

January 14, 2014

To: Members of the U.S. Senate

The following 62 organizations are writing to warn that Senate passage of new Iran sanctions would critically endanger the possibility of a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear standoff with Iran, increasing the likelihood of a nuclear-armed Iran and an unnecessary and costly war. We call on you to not cosponsor S.1881 (the “Nuclear Weapon-Free Iran Act of 2013”) and strongly discourage Senate consideration of new Iran sanctions while negotiations proceed.

The Joint Plan of Action signed between the P5+1 and Iran in November boosts American and regional security by freezing and rolling back Iran’s nuclear program for the first time in nearly a decade. The agreement also institutes unprecedented transparency for international inspectors, including daily inspection of Iran’s enrichment facilities.

However, as part of the agreement, the U.S. has agreed to “refrain from imposing new nuclear-related sanctions” on Iran. Even with the delay mechanisms included in S.1881, U.S. and Iranian officials warn that new Congressional sanctions would kill the deal. The White House has added that new Congressional sanctions would be perceived as a sign of bad faith by allies critical to the enforcement of the sanctions regime, including the other permanent members of the UN Security Council. As a result, new sanctions will erode rather than strengthen our leverage for negotiations. Further, an unclassified U.S. intelligence assessment warns that, “new sanctions would undermine the prospects for a successful comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran.”

S.1881 also sets insurmountable demands for a comprehensive nuclear deal by insisting that Iran dismantle its entire “nuclear infrastructure, including enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and facilities.” Such a demand is a poison pill for negotiations and is not necessary to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

Further, any comprehensive deal will require trading in existing sanctions for Iranian nuclear concessions. But the sanctions provisions included in S.1881 could only be waived by the President for a final nuclear deal if Iran agrees to the zero enrichment demand, effectively eliminating the President’s ability to offer sanctions relief. Rather than attack Presidential waiver authority, Congress should ensure that the President has full authority to lift sanctions as part of a comprehensive deal.

By foreclosing diplomatic prospects, new sanctions would set us on a path to war. The American people have made it clear that they do not want another war in the Middle East and strongly support pursuing diplomatic prospects until they are exhausted. It would be the height of irresponsibility to step in and undercut diplomatic negotiations before this opportunity has the chance to bear fruit.

We strongly urge you to withhold co-sponsorship of S.1881 and delay consideration of new Iran sanctions while negotiations are ongoing.

Sincerely,

National Iranian American Council
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Win Without War
Adventist Peace Fellowship
American Friends Service Committee
American Values Network
Americans for Peace Now
AntiWar.com
Augustinians Province of St. Thomas Villanova
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America
Berim
Center for Interfaith Engagement, Eastern Mennonite University
Center for International Policy
CODEPINK
Come Home America
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Council for a Livable World
CREDO
Daily Kos
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding
Evangelicals for Social Action
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Franciscan Action Network
Global Exchange
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
GlobalSolutions.org
Havaar
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
International Civil Society Action Network
Islamic Society of North America
J Street
Jewish Voice for Peace
Just Foreign Policy
Maryknoll Office For Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
MoveOn.org
Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice
Muslim Public Affairs Voice
Muslims for Progressive Values
New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good
On Earth Peace

Orthodox Peace Fellowship
Pax Christi International
Peace Action
Peace Action West
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Progressive Democrats of America
River University Chaplain
The Shalom Center
Shomer Shalom Network for Jewish Nonviolence
Society of the Divine Savior - American Province
Sojourners
Tikkun/The Network of Spiritual Progressives
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit
USAction
Veterans for Peace
Women's Action for New Directions
Young Democrats of America