where the ayatollah and the mullahs are in charge of your great homeland. The ayatollah is at war. He's at war with the peoples of the world. He's at war with anyone that believes in freedom and liberty. He's at first at war with his own people—your families, your friends in Iran, anyone who speaks against the ayatollah and the mullahs, anyone who speaks in favor of liberty, anyone who disagrees with what's taking place in Iran could get the death penalty.

But let me tell the ayatollah something. If I were in Iran giving this speech, I would probably be subject to the death penalty, 'cause I'm speaking against him and his illegitimate regime of mullahs, because they are at war with the people of Iran in Iran.

But he's also at war with freedom loving people throughout the world—your families, your friends, wherever they are. Through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iran is the number one state sponsor of terrorism. They have all kinds of terrorist groups from Hezbollah to Hamas throughout the world killing people who believe in freedom. He's at war with humanity and we need to recognize that.

But we're not through, because Iran is still in captivity of the mullahs and the ayatollah and we will continue with you on this journey to fight for free Iran and we want to do that through a peaceful regime change so that freedom can take place there. That is the answer. A regime change and let the people decide who should be in charge, not the U.N., not the ayatollah, but the people of Iran—your friends and your family—decide who should have governance over (there).





REP. DANA ROHRABACHER (R-CA)
House Foreign Affairs Committee Member
Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats Com-
mittee Chair

Excerpt:

So we have freed the people of Camp Ashraf. Now it's time for us to free the people of Iran. [applause] That, too, has something to do with making our system work. Good things don't just happen in a democracy. Good things happen because good people, people who believe in the principals that our country stands for, to see that our country maintains those standards that our founding fathers had in mind and so, yes, we worked and we freed and helped free the people from Camp Ashraf. Today we've got to make sure, number one, that nothing that we do, that our government does will make the Iranian regime

stronger, as Ileana went through the list. We have to make sure we do not do any of those things and if we see our government doing those things, then we will be able to step in and make it right.

We know that many of you as members, as people who have been involved in the fight for many years, involved in the MEK and other leaders that I've met in Paris and had many good meetings there with your leadership there, but also with all of you, that we now have a group of people in Iran who believe in democracy and believe in those Western values that we're talking about.

So there are many thing, we can be proud of what we've accomplished, but now is our time. We have a new president. We can now say, "We can accomplish the main goal." The main goal which is a free Iran, at peace in the world, that welcomes the children of Iran back who've been in exile, an Iran where people could worship God as they see fit, an Iran where people can criticize the government and not have a gang of thugs at the doors beating their family up, an Iran where you don't have people on motorcycles patrolling the streets and beating up anybody who wants to criticize the government.





REP. SHEILA JACKSON LEE (D-TX)

Homeland Security Committee Member

Excerpt:

...There was one woman who never gave up as well, and that is President Maryam Rajavi. President Maryam Rajavi. And so I want to offer to her in her absence my appreciation for her leadership, her hospitality to all of us when we visited Paris, her constant strength in the face of danger before collectively the MEK was removed from the terrorist list. You know how hard we fought, but she had to stand strong to lead. If we did not have leadership how would we continue to fight? Let us give her a major applause.

So I want to make sure that you know that I believe in #freelran. #freelran. And to all of the young people that are in Iran today and around the world, we know that if you continue to understand what democracy is, that democracy is secular, democratic, and it is a non-nuclear republic Iran, then we know that we will be free someday. We thank you for all of those who believe in that.

I am an American. I love this country. It is already the greatest country in the world. But I will assure you that I will be watchful as to the interaction with Russia, and the interaction between Russia and Iran, and the teaming up against a good democratic people of Iran and the good democratic Iranian-Americans who want a free Iran.....we must not yield to Russia, we must not yield to the collaboration between Russia and Iran. Again #freelran.



**REP. PAUL GOSAR (R-AZ)**

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Member

Excerpt:

As you now know, there's a new sheriff in town. And we're going to be very critical about what transpired last year with Iran. Why did Iran deserve what they got? It wasn't a treaty. It wasn't condoned as a treaty. It was done with a piece of paper. And what was done with a piece of paper can be undone with a piece of paper and I hope that this administration—and we will forward that aspect—takes a hardline application with the country of Iran. Human rights, violations of U.N., and the stockpiling of nuclear materials—all of these are violations. And to take a look at their inordinate abstinence to us.

Look at what they've done - fired at our military, they've captured our military and subjugated them. This isn't what we believe should happen.

....Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. Count me as your friend and as my friends before said, #FreeIran. So thank you so very much for giving me the chance.

