



JCRC THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
OF THE JEWISH UNITED FUND OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT THE THREATS POSED BY IRAN

✓ **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY JCRC MAY 8, 2007**

The Challenge:

Preventing Iran from fulfilling its ambition to become a regional hegemon equipped with nuclear weapons is a top priority for the Jewish community, as it is for the U.S. Israel, the entire “Western” world and moderate Arab and Muslim countries. Our community’s particular concerns are heightened since Iran is led by a President that denies the Holocaust and threatens to wipe Israel off the map. Meanwhile, the regime continues the long-standing Iranian policies of supporting Hezbollah and Hamas and aiding terror attacks against Jewish/Israeli targets around the world. Our ultimate objective is to arouse the political will of governments to take the kind of vigorous economic and diplomatic measures, not to punish the Iranian people,* but to prevent Iran from succeeding in its quest for nuclear weapons. Solid Jewish community relations work, which necessarily involves engaging non-Jews, can play a constructive and meaningful role in addressing the Iranian challenge. Engaging the non-Jewish community on Iran is especially complicated, emerging as it is amidst the Iraq war and the way that is reverberating within American domestic and Middle East regional politics. Nonetheless, because Iran is a profound problem for the world (not just us and Israel) and because it is how community relations is most effective, our voice needs to be raised in concert with other Americans.

JCRC as the convener for 46 local Jewish constituent organizations (many are umbrella bodies themselves) and in collaboration with many of those groups is uniquely positioned to accelerate, broaden and intensify its Iran-related advocacy.

The Strategies:

JCRC looks to enhance its efforts to meet the Iranian challenge via two primary strategies:

- I. **INTERNAL:** To educate and mobilize, in cooperation with many of its participating organizations, the Jewish community (institutions and individuals) for action.
- II. **EXTERNAL:** To educate, partner and where possible mobilize for action amongst non-Jewish religious, civic, ethnic, non-profit, governmental, media, campus, educational, corporate and human rights organizations/institutions, again in partnership with many JCRC participating organizations.

* Of particular concern is the fate of Iran’s remaining 25,000 Jews, a consideration informing all of our deliberations on the subject of Iran.

It is essential to reach out to both existing and potential non-Jewish friends across all types of spectrums. The nature of the Iranian threat requires aggressively seeking out unconventional partners in this urgent campaign; indeed we are prepared to consider partnerships with what might seem like strange “bedfellows.” The threat of a nuclear-armed Iran is and should be framed as a matter of the gravest national security to Americans, Arab states, Europe and the entire civilized world; it is both a “Jewish” and “Israeli” issue, but it is not exclusively that.

The Plan:

JCRC’s community relations efforts will develop within both strategic areas: intra Jewish community and with the non-Jewish world. Many of the individual tasks will invariably spillover into both the “internal” and “external” dimensions of our work. Perhaps such inter-connectedness will be most clear and significant when we would look to protest/rally against visiting Iranian officials in Illinois or Washington, D.C., or at the U.N. in New York. In that and other areas of public and behind-the-scenes-advocacy JCRC (along with its constituent organizations) is uniquely positioned for substantial impact in the Chicago area on this issue.

INTERNAL/JEWISH COMMUNITY

- ✓ Within the Jewish community, JCRC will collaborate with its constituent organizations, especially the synagogue movements and rabbinic bodies as well as the foreign policy focused groups.
- ✓ JCRC will increasingly work with the Jewish Federation’s Government Affairs’ Offices in Springfield and Washington, D.C., and utilizing JUF Communication vehicles of E-Alert, the JUF website, JUF NEWS and other outlets.
- ✓ Iran – through speakers, news updates and prepared written materials – will continue to become an increasingly integral piece of the JCRC/Hillel Israel Initiative on campuses, high schools, Jewish youth groups and summer camps. Like the JCRC/Hillel Israel Initiative itself, this Iran focus will also be increasingly brought to what we call “remote” campuses, where relatively few Jewish students, faculty and administrators are.
- ✓ JCRC will explore educational programming of particular interest to various boards and constituencies as well as utilize the networking capacities of other Jewish groups to reach and possibly partner with non-Jewish institutions and individuals.
- ✓ Nationally, JCRC will sustain its strong support for the JCPA/UJC Israel Advocacy Initiative (IAI) and its Iran activities. JCRC received a \$4,000 grant from the IAI towards what is being planned as a major academic forum for the Fall of 2007 that will aim to attract professors of varied disciplines, law enforcement officers, clergy, consuls general and their senior staff, particularly from key member nations at the UN Security Council, the International Atomic Energy Agency and Human Rights Council, Illinois legislators, journalists and leaders in the business and religious communities. This program will be modeled in part on the very successful Spring 2005 all-day JCRC seminar looking at international terrorism and the links to it from Chicago.

