

Iran Diplomacy Letter Circulated by Sen. Feinstein (D-CA) the Week of July 29th, 2013

Dear President Obama:

We urge you to seize the opportunity presented by the upcoming inauguration of Iran's new president, Dr. Hassan Rouhani, by reinvigorating diplomatic efforts to secure a verifiable agreement that ensures that Iran does not develop nuclear weapons.

Since 2010 Congress has worked with your Administration to increase U.S. and international sanctions against Iran. The impact on Iran's economy has been significant: the value of the Iranian rial has plummeted against the U.S. dollar since 2011, unofficial estimates of inflation range as high as 70 percent, exports of oil have been halved, Iranian oil production has declined 35 percent to 2.6 million barrels per day, the Iranian economy declined by as much as 8 percent between March 2012 and March 2013 and is set to decline further in the next year, and unemployment estimates range as high as 20 percent.

With economic and political difficulties facing the Iranian people, the election of Dr. Rouhani is a clear demonstration of their desire to step away from the policies of his predecessor. Dr. Rouhani campaigned on the notion of repairing Iran's relationship with the West, he criticized the Ahmadinejad government's posture in nuclear negotiations, and he strongly and appropriately condemned Ahmadinejad's abhorrent comments directed at Israel as hate rhetoric. Rouhani has also publicly warned that developing a nuclear arsenal would not provide Iran security dividends and has indicated Iran's readiness to increase the transparency of its nuclear program. These events, taken together, provide an opening for negotiation.

As a result, we believe the U.S. should reinvigorate diplomatic efforts to determine whether Dr. Rouhani is truly willing to engage the international community. Doing so is the only way to reach a verifiable agreement, including limits on Iran's enrichment and other sensitive nuclear activities and greater cooperation with the IAEA, that ensures that Iran will not develop nuclear weapons.

We believe that the United States should make it clear that existing bilateral and multilateral sanctions against Iran can only be lifted through progress at the negotiating table, and only if Iran takes proportionate steps that would sufficiently demonstrate its commitment to forgoing nuclear weapons. While a comprehensive resolution to the nuclear impasse may prove elusive in the near term, presenting Iran with intermediate measures to make progress could be the best approach for determining whether the Iranian government is serious.

Our nation's security and the stability of the Middle East depend upon the resolution of this long standing dispute. As you examine America's options on Iran over the next several months, we stand ready to work with your administration toward a peaceful settlement.

Sincerely,