

# UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

**Dr. Shirin Ebadi:**

## **“Rebuilding US –Iran Relations”**

**Hosted by University of California, Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation,  
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US-Iranian political relations, strained since the beginning of the Islamic revolution, have become even more tenuous since Iran’s case was referred to the UN Security Council. Since the onset of the revolution, the Iranian government has constantly claimed that the US interferes in its internal affairs, beginning with the August 1953 coup that resulted in the overthrow of Dr. Mosadegh and reaching its zenith during the last ten years of Mohammad Reza Shah’s reign. The income from oil was spent on American weapons and the employment of American advisors. In reaction to this aberrant policy, the Iranian government countered by acting in an even more unlawful manner by taking American diplomats hostage in 1979, an act which not only went against international laws but also moral values. The American government in turn froze all of the Iranian government’s assets in the US and initiated economic sanctions against Iran. These sanctions expanded to such an extent that they even affected the field of science, with American scientific journals refraining from publishing articles written by Iranian scientists. In addition, Iranian students were banned from studying in fields such as nuclear physics as well as new and advanced technology.

US-Iranian ties were becoming more strained by the day and the recent nuclear energy issue has added to the problem. The Iranian government claims – I stress – CLAIMS that they intend to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but the American government does not believe this claim for many reasons:

- A- In Iran, decisions are made behind closed doors and the people are unable to watch over the government's actions. Therefore, it is natural that claims made by such a government cannot easily be trusted.
- B- The Iranian government has, for a period of approximately 17 years, been conducting research and activities without the supervision of the IAEA.
- C- The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has constantly been a threat against Israel. The hosting of the Holocaust conference, support of Hezbollah, and the expressed wish of eliminating the state of Israel are matters that the US government cannot ignore.

Alongside these three issues, there are other minor points in play such as the violation of human rights in Iran, and the establishment of democratic rule in Iran by, or with the help of the US. If we review the aforementioned issues we may conclude several points:

- 1- Violation of human rights in Iran and the lack, or non existence of democracy in Iran cannot be the main reason for differences between the US and Iran, since Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain are considered close allies of the United States who remain far behind Iran in their respect for human rights and democracy.

Therefore, American support for these governments has resulted in the dissatisfaction of these nations' youth and liberal elements toward the US.

- 2- The US opposition of the spread of nuclear energy throughout the world is also an inappropriate claim. The US is currently aiding India and Pakistan, another one of the US allies, already has a nuclear bomb. We should not forget that Perviz Mosharraf did not attain power through elections and Pakistan has served as a base for terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Also, Pakistani Muslims are much more fundamentalist than the Muslims in Iran. Therefore, the issue of the Iranian government having or not having access to a nuclear bomb is also not the main reason for the rift between the US and Iran.
- 3- But the subject of Israel is a fundamental issue, which until it has been resolved, will not allow US-Iranian relations to normalize. The Islamic Republic's support of the Hezbollah in Lebanon, support for Hamas, aiding and cooperating with Syria, and Mr. Ahmadinejad's political errors - such as his hosting of the Holocaust conference - causes Israel to feel constantly threatened and seriously endangered, and since Israel's lobby in the US is very influential, they will definitely not allow the normalization of US-Iranian relations.

And on the other hand we should not forget that Iran is a country with rich resources such as oil, gas and uranium and must move in step with American economic policies in the area of globalization--- insubordination by a

country like Iran could serve as a good example for other countries to follow, and this is a weak point of US international policies.

Now this question must be answered: why does the Iranian government support Palestine to such an extent, that it is willing to endanger its own people's peace and security for the security of Palestine? I will only point out one case — after the end of the Lebanon war, Hezbollah announced that with the help of the Iranian government, they would pay each family whose house had been damaged by the war, \$1000 a month for a period of one year, making Hezbollah even more popular in Lebanon. But the people of Iran were not happy with this situation, since evidence of the destruction resulting from the 8 year Iran-Iraq war still exists. The victims of the Bam earthquake remain homeless and such aid should have been directed to the people of Iran and not the people of Lebanon.

In my opinion, supporting Palestine serves the interest of Iran by enabling the IRI to reach its great ambition, that is to be the forerunner in the world of Islam. From the beginning of the revolution, the Iranian government has always spoken of exporting the revolution, and along the same lines, helped the Hezbollah of Lebanon and did all the things I mentioned before. In fact, sponsoring Palestine and opposing the US makes Iran more powerful and popular in the region. It may interest you to know that in some of the press conferences in which I attend and where I criticize the violation of human rights in Iran, some Arab Journalists criticize me saying that now is not a good time to bring up such subjects, and that I should support my own government.

The result of the United States' mistaken policies in the region is that the IRI is becoming more and more popular by the day. Maybe regional governments do not support Iran but their people, and particularly the Arab youth, support Iran and as such should the US attack Iran, the entire region will plunge into chaos and there will be an explosion greater than the one in Iraq. I hope that the US will not once again make the same mistake.

In my opinion until the Israel-Palestine peace talks do not reach a conclusion, the Middle East will never experience calm – whether or not the Islamic Republic has nuclear weapons.

Allow me to share a personal experience with you. In order to cure my Migraine problems I visited a doctor who specializes in acupuncture and he stuck a couple of needles into my ankle. I said to him that my head aches, why are you sticking needles into my ankle? He responded that your head's nerves are here. Now the tale of US Iran political relations' is the same – the nerve of this relation is in the peace between Israel and Palestine – let us ask ourselves: Why should innocent Israeli youth get killed? Why shouldn't Israel have security? Why are they destroying the Palestinians' homes upon the heads of their innocent people...and thousands of other questions? If one-day peace is established between these two countries, the whole region will be stabilized.

But until that day is upon us, what should be done?

If we agree that war is a grave mistake, then we should logically favor a dialog between the US and Iran. These two countries must resolve their

problems through direct talks. These talks should be public and clear and in line with the interests of the people of both countries and should promote human rights and democracy. The talks should be held at the level of the heads of the governments, the parliaments of the two countries, and the civil society of Iran and the US. In May 2006, there was a gathering between the civil societies of Iran and the US in Vienna, which was instigated by the Nobel Women's Initiative and resulted in the issuance of a joint resolution. We also had a meeting with Mr. Al-Baradei. Obviously one gathering is not sufficient and such meetings should take place at different levels between students, journalists, feminists, human rights advocates, lawyers and artists.

Governments should accept that war and peace are not issues that only concern the presidents or authorities, but involve the lives of the people. The people should decide, and people can make the right decisions only when they have sufficient knowledge and information. Therefore, public awareness of the dangers of a possible war is the duty of all those in favor of peace. I thank you very much for your patience and attentiveness, and will now hand off to my esteemed colleague Professor Judy Williams who will continue our discussions.

