

110TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3653

To hold the current regime in Iran accountable for its human rights record  
and to support a transition to democracy in Iran.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

Mr. BILIRAKIS (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. WOLF, and Mr. MCCOTTER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

---

## A BILL

To hold the current regime in Iran accountable for its human rights record and to support a transition to democracy in Iran.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Iran Human Rights  
5 Act of 2007”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) There is currently not a democratic govern-  
9 ment in Iran. Instead, Iran is an ideological dicta-

1 torship presided over by an unelected Supreme  
2 Leader with limitless veto power, an unelected Expe-  
3 diency Council, and a Council of Guardians capable  
4 of eviscerating any reforms.

5 (2) The Supreme Leader appoints the heads of  
6 the judiciary, the clergy members on the powerful  
7 Council of Guardians, the commanders of all the  
8 armed forces, Friday prayer leaders, and the head of  
9 radio and television and confirms the president's  
10 election, rendering him the most powerful person in  
11 Iranian politics with little accountability within the  
12 political system.

13 (3) Members of the Council of Guardians in  
14 Iran, who are chosen by the Supreme Leader, must  
15 vet all candidates for election based on their political  
16 predispositions and all legislation before it can be  
17 entered into law.

18 (4) There has been a re-entrenchment of revolu-  
19 tionary forces in the political system in Iran. Elec-  
20 tions held in February 2004 resulted in significant  
21 gains by conservative hard-liners affiliated with the  
22 regime's clerical army, the Pasdaran, culminating in  
23 the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in  
24 June 2005.

1           (5) Over the past decade, human rights have  
2           been in steady decline in Iran. Torture, executions  
3           after unfair trials, and censorship of all media re-  
4           main rampant throughout the country. Stoning, am-  
5           putation, flogging, and beheading are used as meth-  
6           ods of punishment.

7           (6) Since his rise to power, President  
8           Ahmadinejad has embarked upon a concerted cam-  
9           paign of domestic repression, including new restric-  
10          tions on radio, television, and film content, a ban on  
11          the publication of virtually all books, and an expan-  
12          sion in the activities of the regime’s “morals police”.

13          (7) The United Nations General Assembly  
14          adopted Resolution 61/176 on December 19, 2006,  
15          to express its grave concern over the deteriorating  
16          human rights situation in Iran. The resolution urges  
17          the Government of Iran “to ensure full respect for  
18          the rights to freedom of assembly, opinion and ex-  
19          pression . . . to eliminate the use of torture and other  
20          cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punish-  
21          ment . . . [and] to eliminate, in law and in practice,  
22          all forms of discrimination based on religion, eth-  
23          nicity, or linguistic grounds.

24          (8) The 2006 State Department Country Re-  
25          ports on Human Rights Practices states that “the

1 Government's poor human rights record worsened,  
2 and it continued to commit numerous, serious  
3 abuses".

4 (9) According to Human Rights Watch's World  
5 Report 2006, many of the human rights violations  
6 committed in Iran were performed by quasi-official  
7 "parallel institutions", which include "paramilitary  
8 groups and plainclothes intelligence agents [that]  
9 violently attack peaceful protesters, and intelligence  
10 services [that] run illegal secret prisons and interro-  
11 gation centers". Uniformed police officers are fearful  
12 of challenging plainclothes agents, who belong to  
13 groups such as Ansar-e Hizbollah and Basij.

14 (10) According to the 2006 State Department  
15 International Religious Freedom Report, the popu-  
16 lation of Iran is 89 percent Shi'a Muslim and 8 per-  
17 cent Sunni Muslim; less than 2 percent of the re-  
18 maining population is comprised of Baha'is, Jews,  
19 Christians, Mandaeans, and Zoroastrians.

20 (11) Religious minorities in Iran face signifi-  
21 cant discrimination, including imprisonment, harass-  
22 ment, and intimidation. Accordingly, the Secretary  
23 of State has, since 1999, designated Iran as a coun-  
24 try of particular concern pursuant to section

1 402(b)(1)(A) of the International Religious Freedom  
2 Act of 1998 (22 U.S.C. 6442(b)(1)(A)).

3 (12) Ambeyi Ligabo, United Nations Special  
4 Rapporteur on the Right to Freedom of Opinion and  
5 Expression, submitted a report to the Commission  
6 on Human Rights in 2004 on “Civil and Political  
7 Rights, Including the Question of Freedom of Ex-  
8 pression”. Mr. Ligabo asserted that “the climate of  
9 fear induced by the systematic repression of people  
10 expressing critical views against the authorized polit-  
11 ical and religious doctrine and the functioning of the  
12 institutions coupled with the severe and dispropor-  
13 tionate sentences imposed lead to self-censorship on  
14 the part of many journalists, intellectuals, politi-  
15 cians, students and the population at large, thus in  
16 effect impeding freedom of expression”.

