

Live Free or Die: A Promise

✖ What would you do if someone was threatening to kill you?

Imagine

that this person not only hated you vehemently, but was thought to

have killed many of his own family members in cold blood. You know

for a fact he owns several weapons and strongly suspect he has been

attempting to purchase more. On top of all that, he publicly proclaims his desire to kill you on a regular basis. Would you take

his threats seriously?

The scenario I described might sound like the setup for a terrible

summer movie, but it almost exactly parallels the behavior of Iran

toward Israel and the United States over the past several years.

Iran's leaders—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—have openly declared their intention to “wipe Israel off the map” on numerous occasions.

Less publicized are statements like Ahmadinejad's from 2008:

“Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United

States has come, and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor

of power and wealth has started.” Their intentions toward the United States and Israel could not be clearer.

A growing body of intelligence suggests that the Iranians, who already possess a large arsenal of ballistic missiles, are in the

process of building nuclear weapons. While they may not have the capability of striking the United States mainland from their own, they could certainly hit Israel or pass off a nuclear weapon to a terrorist organization.

Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, who met with President Obama earlier this week, has openly threatened to strike Iranian nuclear facilities rather than allow them to attain nuclear capabilities on his watch. I think most reasonable people can understand why he would make this threat.

An Israeli strike on Iran is a serious matter, one which would at a very minimum disrupt an already unstable oil supply. So it is understandable that the White House would want to avoid an Israeli strike if possible. Yet openly disagreeing with the Israeli threat to strike has two effects: It lessens the deterrent force of such a possibility, and it treats Israel and Iran as morally equivalent parties in a conflict. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

Israel is a democracy, like the United States, which respects the rights of individuals to freely practice religion and live as they choose under the law. There are many Muslims and Christians—as well as Jewish people—living and working in Israel. Iran, on the

other

hand, recently condemned a Christian pastor to death for the crime of

converting to Christianity. As of this writing, the fate of Pastor

Youcef Nadarkhani is uncertain.

Why does Iran want to annihilate Israel? One reason is undoubtedly

the growing power of Twelver Shi'ism, a sect of Shia Islam.

This

sect believes that the "Twelfth Imam"—who disappeared as a child during the late 800s—will return soon to save the world and

establish the Islamic reign over the world. They hold the Twelfth

Imam to be the legitimate leader of Islam, but to prepare the way for

his coming, these Islamists believe they must destroy Israel and the

United States.

While many Iranians both inside and outside Iran reject Twelver

radicalism, the group has been growing in popularity in recent decades. (As many as 85 percent of Shia Muslims worldwide are believed to be Twelvers.)

Both Ahmadinejad and Khamenei invoke radical Twelver imagery and

vocabulary regularly in their speeches. Some analysts believe they do

this to stir up the emotions of their Twelver followers, while others

fear that the president and the supreme leader themselves may truly

believe this is the end of days, and that their job is to prepare the

way for return of the Twelfth Imam.

Twelver radicals in Iran believe the United States is weak, afraid to fight and ready to fall. This belief emboldens plans to build weapons for the purpose of destroying both Israel and the United States, however insane that may sound to people in the West. By continually offering to talk to Tehran and publicly abandoning Israel, the current administration is playing right into the radicals' hands.

If Israel conducts a preemptive strike on Iran, the U.S. will undoubtedly be drawn into the conflict. Before we get involved in such a volatile controversy, we must have the military will to totally reduce the rogue nation to military powerlessness. We also will have to be willing to endure \$8-a-gallon fuel prices.

Let me be clear: Islam is not an evil religion. Nonetheless, the men presenting themselves as the faithful in Iran are, in fact, evil.

Their disregard for human life and international peace is very evident. Our nation will have to decide if it agrees with New Hampshire's official state motto, which was adopted at the close of World War II: "Live Free or Die."

Defending freedom will remain very expensive in terms of petroleum, cash and American blood. As a preacher, I can never promote war as the ultimate answer. But as a realistic Christian, I can support St. Augustine's Just War Theory. More specifically, I

must support the U.S. aligning militarily with Israel to avoid senseless killings engineered by evil factions in the earth.

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