

# Israeli prime minister lays out path to war with Iran

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In a bellicose speech before the United Nations Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded a “red line” be placed on Iran’s nuclear enrichment program, outlining a plan of action that would lead to war next year, if not sooner.

Employing a crude cartoon drawing of a bomb with a lit fuse, Netanyahu said that action to physically destroy Iran’s nuclear program would have to take place before the uranium enrichment process began its final stage, which he claimed would happen around the spring or summer of 2013. “The hour is getting late, very late,” he declared.

The Israeli prime minister compared the Iranian government to Al Qaeda, placing the two within the framework of “a fanatic ideology bent on world domination.” He added, “It makes little difference whether these lethal weapons are in the hands of the world’s most dangerous terrorist regime, or the world’s most dangerous terrorist organization.”

Speaking as the head of government of a state that, in close alliance with the United States, is responsible for military aggression throughout the Middle East and beyond, and is engaged in a brutal occupation of Palestine, Netanyahu said that Israel “cherishes peace.” Israel currently has a stockpile of some 400 nuclear warheads and has refused to submit to international inspections.

Iran has denied that it is building a nuclear weapon, and international inspectors have found no evidence of anything that goes beyond an energy program. Netanyahu insisted, however, “The red line must be drawn on Iran’s nuclear enrichment program because these facilities are the only nuclear installations we can see and target.” By placing his “red line” before the beginning of the production of weapons-grade uranium, Netanyahu is seeking to establish a pretext for war even

before there is any evidence that Iran is actually seeking to build a bomb.

Israeli-US plans for war—which would have devastating and incalculable consequences—are being carried out entirely behind the backs of the American people. One of the principal concerns of the Obama administration has been to delay actions until after the US elections in November, to ensure that the population has no say in the matter.

Whatever their tactical differences, the US and Israel are agreed on basic strategy. “Democrats and Republicans alike” are united in the campaign against Iran, Netanyahu said. He added, “Israel is in discussions with the United States over this issue, and I am confident that we can chart a path forward, together.”

Netanyahu’s remarks came two days after Obama, in his own speech before the United Nations, declared that “a nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained... The United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.”

At the same time, Obama indicated that the administration wants to spend more time increasing sanctions on Iran, which have had a crippling impact on the country’s economy.

Netanyahu’s timetable for military action—coming about six months after the US elections—is an indication that his government is seeking to play down differences with the Obama administration over when military action would take place. On the day of his remarks, a report was leaked from Israel’s Foreign Ministry calling for an additional round of sanctions.

The report, obtained by the Tel Aviv daily *Haaretz*, also details the devastating impact of existing economic sanctions, including a 50 percent decline in oil exports and a sharp rise in prices for food and other

commodities.

Commenting on disagreements over “red lines” on Iran’s nuclear program, Israel’s deputy foreign minister, Danny Ayalon, said on Thursday, “I think that this whole matter of red lines should be made, but not publicly. And I think that at the moment, the talks between us and the Americans, which are excellent, are precisely about this. We are constantly coming closer in our positions.”

Dennis Ross, a career Middle East diplomat under both Republican and Democratic presidents, including Obama, also emphasized the basic strategic agreement between the US and Israel. “What you are really seeing is an agreement on the objective of making certain Iran cannot have nuclear weapons,” he said in an interview with MSNBC.

Ross added that “one of the reasons it is so important to create a context where the international community believes... that you have exhausted all the diplomatic options and have given the economic sanctions enough time” is “to create the kind of context that demonstrates unmistakably that we went the extra mile and if we had to use force, in fact we were left with no choice.”

The resort to war, Ross said, is “more and more likely.”

*The author recommends:*

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