



Campaign for Peace and Democracy

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OPPOSE WAR AND SANCTIONS ON IRAN SOLIDARITY WITH THE DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE INSIDE IRAN

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In June 2009 people around the world were inspired by the massive, courageous protests in Iran, with hundreds of thousands, probably millions, taking to the streets to demand their democratic rights. Over the past year the movement has been violently repressed; hundreds of political prisoners remain behind bars, often tortured, deprived of medical care, and forced to live under dangerously unhealthy conditions. The Ahmadinejad regime's message to the Iranian people is clear: dare to stand up for your rights and this is what will happen to you as well.

The Iranian democratic movement holds the promise of bringing freedom to Iran. But far from aiding the struggle for Iranian democracy, war threats and sanctions from the United States, Israel and leading European nations make that fight much more difficult.

These threats strengthen Ahmadinejad's hand at the very time when worsening economic conditions could help revive active popular support for the democratic movement, especially on the part of Iranian working people. Sanctions allow the regime to shift the blame for these conditions from itself to the external enemy. The Iranian government, the Republican Guard, the paramilitary Basij and the reactionary clerics are past masters at sanctions busting, but if the U.S. achieves its main goal of preventing Tehran from importing refined petroleum, millions of ordinary Iranians will suffer.

Despite denouncing Ahmadinejad's repression, U.S. Iran policy is clearly not animated by a genuine concern for democratic rights. If it were, how could the U.S. continue support for authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt? Nor is the goal of U.S. policy to save the Middle East from the threat of nuclear war; otherwise how could it support such "irresponsible" nuclear-armed states as Israel, the most dangerously aggressive country in the region, or Pakistan, which has known ties to terrorist groups? In fact, Washington's motives are all about domination of the Persian Gulf region and neutralizing or eliminating a major threat to U.S. power there.

We don't want Iran, or any other country, including our own, to have nuclear weapons. But U.S. belligerence only creates strong inducements for Teheran to seek nuclear weapons for its defense. The U.S. can best reduce the danger of nuclear warfare by adopting a new, democratic and socially just foreign policy. This would include taking major steps toward both nuclear and conventional disarmament, encompassing missiles as well as warheads; ending its predatory wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan; giving real support to Palestinian rights rather than continuing one-sided support to Israel; and dismantling its more than 1000 military bases around the world. Such steps would help undermine the rationale for Iran and other countries developing their own nuclear weapons. They would also be the most effective way to strengthen feminists, labor, and other democratic movements in Iran.

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