

# Timeline of Iran's Foreign Relations

Semira N. Nikou

## 1979

Feb. 12 - Syria was the first Arab country to recognize the revolutionary regime when President Hafez al Assad sent a telegram of congratulations to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The revolution transformed relations between Iran and Syria, which had often been hostile under the shah.

Feb. 14 - Students stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, but were evicted by the deputy foreign minister and Iranian security forces.

Feb. 18 - Iran cut diplomatic relations with Israel.

Oct. 22 - The shah entered the United States for medical treatment. Iran demanded the shah's return to Tehran.

Nov. 4 - Students belonging to the Students Following the Imam's Line seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The hostage crisis lasted 444 days. On Nov. 12, Washington cut off oil imports from Iran. On Nov. 14, President Carter issued Executive Order 12170 ordering a freeze on an estimated \$6 billion of Iranian assets and official bank deposits in the United States.

March - Iran severed formal diplomatic ties with Egypt after it signed a peace deal with Israel. Three decades later, Egypt was still the only Arab country that did not have an embassy in Tehran.

## 1980

April 7 - The United States cut off diplomatic relations with Iran.

April 25 - The United States attempted a rescue mission of the American hostages during Operation Eagle Claw. The mission failed due to a sandstorm and eight American servicemen were killed. Ayatollah Khomeini credited the failure to divine intervention.

Sept. 22 - Iraq invaded Iran in a dispute over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The war continued for eight years. Iran and Syria strengthened ties after Iraq's invasion, as Damascus provided Tehran with military and diplomatic support.

October - Iran cut all ties with Jordan after Amman declared support for Iraq. Relations did not resume until 1991.

## **1981**

Jan. 20 – After weeks of mediation by Algeria, Washington and Tehran agreed to the Algiers Accord to end the hostage crisis. The United States agreed to release frozen Iranian assets and not to intervene in Iranian affairs, in exchange for the release of 52 American hostages. Both countries agreed to end lawsuits. All claims would be referred to international arbitration at a new Iran-U. S. Claims Tribunal in The Hague.

May 25 – The Gulf Cooperation Council was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in order to confront security challenges posed by the Iran-Iraq War and the perceived threat of Iran's Islamic revolution. The agreement was between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

## **1982**

June – Iran dispatched more than 1,000 Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon after Israel's June 6 invasion. Iranian forces supported the formation of Hezbollah, a Shiite militia, but never directly confronted Israel. The invasion also strengthened ties between Iran and Syria.

July 19 – American University of Beirut President David Dodge became the first of several Americans to be taken hostage over the next nine years. He was the only one taken to Iran, where he spent one year in prison.

## **1983**

Oct. 23 – The United States accused Iran of aiding the suicide bombing at the barracks of U.S. Marine peacekeepers in Lebanon, which killed 241 U.S. military personnel, the largest loss to the American military in a single incident since Iwo Jima in World War II.

## **1984**

Jan. 23 – The Reagan administration put Iran on the State Department list of governments supporting terrorism.

March – An Iran-supported militia in Beirut again began abducting American hostages, including CIA station chief William Buckley, who died in captivity.

## **1985**

Apr. 1 – Washington warned Iran it would be held responsible if American hostages were harmed. By mid-summer, Washington had begun behind-the-scene diplomatic efforts that led to the arms-for-hostage swap.

June 2 – During a visit to Japan, Parliamentary Speaker Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani called on the United States to restore relations with Iran. Later that month, he played a

role in ending the hijacking of TWA 847, the 17-day hostage ordeal of 39 Americans in Beirut.

July 25 – Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, heir apparent to Ayatollah Khomeini, urged Iranian diplomats to improve relations with Western nations.

Aug. 14 – A shipment of U.S. TOW antitank missiles was sent to Tehran from Israel as part of the secret arms-for-hostage swap. The same day, Rev. Benjamin Weir became the first of three American hostages to be freed in Lebanon.

Nov. 22 – A shipment of HAWK anti-aircraft missiles was sent to Tehran from Israel as the second phase of an arms-for-hostage swap, but the deal fell far short of what was promised and Iran ordered a refund of payment and a resupply.

## 1986

Jan. 17 – President Ronald Reagan signed a special finding to permit negotiations with Iran on hostages and to help promote “moderate” elements in Tehran. This was followed by a shipment of 1,000 TOW missiles to Iran at the end of February.

May 25-28 – Former national security adviser Robert McFarlane and Lt. Col. Oliver North made a secret trip to Iran to deliver arms. In July, American hostage Father Lawrence Jenco was freed in Lebanon. On Aug. 3, the United States delivered new HAWK missiles to Iran.