We are all united in this, democrats, republicans, we're all united because we won't stop until we see a free Iran and we won't stop till we're able to walk down the streets of Tehran arm in arm in a new democratic Iran.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Eliot Engel



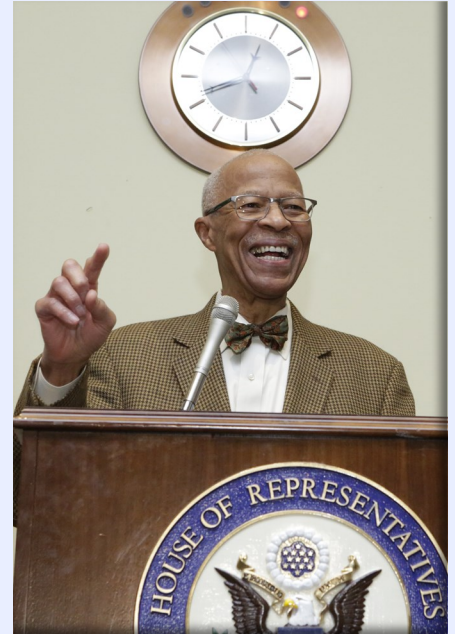


PROF. RAYMOND TANTER

Excerpt:

... Let me say something about each one of these things in turn. One, concerning the bipartisanship, you had Engel and Sheila Jackson Lee, born in New York—I count her there, together. You had Judge Poe with who else is in Texas? [Sheila Jackson Lee] Sheila Jackson Lee again. [laughs] And you have who else? Rohrabacher and Sherman in California. This is not only, this is bipartisanship that is extremely important for this movement.

Now, one of the things that I do is study the Iranian resistance. I study all Iranian resistance groups. Why? Because it's important to note that when you study all of them, you find that the National Council of Resistance of Iran, it's largest unit, the Mujahedin-e Khalq stands out as the only one (that) any regime pays attention to. The exposition set up around the country to tell the youths not to pay attention to the National Council of Resistance of Iran ideas because they are so dangerous. These are democratic ideas that are dangerous. So that's one of the things I wanted to mention concerning the bipartisanship.



Hajar Mojtahedzadeh

Excerpt:

On behalf of OIAC millennials, my first message is to the youth in Iran. Continue your protests, and gatherings, increase your demands for equal pay and equal rights. Your voices will shake this weakened dictatorship to its core. We know how much your dissent frightens the regime; they don't want the youth to take to the streets. That is why more than 60 have been executed since the start of 2017.

The Iranian regime has attempted to divert attention from its domestic discontent by exporting chaos to neighboring countries, such as Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. After the nuclear deal, some hoped that living conditions would improve, and the ruling regime would lighten up. But one year after the nuclear deal, 70 percent of Iran's people believe that nothing in their lives has changed, or can ever change without regime change.



**Dr. Majid Sadeghpour
OIAC Political Director,
presented the
organizations'
recommendations
on U.S. Iran policy**



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**OIAC Policy Statement
U.S. House of Representatives
Rayburn Gold Room
January 24, 2017**

OIAC Political Director, Dr. Majid Sadeghpour presented the organizations' recommendations on U.S. Iran policy for the new administration by welcoming congressional measures to sanction the IRGC, which he said controls most of Iran's economy. Diminishing IRGC influence & reach, he noted, "would weaken this prominent pillar of Iran's religious dictatorship."

Below is the text of Dr. Sadeghpour's remark:

Organization of Iranian-American Communities-US (OIACUS), as the largest, most active and enduring grass root organization of Iranian-Americans welcomes the 115th Congress as well as 45th President of the United States Donald Trump to Washington, DC. We look forward to the opportunity to work with the United States Congress and the new President to shape a successful policy towards arguably the greatest threat to U.S. national security – the regime in Iran.

Iran's domestic and foreign policies have and continue to be focused on establishing and preserving a theocratic empire which poses a direct threat to the people of Iran, the United States, and world peace.

In the wake of the nuclear agreement (otherwise known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, JCPOA) and associated initiatives, a major foreign policy challenge for the new administration will be to effectively manage the US relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The new administration's contempt for JCPOA is well stated. This disposition is also shared by most if not all Congressional Republicans, as well as by a surprisingly high number of leaders in the Democratic Party.

In testimony before Congress, the nominees and bi-partisan Senators clearly articulated their belief that "the Iran problem" is not limited to the weaknesses or strengths of the JCPOA in its current form, but also extend to the persistent extraterritorial belligerence of the Iranian regime and its egregious conduct at home (i.e. Iran's atrocious Human Rights record).

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, for example, indicated that he would call for a thorough review of the agreement, leaving open the need to cancel, renegotiate, strengthen, or replace the deal in the long run. Additionally, Secretary of Defense James Mattis described the Iranian regime as the biggest contributor to regional instability and added that American policy in Iraq and Afghanistan should be focused on countering Iran's "malign influence," which in his assessment has been growing.

Cabinet members in the administration of the 45th President of the United States have not stated such strong opinions on Iran policy in a vacuum. The wealth of intelligence on the validity of their concerns notwithstanding, 23 prominent former US officials underscored these very policy points and more in a recent bipartisan letter to President Trump.

