

Iran deal is a significant step forward for peace. Here's why.

There's prominent support for an action plan that takes these specific steps.

By Barry B. Cohen, James V. Roth, Linda Thomson and Catherine Murphy

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As members of the Minnesota Peace Project, we believe that the Iran nuclear agreement — or, officially, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) — is a significant step forward in ensuring that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful and that Iran will not seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons. We are pleased that U.S. Sens. Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar, along with U.S. Reps. Keith Ellison, Betty McCollum and Tim Walz, have said they will vote for the agreement, and we urge the other members of our Minnesota congressional delegation to follow suit.

The JCPOA is exacting, comprehensive and replete with safeguards that guarantee its execution. Key features making it worthy of congressional support include:

- 1) Uranium enrichment by Iran is strictly regulated for at least 15 years, and a 97 percent reduction in the country's existing enriched uranium stockpile is required. All centrifuges and related infrastructure will be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during the 15 years.
- 2) Iran must remove the core of its nuclear reactor at Arak and redesign it to render the production of weapons-grade plutonium impossible. For 15 years, it cannot build heavy water reactors.
- 3) The U.N. Security Council will restrict Iranian arms sales for five years and ballistic missile development for eight.
- 4) Verification entails the most intrusive and rigorous inspections regime ever devised. International inspectors will have timely access to any perceived suspicious site, including investigation of all existing military installations. In addition, the IAEA will monitor Iran's centrifuge production facilities and entire nuclear supply chain for 20 years and its uranium mining for 25 years.
- 5) Iran will receive relief from multilateral and national nuclear-related sanctions only after confirmation of its compliance with agreement terms. In a "reciprocal step-by-step process," the IAEA must first verify that Iran has completed rollback of specified element in its nuclear program

before the U.N. Security Council and U.S., respectively, suspend their nuclear-related sanctions. With limited exceptions, the U.S. ban on trade with Iran will remain in force.

6) A detailed dispute-resolution process outlines steps for negotiating differences between parties. The U.N. Security Council has final authority in such matters, as well as in lifting or reinstating sanctions approved in previous resolutions. Permanent members of the Security Council can also unilaterally decide to reimpose their own sanctions.

Many knowledgeable and prominent individuals are publicly supporting the agreement, including:

- Twenty-nine top U.S. physicists, who have signed a letter praising technical features of the accord, which they characterize as ‘innovative’ and “stringent.”
- A bipartisan group of more than 50 retired military leaders, senior foreign-policy officials, ambassadors and leading national security experts, who have released a statement supporting the agreement framework — including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, national security advisers Brent Scowcroft, Sandy Berger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, retired Adm. William Fallon, and recent Senate Committee Chairs Dick Lugar, Carl Levin and Nancy Kassebaum.
- More than 50 senior members of Israel’s defense establishment who, in an open letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dated Aug. 3, stated that it is in Israel’s best interests to support implementation of the agreement, initiate steps toward reaching a two-state solution and establish a moderate Sunni-Western axis to combat extremist forces. Signers included former Shin Bet chiefs Amy Ayalon and Carmi Gillon, former Knesset member Roman Bronfman and former police chief Assaf Heffetz.
- Leaders of more than 90 nations, including the six Arab states of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the 15 member states of the U.N. Security Council.

While the JCPOA is not perfect — as most supporters, including our senators, attest — we see no better alternative. Most if not all opponents are against any agreement with Iran. We see cautious reason for optimism. The JCPOA, though specific to the Iran nuclear program, bodes well for multilateral settlement of other Middle East conflicts. World leaders have created a cooperative stepwise framework for enforcing an agreement diplomatically and, only if necessary, militarily.

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