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## Security Council (SC)

**"Decision on an urgent political crisis: Iran"**

## **Introduction to the Security Council**

The Security Council of the United Nations has primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security, and its resolutions are binding on all member states. During the first forty-five years of its existence, the Council was largely paralysed by the Cold War, but since 1990 and the thawing of the global political climate, it has been very active.

The Security Council is composed of fifteen UN Member States, five of which are permanent members: The United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Russian Federation, and China. The permanent members have the power to 'veto' a substantive decision of the Council by voting against it. The veto is cast much less often now than it was during the Cold War, but it is still very much in use as a threat which blocks Council action. The other ten members of the Council are elected by the General Assembly to two-year non-renewable terms, with five new members elected each year. The ten elected members, known in Charter language as "non-permanent members," are selected according to a distribution formula from each of the world's major regions.

Acting under Chapter VI of the Charter, the Council 'shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties' to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, or judicial settlement (Article 33). And it may, if all the parties to a dispute request, make recommendations to the parties with a view to a peaceful settlement (Article 38). In practice, the Council often asks the Secretary-General or one of his Special Representatives to mediate or negotiate under guidelines the Council has established. Increasingly the Council members themselves have travelled to conflict areas in an effort to directly negotiate settlements or mediate conflicts. The Security Council may also take enforcement measures which are more robust than peacekeeping. These enforcement powers are contained in Chapter VII of the Charter, which authorises the Council to determine when a threat to, or breach of, the peace has occurred, and authorises it among other things to impose economic and military sanctions.

The 'peace' referred to in Article 39 may involve conflicts other than those between states. At the time the Charter was established, it was envisaged that conflicts within the borders of a state could also constitute a threat to or breach of the peace, and thus that the Council could order the use of enforcement measures. The Council has broadened its definition of these cases over time, so that gross violations of human rights may now be seen as a threat to the peace, as was the case with the genocide in Rwanda.

In exercising its enforcement powers, the Security Council has imposed economic sanctions against a number of States and other parties. The great majority of these sanctions regimes have been imposed in the post-Cold War period. The Council imposed general trade sanctions on Iraq in 1990, but since then the Council has preferred to impose more "targeted" sanctions such as arms embargoes, travel bans, restrictions on diplomatic relations, and bans on key commodities like petroleum and diamonds.

## **Members of the Security Council**

Besides the five permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) ten members are elected by the General Assembly to two-year non-renewable terms.

On December 31<sup>st</sup> 2005 the membership term will end for Benin, Brazil, Philippines, Romania, and Algeria and on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 the membership term will end for Argentina, Denmark, Greece, Japan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Presidency of the Security Council rotates monthly, according to the English alphabetical listing of its Member States and in August 2005 Japan will accede the Presidency.

## **Introduction to the Issue**

### **Political Structure of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

#### **Supreme Leader**

At the top of Iran's power structure is the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who succeeded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the father of the Iranian Revolution, upon Khomeini's death in 1989. Khomeini and Khamenei are the only two men to have held the office since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

According to Iran's Constitution, the Supreme Leader is responsible for the delineation and supervision of "the general policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran," which means that he sets the tone and direction of Iran's domestic and foreign policies. The Supreme Leader is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces and controls the Islamic Republic's intelligence and security operations; he alone can declare war or peace. He has the power to appoint and dismiss the leaders of the judiciary, the state radio and television networks, and the supreme commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. He also appoints six of the twelve members of the Council of Guardians<sup>1</sup>, the powerful body that oversees the activities of Parliament and determines which candidates are qualified to run for public office. The Supreme Leader's sphere of power is extended through his representatives, an estimated 2,000 of whom are sprinkled throughout all sectors of the government and who serve as the Leader's clerical field operatives. In some respects the Supreme Leader's representatives are more powerful than the president's ministers and have the authority to intervene in any matter of state on the Supreme Leader's behalf.

#### **President**

The president is the second highest ranking official in Iran. While the president has a high public profile, his power is in many ways trimmed back by the constitution, which subordinates the entire executive branch to the Supreme Leader. In fact, Iran is the only state in which the executive branch does not control the armed forces.

The president is responsible for setting the country's economic policies. Though he has nominal rule over the Supreme National Security Council<sup>2</sup> and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, in practice the Supreme Leader dictates all matters of foreign and domestic security. Eight vice presidents serve under the president, as well as a cabinet of 22 ministers. The Council of Ministers must be confirmed by Parliament.

#### **Parliament**

The Iranian Parliament is a unicameral legislative body whose 290 members are publicly elected every four years. It drafts legislation, ratifies international treaties, and approves the country's budget. However, Parliament is still held in check by the Council of Guardians, the influential oversight

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<sup>1</sup> Twelve jurists comprise the Council of Guardians, six of whom are appointed by the Supreme Leader. The head of the judiciary recommends the remaining six, which are officially appointed by Parliament. The Council of Guardians is vested with the authority to interpret the constitution and determines if the laws passed by Parliament are in line with sharia (Islamic law). This means that the council has effective veto power over Parliament. If it deems that a law passed by Parliament is incompatible with the constitution or sharia, it is referred back to Parliament for revision.

