

## UNSC

### United Nations Security Council The Iranian Nuclear Program

#### Overview

Nuclear weapons are one of the most dangerous weapons on earth. Although having only been used twice in nuclear warfare in 1945- by the USA against Japan in World War II- they caused tens of thousands of deaths, destroyed cities and environments, and led to serious health complications which persist through generations. To this day, despite their non-use in conflict since WWII, countries are wearier than ever about nuclear conflict, often aiming to stockpile for themselves to deter hostile nations from attacking. However, in the hands of bellicose countries, these arms could prove disastrous, with their offensive use being of key concern. Iran in particular is of grave concern, as its leadership has threatened to attack several political and religious enemies worldwide. As such, nations must unite to determine if and how the Iranian nuclear program is to be disrupted.

#### *What is UNSC?*

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has many goals and responsibilities concerning global security, primarily focusing on the preservation of international peace.<sup>1</sup> There are fifteen members of the council including five permanent members who each have a veto power on possible resolution papers. These five members are the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom. The Security Council has the power to impose sanctions in the efforts of maintaining and restoring international peace as well as authorizing the use of force. As one of their main goals is maintaining peace and security, the Iranian Nuclear Program is under the UNSC jurisdiction as nuclear weapons are a continuous threat to global security.

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<sup>1</sup> "United Nations Security Council ." *United Nations*, [www.un.org/securitycouncil/](http://www.un.org/securitycouncil/).

## History

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was created in 1970 in order to protect society from the potential devastation nuclear weapons weapons.<sup>1</sup> The NPT's main goals are to find more peaceful alternatives to nuclear weaponry, prevent the use and spread of nuclear weaponry, promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and global disarmament.<sup>2</sup> The treaty became binding in 1970, with 191 States joining it. This treaty has successfully established nuclear weaponry as an unacceptable response in any war. Iran is one of the 189 current signatories of this treaty, and is thus accountable to hold by any standards set by the agreement.

In addition to the NPT, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) also focuses on nuclear weapon deterrence. The members of NATO, including those that do not have nuclear weapons, convene in order to determine how to manage its members who currently have nuclear weapons or nuclear stockpiles.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, NATO countries that already have nuclear weapons are not of main concern, while Iran, who is not a member of NATO, is not bound by these rules. This means that not only is Iran immune from any regulations NATO put in place, but they are also less frequently checked up upon, leading to growing concerns that their nuclear capabilities are growing. It is the delegates' responsibility to determine the degree of danger in Iran's acquiring of nuclear weapons and the proper response in order to maintain international peace and security.<sup>4</sup>

In the seventies, Iran established the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). This establishment's purpose was to use nuclear energy in order to improve Iran's energy and agricultural industries. The AEOI was responsible for establishing nuclear power plants, producing raw materials required for nuclear industries, and conducting scientific research.<sup>5</sup> Between 1980 and 1990, China had decided to help Iran in its nuclear research endeavors. Due to international pressure from the United States, however, China withdrew from its plan to

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<sup>2</sup> "UNODA - Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)." UN News Center.

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/wmd/nuclear/npt/#:~:text=The%20NPT%20is%20a%20landmark,and%20general%20and%20complete%20disarmament.>

<sup>3</sup> "NATO's Nuclear Deterrence Policy and Forces." NATO. [https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics\\_50068.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/em/natohq/topics_50068.htm)

<sup>4</sup> "AEOI." AEOI. Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. <https://www.aeoi.org.ir/en>

<sup>5</sup> "Text of H.R. 3107, The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996." Federation of American Scientists. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/104th-congress/house-bill/3107>

construct a nuclear enrichment facility in Iran. Moreover, the U.S. Congress passed the Iran Libya Sanctions Act in 1996, which penalizes countries or organizations that invest over 20 million dollars annually in Iran's nuclear sector by sanctioning them financially.<sup>6</sup>

At the turn of the millennium, the growing threat of Iran developing nuclear weapons became apparent. In 2003, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) passed a resolution that called for Iran to stop its uranium enrichment efforts, an essential step in the process of producing nuclear weapons. This resolution also allowed IAEA inspectors to sample the Iranian environment to determine the nature and extent of its nuclear activity.<sup>7</sup> Iran never cooperated or followed through on this agreement. In 2005, the IAEA adopted a resolution that declared that Iran's nuclear activity was not in compliance with IAEA standards and was not necessarily in the interest of peace.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran maintained that the country wanted nuclear energy for peaceful purposes and that other countries should not have the power to take away Iran's right to nuclear research.