17 (13) According to the 2006 State Department  
18 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, on  
19 July 31, 2006, student protestor Akbar Mohammadi  
20 died in Evin Prison from medical complications re-  
21 lated to a hunger strike. The report states that “au-  
22 thorities reportedly denied Mohammadi’s parents  
23 permission to see their son’s body and did not re-  
24 spond to calls for an independent investigation into  
25 the cause of death.

1           (14) Amnesty International’s 2003 Report on  
2 Iran detailed the arrest of Iranian-born Canadian  
3 journalist Zahra Kazemi for taking photographs out-  
4 side Evin prison in Tehran on June 23, 2003. Over  
5 the course of her detention, judicial officials interro-  
6 gated Ms. Kazemi for three days. While in custody,  
7 Ms. Kazemi was beaten, and she died of a brain  
8 hemorrhage on July 23, 2003. Despite court orders  
9 for investigation, no progress has been made on this  
10 case.

11           (15) Men and women are not equal under the  
12 laws of Iran, and women are legally deprived of their  
13 basic rights. The 2006 State Department Country  
14 Reports on Human Rights Practices stated that the  
15 weight of a woman’s court testimony in Iran is half  
16 that of a man’s testimony and the family of a female  
17 crime victim in that country receives only half the  
18 amount of “blood money” provided to the family of  
19 a male crime victim. The Government of Iran man-  
20 dates gender segregation in most public spaces, in-  
21 cluding on public buses and at entrances to public  
22 buildings, universities, and airports.

23           (16) The April 30, 2007, State Department  
24 Country Reports on Terrorism states that Iran re-  
25 mains the most active state sponsor of terrorism.

1           (17) There exists a broad-based movement and  
2           desire for political change in the Islamic Republic of  
3           Iran that is pro-democratic and seeks freedom and  
4           economic opportunity, and which represents all sec-  
5           tors of Iranian society, including youth, women, stu-  
6           dents, military personnel, and religious figures.

7           (18) The people of Iran have increasingly ex-  
8           pressed frustration at the slow pace of reform in  
9           Iran, and any efforts for nonviolent change in their  
10          society have been suppressed.

11          (19) On September 7, 2006, Mohammad  
12          Khatami, President of Iran from 1997 to 2005, be-  
13          came the highest ranking Iranian to visit Wash-  
14          ington, DC, since the hostage crisis of 1979, despite  
15          his government's state sponsorship of terrorism, re-  
16          pression of political opponents, and dismal human  
17          rights record and the advancement of Iran's ura-  
18          nium enrichment program.

19          (20) President Ahmadinejad is moving to limit  
20          freedom of expression in higher education. On Sep-  
21          tember 5, 2006, he expressed concern that univer-  
22          sities were too secular and called for a purge of lib-  
23          eral and secular faculty members from universities  
24          in Iran.

1 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENTS TO THE IRAN FREEDOM SUPPORT**  
2 **ACT.**

3 (a) FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES.—Section 301(a) of  
4 the Iran Freedom Support Act (Public Law 109–293; 22  
5 U.S.C. 2151 note) is amended—

6 (1) in paragraph (1), by striking “and” at the  
7 end;

8 (2) in paragraph (2), by striking “in Iran.” and  
9 inserting “inside and outside Iran that maintain  
10 internationally recognized human rights standards,  
11 including those provided for in the Universal Dec-  
12 laration of Human Rights and the Helsinki Commit-  
13 ments;”; and

14 (3) by adding at the end the following:

15 “(3) to make the deplorable human rights  
16 record of the Government of Iran a top concern and  
17 priority of United States foreign policy; and

18 “(4) to keep the deplorable human rights record  
19 of Iran a top priority, irrespective of ongoing nuclear  
20 issues.”.

21 (b) SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
22 IN IRAN.—Section 302 of such Act is amended—

23 (1) by amending the section header to read as  
24 follows: “**SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY AND**  
25 **HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**”; and

1           (2) by redesignating subsections (a) through (g)  
2 as subsections (b) through (h), respectively;

3           (3) in subsection (d), as redesignated—

4                 (A) by inserting “, acting through the Spe-  
5 cial Envoy,” after “The President”; and

6                 (B) in paragraph (2), by striking “(g)”  
7 and inserting “(h)”; and

8           (4) by inserting before subsection (b) the fol-  
9 lowing:

10           “(a) SPECIAL ENVOY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN.—

11                 “(1) APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL ENVOY.—The  
12 President shall appoint a special envoy for human  
13 rights in Iran within the Department of State (in  
14 this section referred to as the ‘Special Envoy’). The  
15 Special Envoy should—

16                         “(A) be a person of recognized distinction  
17 in the field of human rights;

18                         “(B) not be an incumbent official of the  
19 Department of State; and

20                         “(C) report directly to the Secretary of  
21 State.

22           “(2) DUTIES.—

23                         “(A) IN GENERAL.—The Special Envoy  
24 shall coordinate and promote efforts to improve  
25 respect for the fundamental human rights of

1 the people of Iran and work with organizations  
2 committed to promoting democracy in Iran.