September – Two more Americans were taken hostage in Lebanon. On Sept. 19-20, an Iranian emissary related to Rafsanjani visited Washington for talks on arms, hostages and improved relations.

October – American writer Edward Tracy was taken hostage in Lebanon. A few days later, the United States provided 1,000 TOW missiles to Iran. On Nov. 2, American hostage David Jacobsen was freed in Beirut.

Nov. 3 – The Lebanese magazine *Ash-Shiraa* exposed secret dealings between Iran, Israel and the United States, which became known as the “Iran-Contra affair.”

## 1987

April 7 – Parliamentary speaker Rafsanjani said that Iran would try to mediate the release of American hostages in Lebanon if the United States showed “good will” by unfreezing Iranian assets in the United States. On May 13, the United States returned \$450 million in frozen assets.

July 31 – Saudi law enforcement agencies clashed with hundreds of demonstrators outside the Grand Mosque in Mecca. The dispute claimed the lives of around 400 pilgrims, two-thirds of whom were Iranian. Saudi Arabia blamed Iran and banned all political activities during the annual Hajj pilgrimage. In retaliation, angry mobs in Tehran ransacked the Saudi embassy.

### **1988**

April 27 – Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic relations with Iran. Official relations were restored in 1991.

June 19 – The *USS Vincennes* shot down an Iranian passenger plane, killing 290 passengers and crew on board.

### **1989**

Nov. 3 – The United States returned \$567 million of frozen Iranian assets, in accordance with the Algiers Accord of 1981. American officials denied the deal was linked to Iranian President Rafsanjani's offer to help in the release of hostages in Beirut. Iranian assets valued at \$900 million remained frozen.

Jan. 4 – Ayatollah Khomeini wrote a letter to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev saying that communism was dead and that he should study Islam. Iran's relations with the Soviet Union soured after the Soviet support of Iraq during its eight-year war with Iran.

Jan. 20 – In his inaugural address, George H. W. Bush said, "good will begets good will," in reference to Iran and American hostages held by pro-Iranian Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Feb. 14 – Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for the death of British author Salman Rushdie for his book "The Satanic Verses." On March 7, Iran cut off diplomatic relations with Britain over Rushdie's book. In 1990, low-level diplomatic relations resumed.

### **1990**

August-September – Iran and Iraq resumed diplomatic ties, although Iran condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

### **1991**

Dec. 4 – Terry Anderson, the last American hostage in Lebanon, was freed after Iranian intervention.

### **1992**

March 17 – A suicide bombing at the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires killed around 30 and wounded more than 300 people. A group called the Islamic Jihad Organization, with alleged links to Iran and Hezbollah, claimed responsibility for the attack. Iran and Hezbollah denied involvement.

April – Iran took full control of Abu Musa, an oil-rich island claimed by both Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Rival claims over the island became a source of tension between the two countries.

Sept. 10 – China and Iran finalized an agreement on "nuclear energy" cooperation when Iranian President Rafsanjani visited Beijing, accompanied by senior military and atomic energy officials. The China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation reportedly agreed to sell Iran a facility to convert uranium ore into uranium hexafluoride gas. This agreement was cancelled in 1996 after pressure from the Clinton administration.

December – The European Council announced the opening of a “critical dialogue” with Iran. The goal was to help end Iran’s isolation while pressing it to improve its human rights record. The dialogue ended in 1997 when a German court found the Iranian government responsible for the murder of four Kurdish dissidents in Berlin.

### **1993**

March – Iran and Algeria broke off ties after Algeria accused Iran of supporting the opposition Islamic Salvation Front. Tehran denied the charges. Diplomatic relations were restored in September.

### **1994**

May 10 – Iran and South Africa reestablished diplomatic relations after the end of apartheid. The shah and South Africa had good relations, which ended after the 1979 revolution when the theocracy imposed a trade and oil boycott.

July 18 – The bombing of a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 and wounded 300, was blamed on Iran and Hezbollah. The charges were denied by both parties. In 2006, Argentine prosecutors called for the arrest of former President Rafsanjani.

### **1995**

Jan. 8 - Iran signed a contract with Russia to resume work on the partially complete Bushehr nuclear reactor.

March 15 – The Rafsanjani government offered a billion-dollar contract to U.S. oil giant Conoco to develop two offshore oil fields, which was blocked after President Clinton signed an executive order banning U.S. investment in the Iranian oil industry.

May 6 - President Clinton issued a total embargo of U.S.-Iran trade and investment over the country's alleged sponsorship of "terrorism," nuclear ambitions, and hostility to the Middle East peace process.

