

Key facts to keep in mind while opposing war against Iran

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Representatives of Iran and six of the world's most powerful countries are scheduled to meet this week in Geneva, one of a series of events that increasingly looks like a rerun of the build-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

As we prepare for a barrage of anti-Iranian media spin, it would be good for anti-war activists to remember five basic facts:

One: There is absolutely no evidence that Iran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon.

Two: The U.S. has not discovered a "secret nuclear facility" in Iran.

Three: The recent Iranian tests of long-range missiles is a purely defensive exercise.

Four: Despite what we all have repeatedly heard, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad does not deny the Holocaust. (Please see quotes below.)

Five: Iran has a lot of oil. A whole lot.

On Oct. 1, a senior Iranian diplomat is to meet with representatives of the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the U.S., U.K, France, Russia and China, plus Germany, a group dubbed the G-5-plus-1. These will be the first international talks to address Iran's nuclear program in more than a year.

During these negotiations, Iran will attempt to discuss a wide range of issues. The six countries - or at least the U.S., U.K., France and Germany - will make demands on Iran's nuclear program that they already know will be rejected. These four most powerful Western nations will then move to impose even harsher sanctions than the three sets they have already rammed through the U.N. Security Council.

There may even be a military attack on Iran by Israel, a move already given the green light by U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.

And this will all be in violation of international law.

Is Iran trying to develop a nuclear weapon?

Iran has a program to develop nuclear power for peaceful energy purposes. Part of that program involves enriching uranium to power nuclear reactors. Enriched uranium is also an essential component in building a nuclear bomb, but the enrichment process is so different

that it would be virtually impossible to conceal it, and Iran is the most inspected country in the world.

Further, Iran was one of the first countries to sign the U.N.'s Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), under which it renounced the right to build nuclear weapons in return for not only the right to develop nuclear power, but to receive help in doing so from the world community.

There is absolutely no evidence that Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons. None. Zip. Not from the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, the U.N. body charged with making sure NPT members abide by that treaty. Not from the U.S. and its 16 separate intelligence agencies, nor from Israel and its Mossad intelligence agency nor from counter-revolutionary Iranian organizations such as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK), all of which have been working overtime to come up with any fact, report, material or rumor with which to indict Iran.

Meanwhile, of course, none of the G-5, G-5-Plus-1, G-20 or G-We-Rule-the-World countries are saying "boo" about Israel's estimated 200 nuclear weapons, let alone the U.S. with its 10,000.

It's true that Iran has a lot of oil, but oil is a finite resource. Even Iran's vast reserves will someday run out. So it's developing alternative sources of energy, including solar and wind, as well as nuclear.

The U.S and other Western powers are opposed to Iran developing nuclear power because that would ensure Iran can remain independent. And strong. And influential in its own region. And that is unacceptable to the world's former colonizing powers.

Iran, like Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, North Korea, Zimbabwe, the Sudan and many other countries, rejects the status of a "second-tier" country. These countries refuse to accept the authority of the Empire.

They have thrown off the yoke of colonial oppressors and have charted their own independent courses on the world stage. Their peoples are like runaway slaves who have established their own modern maroon colonies and as such are viewed as a threat to the orderly administration of the New World Order.

And they must be brought back under control, lest they serve as dangerous examples for those peoples still enslaved.

That's why keeping those countries from developing technologically is a prime goal of U.S. foreign policy.

Has the U.S. discovered a "secret nuclear facility" in Iran?

On Sept. 21, the Iranian government sent a letter to the IAEA in Vienna describing the construction of a plant designed to enrich uranium, up to 5 percent in purity, sufficient for energy production but well below the 90 percent level required for weapons-grade material. "Further complementary information will be provided in an appropriate and due time," the letter stated.

According to the provisions of the NPT, Iran and other treaty signatories are required to inform the IAEA six months before a uranium enrichment facility becomes operational.

President Ahmadinejad later told a news conference that the new facility won't be up and running for 18 months.

In other words, Iran was a year early in fulfilling its treaty obligations to provide notice to the IAEA.

But on Sept. 25, U.S. President Barack Obama, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy interrupted their G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh to hold a press conference at which they charged Iran with constructing a secret nuclear fuel facility.

Sarkozy, whose country depends on nuclear power for 80 percent of its energy needs, detailed intelligence information that Brown said would "shock and anger the whole international community." Obama charged Iran with "breaking rules that all nations must follow ... and threatening the stability and security of the region and the world."

The next day, Iran announced it would place the plant under the IAEA's supervision.

So: Iran built a nuclear facility. Then, fully one year before the required deadline mandated by the U.N.'s NPT, it informed the IAEA about the plant's existence. But, just days before the Oct. 1 seven-nation negotiations, the leaders of the U.S., U.K. and France decided to hold a dramatic press conference to denounce Iran for breaking the rules.

A Sept. 26 story in The Washington Post noted that "the rapidly escalating confrontation provided (Obama) with a fresh opportunity to project toughness and success on the world stage. Obama's detractors have long called him naive for his willingness to engage diplomatically the nation's adversaries, including Iran. Republicans say his decision to change the deployment of a missile shield for Eastern Europe demonstrates weakness, and critics have chastised him for taking time to weigh a decision on sending additional troops to Afghanistan.

"The announcement also provided a boost for the CIA at a time when the agency is facing harsh attacks - and possible prosecution - for detainee interrogations."

Are the recent Iranian missile tests an offensive move?

Starting on Sept. 26, Iran began testing a number of missiles, including its medium-range Shahab-1 and Shahab-2 and, on Sept. 28, its longer-range Shahab-3. The latter missiles are believed to have a range of up to about 1200 miles, far enough to reach Israel, U.S. bases in the Middle East and parts of Europe.

