

U.S. Urged to Place Sanctions on Iran

During the 2008 campaign, President Obama said he was willing to sit down for talks with Iran about its nuclear program “without preconditions.” Given Iran’s long record of delay when it comes to such negotiations, the president clarified early on in his administration that he would not wait indefinitely for Iran to come to the table and join the discussion. The president and our allies set September as the deadline for talks to begin.

When September arrived, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sounded a note of complete defiance. Taking a break from arresting and torturing his political opponents, Ahmadinejad declared “the nuclear issue is finished” and that “we will never negotiate on the Iranian nation’s rights.” Days later, Iran followed up by saying talks would be limited to a narrow list of topics of its own choosing. Notably absent from this list was its nuclear program.

The Iranian offer to talk about everything except its nuclear program is too transparent to call a ploy. It is a snub. Even the U.S. State Department immediately recognized it as such. The day after Iran issued this offer, State Department spokesman P. J. Crowley called it “unacceptable.” A few days later, however, the administration reversed itself and said it would accept Iran’s offer. Talks are set to begin on October 1.

Such behavior from Iran is hardly new or surprising. For years now, Iran has demonstrated its mastery of the arts of delay and obfuscation. When proposals are made, Iran “analyzes” them for months before asking for further “clarification.” When deadlines are given, Iran waits until the last minute to make an unacceptable counter offer. All the while, Iran maintains a

pretext of cooperation that delays the imposition of serious economic sanctions. And all the while, Iran is working clearly, unambiguously, and tirelessly on its nuclear program.

As Iran's diplomats spin their delays, Iran's centrifuges spin day and night, enriching ever-greater amounts of uranium.

Those who support the current negotiations insist that, even if they fail, they are necessary in order to build consensus for sanctions. We must, they tell us, demonstrate to the international community that we tried to talk to Iran first. Such a rationale might have made sense when this process first began years ago. But if all of the talks and delays to date have not yet developed a consensus in support of sanctions, why is there any reason to believe that they will do so now?

The time has come, and is actually long overdue, that Iran see it will pay a steep price for continuing its march toward nuclear weapons. The Obama administration will begin talks with Iran in October. We wish them well and pray that our deep skepticism about such talks is proven wrong. But in the meantime, we do not have to sit by silently. In fact, we can actually strengthen the administration's bargaining position by making clear to the Iranians their failure to abandon their nuclear program will be met with crippling economic sanctions. We through Congress can give President Obama a stick with which to strengthen the allure of his carrot.

Last week, Christians United for Israel sent out an action alert asking constituents to contact their Congressmen to tell them to support the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009. By targeting Iran's gasoline imports representing 40 percent of their total gasoline consumption—the bill provides for exactly the kind of serious sanctions no Iranian government can ignore.

We can act today and stop Iran before it is too late. Urge your Congressman to support the legislation by clicking here.

David Brog is the executive director of Christians United for Israel.