## 1996

April 6 - Belgian customs officials seized a large mortar from an Iranian shipment of pickles destined for Munich, Germany. Belgian officials speculated the military equipment was meant for attacks targeting Israeli interests in Europe.

June - Iran was suspected of masterminding the June 25 bombing of Khobar Towers, a U.S. Air Force housing complex in Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, the Clinton administration sent a letter to President Khatami, transmitted by the foreign minister of Oman. The letter indicated that Washington had direct evidence of the Revolutionary Guards' involvement in the attacks. The message also stated that the United States wanted to work toward better relations with Iran. Tehran's response was brusque, denying the allegations.

Aug. 4 - President Clinton signed into law the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which penalized foreign companies doing business with the United States that also invested more than \$20 million in the Iranian oil industry.

Aug. 10 - Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan visited Tehran to negotiate a \$20 billion natural gas agreement covering the delivery of 140 cubic feet of gas per year and the building of gas pipelines in both countries. Turkey said that the agreement involved trade, not investment, and therefore was not in violation of ILSA.

## 1997

January - Kazakhstan began shipping oil across the Caspian Sea to Iran, as part of an oil swap agreement negotiated in 1996.

April 10 - A German court ruled that Iran was behind the murders of four Kurdish dissidents in Berlin in 1992. The German government expelled four Iranian diplomats and recalled its ambassador from Tehran. Iran denied involvement. The European Union declared a mass recall of ambassadors from Tehran and joined Germany in suspending the "critical dialogue." New Zealand, Australia and Canada also recalled their ambassadors from Tehran.

August - In his inaugural address, President Mohammad Khatami said Iran was willing to have "relations with any state which respects our independence," and called for a "dialogue of civilizations" with all nations.

Dec. 9 - Iran hosted the eighth Islamic Summit Conference of all Muslim countries.

## **1998**

Jan. 7 - In an interview with CNN, President Khatami said Iran had an "intellectual affinity with the essence of American civilization" because it was also trying to construct a system based on the pillars of "religiosity, liberty, and justice." He called for both countries to try to bring down the "wall of mistrust."

September - Iran deployed thousands of troops to its border with Afghanistan after the Taliban admitted killing eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist. But Iran ultimately did not go to war.

## **1999**

March 9 - Iranian President Khatami arrived in Italy for the first visit to the West by an Iranian leader since 1979.

May 18 - Tehran restored full diplomatic relations with Britain after resolution of the dispute over Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa against Salman Rushdie.

## **2000**

March 17 - In a speech, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright apologized for America's role in the 1953 overthrow of democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh. She admitted that the coup, which put the shah back on the throne after he fled into exile, "was clearly a setback for Iran's political development." The Clinton administration partially lifted sanctions on Iranian carpets and foodstuffs. But Iran denounced the goodwill gesture because Albright's speech ended by criticizing Iran's domestic policies.

May 19 - The World Bank approved its first loans to Iran in seven years, after the vote was postponed twice due to objections by Washington.

Sept. 30 - President Khatami paid an official visit to Cuba, where Cuban President Fidel Castro presented him with a medal of honor. Khatami said the visit symbolized solidarity between the two nations.

## **2001**

March 12 - During a state visit to Moscow, Iranian President Khatami and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the first cooperation and security agreement since the Iranian revolution.

Sept. 27 - Ayatollah Khamenei and President Khatami condemned the al Qaeda 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington D.C.

October-December – After the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan ousted the Taliban, Iran cooperated with the United States, Russia and India in providing support for the Northern Alliance opposition to bring down the Taliban. Iranian diplomats met with their U.S. and other Western counterparts in Bonn to form a new Afghan government. Iran also worked with the United Nations to repatriate nearly 1 million Afghan refugees.

## **2002**

Jan. 29 – In his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush referred to Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an “axis of evil.”

## **2003**

March – Following the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, Syria and Iran intensified their cooperation to ensure they would not become Washington's next targets. They expanded bilateral defense cooperation and support to insurgent groups to tie down U.S.-led forces in Iraq.

May – A Swiss diplomat relayed Iranian conditions for bilateral talks to the Bush administration shortly after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but it was not taken seriously in Washington.

Dec. 26 – A devastating earthquake hit the southeastern city of Bam, killing more than 26,000 people. On Dec. 30, the United States flew in an emergency response team. The military aircraft were the first U.S. planes to land in Iran in 20 years.

## **2004**

June 21 – Iran arrested six British sailors -- part of the U.S.-led force in Iraq – for trespassing into Iran’s territorial waters. As a blow to Britain, Tehran paraded the servicemen through the city and forced them to apologize. They were released three days later, after negotiations.

