



IRAN DEMOCRACY MONITOR

The American Foreign Policy Council's Review of
Radicalism and Reform in Islamic Republic of Iran

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Related Categories: Arms Control and Proliferation; Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues; Iran; Israel; Russia

THE UN REFOCUSSES ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

A new United Nations report has once again raised the alarm over human rights conditions in Iran, amid reports of rising executions within the country. The annual study, just issued to the UN Human Rights Council, notes that "[t]he Secretary-General is deeply concerned by the increase of executions, including for drug-related offences." The report details that, in 2021, 310 individuals were executed by the Iranian regime – as compared to 260 the preceding year. And in the first three months of 2022, the study details, at least 105 others have been put to death by authorities on a variety of grounds. (Reuters, June 21, 2022)

[EDITOR'S NOTE: The Iranian regime categorizes a broad number of offenses as capital crimes, including same-sex relations, the selling of drugs, and even "spreading corruption" – a broad catch-all category that has been manipulated in the past by regime authorities to persecute and prosecute its opponents in the political and cultural domains.]

HOW THE RUSSO-IRANIAN ALLIANCE IS ADAPTING

For years, the Iranian regime has relied on Russia as a strategic partner, counting on Moscow to advocate on its behalf in multilateral fora and to use its political clout to lessen Tehran's international isolation. But today, against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine, the two countries are experiencing something of a role reversal, with the Islamic Republic emerging as a key ally for an increasingly-isolated Kremlin.

The changed circumstances are visible in recent Russian investments in Iranian infrastructure, the country's energy sector, and assorted transportation hubs in the wake of a new deal expanding commercial ties between the two countries. However, observers say, the Iranian regime could prove useful to Moscow in another way as well. "Russia, which is now under increasing sanctions due to its invasion of Ukraine, stands to learn a lot from the Islamic Republic in the sanctions busting space," says Behnam Ben Taleblu of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "Therefore, the value of Russo-Iranian collaboration will not just be quantitative as represented by the volume or value of trade, but qualitative, namely the industries as well as what contacts are made and experiences gained." And, he notes, "[t]he longer Russia's invasion and war against Ukraine continues, the deeper its embrace of actors like the Islamic Republic, who are used to operating outside or abusing formal financial networks, will be." (*Washington Free Beacon*, July 7, 2022)

TEHRAN STILL SEEKS WMD TECH

Tehran continues to attempt to covertly acquire components for its ballistic missile and nuclear programs from abroad, a new German intelligence reform has confirmed. In its annual security report, published in early July, the intelligence service of the city-state of Hamburg in north Germany confirmed that Iran had succeeded in acquiring illegal technology worth nearly 1 million Euros. Over the past year, the report detailed, the procurement effort centered on a German-Iranian national who was recruited to provide the Islamic Republic with complex laboratory equipment, including spectrometers that can be used in both nuclear and chemical weapons development. (*Jerusalem Post*, July 4, 2022)

ISRAEL AND IRAN'S NUCLEAR CLOCK

Is it too late for Israel to stop Iran's nuclear effort? At least one prominent Israeli politician thinks so. Writing in *TIME*, former Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak argues that "[t]his summer, Iran will turn into a de-facto threshold nuclear state." "After more than 20 years of trying," he asserts, "Iran is about to cross the point of no return in becoming a member of the 'nuclear club.'"

The U.S. and Israel, meanwhile, are poorly positioned to do anything about it. "For unexplainable reasons, after the US pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018 neither the US nor Israel prepared an available military 'plan B,' a kinetic attack capable of delaying the Iranian program by at least several years," Barak writes. And now that Iran has dramatically decreased the amount of time it would take it to convert highly-enriched uranium into a weapon, Israel simply doesn't have sufficient time to act unilaterally.

This turn of events, he argues, has dramatically raised the stakes surrounding Iran's nuclear program. "The US can still deter Iran from going nuclear by a diplomatic ultimatum to stop the program, backed by credible threat of a wide scale war," Barak concludes. However, "[n]othing short of that can assure a result." (*TIME*, July 25, 2022)