<sup>2</sup> Article 176 of Iran's Constitution sets up the Supreme National Security Council, and charges it with "preserving the Islamic Revolution, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty." Its members include: the president; speaker of Parliament; the head of the judiciary; the chief of the combined general staff of the armed forces; the ministers of foreign affairs, the interior, and intelligence; and the commanders of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the regular military, among others. As head of the Supreme National Security Council, the president helps coordinate the Supreme Leader's foreign policy directives.

body that examines all laws passed by Parliament to determine their compatibility with sharia, or the Islamic law<sup>3</sup>.

**For further information visit:**

- UN Website
- <http://www.country-studies.com/iran/>
- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/middle\\_east/2000/iran\\_elections/iran\\_struggle\\_for\\_change/who\\_holds\\_power/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/middle_east/2000/iran_elections/iran_struggle_for_change/who_holds_power/)

**Timeline**

1970:

The Non-Proliferation Treaty enters into force. By this time, nuclear research and education had centered on a 5MW research reactor supplied by the US.

1974-1978:

Under the Shah Iran launches a series of ambitious nuclear programmes, with support of the US and Europe. Deals with Kraftwerk Union (Siemens) for a 1200MW reactor at Bushehr and the French Framatome for two 900 MW reactors were struck.

1980-1988:

The Revolution and the First Gulf War consume resources, the sites at Bushehr are bombed and Siemens abandons the project.

Late 80s, early 90s:

Under Rafsanjani the nuclear program is revived with help from Russia, and China. Iran is also believed to have received uranium enrichment technology through the black market network run by Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan.

14/08/2002:

Alireza Jafarzadeh of the Mojahedin Khalq Organization/National Council of Resistance of Iran reveals secret nuclear sites, a uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and a heavy-water facility in Arak. (Both MKO and her political wing NCRI are regarded as terrorist organisations in the US and the EU)

21/02/2003:

Director General of the IAEA ElBaradei visits Iran to verify Teherans claims that its nuclear program is peaceful, contrary to Washingtons assertion that the country is preparing to build nuclear weapons.

21/10/2003:

In the "Statement of Teheran" representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany and France confirm Irans decision to fully cooperate with the IAEA, sign additional protocols and suspend enrichment.

26/11/2003:

The IAEA-Board of Governors "expressed concern over failures by the Islamic Republic of Iran to report material, facilities and activities that Iran is obliged to report pursuant to its Safeguards Agreement" and "requested Iran to work with the Secretariat to promptly and unconditionally sign, ratify and fully implement the Additional Protocol".

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<sup>3</sup>The 2004 political crisis in Iran over disqualification of many reformist candidates for the parliament is compounded with persistent socioeconomic problems, corruption, and widespread political apathy among the youth.

18/12/2003:

Iran signs the additional NPT protocol allowing unannounced inspections of its nuclear sites. The protocol remains unratified to date.

18/06/2004:

The IAEA notes with concern delays in the verification process and that the promised suspension was not comprehensive.

20/07/04:

According to "The London Sunday Times" an Israeli defense source in Tel Aviv told them that Israel "will on no account permit Iranian reactors - especially the one being built in Bushehr with Russian help - to go critical."

18/08/2004:

"We will not sit [with arms folded] to wait for what others will do to us. Some military commanders in Iran are convinced that preventive operations which the Americans talk about are not their monopoly", Admiral Ali Shamkhani told the Qatari satellite television Al Jazira when asked about the possibility of a US or Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

15/11/2004:

The "E3" and the Islamic Republic of Iran with support of the High Representative of the European Union sign an agreement in which Iran voluntarily suspends all enrichment related and reprocessing activities. They also confirm their determination to combat terrorism, especially of Al Qaeda and the MKO.

06/2005:

Teheran announced that it would extend its freeze on uranium enrichment until the end of July to give the "E3" time for a new proposal.

24/6/2005:

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is elected president with 61,6% of the vote against 35,9% for former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The mayor of Teheran, widely regarded as a hardline conservative, won on social issues and convinced the religious poor.

## **Sources and Links for further Research**

### **Internet Links**

- [www.iaea.org](http://www.iaea.org)  
» <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Treaties/npt.html>
- [www.ctbto.org](http://www.ctbto.org)
- [www.military.com](http://www.military.com)  
» search for 'Iran'
- [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org)  
» Nuclear Weapons

### **Books**

- Strategic survey (1998-2004)
- Military balances  
» <http://www.csis.org/burke/mb/#nuclear>
- SIPRI yearbook. Armaments, Disarmaments and International Security