November – Iran’s representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency heralded growing ties with China, noting "we mutually complement each other. They have industry and we have energy resources."

## **2005**

July 5 - Iran received observer status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Astana and applied for full membership in 2008. But Iran’s membership was blocked because the organization stipulated that no country under U.N. sanctions could be admitted.

Oct. 26 – Newly elected Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called for Israel to “vanish in the pages of time.” The statement was widely interpreted as a call for Israel to be wiped off the face of the earth.

## 2006

May 8 – President Ahmadinejad sent President Bush an 18-page letter.

July 30 – Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez visited Iran, where President Ahmadinejad awarded him Iran’s highest state medal for his support of Iran’s nuclear energy program. The two presidents often referred to each other as brothers.

July 31 – The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1696, demanding that Iran halt its nuclear enrichment program.

Dec. 15 – President Ahmadinejad said the Holocaust was exaggerated.

Dec. 23 – The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1737, which imposed sanctions against Iran for failing to stop its uranium enrichment.

## 2007

Feb. 8 – Ayatollah Khamenei warned that Iran would target U.S. interests around the world if it came under attack over its nuclear program.

March 9 – Former FBI agent Robert Levinson goes missing during a visit to Iran.

March 24 – Iran detained 15 British sailors and Marines for trespassing into Iranian territorial waters. They were held almost two weeks.

March 24 – The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1747. The resolution called for a tightening of sanctions on Iran’s nuclear program.

Oct. 16 – Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Supreme Leader Khamenei on his first official visit to Iran, marking closer Russia-Iran ties. After the revolution, Washington had been called the “great satan,” and Moscow labeled “the lesser Satan.”

Oct. 25 – Washington imposed the most sweeping unilateral sanctions since the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in 1979. It sanctioned the Revolutionary Guards and a few Iranian banks, and individuals believed to have links to nuclear and terror-related activities.

Sept. 20 – New York City officials denied President Ahmadinejad’s request to visit the site of Sept. 11 attacks during his visit to the United Nations.

December – A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate concluded that Iran halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003.

## 2008

March 4 – The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1803, its fourth resolution against Iran for failing to suspend uranium enrichment.

Sept. 24 – President Ahmadinejad spoke at the United Nations and Columbia University, where he criticized U.S. policy and said there were no homosexuals in Iran.

Nov. 6 – President Ahmadinejad wrote President-elect Barack Obama congratulating him on his election and urging “real change.”

## 2009

Feb. 10 – In a speech marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, President Ahmadinejad welcomed talks with the United States based on “mutual respect and in a fair atmosphere.”

March 20 – President Barak Obama sent a Nowruz (Iranian New Year) message to the Iranian people and government that called for better relations. He also said that Iran’s place in the international community “cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions.”

March 20 – Ayatollah Khamenei referred to Obama’s speech as deceptive. In light of recent sanctions, he said Iran would judge the United States by its actions and not by its words.

April 2 – At the G-20 London summit, President Chavez and President Ahmadinejad announced the formation of a joint Iranian-Venezuelan development bank.

May 1 – Iran rejected the April 2010 report by the U.S. State Department that designated Iran as the “most active state sponsor of terrorism.” Tehran said that the United States could not accuse others of terrorism after its actions at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison and Guantanamo Bay.

May – President Obama sent a letter to Ayatollah Khamenei before Iran’s June presidential elections that called for improved relations through “co-operation and regional bilateral relations.” Khamenei briefly mentioned the letter in his Friday sermon.

September – An Iranian news website reported a second letter sent by President Obama to Ayatollah Khamenei.

October – Iran blamed the United States and Britain for involvement in suicide bombings that killed 15 members of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards in southeastern Iran. The attack was carried out by the Sunni Muslim rebel group Jundollah, which Iran claimed was funded by the United States. The group had carried out a similar attack, killing 40, around five months earlier.

Oct. 21 – Iran agreed to a U.S.- and U.N.-backed deal designed to provide fuel for Tehran’s research reactor for medical needs and to remove a large part of Iran’s enriched uranium from its control. The deal called for the transfer of 1,200 kg of low-enriched uranium to Russia for further enrichment and then to France to produce fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor. But Iran later backed off from the agreement.

Nov. 24 – President Ahmadinejad arrived in Brazil as part of a five-nation tour of Senegal, Gambia, Brazil, Bolivia and Venezuela. He was greeted by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, marking the first visit by an Iranian leader since 1965.

## 2010

June 9 – The U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1929, imposing additional sanctions on Iran.

March 20 – President Obama sent a second Nowruz message to the Iranian government and people. The message encouraged dialogue between the two countries and criticized Iran’s human rights violations during post-election protests.

