

Israel warns Obama against dialogue with Iran

By [Global Research](#)

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Israel said today US president-elect Barack Obama's stated readiness to talk to Iran could be seen in the Middle East as a sign of weakness in efforts to persuade Tehran to curb its nuclear programme.

"We live in a neighbourhood in which sometimes dialogue — in a situation where you have brought sanctions, and you then shift to dialogue — is liable to be interpreted as weakness," foreign minister Tzipi Livni said, asked on Israel Radio about policy change toward Tehran in an Obama administration.

Her remarks sounded the first note of dissonance with Mr Obama by a senior member of the Israeli government since the Democrat's sweeping victory over Republican candidate John McCain in the US presidential election on Tuesday.

Asked if she supported any US dialogue with Iran, Ms Livni replied: "The answer is no."

Ms Livni, leading the centrist Kadima party into Israel's February 10th parliamentary election, also said "the bottom line" was that the United States, under Obama, "is also not willing to accept a nuclear Iran".

A senior Iranian official today called on Mr Obama to show goodwill and remove sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Mr Obama has said he would harden sanctions but has also held out the possibility of direct talks with the United States to solve problems, including the dispute over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

"Through the lifting of the past government's cruel sanctions against Iran, Barack Obama can demonstrate his goodwill to the Iranian people," Prosecutor-General Ayatollah Qorban-Ali Dori-Najafabadi said.

"Calling for forgiveness and remorse for the past U.S. government's deeds by the new government can bring about the great Iranian nation's forgiveness," he was quoted as saying in the northwestern city of Tabriz.

The United States cut diplomatic ties with Iran after its Islamic Revolution in 1979 and is spearheading a drive to isolate the country over its nuclear activities.

Mr Obama, like current US President George W. Bush, has not ruled out military action although he has criticised the outgoing administration for not pushing diplomacy and engagement with Iran.

Iranian officials have said his election victory on Tuesday showed the American people's desire for fundamental change in domestic and foreign policy from the policies of Mr Bush, who labelled Iran part of an "axis of evil".

The head of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy commission said any change in Iran's strategy towards Washington would depend on a change in the US approach, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"As long as the US policy toward Iran stays the way it currently is, negotiations with that country will have no meaning," Alaeddin Boroujerdi said in the city of Mashad.

The West believes Iran's nuclear enrichment programme is aimed at building atomic weapons, an allegation the Islamic Republic denies.

Israel, believed to have the Middle East's only atomic arsenal, has said Iran's nuclear programme is a threat to its existence and that it was keeping all options on the table to stop it.

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