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February 17, 2026



*Cheerful American real-estate negotiators try to convince Iranian mullahs to disobey Allah, by giving up nuclear weapons and their commitment to conquer Western civilization (AI-imagined photo). Does President Trump really believe he can make a deal with Iranian fanatics?*

# Is Trump “chickening out” by negotiating with Iran’s fanatics—or does he mean business?

Word count: 1,043; estimated reading time: 3.9 minutes

Dear Friend of Israel, Friend of FLAME:

When thousands took to the streets of Iran demanding an end to the country’s tyrannical Islamist regime, President Trump declared, “Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING...HELP IS ON ITS WAY.” One month later, that help hasn’t materialized. Instead, Trump called off plans to strike Iran in favor of diplomacy, even as the mullahs continued killing thousands of their own people in cold blood.

President Trump’s delay in carrying out threats to strike Iran for its slaughter of protesters, continuing nuclear weapon development and fortifying its ballistic missile capability threatens to squander American leverage in the Middle East, potentially permitting Iran’s aggression to destabilize the region and endanger the Western world.

This delay may be another example of the President’s “TACO” habit—Trump Always Chickens Out—his pattern of issuing threats then delaying or backing off to allow negotiations.

Trump’s insistence on engaging with Iran’s lying, cheating Islamist regime increasingly echoes mistakes made by the Obama and Biden Administrations, whose negotiations strengthened Iran, allowing it to advance its nuclear program, its missile program and its terrorist proxies.

If Trump fails to act, he betrays the Iranian people suffering under their Islamist oppressors, as well as Americans, Israelis and Western nations who take him at his word.

The President’s go-slow strategy seems to stem from failing to understand Islamist values and global mission. While Team Trump loves transactions—real estate-style deals in which both parties prosper—the mullahs care nothing for deals, but are religiously committed to long-term conquest of Middle East and Western lands by Shiite Islam.

Trump also fails to recognize the Iranian strategy of temporizing—stretching out “talks” as they quietly continue fomenting jihad. In fact, Iran is already now using Trump’s delay to fortify its nuclear program and repair its ballistic missile systems.

Fortunately, there’s still hope President Trump will keep his word to make Iran pay for its belligerence. But when will he finally realize that negotiating with the mullahs is pointless and turn to the only proven successful strategy for persuading Islamist tyrants—force?

**How does Trump’s “TACO” habit apply here?** TACO was first coined to refer to Trump’s pattern of issuing aggressive tariff threats, then backing off to allow negotiations. He announced his “Liberation Day” tariffs last April, for example, but following a huge market sell-off he backed off and paused many of the tariffs to allow for negotiations.

No wonder today critics are applying the TACO label to Trump’s prolonged negotiations with Iran. *The Times of Israel*, for instance, questioned if Trump would act decisively on Iran or if it would be “TACO time.”

**Will Trump repeat the mistakes of Obama and Biden?** Both Presidents Obama and Biden deceived themselves, thinking negotiations could persuade Iran to curtail its nuclear development. In 2015, Obama

concluded a deal that would have allowed Iran to build an atomic bomb as soon as restrictions mandated by the agreement expired. Though Trump withdrew from this deal in 2018, during his first term, Biden futilely sought to revive the agreement.

Meanwhile, Iran advanced uranium enrichment to near-weapons-grade levels, amassed a larger fissile stockpile, earned over \$140 billion in oil revenues, and funded proxies Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis. By the end of Biden's term, Iran emerged stronger than ever, with nuclear thresholds closer, alliances with countries like China and Russia bolstered, and its proxies emboldened, leading, for example, to Hamas's October 7<sup>th</sup> massacre in Israel and Houthi attacks on international shipping. This experience underscores the folly of negotiating with Iran's mullahs.

**The price of a TACO on Iran would be disaster.** Trump threatened that if Iran "violently kills peaceful protesters," the U.S. would "come to their rescue," adding, "We are locked and loaded and ready to go." He was hours from ordering strikes on Iran, but paused after Iran promised that executions of protesters had stopped—which was a lie. In fact, Iran has shown no signs of cooperating on any of the outstanding issues.

If Trump doesn't deliver on his threats, he'll be abandoning Iran's protesters, showing he's not serious on human rights, undermining global trust and empowering Iranian autocrats. He will also appear weak and indecisive at home and abroad. Furthermore, Israel threatens to act unilaterally against Iran if Trump's diplomacy fails, which could strain alliances in the region.

**Trump underestimates Islamists' commitment to conquest.** Iran's mullahs believe Allah commands Muslims to conquer the world. They view diplomacy not as a means to achieve peace, but to achieve a "hudna"—a tactical ceasefire used to rearm and strike enemies anew. Peace is only possible when the infidel is defeated—now, ten years or 100 years from now—and Islam reigns supreme.

Iran and all its proxies abide by this principle. For example, senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan recently said Hamas wouldn't disarm until Israel was "eliminated," adding, "if the establishment of a Palestinian state is in the cards, it is possible to have some kind of agreement on a hudna."

In other words, Trump's negotiations with Iran will at best yield another hudna—a chance for Iran to regain strength and attack America and its allies again.

**While Team Trump dallies, Iran rebuilds.** Indeed, Iran has already used the time that Trump has spent talking to enrich uranium to 84%—just shy of weapons grade. Satellite imagery has also shown that Iran is fortifying its nuclear sites and repairing its missile launch sites in anticipation of conflict.

**The West prays Trump will keep his word.** Although Trump prefers diplomacy, he's also shown willingness to use force, most recently launching a daring military operation to capture Venezuelan dictator Nicolas Maduro and bring an end to his oppressive regime. Moreover, there are strong signs that Trump will strike Iran soon. He has moved a massive armada into the Middle East and has just ordered America's largest aircraft carrier to join it. Trump also recently admitted, according to Israel's Ynet News, that Iran has not historically followed through on agreements, suggesting he is well aware of Iran's reputation for treachery. Hope abides.

Please make the point when speaking with family, friends, colleagues—or in letters to the editor—that Americans—and the world—need Trump to make good on his word, rather than lapse into TACO mode, making the U.S. look weak before its enemies and allies.

If you agree we need to spread this truth, please use your email browser to forward this Hotline issue to fellow lovers of Israel—and encourage them to join us by subscribing to the Hotline at no charge.

Best regards,  
Jason Shvili, Contributing Editor  
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Surely you've recently read of some celebrity, politician, radical student, foreign head of state or media pundit slander Israel with the "Gaza genocide" lie. Many who spread this lie are ignorant, but most are anti-Israel haters. They care nothing for the truth. The tragedy is, when they utter the Gaza genocide falsehood, too few knowledgeable people—and virtually no media—stand up to refute it. Indeed, when you share the simple facts, the genocide lie crumbles. Upon learning that Israel conducts its war against Hamas terrorists with the highest ethical standards—and that *nothing* Israel does in Gaza fits the definition of genocide—fair-minded people quickly see through the lie. I hope you'll agree that we supporters of the Israel-U.S. relationship need to speak out. FLAME's new *hasbarah*—explanatory message—"Facts Shatter Gaza Genocide Lies"—describes what genocide is *and is not* and proves factually that Israel's tactics in the war are ethical and righteous. It also reveals demographic data showing that the Palestinian population in Gaza is actually increasing. Finally, it notes that those who spread the Gaza genocide lie fit the classic definition of antisemites. Please review this convincing, fact-based editorial, which FLAME is about to publish to millions—in leading social media, as well as in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *Denver Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, the President and Vice President. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to **support us** with a donation.