April 13 – President Ahmadinejad disclosed that he wrote a second letter to Obama. “Obama only has one way to tell the world that he has created change, and that is Iran,” he said in a televised interview.

May 17 – Iran accepted a proposal from Turkey and Brazil for a nuclear fuel swap deal in which Iran would send 1200 kg of its Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) to Turkey, a modified version of the deal Iran accepted, then rejected, in October 2009. The United States rejected the proposal, in part because Iran had increased its stockpile of enriched uranium. Washington then pushed for tougher U.N. sanctions.

June 9 – The Security Council imposed a fourth round of sanctions on Iran in Resolution 1929.

June 12 – The president of the Iran-China Joint Chamber of Commerce predicted that the annual trade between Iran and China would reach \$50 billion in the next five years.

June 26 – The U.S. Congress passed tough new sanctions against Iran’s energy sector and IRGC affiliated companies. Congress also called for penalties against companies that export gasoline and other refined energy products to Iran.

July 26 - The 27 European foreign ministers agreed on a comprehensive package of sanctions against Iran in the areas of trade, financial services, energy and transport, as well as additional designations for visa bans and asset freezes. Measures focused on Iranian banks, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.

Dec.6-7 - Iran met in Geneva with members of the U.N. Security Council and Germany for negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. The group agreed to meet again in January 2011 in Istanbul.

## 2011

Jan. 21-22 - Nuclear negotiations held in Istanbul between P5+1 countries and Iran failed after Tehran refused to discuss transparent limits on its uranium enrichment program.

Feb. 24 - The United States imposed new sanctions on two top Iranian officials for engaging in "serious human rights abuses" since the disputed 2009 election.

March 20 - President Obama sent a third Nowruz message to Iran, directed specifically at Iran's youth. The President addressed Iran's young people, saying, "your talent, your hopes, and your choices will shape the future of Iran, and help light the world. And though times may seem dark, I want you to know that I am with you."

May 23-24 - The E.U. imposed sanctions on more than 100 individuals and companies tied to Iran's nuclear program, while the United States sanctioned seven foreign companies involved in supplying Iran refined oil as well as sixteen firms and individuals involved in the missile and nuclear program.

August - Former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati is detained in Iran.

Oct. 11 - The U.S. Treasury Department designated five individuals, including four senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force officers connected to a plot to assassinate the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States.

Oct. 12 - The U.S. Treasury Department designated the Iranian commercial airline Mahan Air pursuant to Executive Order 13224 for providing financial, material and technological support to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force.

Nov. 29-30 - Iranian protesters stormed the British embassy in Tehran during a demonstration against U.K.-imposed sanctions. Britain evacuated its diplomatic staff and expelled all Iranian diplomats from London, but did not sever ties. France, Germany, and the Netherlands also recalled their ambassadors for consultations.

Nov. 21 - The United States, United Kingdom, and Canada announced bilateral sanctions on Iran. The United Kingdom severed all ties with Iranian banks.

Dec. 15 - The U.S. Senate passed new sanctions on Iran's central bank.

Dec. 6 - The United States launched its Virtual Embassy Tehran website to provide a means for direct communication with Iranians.

Dec. 13 - The United States sanctioned two senior Iranian military officials for responsibility for or complicity in serious human rights abuses.

Dec. 20 - The United States issued new sanctions against front companies linked to Iran's missile program.

## **2012**

Jan. 11 - The United States sanctioned three Chinese, UAE, and Singapore firms under the Amended Iran Sanctions Act.

Jan. 23 - The European Union imposed an oil embargo on Iran, effective July 1, 2012. The European Union made up 20 percent of Iran's oil sales.

Feb. 6 - The United States imposed sanctions on Iran's Central Bank.

Feb. 16 - The United States imposed sanctions on Iran's Intelligence Ministry.

March 6 - The P5+1 countries agreed to resume talks with Iran over its nuclear program.

March 20 - President Obama sent a fourth Nowruz message to the Iranian government and people. The message accused Iran of having an "Electronic Curtain," criticizing the Iranian government's internet censorship.

April 14 - P5+1 diplomats met in Istanbul with Iranians to discuss Tehran's promised "new initiatives" on its nuclear program.

May 1 - The White House issued an Executive Order targeting foreign sanctions evaders.

May 23-24 - The P5+1 held inconclusive talks with Iran in Baghdad.

June 18-19 - The P5+1 held inconclusive talks with Iran in Moscow.

June 11 – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced Iran sanctions exceptions for India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Taiwan.

July 1 – The E.U. embargo on Iranian oil exports went into effect.

