

MEMMO

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Arab States Can Do More to Prevent Nuclear Iran

Arab leaders are demonstrating increasing concern about Iran's nuclear program and quest for hegemonic influence in the Middle East. As Iran forges ahead with its nuclear weapons pursuit, Tehran is actively working to destabilize Arab states and undermine Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts. It is clearly in the interest of Arab states to take decisive action to support U.S. and international efforts to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

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- Arab countries with strong ties to the United States are terrified of Iran achieving a nuclear weapons capability. Gulf countries in particular fear that Iran will use its nuclear umbrella to intimidate their governments and radicalize their people.
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton sensed this anxiety during her recent trip to the region, saying, "There is a great deal of concern about Iran from this whole region. It is clear Iran intends to interfere with the internal affairs of all of these people and try to continue [its] efforts to fund terrorism, whether it is Hezbollah or Hamas or other proxies."
- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas called on Iran to "stop interfering in our affairs. They are interfering only to deepen the rift between Palestinians."
- Saudi Arabia's top diplomat, Prince Saud al-Faisal, has implored Arab foreign ministers in Cairo to stand up against Iran's nuclear ambitions.
- Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in December denounced Iran's growing hegemonic influence in the region, saying that "the Persians are trying to devour the Arab states."
- Morocco recently cut off relations with Iran, citing Tehran's efforts to spread its own version of Shia Islam in the predominantly Sunni country.



Arab states are increasingly concerned about Iran's hegemonic ambitions in the region.

A nuclear-armed Iran would further destabilize the Middle East and threaten Israeli-Arab peace efforts.

- A nuclear-armed Iran would fundamentally alter the strategic balance of the Middle East, a vital region key to U.S. national security interests.
- An Iran with nuclear weapons would embolden the regime to carry out its radical foreign-policy agenda by furthering its support for its terrorist allies, Hamas and Hizballah, which are undermining U.S. peace efforts in the region. Calling Israel a "cancerous tumor," Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei recently called on all Muslims to support efforts "for liberating Palestine."

- Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons also would likely touch off a regional nuclear-arms race among other Middle Eastern countries.
- Indeed, many Arab states have expressed new interest in "peaceful" nuclear programs as Iran continues its nuclear weapons pursuit. This heightened interest in nuclear technology would likely spread beyond the Middle East.
- In addition to seeking their own nuclear programs, Arab states—out of fear—could seek an accommodation with a nuclear Iran rather than work to isolate the regime, further encouraging Iranian hegemony

Arab states fearful of Iran's regional ambitions should back international efforts to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

- While Arab states have registered concern over Iran's nuclear work, many have been reluctant to enforce truly biting sanctions against the Islamic Republic.
- International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, an Egyptian, said that Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability cannot be halted without the involvement of the Arab states. "The neighbors so far have been sitting on the fence," he said. "Any solution to the Iranian issue has to engage the neighbors."
- Arab states need to heed U.N. Security Council Resolution 1803 and exercise vigilance over the activities of financial institutions in their territories with all banks domiciled in Iran, particularly Bank Melli and Bank Saderat.
- Arab states should stop shipments of refined petroleum to Iran. Today, Iran imports as much as 40 percent of its gasoline.
- Arab states must do more to stop the transfer of sensitive nuclear-related dual-use technologies to Iran. In September, a federal grand jury in Miami returned an indictment charging eight individuals and eight corporations with conspiring to export U.S.-manufactured commodities to Iran in part via the United Arab Emirates

Arab states should support the legitimate Palestinian and Lebanese governments and act to thwart Iran's proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah.

- The Arab states should act to support the legitimate Palestinian and Lebanese governments by rejecting the extremism of Iranian backed Hamas and Hizballah.
- Arab states need to take concrete steps to support Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas by providing the political and financial support he needs to fight terrorism, isolate Hamas and make the tough compromises necessary to reach an agreement with Israel.
- Arab states should increase their political and financial support to Lebanon's "March 14" faction and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora as they are challenged by Hizballah in June's parliamentary elections.
- Arab states should fulfill their financial pledges to the Palestinian and Lebanese people to deny Iran the opportunity to exploit the financial void. Arab states have failed to deliver on repeated promises of support while Iran has delivered cash and weapons.