"It is now clear," they wrote, "that Iran's leaders have shown no interest in reciprocating the US overture beyond the terms of the JCPOA which gained them significant rewards. Through their extremely high rate of executions at home, and destructive sectarian warfare in support of the Assad regime in Syria and proxy Shiite militias in Iraq, Iran's rulers have directly targeted US strategic interests, policies and principles, and those of our allies and friends in the Middle East."

Experiences of the past 3 & 1/2 decades have demonstrated that no amount of engagement, monetary incentive, or political goodwill gesture will change the nature of the Iranian theocracy. Iran's religious dictatorship has for nearly 4 decades relied on 3 pillars to preserve its reign on power:

- 1- Internal suppression of dissent
- 2- Drive to obtain nuclear weapons
- 3- Support for and exportation of terrorism

Accordingly, a viable U.S. policy towards Iran must comprehensively address these areas. OIAC believes that an effective and meaningful U.S. Iran policy should, at a minimum, include the following components:



Support for Human Rights: Iran is a major and persistent violator of human rights of its citizens, particularly women, youths, journalists, religious and ethnic minorities. Some 120,000 dissidents have been executed in Iran in the past 37 years, including nearly 30,000 political prisoners massacred in a span of several months in 1988. The rate of executions has increased dramatically during Hassan Rouhani's tenure. Indeed, the regime in Tehran is the leading per capita executioner of its own citizens in the world today and as such must be held accountable.

We therefore welcome bipartisan congressional legislations, which aim to hold Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) accountable for their key role in the ongoing violations of human rights in Iran.

We call for the U.S. President to pressure the international community to forward Iran's rights record dossier to the U.N. Security Council.

Defeating the Threat of Terrorism/Islamic Extremism: Designated as the most active "state sponsor of terrorism" by the US government since 1984, Tehran continues to use terrorism as a major tool of advancing its foreign policy and destabilizing the Middle East. Iranian regime today remains the predominant supporter of international terror networks and acts as the epicenter of extremist Islamist ideology. The latter is a steadily growing threat to stability in a volatile region and to US national security. It is also as dangerous as its nuclear weapons program and must be dealt with decisively and urgently.

We appreciate U.S. House and Senate leaders for introducing legislations to designate "Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps as a foreign terrorist organization." These much needed and long overdue measures are needed to weaken Iran's terror machine both at home and across the region.

We call for comprehensive sanctions against the IRGC and its related entities which oversee at least two-third of Iran's economy and hence its global trade.

Removing the Nuclear Threat: As you know, another strategic pillar of Iran's foreign policy, complementing its human rights abuses and sponsorship of terrorism, is its nuclear weapons program. The nuclear deal has pushed back Iran's nuclear program, albeit temporarily, but has left the program's infrastructure essentially intact. With the view that only a democratic, secular, and non-nuclear Iran will permanently remove this danger, the focus must now be directed at putting in place an airtight monitoring and verification mechanism to prevent Tehran from cheating, as it has done over the past three decades.

We therefore support the "distrust and verify" approach – within which the JCPOA is comprehensively reviewed, its enforcement regimen fully implemented and improved.

Support for a Democratic Future in Iran: The destructive influence of Islamic fundamentalism, godfathered by the establishment in Iran, will not be mitigated until and unless a democratic, secular, and non-nuclear republic democratically replaces that regime. Successive US administrations, both Republican and Democrat, for years tried to engage Iran by offering concessions and ignoring its transgressions in hopes of moderating its behavior. While sidestepping the approximate 80,000,000 freedom loving people in Iran, the policy has naively assumed that Iranian dictators are capable of reform. This policy has clearly failed. While underscoring that a foreign military intervention is also not the answer, we believe the United States should recognize the aspirations of Iranian people for a free and democratic future as the only effective and viable policy.

In shaping foreign policy towards Iran, OIAC calls on President Trump's Administration to engage the Iranian people and their well-organized opposition movement.

As bipartisan U.S. officials noted in their letter to Mr. Trump, the United States must establish a dialogue with the National Council of Resistance of Iran and support the 10-point plan for Iran of tomorrow as articulated by NCRI President-Elect, Madam Maryam Rajavi.

Our members have a range of political and party affiliations but are unified in the belief that democracy and human rights in Iran are imperative to the national security of America and peace in the Middle East and beyond. In this honorable endeavor, we shall welcome congressional and executive branch engagement and will support its decisive decision-making regarding Iran.



US Lawmakers Promise Iranian Opposition Group Tougher Action Against Iran

January 27, 2017

"In separate remarks to OIAC members, Democratic Congressman Eliot Engel said he wants to focus on helping one Iranian opposition group in particular MEK, which completed a two-year-long process of relocating about 3,000 of its Iraq-based exiles to Albania last September."

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