July 12 – The United States announced broad new sanctions on Iranian front companies and banks linked to the Tehran’s nuclear and missile programs.

July 31 – The United States announced new sanctions on Iranian oil and foreign financial institutions that facilitate transactions for Iranian banks.

Aug. 2 – The U.S. Congress voted to impose new sanctions on Iran that target companies aiding Tehran’s energy sector. The Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Human Rights Act of 2012 differs from President Obama’s July 31 executive order by targeting companies conducting business with Iran’s national oil company and tanker fleet, such as insurers and shippers.

Aug. 9 – Envoys from 26 different countries attended the International Conference on Syria hosted by Tehran.

Aug. 10 – The United States imposed sanctions on a Syrian state-run oil company, Sytrol, for conducting business with Iran’s energy sector.

Aug. 12 – The United States offered aid to Iran after two earthquakes reportedly hit almost 200 villages near the northwest city of Tabriz.

Aug. 26-31 – Some 120 countries attended the 16th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran. Iran began its three-year presidency of the movement.

Sept. 1 – Iran and North Korea signed a scientific and technological cooperation agreement.

Sept. 7 – Canada closed its embassy in Tehran and expelled Iranian diplomats from Ottawa. Foreign Minister John Baird cited Iran as “the most significant threat to global peace and security” as the reason for severing diplomatic relations.

Sept. 28 – The U.S. State Department revoked the Mujahedin-e Khalq’s (MEK) designation as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. The leftist group had killed six Americans in Iran in the 1970s and attempted an attack against Iran’s U.N. mission in 1992. The State Department then added it to the terrorism list in 1997. But the MEK renounced violence in 2001 and no terrorist attacks have been positively linked to the organization for more than a decade.

Oct. 9 – The United States moved to tighten loopholes in its Iran sanctions. President Obama’s executive order aimed to implement additional punitive measures that he signed into law on August 10, 2012.

Oct. 15 – The European Union targeted Iran’s nuclear program with new sanctions on its financial, energy, trade, and transport sectors.

Nov. 8 – The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned 17 individuals and entities related to the Iranian government’s human rights abuses, its support of terrorism, and Iran’s Revolutionary Guards.

Nov. 18 – Tehran hosted the Syria National Dialogue conference. An Estimated 200 Syrian and regional politicians attended the conference.

Nov. 30 – The U.S. Senate unanimously approved new sanctions on Iran’s energy and shipping sectors.

Dec. 7 – Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the renewal of Iran sanctions exceptions for China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Taiwan.

Dec. 13 – The U.S. Treasury and State Department imposed sanctions on seven Iranian companies and five individuals for “proliferating weapons of mass destruction” pursuant to Executive Order 13382.

Dec. 20 – Rev. Saeed Abedini, an American citizen and Christian convert, is detained in Iran.

Dec. 21 – The U.S. Treasury froze the assets of four Iranian companies and one executive for links to Tehran’s missile and nuclear programs.

## **2013**

Jan. 10 – 48 Iranian captives landed in Tehran after their release by Syrian rebels. Syrian opposition members claimed the Iranians were members of the Revolutionary Guards, but Tehran claimed the men were religious pilgrims.

Jan. 16-17 – The IAEA held talks with Tehran over suspicions that tests related to atomic weapons triggers had been carried out. They failed to reach an agreement.

Feb. 2 – Vice President Joe Biden said that the United States was prepared to hold direct talks with Iran to resolve tensions over its controversial nuclear program.

Feb. 6 - The U.S. Treasury Department imposed new sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran and other financial institutions to restrict Tehran's ability to spend oil revenues. It also designated one individual and four entities for involvement in censorship activities.

Feb. 7 - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei rejected the offer by Vice President Biden for direct talks. "Some naïve people like the idea of negotiating with America. However, negotiations will not solve the problem," he said in a speech to Iranian Air Force commanders.

Feb. 11 - The U.S. Treasury Department imposed new nonproliferation sanctions on entities and individuals from Belarus, China, Iran, Sudan, Syria, and Venezuela. Credible information indicated that they had transferred to, or acquired from, Iran, North Korea, or Syria, equipment and technology related to weapons programs.

Feb. 16 - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei claimed that although Iran has no intention to build nuclear weapons, "America would not have been able to stop the Iranian nation in any way" in speech in Tabriz, Iran.

Feb. 20 - Ambassador Mohammad Khazaei welcomed recent U.S. calls for direct talks. He outlined steps the United States could take to prove its good faith, such as "discarding the two-track policy of pressure and engagement."

Feb. 26 - The P5+1 held talks with Iran in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

March 14 - The U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned a Greek businessman and 14 companies for helping Iran evade international oil sanctions.

