

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515-4314

June 8, 2006

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your recent moves toward a possible dialogue with Iran and welcome the statements of Secretary Rice outlining this change of approach. But we sincerely hope you will not allow a disagreement over pre-conditions to scuttle negotiations before they have the chance to begin.

As you are aware, the US has not pursued formal diplomatic dialogue with Iran for nearly 26 years. This "no negotiation" stance has not yielded positive results, however. As the US-Iran diplomatic crisis escalates, our negotiation efforts at the United Nations have been conducted by the UK, France, and Germany. Yet those nations have thus far had little success with regard to Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has on several occasions sought direct dialogue with the United States in the hopes of solving outstanding issues between the two countries. In May 2003, for example, a communiqué from Iran was sent through the Swiss suggesting a dialogue between Iran and the United States. This year, the Iranian president sent a lengthy personal letter, the first letter from an Iranian president to a U.S. president in 27 years. Unfortunately, neither of these approaches resulted in US moves toward dialogue. If we hope to convince the American people, our allies, and the international community that we are serious about resolving this matter diplomatically, the US must open direct diplomatic channels to Tehran.

IAEA Chief Mohammad El-Baradei, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and many Middle East security experts