

## Nuclear Deal With Iran Nears Finish Line

Former Iranian negotiator says final sanctions piece falls to Kerry, armed with a hostile mandate from Congress

By [PAUL D. SHINKMAN](#)

November 8, 2013

A deal to end some sanctions against Iran could come as early as Friday, following reports that Secretary of State John Kerry left early Friday morning for Geneva to tip the scales in ongoing international talks there.

[\[REPORT: Saudi Arabia Poised to Receive Nukes\]](#)

The groundwork for an agreement appears to be in place between Iran and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany, known as P5+1. The two issues at hand are whether Iran will be able to create a transparent infrastructure for international monitoring of its nuclear program, and boosting international confidence that the Middle Eastern nation will not enrich nuclear materials at a level that could produce weapons.

Conciliation in Geneva could begin to peel away at the layers of sanctions imposed by the European Union and the United Nations against Iran for decades, as well as the U.S. sanctions that would require approval by a reluctant Congress facing increasing pressure from Israel.

"There is an understanding with the Russians and the Chinese, the Europeans and Iranians. They only need the U.S. to join the steps related to sanction relief," says Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator.

"The U.S. has a problem with its Congress on lifting the sanction," says Mousavian, now a research scholar at Princeton University. "This is the problem with the U.S. delegation. They don't have the ability to deliver sanction relief with the negotiations."

[\[OPINION: Too Much Breathing Room for Iran\]](#)

Kerry's decision to participate in the negotiations in person is a clear sign of the U.S. administration's commitment to easing [longstanding hostilities with Iran](#). But the secretary of State doesn't have a clear mandate from his home legislature or one America's closest allies abroad. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Kerry moments before his trip to Geneva against making a deal with the Iranians, reports Haaretz, an Israeli news service.

"[Iran got] the deal of the century and the international community got a bad deal," Netanyahu told reporters later, [Haaretz](#) says. "Israel utterly rejects it and many in the region share my opinion, whether or not they express that publicly. Israel is not obliged by this agreement and Israel will do everything it needs to do to defend itself and the security of its people."

He described the Iranians as "walking around very satisfied in Geneva" because "they got everything and paid nothing."

Such criticism of a compromise was echoed among the staunchly conservative members in Congress.

"Agree with @netanyahu and unwaveringly stand with Israel. Iran nuclear deal is very bad and U.S. must reverse course," wrote Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., in [a tweet Friday morning](#).

"We are going to unfreeze Iran's assets and give them 6 months? Are we paying them to get a bomb?" [tweeted Sen. Ted Cruz](#), R-Texas.

[\[MORE: The Game Saudi Arabia and Iran Are Playing in Syria\]](#)

Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, said the Obama administration was making "[another colossal Middle East blunder](#)" in a potential deal with Iran.



Secretary of State John Kerry gives a thumbs-up as he leaves his hotel in Geneva on the second day of talks with Iran on the country's nuclear program.

No other members of Congress mentioned via Twitter since Thursday the ongoing negotiations in Iran, except for Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, who [tweeted a link](#) to Netanyahu's criticism.

Former negotiator Mousavian says this problem falls squarely on America's shoulders.

"The Israelis are looking for no solution, to keep the sanctions going on because of other political intentions they have," he says. "Their issue is not really nuclear. This is about the problems, tensions, hostilities between Iran [and Israel] about playing a nuclear role in the region."

"[For the U.S.,] the red line is no nuclear bomb, and they're convinced the package is now 'No nuclear bomb'," Mousavian says. "They are not going to give up that opportunity."

Kerry's travels to Geneva force him to cancel scheduled trips to Morocco and Algeria. A State Department spokesperson said the U.S. values its strong relationships with those countries, but Kerry "looks forward to leading" the U.S. delegation in the P5+1 dialogues with Iran. Kerry will continue to other scheduled travel in the Middle East after leaving Geneva, the spokesperson said.

#### More News:

- [Iran on Nuke Talks: It's a Question of 'Months, Not Years'](#)
- [A Friendlier Iran: Diplomatic Breakthrough or Sinister Feint](#)
- [World Report: The Empty Threat of Iran Sanctions](#)

**Tags:** [Iran](#), [UN](#), [John Kerry](#), [nuclear weapons](#)

Copyright © 2013 U.S. News & World Report LP. Use of this website constitutes acceptance of our Terms and Conditions of Use / Privacy Policy.