



Do the Right Thing on Iran: No Military Support.

Immediate Ceasefire. Diplomatic Negotiations

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There are no good wars. More than 20 days in, the military action by the United States and Israel against Iran began tragically with the killing of 160 primary-school girls by an American Tomahawk missile. It's gotten worse.

The conflict has metastasized across the Middle East, to the Arab Gulf states and Lebanon, killing and maiming civilians, degrading public infrastructure, destabilizing the global oil market, food and fertilizer markets, hyping commodity speculation, driving up gas prices at the pump, and, above all, enriching arms dealers.

In response to US and Israeli strikes on its energy facilities, and assassinations of its top leaders, Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz to western oil and gas shipments—although Iranian, Chinese, and Indian ships have been let through—and has damaged the world's largest liquefied natural gas export facility in Qatar.

The war sidetracks scrutiny of Israel's continuing suppression of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. In the US, the conflict diverts public attention from the release of the Epstein files. Perhaps most importantly, the war distracts from President Trump's dismal approval ratings. These do not augur well for the Republican Party in the upcoming mid-term elections, which could result in political deadlock in Congress.

But the conflict has not stopped Iran's flow of funds and weapons to its proxy militias in the region. Nor have the human rights abuses perpetrated on the Iranian people by the regime in Tehran stopped. UN Special Rapporteur Mai Sato has documented the state's unlawful use of lethal force against protestors and detainees, its extraordinarily high number of executions, and the extreme discrimination of Iran's justice system against women, among other egregious human rights abuses.

There is no indication that Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, son of slain Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, or his ally, Parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, will change course on domestic politics or military strategy.

Indeed, Mojtaba's selection "was a clear signal that Tehran is determined to resist", emphasizes Johns Hopkins scholar Vali Nasr. "Since the 16th century, Iranian nationalism has been forged in the crucible of persistent threats to the country's survival, resisting and defying plans by powerful neighbors and imperial powers to

dominate and divide it.” Anti-imperial ideology combined with Shiism defines the core of the Islamic Republic. This will not be a short war.

A group of UN human rights experts has called for de-escalation and accountability: “Civilians are bearing the brunt of this war with their lives, their safety, their environment and their health. In a country that has already lost thousands to violent repression following the nationwide protests that began on 28 December 2025, these attacks deepen an already profound human tragedy.”

However, Payam Akhavan, Human Rights Chair at the University of Toronto’s Massey College, argues that “the astonishing resilience of those fighting for freedom demonstrates the tremendous potential for a future Iran that will allow its people to live in dignity and become a force for progress in the region.” He expects that the arc of Iranian history will be bent toward justice and secular pluralism by “a youthful, highly educated population with a rich and ancient cultural heritage.” There is pain, he writes, but there is also potential.

Opposition to this illegal war has been registered by the United Nations Secretary General, France, Italy, Spain, Brazil, China and Russia, among others, and by segments of the US Administration’s own political base, including influential podcaster Joe Rogan.

As Brazil’s President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has said: “My message to the United States, Israel, and Iran is simple: the world is tired of your conflicts. Diplomacy is not a sign of weakness; it is the highest expression of human intelligence. Those who die are not the ones signing the attack orders in Washington or Tel Aviv; those who die are the innocents.”

Canada has supported this war, although it has been difficult to discern a clear position emanating from Prime Minister Carney. The message seems to be that while Canada supports a war to prevent Iran obtaining nuclear weapons and perpetrating terrorism around the world, the Canadian government will not support the US and Israel militarily by committing our armed forces.

That position may be changing. On March 19, Canada joined Japan, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands in committing to help open the Strait of Hormuz. “We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait. We welcome the commitment of nations who are engaging in preparatory planning.”

This commitment is well-meaning but immensely problematic in offering, ambiguously, “appropriate” efforts to ensure safe passage in the Strait. It is conceivable that naval escort vessels deployed for this purpose by the seven countries (including Canada) will themselves come under fire from Iran. If they do, and they return fire, the conflict risks immediate escalation.

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet must immediately confirm that Canada rules out military support and, through the United Nations, the Group of 7, and the European

Union, work urgently for an immediate ceasefire and renewed diplomatic negotiations to bring an end to the conflict—a process that must not, as Lula insists, be “tainted by arms trade interests.”

Regrettably, the Carney government has recently rejected the option of preventing the flow of arms to Israel and the US and to other belligerents through legislative action. Bill C-233, the No More Loopholes Act, was designed to cut off the flow of arms to the perpetrators of genocide and war crimes and their supply chains. The Bill had support from some Liberal MPs as well as the NDP, but it was defeated in the House.

The prospects of Canada’s upcoming trade talks with the US should not deter us from this better path. It is late, but there is still time to do the right thing: No military support. Immediate ceasefire. Diplomatic negotiations.

Yours respectfully,



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