

Samuel Rodriguez: US Must Wait for Iran to Halt Nuclear Program Before Deal

At the weekend talks in Geneva, Iran and six world powers—the United States, Britain, Russia, France, China and Germany—“came close to a preliminary nuclear agreement,” Reuters reports. The parties decided to resume negotiations Nov. 20.

The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC) is concerned the Obama administration has shown its apparent willingness to allow the Islamic republic to retain its capacity to produce nuclear weapons while acceding to the weakening of sanctions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stated that Iran already is entering negotiations in bad faith and will not agree to cease its nuclear ambitions. “Israel is united in opposition to the deal offered to Iran,” Netanyahu says. “We are speaking in a clear and unequivocal voice.”

The prime minister further states that the date on which a good deal will be achieved will be the day on which Iran will be denied military nuclear capability. “This is not just important for Israel, but for the entire world,” he says.

Democratic Sen. Robert Menendez from New Jersey, speaking on NBC, said, “I think the possibility of moving ahead with new sanctions, including wording it in such a way that if there is a deal that is acceptable that those sanctions could cease upon such a deal, is possible. It’s an insurance; it’s an insurance for the United States to make sure that Iran actually complies with an agreement that we would want to see, which is of course desirable.”

The Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the NHCLC, responds, "If the administration agrees to reach an agreement with Iran without Iran's acquiesce to halt and dismantle its nuclear program, such a position would be a monumental departure from multiple U.N. resolutions, our pledges to Israel and this administration's own stated policy.

"Congress' bipartisan pushback against the administration's unilateral negotiations is proof that key congressional leaders view any lifting of sanctions—even before Iran has done anything to halt and dismantle its nuclear program—as dangerous to the nation of Israel and to the stability of the region.

"The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference—as America's largest Hispanic Christian organization, with 40,118 member churches representing millions of Hispanics across the nation—calls for the continuation of current levels of sanctions if and until Iran fully agrees and acts to halt its nuclear program, particularly its centrifuge manufacturing. To do less is, as Netanyahu said, a 'historic mistake.' We concur.

"We believe that we have a moral, biblical and strategic obligation to stand united in efforts to protect the safety of the nation of Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, and thereby protecting our own American interest. We also urge the Senate to take immediate action on pending banking committee legislation to strengthen sanctions against the nation of Iran."

The NHCLC is concerned about nuclear Iran to the point that it will be, as part of the annual National NHCLC Justice Summit in Washington, D.C., on Monday and Tuesday, lobbying for congressmen and senators to pass either an additional or stronger Iranian sanctions bill.