

Dear Mr. President:

Recently, the Iranian people voted for their next president, Hassan Rouhani. The President-elect was widely perceived to be the most moderate of the candidates allowed to run under Iran's extremely restrictive election process. Indeed, more than 600 potential candidates were disqualified by an unelected body of Islamic jurists, leaving only those approved by government-appointed clerics. But while this was not a free and fair election, judged by international standards, its outcome reflected considerable dissatisfaction by the Iranian people with an autocratic and repressive government that has internationally isolated Iran.

Iran's election unfortunately has done nothing to suggest a reversal of Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capacity. President-elect Rouhani, who served as a nuclear negotiator for Iran at a time its illicit program was well underway, indicated his support for Iran's nuclear ambitions in his first post-election press conference. Indeed, there appears nothing "moderate" about his nuclear policies, which are a continuation of the policies that have been roundly opposed by the international community. Moreover, decisions about Iran's nuclear program and foreign policy rest mainly in the hands of Iran's Supreme Leader Khamene'i. Khamene'i has recently reiterated his view that Iran has no reason to normalize relations with the United States.

According to a recent report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran is accelerating its nuclear efforts. Tehran is dramatically expanding its nuclear infrastructure: installing advanced centrifuges which would quadruple the speed with which Iran can enrich uranium, while continuing construction of a heavy water reactor which will permit a plutonium option. Our diplomacy and sanctions strategies must reflect these dangerous realities.

Our diplomatic goal must be to reach a negotiated settlement in which Iran agrees to verifiably dismantle its nuclear weapons program. For this outcome to be realized, Iran must face intensifying pressure. This means the full implementation of current sanctions available to your administration, and further legislative steps to close loopholes and broaden our sanction's reach.

As Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, we appreciate your recent imposition of new sanctions and urge you to increase the pressure on Iran in the days ahead. An added positive action would be extending sector-based sanctions to the mining, engineering, and construction-based sectors of Iran. We plan to strengthen sanctions with additional legislation already approved unanimously by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and now pending in the House of Representatives. It is important that you leave no doubt in the minds of the Iranian government that the United States will do all it can to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.