I.I.C.
Iranians for International Cooperation

IIC Frequent Asked Questions

Q: *How long has IIC existed?*

A: IIC was founded in August 1997 by Trita Parsi, the present Chairman. While conducting research on Iran for US Congressmen in Washington DC in 1997, he recognized the necessity of establishing a lobbying organization in order to protect the socio-economic and political aspirations of the Iranian people on one hand, and to promote the historical and contemporary cultural and scientific contributions of people of Iranian heritage worldwide, on the other. This consequently led, in collaboration with a large number of intellectuals and experts, to the formation of Iranians for International Cooperation (IIC).

Q: *What is IIC, is it a political party or a lobby organization?*

A: IIC is not a political party *or* even a political organization. We consider ourselves a lobby organization; we use our constitutional rights to influence our elected representatives. But we have no ambition to run for public office! **We simply do not consider ourselves an alternative to the regime *or* to the opposition**.

Q: *But if IIC is a lobby organization, doesn't it become political if it supports politicians?*

A: **IIC doesn't support any politicians, political groups or movements!** We support ideas, objectives and reforms. And as a non-political group, we don't make politics out of this: If someone presents an idea or, in our opinion, genuinely strives to push for reforms which we agree with, we will support that *move*-- regardless if the person in question is a former communist, mullah or monarchist. **We support the idea or the reform, not the person/group behind it.**

Q: *What does IIC aim to do? Do we really need an Iranian lobby?*

A: Our main objective is promote friendship between Iran and the US. Currently, our agenda is topped by the removal of US economic and political sanctions against Iran, and the commencement of an Iran-US dialogue. Iranians constitute one of the most productive and highly educated ethnic groups in the US. Yet, we are a very small voice in US politics. We simply do not participate in the political processes in this great democracy, and if we do not participate we cannot expect to have our voice heard.

Many of the problems Iranians face in the US, and much of the enmity between the US and Iran, could either have been terminated or reduced had we attempted to constitute a political force in the US. For instance, had there been an organized *Iranian* opposition to the proposed US sanctions back in 1995, chances are that the sanctions either wouldn't have been enacted *or* that they would have been enacted in a much more lenient form. Now, we missed that train, but we still have the opportunity *and the responsibility* to help our people out of this situation and to make sure that we never get in such a precarious situation again.

Of course a non-political Iranian lobby is needed!

Q: *Why should we oppose US sanctions and what would an US-Iran dialogue do?*

A: There are several reasons why we should oppose US sanctions:

1. The sanctions do not hit the regime, **they hit the people**-- our relatives back in Iran-- and make their already hard life even more difficult to endure.

2. Economic hardship will not lead to any political change in Iran. On the contrary, history has shown us that for the emergence of democracy, a strong middle class is needed. US sanctions effectively prohibit the emergence of a strong middle class-- and thus the emergence of democracy…

3. To make the above point even clearer: Has economic sanctions brought democracy or even change to Libya, Iraq, or North Korea? No, but it has caused widespread starvation. And if we don't act now, we may soon face the same fate as the Iraqi people.

4. As a result of the US sanctions, we see how our bright students get discriminated against in the US. For instance, with Iranian addresses one can not sign up to give the TOEFL and many other exams. Thus, US sanctions prohibit Iranians' access to the best universities in the world.

5. Due to the US sanctions, the US opposes Central Asian gas pipelines to reach the Persian Gulf through Iran-- the shortest and cheapest way. The hard currency Iran would make on such pipelines is insignificant. However, the geopolitical and strategic importance Iran would gain by having these pipelines pass its territory are immense, not only for now but for the next 50 to 70 years. Thus, the US sanctions do not only aim to impoverish the Iranian people, but also to weaken the Iranian nation for the next half century-- regardless of what regime reigns in Tehran, be it democratic or theocratic.

6. Now that we are seeing tremendous change in Iran, US aggression against Iran will be counterproductive. The Iranian people voted for President Khatami to get a more open society. If the sanctions succeed in crippling Iran, we will get the exact opposite: A more closed society where conservative forces' struggle to turn the clock back will be facilitated. We have the power and the responsibility to make sure this does not occur.

7. US sanctions are not only an excessively costly policy, but undermine US interests in the Middle East, one of the most strategically important regions in the world.

8. Iran has the potential to be the US's firmest ally in the oil-rich Middle East. Mindful of the instability of the US's present allies in the region, normalized relations with Iran does lie in the interest of the US.

Regarding an US-Iran dialogue, this is simply the only way to put an end to the now 20 year old enmity between these two great nations. Just as the US has urged all of its allies to use dialogue and not violence in order to solve disputes and conflicts, dialogue should be the mean used to solve the disagreements between Iran and the US.

Q*: How does IIC work?*

A: We work by informing our representatives of our opinions on these issue. We petition Congress and the EU Parliament, we meet with politicians, we send editorials to major newspapers, we promote tourism to Iran, we promote sports and cultural exchanges, we fight discrimination facing Iranians in the US etc. etc.