- ✓ JCRC will collaborate with JUF's Israel Office as well as Israeli governmental, academic and other institutions for programming, resources and related activities of shared interest. For example, the offices of local "Friends of" Israel universities could be approached to facilitate Chicago visits of professors with relevant expertise on Iran.

EXTERNAL/BROADER COMMUNITY

Beyond the Jewish community locally, nationally and internationally, JCRC (and our constituent organizations) will – must – work increasingly with non-Jewish institutions and leaders. The scope of this plan doesn't allow for detailed specificity of all the types of activities that will be pursued within each type of category below, but suffice it to say that both traditional and unconventional community relations strategies will be employed in each of the following important arenas:

- ✓ Local, state and federal elected officials and relevant executive branch departments (Chicago's Inter-Agency Terrorism Task Force, state and federal departments of Homeland Security, etc.). (Steps to be pursued within this category include additional U.S. governmental economic and diplomatic sanctions, as well as those by other foreign countries, the possibilities of an embargo of both Iranian exports of unrefined gas and its imports of refined gas, and, at their respective invitations, consulting closely with Congressmen Jan Schakowsky in her new assignment on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and with Mark Kirk in his on-going co-chairmanship of the House Iran Working Group.)
- ✓ Print, TV, and radio media, as well as professional journals, organizational newsletters, etc.
- ✓ Chicago-area churches, ministers, religious organizations, clergy associations and seminaries.
- ✓ Law enforcement.
- ✓ Chicago's 58-strong foreign Consular Corps.
- ✓ Human rights organizations (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, etc.). In this area, possible support will be provided to efforts to have the International Criminal Court in The Hague indict Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Charges are being prepared by a team of prominent international legal scholars and supported by some Jewish groups. They allege that Ahmadinejad is guilty of incitement to genocide by threatening "to wipe Israel off the map," which could be a violation of the 1948 U.N. Convention on the "Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."
- ✓ Foreign policy-focused civic groups (Chicago Council on Global Affairs, National Strategy Forum, etc.).
- ✓ Labor unions.
- ✓ Select Chicago communities with Middle East backgrounds (Turks, Assyrians, etc.).
- ✓ Local university departments of Middle East, International Relations, and Political Science as well as Law Schools.

- ✓ Select corporations and their top executives.
- ✓ Direct divestment of shares held in foreign companies doing business with Iran, especially those helping its energy and nuclear development industries, will be pursued legislatively and in other spheres. Divestment of any sort by the organized Jewish community is highly unusual. That JCPA and other national Jewish groups are now supporting it is a testament to the seriousness of the Iranian threat, and the type of atypical response that is necessary.

This aggressive new initiative will sometimes appear as a public program (within or beyond the Jewish community), sometimes as a Letter to the Editor, sometimes as a meeting with a diplomat or a briefing by a visiting scholar, sometimes as a piece of legislative activity in Springfield or D.C., sometimes as a protest of a visiting Iranian leader, sometimes as an update to local rabbis and Jewish educators, and, a number of times, activity with no visible connection to JCRC. It will be an ever-evolving project, one influenced by international and local dynamics, by trial and error, and opportunities that present themselves. What is certain is the high level of priority that JCRC is attaching to confronting the Iranian challenge, and the creativity and assertiveness with which it will be undertaken.

JCRC will report regularly to our constituent organizations and to the community (via Ealert, website, and JUF NEWS) about the initiative and progress being made. Through the “IranWatch” micro-site (<http://www.juf.org/jcrc/iran.asp>) that was launched to carry up-to-date and incisive information and action steps re: Iran, we can also link to programs and other items of note that our constituent organizations are producing.

Finally, in case it isn't clear from the scope of this document, the effort to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear hegemon is of a magnitude rarely undertaken by Jewish advocacy groups. Even major campaigns like AWACS, loan guarantees and more recently Presbyterian divestment were short in duration, narrowly focused in terms of who we worked with and what was being attempted and lacked the total communal mobilization that the Iran campaign will require. The closest modern American Jewish analogy in terms of communal-wide priority and mobilization as well as a goal of changing the behavior and capacities of a foreign government is with what we did on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Every synagogue, Jewish advocacy group, and Federation, in concert with many other Americans, sustained a relentless, innovative movement that not only led to the freedom of Soviet Jews to leave or practice their faith freely if they chose to stay, but also played no small role in helping accelerate the crumbling of the Soviet Union itself. This new Iran campaign requires a comparable Jewish communal awareness, unity, collaboration and mobilization. Perhaps it too can result in helping eliminate a certain type of threat against the Jewish people while enhancing the chances for peace and security between nations.