

Avi Benlolo: How to stop Iran

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Despite the best intentions of U.S. President Obama's recent nuclear summit, there is legitimate fear that World War Three may be just around the corner. Iran, laughing in the face of excessive chatter about sanctions, is about to go nuclear and has repeatedly threatened Israel with annihilation. Israel, however, is unlikely to allow yet another Nazi-like regime to rise up and threaten Jewish existence. Wishful thinking notwithstanding, the Iranian leadership must come to understand that the Holocaust was a one time event.

I am fearful of an Iranian attack on Israel (or vice versa). Peace is preferable to war and urgent diplomacy is necessary to ease the tensions. World leaders are talking about sanctions against Iran in order to discourage its nuclear aspirations. Yet as everyone knows, sanctions are usually futile. The proposition of sanctions through repeated conferences is only a cover to buy time — an illusion to convince the general public that a breakthrough is imminent.

Sanctions and summits will not work because Iran has smartly cultivated alliances and trading partners; it is aligning itself with the sub-Saharan African nations as it has with several Latin American countries like Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua. By one account, Iran conducted no less than 20 ministerial trips to various parts of Africa last year and has solidified relationships with Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Sudan, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Nigeria. Iran shares extremely strong economic and diplomatic ties with South Africa which, like many of the above nations, benefits from Iranian oil and manufactured products.

Iran is not as dependent on superpowers like the United States, France, Russia, England and China as we are led to believe. Sanctions by these countries may have a small impact, but cannot stop Iran from fulfilling its nuclear fantasies. Iran is not dependent on these nations because its reach is complemented by a significant number of non-aligned trading partners throughout the world.

However, Canada's international reputation for human rights and freedoms places it in a unique position to stop Iran. Canada should immediately

places it in a unique position to stop Iran. Canada should immediately launch a campaign of aligned nations who will together press for an International Criminal Court (ICC) indictment of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ali Khamenei, the Republic's Supreme Leader.

Ahmadinejad and Khamenei can be brought before the ICC on charges for the Direct and Public Incitement to Commit Genocide. International law criminalizes genocide and history has taught us (most recently in Rwanda) that failure of the international community to act against the provocation and preparation of genocide has resulted in mass murder. If Ahmadinejad and Khamenei were to be indicted, this would be the first time leaders who promote hate and genocide toward another identifiable group are prevented from carrying out their intended action.

Backed by Khamenei, Ahmadinejad has made a number of irrational statements that warrant such an indictment, including, "As the Imam said, Israel must be wiped off the map"; "Are they human beings? 'They are like cattle, nay, more misguided.' A bunch of blood thirsty barbarians"; and "Very soon, this stain of disgrace will be purged from the centre of the Islamic world — and this is attainable." A nuclear weapon will soon back the Iranian regime's genocidal rhetoric.

As studies of genocide make clear, they happen systematically through a gradual progression of propaganda, incitement, separation and violence. The ICC has successfully indicted Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir for his actionable violence in Darfur. It may be of little coincidence that violence in that region has lessened due to this indictment.

An international indictment of Ahmadinejad and Khamenei would prevent Ahmadinejad in particular from receiving the red-carpet treatment at the United Nations in New York. An international warrant for his arrest would keep him from globe-trotting gleefully to peaceful parts of this world.

Canadians can stop Iran from acting on its genocidal tendencies. As a free country that promotes human rights, compassion and tolerance, it is our sacred duty and responsibility. What do we stand for otherwise?

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