March 18 - President Obama sent a fifth Nowruz message to Iran saying there could be a "new relationship" with Iran if it meets international obligations on its controversial nuclear program.

March 21 - Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said he is not opposed to direct talks with the United States in a speech marking Nowruz. But he is "not optimistic" about prospects for success if negotiations take place. He also claimed that the United States "doesn't want the nuclear conflict to end."

April 5-6 - Diplomats from P5+1 countries met with their Iranian counterparts in Almaty, Kazakhstan but the talks end without an accord or plans for another meeting. Tehran introduced a proposal requiring world powers to recognize its right to enrich uranium.

June 3 – The United States imposed sanctions for the first time on Iran’s currency, the rial. The executive order’s objective was to render the currency unusable outside of Iran, a senior administration official said during a conference call.

June 4 – The United States sanctioned a major network of front companies for hiding assets on behalf of Iranian leaders.

June 18 – The Group of Eight industrialized nations called on Iran to move “without delay” to fulfill its long-delayed obligations in answering questions about its controversial nuclear program. It also called on the international community to fully implement a several U.N. sanctions resolutions designed to pressure Tehran into compliance.

July 1 – New U.S. sanctions banning gold sales and trade in gold with Iran went into effect.

Sept. 26 – Foreign ministers from P5+1 countries and Iran met on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly and agreed to hold a new round of talks in Geneva. Secretary of State John Kerry and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held their first meeting on the sidelines.

Sept. 27 – President Barack Obama called Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in what was the first direct communication between a U.S. and Iranian presidents since the 1979 revolution. “The two of us discussed our ongoing efforts to reach an agreement over Iran’s nuclear program,” Obama said at a White House briefing.

Oct. 15-16 – Diplomats from P5+1 countries and Iran met in Geneva to solve the nuclear dispute. They committed to meeting in November to continue talks that were “substantive and forward looking.”

Oct. 28-29 – The IAEA held talks with Iran on outstanding issues regarding its nuclear program. Iran “presented a proposal on practical measures as a constructive contribution” to ongoing talks,” according to a joint statement. The sides agreed to meet again November.

Nov. 7-10 – Iran and the P5+1 made significant headway but ultimately failed to finalize an agreement. Foreign ministers rushed to Geneva as a breakthrough appeared imminent. But last-minute differences, reportedly spurred by French demands for tougher terms, blocked a deal.

Nov. 11 – IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano visited Tehran. He and Iran’s chief of the Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, signed a Framework for

Cooperation Agreement committing Tehran to take practical steps towards transparency within three months.

Nov. 24 – Iran and the P5+1 reached an interim agreement that would significantly constrain Tehran’s nuclear program for six months in exchange for modest sanctions relief. Iran pledged to neutralize its stockpile of near-20 percent enriched uranium, halt enrichment above five percent and stop installing centrifuges. Tehran also committed to halt construction of the Arak heavy-water reactor.

Dec. 9 -12 –The P5+1 and Iran met in Geneva at the technical level to discuss implementation of the interim nuclear deal.

Dec. 11 – Iran and the IAEA met in Vienna to review the status of the six actions Iran committed to in November as part of the Framework for Cooperation Agreement.

Dec 13 – Britain’s newly appointed chargé d’affaires, Ajay Sharma, visited Iran in the first high-level diplomatic visit since Britain pulled its diplomats from Tehran two years ago.

Dec. 19 – Nuclear and sanctions experts from Iran and the P5+1 met in Vienna to discuss technical details related to implementing the interim nuclear agreement. The Iranian team unexpectedly flew back to Tehran, reportedly in response to Washington’s blacklisting of 19 entities for violating sanctions.

Dec. 30-31 – The P5+1 and Iran met again in Geneva for technical talks on implementing the November Joint Plan of Action.

## **2014**

Jan. 9-12 – The P5+1 and Iran met in Geneva and reach an agreement on implementation. The delegations returned to their capitals for approval. On January 12, the parties announced that the Joint Plan of Action will be implemented starting on January 20.

Jan. 20 – The Joint Plan of Action entered into force. The IAEA also issued a report stating that Iran is complying with the deal after reducing their 20% enrichment stockpile and halting work on the Arak heavy water reactor. The United States and European Union announced they have taken steps to waive certain sanctions and release a schedule for releasing Iran’s oil money frozen in other countries.

Feb. 6 – The U.S. Treasury announced new measures against more than a dozen companies and individuals deemed to be “evading U.S. sanctions against Iran, aiding Iranian nuclear and missile proliferation, and supporting terrorism.”

