



On the 11th April 2006 Iran announced they had joined the 'nuclear family' of nations to have successfully enriched uranium. The situation has caused fears of retaliatory attacks, punitive measures and the start of Iran's development of nuclear weapons. The complicated history of Iran's nuclear programme has been fuelled by unwillingness to compromise, failed diplomacy and misconception on all sides, leaving many trying to understand the situation.

THE SPARK

Iran's nuclear capabilities are not new; with the assistance of numerous countries, including America, Iran has been operating nuclear research reactors since 1967. The country ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970 but the overthrow of the Shah in 1979 caused external assistance and support to cease as concerns over the Iranian government grew.¹

In 2002 an Iranian opposition group exposed Iran's secret nuclear facilities and plans. Despite stating interest in civilian nuclear programmes only, the nature of Iranian facilities has heightened Western governments' fears.² Iran has fulfilled its legal obligations under the NPT to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections, however, for some this is not enough, as Iran has prevented unrestricted inspections of all their nuclear sites. Inaccurate information on both the extent of Iranian nuclear capabilities and the time scale on which they are working has escalated the problem.



Photo: Emily Johns



For many Iranians there is an increasing sense of being treated as second-class citizens, reinforced by the hypocrisy of American backing Indian and Israeli nuclear weapons programmes.



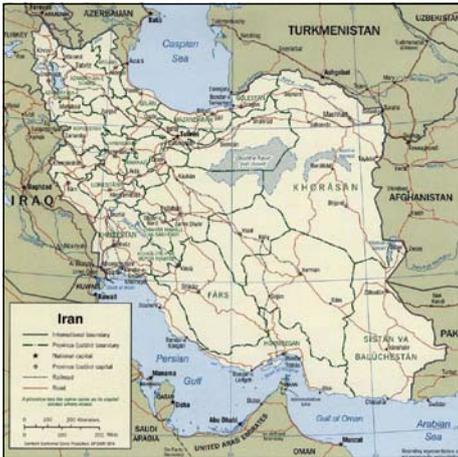
IGNITING THE FUEL

Iran's development of a nuclear energy programme is not illegal. However, by failing to disclose development to the IAEA many in the international community feel Iran has shot itself in the foot. The Iranian government have delayed ratifying the Additional Protocol to Safeguards Agreement and continued their nuclear developments programme. This is in addition to the behaviour of President

Ahmadinejad who has expressed a desire for Israel to be "wiped off the map".³ Others believe Iran has been more than compliant, arguing "there have been three years of intensive investigations of Iranian nuclear facilities, ...and nothing has been found to suggest that Iran has now, or has ever had, a nuclear weapons programme."⁴

STOKING THE FIRE

As the crisis deepens the Iranian population are showing increasing support for their government. Iran has a knowledgeable and experienced nuclear sector. Keen to demonstrate their independence and modernity, Iran has not taken kindly to Western belligerent responses to their nuclear programme. As Iranian journalist Sadegh Khamoushi asks "How can America tell us not to have nuclear energy when Israel does? Is it one rule for America's friends and one rule for everyone else?"⁵



The Fellowship of Reconciliation is against all attacks upon Iran. FoR is calling for all countries to:

- 1 End threats and irresponsible behaviour towards Iran
- 2 Redouble efforts to resolve the situation through diplomacy and negotiation
- 3 Demonstrate positive support for the NPT by entering discussions on reducing and eventually abolishing nuclear weapon arsenals, and
- 4 Respect other countries values, views and boundaries

We would like to encourage people to express their concerns in writing to their local MP's and the Prime Minister. We would encourage people to take active steps towards staying informed about the situation in Iran and to voice their opposition to any future attacks against the country.

Recommended resources

- **Addressing the Challenge of Iran: Breakthrough or Bust in '05?**
British American Security Information Council and Oxford Research Group, April 2005.
- **Paul Ingram. "On the Developing Conflict".**
Ministry for Peace, 1 March 2006.
- **Paul Rogers. Endless War: the Global War on Terror and the New Bush Administration: Briefing Paper.**
Oxford Research Group, March 2005.
- **Paul Rogers. Iran: Consequences of a War: Briefing Paper.**
Oxford Research Group, February 2006.

