



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on November 8, 2013

## Talks on Iran's Nuclear Program Continue in Geneva

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in  Geneva today to join the ongoing talks between the so-called P5+1 nations and Iran. The talks — where the United States is represented by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman — are intended to resolve differences between the Western powers and the Middle Eastern nation concerning Iran's nuclear fuel enrichment program.

The term [P5+1](#) refers to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France — plus Germany. Germany is joined as a partner in the talks primarily because it is Iran's largest trade partner, and Iran's nuclear enrichment program depends heavily on German products and services.

Upon arriving in Geneva, [Kerry told the press](#):

I want to emphasize there are still some very important issues on the table that are unresolved. It is important for those to be properly, thoroughly addressed. I want to emphasize there is not an agreement at this point in time, but the P5+1 is working hard.

Kerry flew to Geneva from Tel Aviv following conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in which he tried to relieve Israeli reservations about the Geneva talks. An [AP report](#) noted that Israel is strongly critical of any deal that even slightly lifts sanctions against Iran unless that nation completely relinquishes all technology that might be used to manufacture nuclear arms.

In the late 1990s, the U.S. intelligence community estimated that Israel possessed between 75 and 130 nuclear weapons, as well as second-strike abilities in the form of its submarine fleet and its nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, which can be launched from nuclear-strike-resistant underground silos.

The AP's report, which was somewhat misleading, said,

The talks primarily focus on the size and output of Iran's enrichment program, which can create both reactor fuel and weapons-grade material suitable for a nuclear bomb. Iran insists it is pursuing only nuclear energy, medical treatments and research, but the United States and its allies fear that Iran could turn this material into the fissile core of nuclear warheads.

Many observers dispute the contention that Iran is close to producing a nuclear weapon.

For example, during the 2012 presidential campaign, candidate Ron Paul said in an interview with CNN's John King: "There is no evidence whatsoever that the Iranians have or are on the verge of getting a nuclear weapon, according to our own military people, our own CIA, according to the UN."

[Reuters reported](#) that Kerry was also expected to hold a trilateral meeting with European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

Commenting on Kerry's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu before traveling to Geneva, Reuters noted that Israel's leader warned Kerry and the P5+1 counterparts that Iran would be getting "the deal of the century" if the group granted Iran limited, temporary relief from sanctions in exchange for a



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partial suspension of its uranium enrichment program and its pledge not to expand the program. "Israel utterly rejects it and what I am saying is shared by many in the region, whether or not they express that publicly," Netanyahu told reporters.

"Israel is not obliged by this agreement and Israel will do everything it needs to do to defend itself and the security of its people," said Netanyahu before meeting Kerry in Jerusalem.

An unnamed Western diplomat told Reuters that Israel's strong objections to the proposed deal might actually make it easier for Iranian President Hasan Rouhani to convince skeptics in Iran's government that it is worth considering.

[BBC News](#) also quoted Netanyahu's strong statement objecting to the P5+1 powers giving concessions to Iran:

I understand that the Iranians are walking around very satisfied in Geneva — as well they should be, because they got everything and paid nothing.

So Iran got the deal of the century and the international community got a bad deal; this is a very bad deal. Israel utterly rejects it.

The [JTA](#) (Jewish Telegraphic Agency) summarized the Western-proposed deal by noting that "Iran would receive limited sanctions relief in exchange for an agreement to curtail nuclear enrichment activities." JTA reported that under the deal Iran would also agree not to use its more advanced, high-speed IR-2 centrifuges (which can enrich uranium three to five times faster than the older model) but could continue using the older-model centrifuges.

Another part of the agreement would require Iran to agree to a six-month freeze on some activities at its plutonium reactor at Arak, which could provide another path to producing nuclear weapons. However, Iran could continue working on the facility for non-weapons-related projects.

During a November 7 [press briefing by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney](#), a reporter asked Carney what he could tell the press about the proposed deal between the West and Iran.

Carney summarized the proposal in general terms:

In general, the P5-plus-1 is focused on developing a phased approach that in the first step halts Iran's nuclear program from moving forward, and potentially rolls back parts of it. The first step would address Iran's most advanced nuclear activities; increase transparencies so Iran will not be able to use the cover of talks to advance its program; and create time and space as we negotiate a comprehensive agreement. This would stop Iran's nuclear program from advancing for the first time in a decade.

In exchange for concrete, verifiable measures to address the P5-plus-1's concerns during the first step, the P5-plus-1 would consider limited, targeted, and reversible relief that does not affect our core sanctions architecture. That core sanctions architecture would be maintained until there is a final comprehensive, verifiable agreement that resolved the international community's concerns.

In addition to [sanctions imposed by the UN](#), the United States has imposed a ban on arms sales to Iran, as well as a near-total economic embargo. This includes sanctions on companies doing business with Iran, a ban on all Iranian-origin imports, sanctions on Iranian financial institutions, and an almost total ban on selling aircraft or repair parts to Iranian aviation companies. The *New York Times* reported on February 6, 2012 that "an executive order signed by President Obama ... started the enforcement process for a tough measure he signed into law at the end of 2011. If fully carried out, that measure



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could isolate Iran's central bank and effectively choke off the sale of Iranian oil by obstructing the means of payment. Most of the revenue for oil sales by Iran, one of the world's biggest oil exporters, is processed by its central bank."

During his press briefing, Carney also stated that "Iran must also meet its international obligations and fulfill its responsibilities under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, its responsibilities to the IAEA, and its responsibilities to staying in compliance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions."

The above references to "international obligations," "responsibilities to the IAEA," and "compliance with the U.N. Security Council resolutions," indicate a willingness to recognize the UN as a supra-national authority that has the right to impose its will on sovereign nations. This is in marked contrast to the state of the world during the Cold War, during which the United States produced an estimated 70,000 nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union produced approximately 55,000, France more than 1,000, the United Kingdom more than 800, China about 600, with other nations producing lesser amounts.

That not one of these nations has had sanctions imposed on it by the UN indicates that in addition to considering itself superior to sovereign states, the UN exercises its "authority" quite arbitrarily.



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