



Freedom Socialist campaign statement

No war against Iran — Lift the embargo

On July 1, following the lead of the United States, the European Union tightened its oil embargo against Iran. This is the latest step in a campaign to paint Iran as a nuclear menace — as a country that violates the rules regarding the production of enriched uranium, used to develop both nuclear weapons and nuclear energy.

Despite any hard evidence of an Iranian weapons program, the Obama administration is cynically conducting a public relations assault reminiscent of the lies and sanctions that preceded the disastrous invasion and occupation of Iraq. This is further evidence that capitalism cannot survive without unending wars against external and internal “enemies.” These conflicts feed the voracious appetite for profit of the military-industrial complex and hold in check international working-class resistance to U.S. rulers.

The Freedom Socialist Party campaign of Stephen Durham for U.S. president and Christina López for vice president calls for an immediate end to the embargo because it hurts the working and poor people of both countries. In Iran, the economic sanctions have raised the price of basic commodities and led to the collapse of the country’s currency; in the U.S., experts estimate, the sanctions have added 25 cents to every gallon of gas consumers buy, thereby driving up inflation and the price of necessities.

Ruling elites can cushion themselves from the effects of an embargo; it is always the common people who suffer.

Background to the present saber-rattling

In 1968, Iran signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Under its terms, countries can produce enriched uranium for peaceful purposes if there are inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). For years, Iran has permitted IAEA inspections; not once have they revealed proof of a weapons production program.

In a theocracy such as Iran, the ultimate power and legitimacy of the regime rest not with the people, but with the clerics. Any vote or governmental decision can be overturned by the Supreme Spiritual Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the 12-man Council of Guardians. Khamenei has repeatedly condemned nuclear weapons as tools of the devil and says they are forbidden by Islamic law.

Iranian leaders claim they have stepped up production of enriched uranium in order to develop nuclear energy. They are anxious to do this both as a matter of national pride and as a means to free the country from dependence on selling oil to make ends meet.

Despite the lack of *concrete evidence* of a weapons production program or the intention to develop one, the embargo noose has been steadily tightened. On New Year's Eve, Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act, which includes provisions for disrupting Iran's ability to export oil by punishing countries that do business with Iran's central bank. These sanctions took full effect on June 28.

This is not the first time the U.S. has used economic sanctions like these against Iran. In 1951, the Iranian parliament nationalized the country's oil fields and kicked out the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (forerunner to BP). The British launched an embargo and were quickly joined by the U.S. Shortages caused by the embargo provoked unrest, and the CIA and British intelligence used this disquiet to launch a coup and put the Shah in power. He was overthrown in 1979 by a revolution that ultimately resulted in a theocracy. This is a corrupt regime that has no respect for free speech or the democratic rights of national minorities, women, gays or unionists. But it is up to the Iranian people to overthrow this regime, not the U.S., which is still despised for installing the brutal dictatorship of the Shah.

Obama's man at the IAEA

In July 2009, Yukiya Amano, who has close ties to the Japanese nuclear industry, became the new IAEA director general. In secret diplomatic cables made public by WikiLeaks, Geoffrey Pyatt, a U.S. chargé d'affaires in Vienna, revealed Amano's overly friendly relationship with the Obama administration.

"Amano reminded the ambassador on several occasions," Pyatt wrote, "that he would need to make concessions to the G-77 [the developing countries group], which correctly required him to be fair-minded and independent, but that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program."

Amano has met with substantial criticism since taking the top spot. Former IAEA officials say he is repeating the errors of the run-up to the Iraq war by listening to a small group of insiders who advocate for the U.S. president's agenda. Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, a non-proliferation organization, asserts, "The main beneficiaries of the Amano reign have been U.S. policy and the Japanese nuclear power industry" with "no space between Amano and Barack Obama." He charges that Amano "withheld serious criticism of the [nuclear] industry during the Fukushima crisis."

All this completely undermines the concept of IAEA as an independent oversight agency whose word is its bond.

Israel: the real nuclear threat

The only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons is Israel. However, Israel has neither signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty nor been inspected by the IAEA. No one knows for sure how many nuclear weapons it has; between 70 and 400 are estimated. This arsenal would be completely secret if it weren't for Israeli nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu, who exposed it in 1986. He was subsequently kidnapped by his own government, imprisoned for 18 years — and held in solitary confinement for 11 of those years. To this day, he is not permitted to speak with foreigners or have a phone.

But Vanunu has fared better than a number of Iranian nuclear scientists who have been assassinated — four in the last two years, and more before that. It is widely assumed that Israeli agents are responsible for these murders. Israeli officials refuse to confirm this, however, saying only that Israel has the right to defend itself.

Obama’s policy is simply a continuation of the Bush era

In 2005, President George W. Bush told Israeli TV that “all options are on the table” if the Iranians refused to comply with demands to halt their nuclear program, pointedly noting that he had already used force in the name of U.S. security. He reiterated this in 2007 and 2008, when he also refused to rule out a preemptive strike.

Nothing fundamental has changed under Obama. While the president used a diplomatic approach up to enactment of the embargo, he continues to use the same Bush phrase over and over again in regard to Iran’s nuclear program: “all options are on the table.” In March, he explicitly stated that “all elements of American power” remain possibilities against Iran, including “a military effort.” As if to prove it, in April the U.S. conducted one of the largest war-games exercises in a decade, meant to mirror conditions the military would face if Iran closed down shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. European and Australian forces also took part.

Stop the next war before it begins

The only force with the power to stop the next war is the U.S. working class in alliance with the people of the world. For that, we need an anti-war movement in this country that will not close up shop every four years when a Democrat — no matter what color, what gender or how charming — runs for president. If we truly want to end U.S. war-making, we must stay in the streets and bring others with us. And we must present a revolutionary alternative vision of international solidarity, equality and peace based on sharing wealth. It’s long past time to end nonstop capitalist crises and preparations for war.

Voting for socialist feminist candidates Stephen Durham and Christina López in the November election is a vote in favor of this vision. It is also a vote against the next war and a pledge to continue the fight for peace.

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www.VoteSocialism.com • 206-985-4621 • VoteSocialism@gmail.com
[Facebook.com/VoteSocialism2012](https://www.facebook.com/VoteSocialism2012) • [Twitter @VoteSocialism](https://twitter.com/VoteSocialism)

National Campaign Headquarters: 4710 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105 • 206-985-4621
VoteSocialism@gmail.com