

What Obama Should Say to Iran

By Debi Ghate

Thirty years after the hostage crisis, Iranians are bravely challenging their government. Despite the theocracy's attempt to crush these protests, Iranians have once again taken to the streets.

Imagine what might happen—the potential benefit to us and to Iran—if instead of declaring that we seek “a relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran based upon mutual interests and mutual respect,” President Obama had said the following on November 4th, 2009.

“Thirty years ago today, the American Embassy in Tehran was seized. The 444 days that began on November 4, 1979 deeply affected the lives of courageous Americans who were unjustly held hostage. Rather than atone for this, Iran’s theocratic regime has clenched its iron fist to retain power. Once again, we have witnessed the beating and intimidation of Iranian protestors. I strongly condemn these unjust actions of the Iranian regime.

“My message tonight is to those Iranians voicing their opposition to the Ayatollah, making it clear his regime does not represent them.

“To those among you standing up in the face of threats; to those among you saying ‘We will continue to speak even if you, Supreme leader, forbid it’; to those among you deciding that it is time for freedom in Iran—we say: you have our encouragement and our respect.

“To those among you who are wholesale rejecting the oppression of theocratic rule—we offer you our moral sanction. You see, we share your goal of ending the Iranian theocracy and of eliminating the threat it poses to our own nation. We have had the moral right to end it for decades, as have you.

“To those in Iran desperately seeking liberty: rejecting theocratic rule is critical, but what are you fighting for? Seize this opportunity to fight for a nation founded on the radical principle of individual rights. As Americans once fought for their independence, so can you. Life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness: these are your inalienable rights. The time is now to fight to create a free nation upholding these ideals.

“Now I recognize that my statements may make some Americans anxious and uncertain. But I have no doubts.

“It is time for America to unequivocally state that she does not recognize the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran has not had a legitimate government worthy of our recognition for decades. The country has been ruled by a series of theocrats. Let us not mince words: they are murderous dictators.

“For decades, the Iranian regime has repeatedly declared itself our enemy, chanting ‘Death to America’ and openly attacking our citizens. We’ve known it since it took our embassy staff hostage in 1979. We’ve known it in the form of multiple Tehran-backed attacks on Americans

since then: 1983 in Beirut, where explosives killed 241 people; 1985 onboard TWA 847, where Iranian-trained Hezbollah fighters killed a Navy diver; 1996 at the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, where bombs killed 19; and the list goes on. America will no longer evade that this regime has orchestrated and participated in three decades of deadly assaults upon her people.

“This is a regime that calls for jihad on the West; for the violent imposition of sharia law; for Islamic totalitarianism. It provides the leadership for the Islamist movement: educating, training, and financing a multitude of terrorist organizations, including those responsible for the September 11th attacks on our soil. We have nothing to say to the Iranian regime—except that we will no longer repeat the grave errors of our past. We know what you stand for, and what threat you pose.

“But we have much to say to you, the courageous protestors, because you too know what your government stands for, and you despise it.

“It will not be easy. Our thoughts are with you as you face imminent danger and uncertainty. It will take courage and conviction. But we are with you as you take your first important step towards real revolution. You have rejected the religious fist that smashes you down. You have spoken. Stand firm, and we will stand with you.”

Unfortunately we will not hear this speech. Only a President acting on a foreign policy that properly defends the rights of its own citizens—a foreign policy of principled self-interest and justice—would take this stand.

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