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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

November 22, 2022



U.S. Should Seize the Chance to Support Iranian Protesters and Bring Down the Regime

Dear Friend of FLAME:

The murder of a 22-year-old Iranian woman—Mahsa (Jina) Amini—by Iran’s morality police for violating the country’s head-covering code has sparked unprecedented and (so far) unrelenting militant protests against the dictatorship of the Islamic Republic.

Protesters have paid a steep price: At least 326 killed to date by Iranian security forces, some 15,000 arrested and thousands reportedly sentenced to death. Yet unrest continues unabated in the streets countrywide.

The United States should seize this opportunity to support regime change in the world's most belligerent country—run by terrorists hellbent on developing nuclear weapons and sowing global jihad. This requires a strategy that places Iran's leaders under strong economic, communications, diplomatic and military pressures.

Above all, it's time for the Biden Administration to shift gears away from appeasement of the Iranian regime to strong measures—a vigorous, coherent strategy that both creates pain for the regime and fortifies the resistance inside Iran and internationally.

Several indicators on the ground encourage an assertive American strategy now.

First, public support of these protests seems greater and more widespread than ever—spanning a wide range of ethnic, age and regional groups, as well both religious and secular sectors.

Second, unlike previous Iranian resistance movements, this one is being boldly led by women, with a focus on fundamental civil rights—women’s rights—rather than on more general economic or political issues.

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Finally, we haven't seen such inspiring courage in the face of massive police crackdowns and huge personal risks by protesters in the past.

On the other hand, Iran's current uprising needs help if it is to continue . . . let alone succeed in replacing the theocracy with more enlightened leadership. Indeed, despite encouraging factors, the movement lacks necessary features it still needs to accomplish a meaningful result.

If Mr. Biden truly cares about the Iranian people—as he forcefully articulated recently—he will focus on facilitating several missing elements for a successful insurrection.

Above all, the current effort lacks any prominent internal leadership. So far we've seen no cracks in the Iranian leadership—no one willing to oppose the ruling hierarchy and facilitate the transition to a new regime.

While the U.S. clearly cannot parachute an “inside” leader into Iran, perhaps our intelligence—or that of Israel—can identify those willing to break ranks, to whom we can provide covert support. Every successful revolution has insiders who first secretly, then openly promote it.

Likewise, the insurgents lack forceful, respected leadership outside Iran. Where is their Nelson Mandela, their Aung San Suu Kyi? Again, such people may not exist currently in Iran's movement, but strategically it behooves the U.S. to support those capable of outside leadership.

The last ingredient for a successful revolution, of course, is the turn of military and security forces to the side of the insurgents. This happened in Iran's own revolution in 1979 and again in Egypt's Arab Spring uprising in 2011. It's unlikely the U.S. or its allies can precipitate such a turning point, but we can be ready when and if it occurs.

Above all, when we consider U.S. options, we need also to avoid stigma of outside instigation. This is exactly the kind of foreign influence Supreme Leader Khamenei already blames for the unrest. Ham-handed efforts to facilitate the revolt directly would surely backfire in Iran and on the world stage.

However, there are five aggressive steps the U.S. can—and should—take strategically now to support the protestors . . . without risking the label of “outside agitator.”

1. Stop the Iran Nuclear Negotiations definitively. These conversations were doomed from the start, and the State Department now admits they're going nowhere. If the U.S. and European nations make a show of canceling the negotiations, it will send a loud message of condemnation to Iran and of support to the protesters.

2. Force open communications in Iranian society. The U.S. has wisely already licensed SpaceX's Starlink satellite to operate in Iran. But an initiative to produce and provide more Starlink terminals is needed, especially as the regime further blocks free-flowing information. On the other side, Western powers

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should actively engage in cyber-warfare to disrupt Iran's efforts to censor websites and close down communications networks.

3. Ramp up sanctions and other economic pressures. While President Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign did not stop the mullahs' nuclear quest, it pinched them hard and continues to erode their popularity as Iran's economy sinks deeper. Many remaining agencies and individuals in the ruling apparatus are vulnerable to additional sanctions and penalties—which should be exercised immediately.

This would include restoration of the "snapback" provisions of Iran Nuclear Deal of 2015, which the U.S. and several European nations have begun—but which the Biden administration withdrew. All JCPOA participants should enforce the snapback sanctions.

4. Banish Iranian participation in international organizations and forums. Iran should be designated *persona non grata* in U.N. agencies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as banned from participation in sporting events, scientific forums and academic meetings.

Finally, visas should be cancelled for all Iranian elites—including those for more than 90,000 children of powerful Iranians studying in the U.S., European and other countries.

5. Demonstrate U.S. military readiness. The Biden administration has obsessively resisted any hint of military threat toward Iran during recent nuclear negotiations. But that was before talks failed and the current Iranian insurrection began. The U.S. and our regional allies should fortify military assets in the Gulf of Hormuz and be ready to shut down Iranian shipping traffic if necessary.

Above all, the U.S. needs a strategy that forcefully reduces Iran's ability to wreak havoc in the Middle East—and cripples its ability to stifle dissent against its authoritarian regime.

Please point out to friends, family, colleagues—and in letters to the editor—that the U.S. has a moral and material interest in seeing the mullahs' iron grip removed from the throats of Iran's people. We should implement a broad, assertive strategy of resistance that supports Iranians' bid for freedom.

Emphasize, too, that while the U.S. should explore and exercise many options short of military conflict, preserving a military option is always the most reliable way to ensure diplomatic success.

I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to forward this message to friends, visit FLAME's lively [Facebook page](#) and review the P.S. immediately below. It describes FLAME's new *hasbarah* campaign—"Democracy Thrives in Israel"—which exposes false claims that Israel deprives Arab Israeli citizens and Palestinian Arabs of their rights.

Best regards,

James Sinkinson, President

Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Despite Israel's guarantee of civil liberties and equal treatment for all its citizens—including two million Arab Israelis—Israel is still falsely accused of being an apartheid state. Despite Israel and the Palestinians agreeing that the Palestinian Authority will administer its own civil affairs, including elections, Israel is accused of violating human rights because Palestinians can't vote in Israeli elections. I think you'll agree that truth is the only antidote to this lie. FLAME's new hasbarah message—called "[Democracy Thrives in Israel](#)" publicizes a new, independent "Democracy Index" in which Israel is named the world's 23rd most successful democracy—ahead of the United States, Italy, Spain and 139 other nations. This new editorial message also clarifies that Palestinians' repression is due overwhelmingly to their two ruling dictatorships. (Palestinians are ranked #109 in the Democracy Index—as "authoritarian.") I hope you'll review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which is scheduled to run nationwide in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times* and *San Jose Mercury News*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Harris and President Biden. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion—and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a [donation](#) now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to [donate now](#). Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Biden stay committed to fighting antisemitic actions by individuals, politicians and commercial companies.

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