

RPEC Position Statement on Iran

War With Iran?

The Richmond Peace Education Center has advocated the nonviolent resolution of conflict for over 30 years. Every war diminishes the human spirit and sets the stage for more war. Violence perpetuates violence.

RPEC rejects the use of military force against Iran. Going to war with Iran would be wrong and damaging to our nation and our world.

A military strike would have dire consequences and risk igniting a broader regional war. It would cost American and Iranian lives. Moreover, such an attack would be entirely outside the bounds of international law and illegal.

RPEC, which was founded in 1980 to oppose the nuclear arms race, has a long history of opposing nuclear weapons. However, we also recognize that Iran as a signer of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is in fact permitted under international law to develop atomic energy for peaceful purposes under the treaty. While we ultimately dream of a nuclear-free Middle East and world, we believe that attacking a country to prevent a hypothetical future nuclear weapons program for which there is scant evidence, is not justifiable and would not solve any stated problems.

Here in the United States, we face budget shortfalls at all levels of government. The city of Richmond, Virginia, faced a \$10 million shortfall in public school funding this year--an amount equivalent to what our country spends on keeping one soldier in Afghanistan for 8 days or on firing 10 cruise missiles.

Martin Luther King, Jr., famously said, "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death." U.S. military spending has nearly doubled in the past decade and over half of federal discretionary spending is spent on the military. The U.S. spends more on its military than the next ten largest military budgets among the world's nations combined. Our recent wars in the Middle East have cost \$3 trillion and resulted in the loss of thousands of U.S. lives, and cost the lives of hundreds of thousands if not a million or more Iraqi and Afghan civilians—while our economy remains mired in a painful economic slump. We simply cannot afford more war.

Moreover, we believe that it is up to the Iranian people to set their course for their own country. Threats of western intervention and tightened economic sanctions actually undermine space for democracy and reform within Iran, while harming the poor and middle class.

We are mindful that previous U.S. efforts to remake Iran by force in many ways set in motion the dynamics that we face today. Many of our own actions and policies have fueled Iran's fear of western invasion and distrust of U.S. overtures.

For all of these reasons, we urge:

- The United States government to engage diplomatically with Iran in a spirit of respect.
- The United States to clearly state its opposition to any strike on Iran by Israel now or after the U.S. presidential elections.
- American citizens to resist efforts by candidates and pundits who use the U.S. election season opportunistically to drive our country closer to war.
- Large and immediate reductions in military spending, and a shifting of those funds to address urgent economic and community needs.

We also call on the people of the United States to learn. Learn about the Iranian people and their extraordinary culture and history. Learn about the history of Iran-U.S. relations. Without understanding the history of U.S. involvement in that country and the region, it is impossible to understand the current situation. See www.RPEC.org for more resources.

Approved by the RPEC Board of Directors and Staff

Contact rpec@rpec.org with “endorse Iran statement” in the subject line to endorse this statement.