Eventually, in 2006, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1696, which demanded that Iran stop its uranium enrichment efforts.<sup>9</sup> Since Iran never ceased its research, Resolution 1737 was passed unanimously in 2006 in response to Iran not complying with Resolution 1696. This second resolution imposed sanctions on Iran and froze many of their nuclear research investment assets.<sup>10</sup> Russia and China initially opposed the second resolution, but it was amended to be more lenient by reducing the severity of the new economic sanctions.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, Iran continued its research and received cooperation from other countries such as Brazil, Turkey, Russia, and China.

Over the years, many subsequent resolutions were passed because Iran was never in

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<sup>6</sup> "Resolution Adopted by the Board on 12 September 2003." Security Council Report.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Iran%20GOV200369.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> "Transcript of the Director General's Press Statements on Iran." IAEA.

<https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/mediaadvisories/transcript-of-the-director-generals-press-statements-on-iran-11-august-2005>

<sup>8</sup> "Resolution 1696." UN. [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1696%20\(2006\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1696%20(2006))

<sup>9</sup> "Resolution 1737." UN. [https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1737%20\(2006\)](https://docs.un.org/en/S/RES/1737%20(2006))

<sup>10</sup> "UN Security Council Resolutions 1737 and 1747." Reut Institute.

<https://www.reutgroup.org/Publications/un-security-council-resolutions-1737-and-1747->

<sup>11</sup> "Families of Iran's murdered nuclear scientists sue Israel, US and Britain." The Guardian. 15 Aug. 2012.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/15/iran-murdered-nuclear-scientists>

compliance with the previous ones.<sup>12</sup> The resolutions demanded that Iran stop uranium enrichment and imposed sanctions upon Iran for non-compliance, which include limiting foreign investments, reducing import of Iran's oil, maintaining a trade embargo, and freezing Iran's assets. As oil exportation is one of the major contributors to Iran's GDP, these sanctions have caused Iran's economy to suffer.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the value of the Rial, the currency in Iran, has plummeted over the past 15 years. The citizens of Iran have been directly affected by the sanctions; groceries are very expensive, access to Western medicine is limited, the poverty rate has increased, and as a result of Iran's noncompliance, there has been little international investment in the Iranian economy.<sup>14</sup>

### **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**

On July 14, 2015, Iran and the P5+1 countries (the five permanent members of the UNSC, plus Germany) signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in Vienna. The purpose of this agreement was to remove Iran's capability for enriching uranium. The removal of this capability will set back Iran's ability to produce a potential weapon by approximately eight months. Once the IAEA has verified that Iran has taken the necessary steps, all economic sanctions imposed on Iran due to its nuclear program will be lifted. Additionally, roughly \$100 billion of frozen Iranian assets will be released.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Fordow facility, which had been a cause for international worry (Iran was believed to be enriching uranium there), will become a research center for international and Iranian scientists. Furthermore, the Fordow facility, which had been a cause for international worry because Iran was believed to be enriching uranium there, is set to become a research center for international and Iranian scientists according to this agreement. Moreover, the international community is to help redesign and

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<sup>12</sup> Kelley, Michael. "The Stuxnet Attack On Iran's Nuclear Plant Was 'Far More Dangerous' Than Previously Thought." Business Insider. Business Insider, Inc, 20 Nov. 2013.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/stuxnet-was-far-more-dangerous-than-previously-thought-2013-11>

<sup>13</sup> Laub, Zachary. "International Sanctions on Iran." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations, 15 July 2015.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/international-sanctions-iran>

<sup>14</sup> Dehghan, Saeed, and Julian Borger. "Iran's Currency Hits All-time Low as Western Sanctions Take Their Toll." Iran's Currency Hits All-time Low as Western Sanctions Take Their Toll. The Guardian, 1 Oct. 2012.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/01/iran-currency-rial-all-time-low>

<sup>15</sup> Northam, Jackie. "Lifting Sanctions Will Release \$100 Billion To Iran. Then What?" NPR. NPR, 16 July 2015.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/07/16/423562391/lifting-sanctions-will-release-100-billion-to-iran-then-what>

rebuild the Arak reactor. According to the JCPOA, Iran must also limit its number of uranium-enrichment centrifuges, which are an integral part of the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup>

## Current Affairs

In 2018, the United States of America withdrew from JCPOA and reinstated banking and oil sanctions as President Trump felt that the JCPOA did not take into account Iran's ballistic missile program.<sup>17</sup> In response, Iran started enriching uranium to higher concentration in violation of JCPOA. They developed new centrifuges and heavy water production in the Arak reactor.