Opportunities for activism

- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament – www.cnduk.org
- Stop the War Coalition – www.stopwar.org.uk
- Voices in the Wilderness UK – www.voicesuk.org

A CHAIN REACTION

The majority of the West have failed to appreciate the effects of the "war on terror" on Iran. In the last three years Iran has seen coalition forces invade Iraq to their West, Afghanistan to their East, and American military bases built near their borders. Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, in his briefing paper *Endless War: the Global War on Terror and the New Bush Administration* points out from "an Iranian perspective, the country has been labelled part of an "axis of evil" by the world's sole superpower that has adopted a clear strategy of pre-empting perceived threats."⁶ For many Iranians there is an increasing sense of being treated as second-class citizens, reinforced by the hypocrisy of American backing Indian and Israeli nuclear weapons programmes.

current nuclear weapon states, who have failed to uphold the NPT, must also take responsibility for Iran's non-compliance with the treaty.

America is fundamentally opposed to Iran having any nuclear capability and see Iran as a far greater threat than Iraq ever was.⁷ America has consistently threatened Iran and in recent months there have been reports of "intensified planning for a possible major air attack."⁸ There are several reasons behind the American government's perspective including fears of

terrorism, American interests in the region, protection of their ally Israel, reliance on oil and desire to see regime change within Iran. Whatever their reasons, American opposition amounts to a significant threat.

Iran feels let down on nearly all sides. The members of the United Nations have failed to take the situation seriously, using threats and false promises to try to restrict Iranian activities. In addition it must be recognised that countries would not have nuclear weapons if it did not give them some sort of credibility.⁹ Paul Ingram, Senior Analyst at the British American Security Information Council, argues that current nuclear weapon states, who have failed to uphold the NPT, must also take responsibility for Iran's non-compliance with the treaty.¹⁰ The UN Security Council is deadlocked on the way forward, with a wide range of national interests coming into play. Despite the IAEA historically supporting countries in their right to develop nuclear energy, IAEA Director-General ElBaradei believes Iran could still hold nuclear weapons ambitions.¹¹ Other countries which have given Iran support are fearful their interests in the region will be damaged.

RAKING THE ASHES

So we are left in a state of limbo with uncertainty of the major players next moves and the consequences of their actions. The nuclear problem is inescapable as all nuclear developments have potential for civilian and military applications.¹² However, certain points are clear: (1) Diplomatic negotiations are not being applied properly and the current tactics are not working; (2) Any military action against Iran would set in motion a chain-reaction of prolonged conflict, and; (3) The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is being seriously undermined. However, it is up to us as peacemakers to decide how we respond to the challenges that lie ahead. As Paul Ingram argues "Iran provides a very crucial opportunity for change as well as threat and a problem that we, ourselves, are as complicit in creating as any other actors in this game."¹³

ENDNOTES

- 1 **Addressing the Challenge of Iran: Breakthrough or Bust in '05?**
British American Security Information Council and Oxford Research Group – April 2005.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 **S. Hersh, "The Iran Plans: Would President Bush go to War to Stop Tehran from Getting the Bomb?"**
The New Yorker – 17 April 2006.
The meaning of this statement is contested, with some believing a more accurate translation reads Israel should be "eliminated from the pages of history" meaning the political situation of Israel; rather than the country and people. See http://www.wj-n-v.org/AW_briefings/INV_briefing087.htm for discussion of the statement.
- 4 **K. Hudson, "CND Warns Against Nuclear Attack on Iran",** Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.
Press Release – 10 April 2006.
- 5 **N. Jubber, "Iran: Heading for a Showdown".**
The Tablet – 22 April 2006 (p. 4).
- 6 **P. Rogers, Endless War: the Global War on Terror and the New Bush Administration: Briefing Paper.**
Oxford Research Group – March 2005 (p. 14).
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 **Hersh, "The Iran Plans".**
- 9 **P. Ingram, "On the Developing Conflict".**
Ministry for Peace – 1 March 2006.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 **R. Edwards, "Iran's nukes, not all they are cracked up to be".**
New Scientist – 29 April 2006.
D. Gee, "Playing Poker with Iran".
Disarm (13: Spring 2006).
- 12 **P. Ingram, "On the Developing Conflict".**
- 13 *Ibid.*