

A Secret Letter from the US President to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

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By

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Mr. President,

Your country stands on the precipice of a grave international crisis provoked by the growing and well-founded concerns of the International Atomic Energy Agency and many members of the UN Security Council that Iran is concealing a clandestine nuclear weapons program behind the fig leaf of civilian nuclear energy development.

You ask why it is that “any technical and scientific achievement reached in the Middle East is portrayed as a threat” to Israel. Mr. President, for over two decades, your country has been the world’s most active state sponsor of terrorism and the most malevolent opponent of Arab-Israeli peace. You yourself announce at every turn that Israel “should be wiped off the map,” and have called Israel a “rotten, dried tree” that will be annihilated by “one storm.” Your predecessor, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, has explained that “the use of a nuclear bomb in Israel will leave nothing on the ground, whereas it will only damage the world of Islam.”

You deny the Holocaust of six million Jews and, declaring Israel’s illegitimacy, brazenly suggest that all Israeli Jews “return to Europe,” including the millions whose families hail from Arab countries, of whom you are apparently ignorant. You represent a nation whose ancient Persian forebears—themselves migrants from Europe—conquered Babylon and freed the Jewish people from captivity, permitting their return to the Land of Israel after the destruction of the first Jewish state. It was Persian kings who granted renewed Jewish political and religious autonomy in ancient Israel, leading to the eventual reconstruction of a Second Jewish Commonwealth. This was followed by centuries of Jewish presence in, attachment to, and ultimately mass return to the Holy Land to build a modern Jewish state with the consent of the League of Nations and the U.N. No, Mr. President: Israel is a thriving oak with deep millennial roots in the land, and strong branches extending in alliance to many nations throughout the world.

Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States spoke out recently to say that the “horrible genocide of the Holocaust is a historical fact no longer in dispute.” He pointedly reminded you that the Arab world has “made our peace” with the creation of Israel. He emphasized that in 2002 the entire Arab League adopted a Saudi plan committing Arab nations to a peace process that would bring about a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In that plan, the 22 Arab countries unanimously agreed to normalize relations and make a comprehensive peace with Israel once it leaves the territory occupied in the 1967 Six-Day War; they also called for a just and agreed solution to the refugee problem, without explicitly mentioning a “right of return.”

Mr. President, Hamas itself is undergoing a struggle between its hard line and pragmatist factions; no one knows whether or when it will moderate its positions and talk peace with Israel. Yet every day we hear pronouncements from prominent Hamas members, such as that by Khaled Suleiman, the group’s spokesperson in the Palestinian parliament, who said on May 10: “The Hamas

movement is ready to recognize agreements signed with Israel, and in fact recognize Israel, but only within the '67 borders." He further promised that Hamas will "not operate to thwart diplomatic negotiations" conducted by Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas with Israel.

You ask why we and our European allies oppose a Hamas government that was elected by the Palestinian people and which represents their will. You question how we can "justify pressuring the Hamas elected government to recognize the Israeli regime and abandon [armed] struggle and follow the programs of the previous [Fatah] government" of peace talks and recognition of Israel. You ask: "If the current government had run on such a platform, would the people have elected it?"

Mr. President, opinion polls in recent months have consistently shown that three-fourths of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza believe that Hamas should "change its position on the elimination of the state of Israel," while as many as 84% want a peace agreement with Israel. Democracy is about much more than elections; it requires respect for the fundamental civil, political and human rights and freedoms of the individual, and by extension, of other states and peoples. It is our moral duty as democrats to sanction those who refuse such elementary respect to their neighbors, or their own citizens, even if they come to power through free elections, as fascists, racists and anti-Semites have in other lands. At the same time, we must apply economic pressures wisely, in a way that balances the promotion of peace with humanitarianism.

It is no small irony that you now invoke democratic elections among Palestinians as reflecting the will of the people, insisting that this popular will be honored. Your allies in government have brutally crushed the reform movement in Iran, which gained the backing of over three-quarters of your people in parliamentary elections. Your government's security forces and kangaroo courts have violently suppressed the reformers, arbitrarily removing reformist legislators from power and disqualifying their candidates.

Mr. President, you note that "history tells us that repressive and cruel governments do not survive." I could not agree more. Every human rights organization in the world—even the UN General Assembly—has recognized that Iran under the mullahs is guilty of systematic and wanton human rights and civil liberties abuses, placing Iran among the most oppressive governments on earth.

By threatening a United Nations member state with annihilation—and let no one imagine that one can wipe a country off the map without committing genocidal mass killings of its population; by exporting terrorism, subversion and extremism across the Middle East and the globe; by trampling the human rights of your own people; by flouting the near-universal international state support for a just peace with Israel; and by failing to satisfy the deep concerns of many nations and the IAEA that Iran seeks covertly to develop the world's most horrific and destructive genocidal weapons—you are transforming a great nation, which bears the historic legacy of Persian civilization, into a loathsome outlaw state.

Mr. President, the world will not stand idly by as Iran exploits the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to hatch doomsday weapons.