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Barack Obama

Address on UN Security Council Sanctions Against Iran

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Alright. Good afternoon, everybody. Today, the United Nations Security Council voted overwhelmingly to sanction Iran for its continued failure to live up to its obligations. This resolution will put in place the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Iranian government, and it sends an unmistakable message about the international community's commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

For years, the Iranian government has failed to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has violated its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has ignored U.N. Security Council resolutions. And while Iran's leaders hide behind outlandish rhetoric, their actions have been deeply troubling. Indeed, when I took office just over 16 months ago, Iranian intransigence was well-established. Iran had gone from zero centrifuges spinning to several thousand, and the international community was divided about how to move forward.

Yet this day was not inevitable. We made clear from the beginning of my administration that the United States was prepared to pursue diplomatic solutions to address the concerns over Iranian nuclear programs. I extended the offer of engagement on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect.



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And together with the United Kingdom, with Russia, China, and Germany, we sat down with our Iranian counterparts. We offered the opportunity of a better relationship between Iran and the international community -- one that reduced Iran's political isolation, and increased its economic integration with the rest of the world. In short, we offered the Iranian government the prospect of a better future for its people, if -- and only if -- it lives up to its international obligations.

So there is no double standard at play here. We've made it clear, time and again, that we respect Iran's right, like all countries, to access peaceful nuclear energy. That is a right embedded in the NPT -- a treaty that has to serve as the safeguard against a world in which more nations acquire the world's most deadly weapons, and international law is treated as an empty promise. That NPT treaty was signed by all the parties involved, and it is a treaty that the United States has sought to strengthen from the day I took office, including through our own commitments to reduce America's nuclear arsenal.

So let me repeat: We recognize Iran's rights. But with those rights come responsibilities. And time and again, the Iranian government has failed to meet those responsibilities. Iran concealed a nuclear enrichment facility in Qom that raised serious questions about the nature of its program. Iran further violated its own obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions to suspend uranium enrichment. Instead, they're enriching up to 20 percent. It has failed to comply fully with IAEA's requirements. Indeed, Iran is the only NPT signatory in the world -- the only one -- that cannot convince the IAEA that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

That's why the international community was compelled to impose these serious consequences. These are the most comprehensive sanctions that the Iranian government has faced. They will impose restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities, its ballistic missile program, and, for the first time, its conventional military. They will put a new framework in place to stop Iranian smuggling, and crack down on Iranian banks and financial transactions. They target individuals, entities, and institutions -- including those associated with the Revolutionary Guard -- that have supported Iran's nuclear program and prospered from illicit activities at the expense of the Iranian people. And we will ensure that these sanctions are vigorously enforced, just as we continue to refine and enforce our own sanctions on Iran alongside our friends and our allies.

The strong resolution that was passed today benefited from strong international support. In voting for it, we were joined by nations from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America -- including Russia and China. And these sanctions show the united view of the international community that a nuclear arms race in the Middle East is in nobody's interest, and that nations must be held accountable for challenging the global non-proliferation regime. The Iranian government must understand that true security will not come through the pursuit of nuclear weapons. True security will come through adherence to international law and the demonstration of its peaceful intent.



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We know that the Iranian government will not change its behavior overnight, but today's vote demonstrates the growing costs that will come with Iranian intransigence. And I want to be clear: These sanctions do not close the door on diplomacy. Iran continues to have the opportunity to take a different and better path. I would like nothing more than to reach the day when the Iranian government fulfills its international obligations -- a day when these sanctions are lifted, previous sanctions are lifted, and the Iranian people can finally fulfill the greatness of the Iranian nation.

Indeed, these sanctions are not directed at the Iranian people. As I said in Cairo, for decades the Iranian government has defined itself in opposition to my country. But faced with the opportunity to find a new way forward -- one that would benefit its own people -- the Iranian government has chosen instead to remain a prisoner of the past.

Saturday will mark one year from the day that an election captivated the attention of the world -- an event that should have been remembered for how the Iranian people participated with remarkable enthusiasm, but will instead be remembered for how the Iranian government brutally suppressed dissent and murdered the innocent, including a young woman left to die in the street.

Actions do have consequences, and today the Iranian government will face some of those consequences. Because whether it is threatening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, or the human rights of its own citizens, or the stability of its own neighbors by supporting terrorism, the Iranian government continues to demonstrate that its own unjust actions are a threat to justice everywhere.

I want and hope for the people of Iran that the government of Iran will make a different choice. It can make a different choice and pursue a course that will reaffirm the NPT as the basis of global non-proliferation and disarmament -- a course that will advance Iran's own security and prosperity, and the peace of the wider world. Today's sanctions are yet another signal that if the Iranian government continues to undermine the NPT and the peace that it protects, then Iran will find itself more isolated, less prosperous and less secure.

Thank you.