

A Statement by the Board of Directors of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago
August 15, 2015

As Congress and the American people consider the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago Board of Directors is especially mindful of our unique, enduring role of keeping our community united and focused on the security of Israel and of Jews worldwide.

Since the JCPOA was announced on July 14, we have undertaken a deliberate listening, learning and governance process. We have convened educational sessions with Administration and Israeli officials, met with our Illinois congressional delegation and independent experts, and listened to many hundreds of passionate members of our community. Our Executive Committee met and our Jewish Community Relations Council convened two sessions, one educational and one to determine if a community consensus could emerge. These meetings have modeled informed, civil discourse.

This board of directors represents the diversity of our beloved Chicago Jewish community. Opinions on the JCPOA differ, but there is unanimity on the end goal: preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Thus, the more difficult task has been to focus on the best specific path to achieve that goal.

We thank the Obama Administration for its prioritizing the threat posed by an Iran nuclear weapon and forging a potent international sanctions coalition against it.

Following a substantive and civil three-hour discussion, our board reiterated its core mission to support Israel and safeguard Jews everywhere. Further, a majority opinion emerged and was adopted: to call on Congress to oppose the JCPOA as originally submitted, and to ask legislators to work with the Administration to produce better solutions addressing Iran's nuclear program.

Additionally, we – proponents and opponents of the JCPOA – together reiterate our essential beliefs and launch a renewed Iran Community Action Plan.

What we believe:

- 1) We approach this complex issue with humility. We are not nuclear scientists, military experts or international diplomats. But precisely because Iran is, in the words of the Administration, not trustworthy, we hope the Accord's terms on inspections and verification, the release of sanctions and frozen funds and the acceptance of Iran as a nuclear threshold power can be strengthened.
- 2) Diplomacy strengthened by sanctions, rather than war, is the wisest course. War is not the only alternative to this deal.
- 3) Iran's threats to annihilate the U.S. and Israel, its role as the leading state-sponsor of terrorism, its destabilizing of neighboring countries including U.S. allies, its theocratic, anti-democratic regime, its abysmal human rights record, and its Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism must no longer be rationalized or minimized. It is long past time to place Tehran where it belongs on the world's political map: isolated and ostracized. Hence, no nuclear accord should provide Iran with an unearned "express pass" to international legitimacy.
- 4) Israel has been singled out: as the only nation publically criticizing the accord and the only country in the region that Iran regularly threatens with annihilation.
- 5) We must continue our two decades of united, successful work. Those efforts have seen the creation of the non-partisan United Against A Nuclear Iran (UANI), passage of Iran divestment by the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago, and educating the Jewish and general communities, the local consular corps, the media and religious and civic leaders.

- 6) Jewish unity is a preeminent Jewish value, and we value it dearly. Before and after Congress votes, every Jew is a precious, welcomed, valued member of this cherished community. No matter your views, you are us, and we are you. We are all better together.
- 7) Despite disagreements over how best to prevent a nuclear Iran, we will rely upon communal unity in the challenging days ahead, days when we must even more vigilantly counter Iran's abominable actions and nurture, in a bi-partisan, community-wide manner, the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Therefore, with those as our core beliefs and responsibilities, we hereby pledge ourselves and commit to lead others to implement the following renewed Iran Community Action Plan:

- a) Call upon this and future U.S. presidents to continue to make clear that the United States will use any measures, including military power, to ensure that Iran is never able to threaten the United States, Israel or others with nuclear weapons..
- b) Call upon Congress to provide the President with advanced authority to take such action if needed.
- c) Urge both Congress and the Administration to intensify both our own and international efforts combatting Iran's sponsorship of global terrorism.
- d) Advocate directly to the United Nations and to the Chicago-based Consuls General of its member states that all relevant U.N. bodies must no longer indulge Holocaust denial or genocidal statements by Iranian government officials. No more free rides for Iran's deadly hatred.
- e) Call upon the U.S. to establish unprecedented levels of advanced understandings and channels of cooperation with Israel to confront risks stemming from the agreement and/or its violation by Iran. This includes clear definitions of what constitutes minor and major violations of the agreement, and accompanying responses, and a security aid package improving Israel's unilateral ability to thwart an Iranian breakout toward a bomb.
- f) Urge that Israel be added to additional multilateral defense alliances (such as NATO) and/or further upgrading the U.S.-Israel military partnership beyond both "Major Non-NATO Ally" status and that specified in the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013.
- g) Regardless of the fate of international sanctions, urge continued enforcement of Illinois, Cook County and Chicago divestment laws.

In addition to Federation itself pursuing this action plan, everyone in our community, on their own, can also adopt and implement it themselves, via:

- ✓ Organizations within and beyond JCRC;
- ✓ The media (radio, web, social media, newspapers, alumni magazines, etc.);
- ✓ Communicating with their members of Congress, and;
- ✓ Organizing educational events through synagogues, alumni associations, fraternal groups like Rotary, trade associations, etc.

In these critically important days before the congressional JCPOA vote, Federation remains open to the possibility of taking additional actions as evolving circumstances dictate. Combating a nuclear armed Iran has been a marathon, and we will continue deploying new strategies to fulfill our many important community roles.