

Knowing of your interest in foreign affairs, I wanted to discuss the recent events in Iran. As you probably know, Iran held its presidential election on June 12, and current President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the winner with 62 percent of the vote. The margin was immediately disputed by many Iranians and international observers because Ahmadinejad's popularity had seemed to be falling while his opponent seemed to be gaining traction in the days before the election. Perhaps most inconceivable are the results suggesting that Ahmadinejad secured a majority of the vote in his opponent's home province. With a strong belief that the outcome was manipulated and fraud was rampant, hundreds of thousands of Iranians have taken to the streets to protest the election results. However, the Supreme Leader of Iran, a religious figure who holds the most power over the domestic and foreign affairs of the nation, today concluded that the election results were fair and accurate. (For more information on the complex structure of Iran's government, click [here](#) .)

The Iranian government's response to the democratic uprising has been extreme. The regime's security agents have taken a number of unacceptable actions, including: unleashing violence against protestors, killing several of them; imprisoning political dissenters; removing foreign journalists; and jamming the use of cell phones and the Internet to stymie the demonstrations. This week's massive protests, however, indicate that many Iranians are very dissatisfied with their government and are willing to risk their lives to make that known. That is why I supported House passage of [H. Res. 549](#) , a resolution that expresses support for the Iranian people who are participating in this struggle for freedom and the protection of the rule of law, condemns the ongoing violence against demonstrators, and affirms the importance of democratic and fair elections.

The encouraging signs of democratic fervor in Iran presented a major dilemma to the United States. President Obama has centered his policy toward Iran on talking directly with the regime, including the Supreme Leader and/or Ahmadinejad. Both of these leaders have expressed their hatred for the United States and Israel in no uncertain terms, and the likely fraud during the recent election and harsh crack down thereafter demonstrate that the Iranian regime is radical and unlikely to be open to negotiation. Unfortunately, the Administration thus far has decided to continue its olive branch diplomatic strategy and express only limited concern with Iran's recent conduct, rather than speaking strongly in favor of the democratic uprising and against the crack down. With Iran nearing the capacity to produce a [nuclear bomb](#) , I believe it is critical that the United States approach this looming crisis with strength, moral clarity, and realism, and that we keep all options on the table. The threat to U.S. security and international peace cannot be more serious.

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