On the 18th of October, also known as Transition day, Iran was supposed to have sanctions lifted. Nevertheless, the EU decided against lifting these restrictive measures as Iran was not fulfilling its obligation under the JCPOA as reported by IAEA.<sup>18</sup> In 2020, Iran no longer limited its uranium enrichment as a response to the US's targeted killing of one its top-ranking generals, Qasem Soleimani. In Fordow, the IAEA inspectors, when permitted by Iran to enter, detected high uranium particles.

The JCPOA has effectively lost its significance, as Iran no longer adheres to its restrictions. Negotiations between the US and Iran have stalled amid broader geopolitical events, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the 2023 Israel-Hamas war, both of which Iran has been accused of influencing.

## Conclusion

As members of the United Nations Security Council, it is your job to pass a resolution

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<sup>16</sup> "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action." European Parliament. 14 July 2015.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/122460/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf><https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/122460/full-text-of-the-iran-nuclear-deal.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Robinson, Kali. "What Is the Iran Nuclear Deal?" Council on Foreign Relations, 2023, [www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal](http://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-iran-nuclear-deal)

<sup>18</sup> Iran: Council Maintains Restrictive Measures under the Non-Proliferation Sanctions Regime after the JCPOA Transition Day." European Council Council of the European Union, 2023, [www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/10/17/iran-council-maintains-restrictive-measures-under-the-non-proliferation-sanctions-regime-after-the-jcpoa-transition-day](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/10/17/iran-council-maintains-restrictive-measures-under-the-non-proliferation-sanctions-regime-after-the-jcpoa-transition-day)

that will help deal with this situation. Each delegate should consider its own country's view on Iran's nuclear research. The delegates should consider ways to ensure that Iran complies with the regulations laid out by the deal and that the resolution is strictly enforced. They should also consider what kind of deal would prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons either by making a new resolution, amending the current one, or passing additional resolutions. In fact, one could question whether a deal is even required; should the UNSC have any sanctions against Iran and should Iran be allowed to manage its nuclear research without international involvement?

Furthermore, if a deal were to be accepted, the delegates should think about how that deal would affect neighboring countries, specifically in the Middle East. There is fear that the most recent nuclear deal could set a precedent which would spark a nuclear arms race in an already volatile region of the globe. One may also question why, if several countries already have nuclear energy, are others being more carefully monitored. After all, nuclear energy is renewable, which is a key resource in combatting climate change. Furthermore, if they obtain nuclear weapons, will Iran obtain the same power as countries that already have nuclear weapons, like the United States, China, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom? Most importantly, is it moral for the UN to restrict this ability from Iran considering they have not used any nuclear weapons in war, while the USA, which has veto power, has used two? Delegates should also consider that Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea are not bound by the terms of NPT, but likely possess nuclear capabilities.<sup>19</sup>

The civilian situation must also be addressed. By removing the sanctions imposed by past UN resolutions, Iran's economy would improve. This improvement would have effects on the international oil supply and price, benefitting all countries that produce or buy oil. In addition, the removal of the sanctions would allow Iran to trade in the international market. However, with more capital, Iran will have an increased capacity to continue research into uranium enrichment and other potentially dangerous endeavors. Delegates should be wary of all consequences of responses to Iran's nuclear program and cooperate to formulate a balanced response.

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<sup>19</sup> "Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance." Arms Control Association. January 2025.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nuclear-weapons-who-has-what-glance>

**Questions to Consider**

1. Should Iran be allowed to have nuclear weapons?
  - a. If not, can Iran be trusted to not develop nuclear weapons while still developing and researching nuclear energy?
  - b. If not, how can the United Nations Security Council ensure that they do not develop nuclear weapons while still allowing them to have nuclear energy?
  - c. What metrics determine if a country is 'permitted' to possess nuclear weapons?  
How can this actually be enforced?
2. If a method is determined, how can we trust the international community to not violate the agreement by helping Iran to acquire nuclear weapons for either political reasons or monetary gain?

**Useful Delegate Resources**

[the United Nations](#)

[Homepage | Security Council](#)

[Iran's Nuclear Program - The New York Times](#)

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/01/iran-currency-rial-all-time-low>

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