

# Iran

J Street believes that Iran obtaining nuclear weapons would pose a very serious threat to American and Israeli interests and to peace and stability in the Middle East and around the world. Reports of progress in Iran's nuclear program, including the assessment issued in November 2011 by the International Atomic Energy Agency, are deeply troubling.

The United States has a fundamental interest, along with Israel and the international community, in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, and J Street supports concrete American actions to address this threat. We support a comprehensive and multilateral approach, including sanctions and active diplomacy.

To that end, J Street lobbied for the passage of strong sanctions against the Iranian regime. We also supported President Obama's early efforts to engage Iran diplomatically and commend his success in securing new multilateral sanctions through the United Nations Security Council in 2010.

American policy going forward should use stronger sanctions and continued diplomacy to pose a stark choice for the Iranian Government. It can continue on its present path and face ever deeper international isolation or change its behavior, in particular by fulfilling its obligations under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. This includes clearly and verifiably desisting from proscribed nuclear proliferation activities. This path will allow it to re-integrate into the international community with the opportunity to develop its economy to its full potential. Accordingly, we oppose any Congressional effort to limit the President's authority to pursue diplomacy with Iran.

We also support American efforts to bolster pro-democracy efforts by civil society reformers in Iran. Human rights should be part of the agenda of U.S. and international engagement with Iran and the region as a whole.

Finally, like [many American and Israeli security experts](#) such as former Mossad chiefs Meir Dagan and Ephraim Halevy, we believe that a military strike against Iran would be ill-advised. While unlikely to permanently disable Iran's nuclear program, a military strike would have dire consequences and runs the risk of igniting a broader regional war. A preemptive attack could also strengthen the current regime in Iran and provide an excuse for it to redouble its nuclear efforts. We therefore oppose legislation authorizing, encouraging, or in other ways laying the groundwork for the use of military force against Iran.

# Additional Reading

- [Ask The Experts: The Case Against A Military Strike On Iran](#)
- [J Street Condemns Iranian President Ahmadinejad](#)
- Shibley Telhami and Steven Kull argue against military action and for a Middle East nuclear-free zone, which would be favored by 64% of Jewish Israelis. “[Preventing a Nuclear Iran, Peacefully](#)”, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2012.
- *The Economist* argues that diplomacy is not appeasement, and must not relent at the first sign of inevitable Iranian intransigence or Congressional opposition. “[Running out of moves: Far from ‘appeasing’ Iran, did Barack Obama give up on diplomacy too soon?](#)”, January 14, 2012.
- Dalia Dassa Kay reports that important divisions are emerging within the Israeli strategic community over how to deal with the Iranian nuclear challenge, and that Israeli leaders are concerned about “overplaying the ‘existential threat’ card”. “[Do Israelis really want to bomb Iran?](#)”, *Foreign Policy*, January 12, 2012.
- *The New York Times* warns that a military strike on Iran would be a disaster, and calls for renewed diplomacy. “[Dangerous tension with Iran](#)”, January 12, 2012.
- Columnist David Ignatius argues that the United States needs to establish an intelligence-oriented back-channel with Iran to avoid inadvertent military conflict, and to assist in a diplomatic solution to the crisis. “[Iran and the U.S. need a way to communicate](#)”, *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2012.
- Columnist Fareed Zakaria details how Iran has been economically hurt and politically isolated by western sanctions, noting the risks of building up such pressure on the Iranian regime. “[Iran’s growing state of desperation](#)”, *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2012.
- Former Ambassadors William H. Luers and Thomas R. Pickering argue that the failure to re-engage Iran diplomatically could lead to a catastrophic war. “[Military action isn’t the only solution to Iran](#)”, *The Washington Post*, December 30, 2011.