So the question is, are the missiles meant to be defensive or offensive?

Defensive, according to Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, as quoted by the semi-official Fars News Agency: "As a result of this capability, those who used to speak of attacking Iran are now declaring that they entertain no such desires or thoughts, for they have realized that attacking Iran is an extremely dangerous act."

It's a little hard to argue with that logic, since Israeli officials have now toned down their threats to attack Iran, citing an increased international concern after the revelation that Iran had been building a new uranium enrichment facility.

Yes, the missiles could be used to attack as well as defend or retaliate. But Iran hasn't attacked another country for hundreds of years. For it to launch a war now against nuclear-armed opponents would be a complete departure from 30 years of foreign policy into the realm of insanity, something for which there is no recent historical precedent.

Does President Ahmadinejad deny the Holocaust?

Every time I read somewhere that President Ahmadinejad has denied the Holocaust, I try and go back and find his original quote. That's not easy, because most of the time the alleged denial is paraphrased or partially quoted.

This month, I finally got a break.

On Sept. 24, Steve Inskeep, host of National Public Radio's Morning Edition program, interviewed President Ahmadinejad at his hotel in New York. The transcript (see <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113175352&ps=rs>) says Ahmadinejad's remarks were delivered via a translator.

Here's the relevant section of that interview:

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INSKEEP: We have, in a previous interview, discussed how you feel (the Holocaust) is being used unjustly to justify Israel, so we need not cover that ground again. But if you would like to describe to me what specifically you believe happened between 1942 and 1945, I would be interested.

AHMADINEJAD: But then 1942 to 1945 is still about the Holocaust, right? I do raise a couple of questions about the Holocaust, and you are a member of the media, and I believe that you should actually tell people what these questions are, and try to receive answers from them as well.

The first question is, is the Holocaust a historical event or not? It is a historical event. And, having said that, there are numerous historical events. So the next question is, why is it that this specific event has become so prominent? Normally, ordinary people and historians pay attention to historical events. Why are politicians giving so much attention to this particular event? Why are they so biased about it? Does this event effect what is happening on the ground this day, now? What we say is that genocide is the result of racial discrimination. Sometimes we look at history to learn the lessons of history.

INSKEEP: Are you acknowledging that millions of people were killed? Millions of Jews, specifically, were killed during World War II?

AHMADINEJAD: If you bear with me so that I can complete my statements, you will receive your answer. I'm asking, and I'm asking a number of serious questions. And I'm not addressing these questions to you, but to a wider audience — everyone — anyone who cares about the fate of humanity; who care about human beings and the rights of people. These are serious questions. If we are looking at history with the aim to learn — derive lessons from it, then what this indicates is that in the future, we should not carry out the same mistakes that were done in the past. While I personally was not alive 60 years ago, I happen to be alive now, and I can see that genocide is happening now under the pretext of an event that happened 60 years ago. So the fundamental question I raise here is that, if this event happened, where did it happen? As a form of an objection question, who was it

carried by? Why should the Palestinian people make up for it?

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez recently pointed out that, before the European Conquest, the Americas were home to some 90 million indigenous people. A few hundred years later, there were 4 million.

Up to 100 million Africans died as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Surely these also were "holocausts."

Six million Jews were systematically murdered in what has come to be known as The Holocaust. And, although it is rarely mentioned, that diabolically efficient mass murder also took the lives of up to 5 million political prisoners, trade unionists, communists, gays and Roma people. Truly, this was one of the world's great atrocities - an atrocity committed in Europe, by Europeans, against Europeans.

It had absolutely nothing to do with Palestinians. Or Iran.

So why, after being elevated to a status above all other mass murders in history, is it used to justify the establishment of what basically is a European colony on Arab land?

Ahmadinejad isn't calling the Holocaust a myth - he's asking why the mythology that has been built up around it is used as a weapon against the Palestinian people and those who support their struggle for self-determination.

Iran has oil

Iran has a lot of oil. And that oil has been off-limits to the world's private oil companies since it was nationalized after the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Huge potential profits are at stake. Further, whoever controls the flow of oil - whether or not that involves actual ownership - can control the development of world production, commerce and politics. And the U.S is determined that, rather than allow a multi-polar world to develop, it will be the only country to play that role.

Tasks facing the U.S. anti-war movement

After an unfortunate year-long ebb, the anti-war movement in the U.S. is again beginning to show signs of life. This October there will be many local and regional protests against the U.S-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most will also address the expanding war in Pakistan and the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.

While some of these protests also will demand no war against Iran, there seems to be less enthusiasm for addressing this issue. The barrage of media attacks, charges and misinformation has taken its toll. The controversy around the Iranian presidential elections and their aftermath have also played a role. Taken together, these factors have to a certain extent disarmed the anti-war movement, even as the possibility of a new war grows ever more serious.

Now is the time to reaffirm this one simple principle that ought to be the bedrock of our movement: every country that has been oppressed by U.S imperialism has the right to

determine its own destiny. It has the right to determine its own form of government, choose its own leaders, decide on its own relations with the rest of the world. And the U.S., as the world's foremost imperialist power, ought to be the last country on earth to presume to dictate to any other how to conduct itself.

It's not necessary to agree with every pronouncement of the leaders of oppressed countries in order to demand loudly and determinedly "No war, sanctions or internal interference!" If we were anti-slavery activists in the 1800s, would we stand by as Nat Turner or John Brown were about to be hung, arguing about tactics or controversial statements? Or would we defend the oppressed and their defenders?

This is how we need to approach the issue of defending Iran.

This October, as we denounce the wars against Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan and the continuing oppression of the Palestinian people, we must also raise our voices loud and clear to demand "No war, no sanctions, no internal interference in Iran!"

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