



FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

... a Quaker lobby in the public interest

October 21, 2009

Rep. Howard Berman
Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Howard Berman,

The Friends Committee on National Legislation was one of eleven national religious organizations that sent the attached letter to Congress October 1 urging Congress not to move on more Iran sanctions legislation at this time, including the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act (H.R. 2194).

We write now specifically to urge you not to hold a hearing to mark up H.R. 2194.

We note that in your statement announcing a hearing date of October 28, you said that only when it is clear that the options of diplomatic engagement, UN sanctions, and other multilateral sanctions will not yield timely result should the U.S. turn to additional unilateral and extraterritorial sanctions. We note, too, that you indicated in your statement that you did not expect committee markup to lead to quick floor action on H.R. 2194.

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer said on the House floor October 15, however, that he would bring H.R. 2194 to the full House within "a matter of days" of your committee hearing. This would turn your carefully considered timeline and sequence of actions upside down. The only remedy to ensuring that U.S. sanctions not eclipse engagement, UN, and other multilateral actions is to delay your markup hearing, until these avenues toward peace have run their course.

In the attached letter we and our cosigners noted five reasons not to move on additional U.S. sanctions now:

- 1) more sanctions are more likely to hinder than help diplomatic engagement
- 2) more sanctions will harm Iran's reform movement (whose leaders have appealed to the U.S. not to impose more sanctions)
- 3) there is no imminent threat from an Iranian nuclear weapon (Mossad assesses that Iran cannot produce a deliverable weapon before 2014)
- 4) further economic sanctions are extremely unlikely to improve Iranian conduct, as even Iran's strongest critics in the U.S. admit; and

5) the impact of existing sanctions on Iran is severe; Iran already stands much to gain by reaching a nuclear agreement to end sanctions.

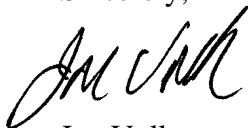
We ask you to consider these and a sixth and very important reason to avert congressional action that will make matters worse. The U.S. commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, made the following statement to the Institute of Strategic Studies in London on October 1:

Iran, of course, being, you know, in such proximity to Afghanistan and having significant influence inside Afghanistan, is a big player. They, in my view, they have a lot of very positive influence inside Afghanistan, some of it cultural, some of it financial, just things that any neighbor would have to try to build the stability. I think that if Iran takes a very mature look at a stable Afghanistan and support the government of Afghanistan, then we'll be — we'll be in good shape. If they were to choose not to do that, and they were to choose to support insurgents, I think that would be a significant miscalculation.

General McChrystal's statement makes clear the importance of U.S.-Iran relations to U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. Moving on additional U.S. sanctions against Iran will not help to solve the problems posed by Iran's nuclear program. That action could, however, lead to a deterioration of relations with Iran resulting in a serious adverse impact on the U.S. in Afghanistan.

We recognize that you are under considerable pressure to move additional Iran sanctions legislation, but we hope that a rational assessment of U.S. national interests, including the interest in resolving the problems posed by Iran's nuclear program, will prompt you not to move H.R. 2194 now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Volk", written in a cursive style.

Joe Volk