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Protect the Iran Nuclear Agreement

The Fruits of Diplomacy

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), more commonly known as the Iran Nuclear Agreement, is one of the great diplomatic achievements of recent times. Thanks to steadfast diplomacy, the world can rest assured that Iran is not currently pursuing nuclear weapons, and if at any point Iran decided to start down that path, the world will know about it with more than enough time to respond. The accomplishments and benefits of the JCPOA include:

- Verifiably moving Iran's [breakout time](#)¹ – the amount of time it would take for Iran to produce enough fissile material for one bomb – from 2-3 months to more than one year.
 - Iran has shipped out 98 percent of its enriched uranium.
 - Iran has decommissioned roughly two-thirds of its centrifuges.
 - Iran has filled the core of the heavy water reactor at its Arak facility with concrete so it cannot be used to produce plutonium.
 - Iran has agreed to the most extensive and technologically advanced inspections regime in history.
- Preventing a war with Iran by serving as the only viable alternative to ensuring Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons.
- Strengthening moderates in Iran, as demonstrated by the [success of moderate politicians](#)² in Iran's recent parliamentary elections.

New Sanctions Are Unnecessary and Would Undermine the JCPOA

While nothing in the JCPOA prohibits the U.S. from sanctioning Iran for non-nuclear related reasons, imposing new sanctions at this time would likely be perceived by Iran as a de facto violation of the agreement. This would empower Iran's hardliners and facilitate the very behaviours the non-nuclear sanctions currently in place are designed to discourage. It could also give Iran pretext to abandon any or all of its commitments under the JCPOA, which could lead to the complete collapse of the agreement and put war with Iran back on the table.

- Ballistic missile sanctions
 - The Obama administration already [responded](#)³ to Iran's recent ballistic missile testing by sanctioning 11 Iranian individuals and companies.
 - Nothing in the JCPOA prohibits Iran from testing ballistic missiles.

¹ The Editorial Board, *A Safer World, Thanks to the Iran Deal*, New York Times, January 17, 2016

² Naji, Kasra, *Iran Elections: Hardliners Lose Parliament to Rouhani Allies*, BBC, April 30, 2016

³ Korte, Gregory, *U.S. Sanctions Iran's Ballistic Missile Program*, USA Today, January 17, 2016

- Terrorism/human rights related sanctions
 - Many of the non-nuclear sanctions that the US has placed on Iran remain in effect. Passing new sanctions in response to Iran’s sponsorship of terrorist organizations would be redundant and harmful to the JCPOA.
- Re-imposing lifted sanctions for non-nuclear reasons
 - If the U.S. imposes new non-nuclear related sanctions on the same individuals or institutions that received sanctions relief under the JCPOA, that [may violate the agreement](#)⁴. [Paragraph 26 of the JCPOA](#)⁵ states that the U.S. “will refrain from re-introducing or re-imposing the sanctions specified in Annex II that it has ceased applying under this JCPOA.”

Good Faith Efforts to Ensure Iran Realizes the Benefits of Sanctions Relief

Despite fulfilling its core commitments under the JCPOA, Iran has not experienced as much economic benefit from sanctions relief as it expected, a problem that a hardline approach by Congress or the incoming administration would, perhaps by design, exacerbate. [Paragraph 26 of the JCPOA](#)⁶ states that the U.S. “will make best efforts in good faith to sustain this JCPOA and to prevent interference with the realisation of the full benefit by Iran of the sanctions lifting specified in Annex II.” Steps the U.S. can take to fulfill these commitments include:

- Refrain from passing new sanctions or reinstating sanctions lifted under the JCPOA.
- Maintain and reinforce the [current policy](#)⁷ that the U.S. will not penalize individuals or institutions for pursuing legitimate business opportunities with Iran.
- Work with the international business community to ensure Iran’s increased access to trade, technology, finance, and energy sectors.

Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **Oppose new sanctions on Iran or other legislation that could harm the success of the agreement**, including sanctions related to sponsorship of terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missile testing.
- **Support efforts to ensure Iran benefits from sanctions relief.** The Obama administration has worked to remove sanctions-related barriers to [foreign investment](#)⁸ in Iran, and Congress should encourage the incoming administration to continue engaging in affirmative steps to ensure Iran realizes the benefits of sanctions relief.
- **Write op-eds, do other media outreach, or make floor statements** highlighting the success of the JCPOA and the importance of ensuring that both Iran and the U.S. are meeting their commitments. January 16, 2017 marks the one year anniversary of the successful implementation of the JCPOA, making it a great time for media outreach.

⁴ Cullis, Tyler, *Policy Memo: Understanding U.S. Sanctions-Related Obligations Under the JCPOA*, National Iranian American Council, August 8, 2016

⁵ JCPOA, Main Text, ¶ 26.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mousavian, Seyed Hossein, and Reza Nasri, *Obama Needs to Protect the Iran Deal*, New York Times, June 20, 2016

⁸ Norman, Laurence, *U.S., EU Urge European Banks, Businesses to Invest in Iran*, Wall Street Journal, May 19, 2016