3 “(B) SPECIFIC DUTIES.—The Special  
4 Envoy shall—

5 “(i) support and promote inter-  
6 national efforts to promote human rights  
7 and political freedoms in Iran, including  
8 coordination between the United States  
9 and the United Nations, the European  
10 Union, the Organization for Security and  
11 Cooperation in Europe, and countries in  
12 the region;

13 “(ii) establish the regional framework  
14 described in section 304;

15 “(iii) coordinate with appropriate of-  
16 fices of the Department of State, the De-  
17 partment of Defense, the National Security  
18 Council, and such other agencies as may  
19 be necessary to coordinate the establish-  
20 ment and operation of the regional frame-  
21 work;

22 “(iv) serve as point of contact for op-  
23 position groups, diaspora groups, and non-  
24 governmental organizations interested in

1           advocating democracy and human rights in  
2           Iran;

3           “(v) coordinate efforts with appro-  
4           priate departments and agencies of the  
5           Federal Government, international organi-  
6           zations, nongovernmental organizations,  
7           and individuals and organizations from the  
8           Iranian diaspora to acquire greater infor-  
9           mation and reporting on conditions in  
10          Iran;

11          “(vi) oversee funding for, and pro-  
12          viding consultative authority with respect  
13          to, public and private broadcasting into  
14          Iran; and

15          “(vii) review strategies for improving  
16          the protection of human rights in Iran, in-  
17          cluding technical training and exchange  
18          programs.

19          “(3) REPORT ON ACTIVITIES.—Not later than  
20          180 days after the date of the enactment of the Iran  
21          Human Rights Act of 2007, and annually thereafter  
22          for each of the following 5 years, the Special Envoy  
23          shall submit a report on the activities undertaken  
24          under paragraph (2) during the preceding 12  
25          months to—

1           “(A) the Committee on Foreign Relations  
2 of the Senate;

3           “(B) the Committee on Appropriations of  
4 the Senate;

5           “(C) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of  
6 the House of Representatives; and

7           “(D) the Committee on Appropriations of  
8 the House of Representatives.”.

9       (c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—Title III of such Act is  
10 amended by adding at the end the following:

11 **“SEC. 303. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF**  
12 **HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN.**

13       “‘It is the sense of Congress that—

14           “(1) there is a direct relationship between the  
15 state of freedom and democracy within Iran and the  
16 efforts of the current regime of Iran to acquire nu-  
17 clear weapons and the long-term success of the glob-  
18 al war on terror; and

19           “(2) it is essential that the issue of human  
20 rights violations in Iran should remain a top United  
21 States foreign policy priority, independent of efforts  
22 to address the nuclear threat in Iran.

23 **“SEC. 304. ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL FRAMEWORK.**

24       “(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that human rights  
25 initiatives can be undertaken on a multilateral basis, as

1 demonstrated by the Organization for Security and Co-  
2 operation in Europe, which established a regional frame-  
3 work for discussing human rights, scientific and edu-  
4 cational cooperation, and economic and trade issues.

5 “(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Con-  
6 gress that the United States Government should explore  
7 the possibility of a regional human rights dialogue on Iran  
8 that is modeled on the Helsinki process established by the  
9 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, en-  
10 gaging all countries in the region in a common commit-  
11 ment to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

12 **“SEC. 305. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE ROLE OF THE**  
13 **UNITED NATIONS.**

14 “It is the sense of Congress that the United Nations  
15 has a significant role to play in promoting and improving  
16 human rights in Iran, and that—

17 “(1) the United Nations General Assembly has  
18 taken positive steps by adopting Resolution 61/176,  
19 which expresses its grave concern over the deterio-  
20 rating human rights situation in Iran;

21 “(2) the severe human rights violations in Iran  
22 warrant country-specific attention and reporting by  
23 the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary  
24 Detention, the United Nations Working Group on  
25 Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, the Spe-

1       cial Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary, or Arbitrary Executions, the Special Rapporteur on the  
2       Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom  
3       of Opinion and Expression, the Special Rapporteur  
4       on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and the Special  
5       Rapporteur on Violence Against Women;

6               “(3) United Nations member states should not  
7       support Iran as a member of the United Nations  
8       Human Rights Council until the Government of Iran  
9       has made significant progress in its human rights  
10       record, including the adherence to the Universal  
11       Declaration on Human Rights; and  
12       

13               “(4) the Special Envoy should work with the  
14       United Nations to compile accurate statistical data  
15       on social and political conditions inside Iran.

16       **“SEC. 306. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON VISA POLICY.**

17       “‘It is the sense of Congress that the commitment to  
18       human rights and democracy of a national of Iran who  
19       has applied for a visa to enter the United States should  
20       be considered when determining the eligibility of such na-  
21       tional for the visa.’”.

○