Feb. 7 – The U.S. Treasury issued a general license allowing Iranians to purchase computers, cell phones, software, mobile applications and Internet services. “We are committed to promoting the free exchange of information in Iran and to enabling individuals in Iran to communicate with each other and with the outside world,” said a Treasury spokeswoman in an email, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

Feb.18-20 – The P5+1 and Iran agreed on a framework for final negotiations on February 20 after three days of discussion in Geneva.

March 3 – IAEA chief Yukiya Amano announced that Iran has implemented the six measures contained in the Framework for Cooperation Agreement but also notes that “much remains to be done to resolve all outstanding issues.”

March 19 – The P5+1 and Iran held another round of closed-door talks on a final nuclear agreement. Ashton and Zarif described their discussions on the Arak heavy water reactor and Western sanctions as “substantive and useful.”

March 20 – The IAEA released a report detailing Iran’s implementation of the interim nuclear deal brokered in November 2013. The report noted that Tehran has not enriched any more uranium to 20 percent. But it had not yet completed a facility to convert low-enriched uranium gas into an oxide, which would need to be reprocessed to fuel a weapon.

The U.S. Treasury authorized accredited U.S. academic institutions to hold academic exchanges with Iranian universities. The general license notably allowed the provision of on-line courses for Iranian students. The Treasury’s announcement coincided with Nowruz, Persian New Year.

President Obama issued a Nowruz (Persian New Year) message outlining progress on the nuclear issue and expressing hope for better U.S.-Iran relations. "This Nowruz could mark not just the beginning of a new year, but a new chapter in the history of Iran and its role in the world – including a better relationship with the United States and the American people, rooted in mutual interest and mutual respect," said Obama.

April 7-9 – The P5+1 and Iran met in Vienna to continue negotiations on a final nuclear agreement. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and E.U. foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton reported that they had “substantive and detailed discussions” on all relevant issues.

April 17 – The U.S. State Department announced that Washington had taken steps to release \$450 million installment of frozen Iranian funds after the IAEA verified Iran is complying with the interim nuclear agreement.

May 13-16 – The P5+1 and Iran met in Vienna to begin drafting a final agreement. The talks ended without any tangible progress. But both sides committed to another round of talks in June.

May 21 – Iran and the IAEA agreed to an additional five actions for Tehran to take before August 25. Two of the actions involved Iran providing information on possible military dimensions of its nuclear program.

June 9-10 – U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William Burns lead a team of officials to Geneva for bilateral talks with Iran to prepare for the next round of P5+1 talks.

June 14 – Rouhani [announced](#) that Iran was prepared to fight ISIS in Iraq, if the Iraqi government asked for its help. Rouhani went on to open the door to future cooperation with the United States on the issue.

June 16-20 – The P5+1 met in Geneva and produced an outline of a draft agreement but did not make much progress on the core issue of uranium enrichment. They agreed to meet on July 2 and hold continuous talks until the July 20 expiration date.

July 3-19 – The P5+1 began marathon talks on July 3, less than three weeks from the due date for a deal. After about a week and half of discussions, some foreign ministers, including Kerry, Zarif and Hague, went to Vienna to check on progress of the talks. On June 19, the two sides announced that they will extend the talks through November 24, exactly one year since the interim agreement was brokered. Iran agreed to take further steps to decrease its 20 percent enriched uranium stockpile. In return, the P5+1 nations agreed to repatriate \$2.8 billion in frozen funds back to Iran.

July 22 – Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian is detained in Iran.

Sept. 18-26 – Iran and the P5+1 resumed talks on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Several meetings were held, including a one-on-one meeting between Kerry and Zarif, in which they also discussed the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The sides did not reach an understanding on major issues such as uranium enrichment and sanctions relief.

Sept. 24 –David Cameron met with Hassan Rouhani in New York on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly in what was the first meeting between an Iranian president and a British prime minister since the 1979 revolution.

Oct. 14-16 – The P5+1 and Iran met in Vienna and made a little progress. Disagreements remained over Tehran's uranium enrichment capabilities and a timeline for implementing a deal. Officials emphasized that the sides had not given up on the November 24 due-date for a deal and that the talks had focused on a "full agreement," not just understandings of key issues.

Nov. 9-11 – Kerry, Zarif, and Ashton met for two days of trilateral talks in Oman, followed by a day of meetings between Iran and the full P5+1. The removal of sanctions and levels of uranium enrichment were among the issues on the table, but officials did not report any significant progress from this round of discussions.

Nov. 19-21 – The final round of talks began in Vienna. On November 19, Zarif and Ashton held a meeting, and the U.S. and Iranian teams held bilateral talks. Kerry arrived in Vienna on November 20 after meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi in London and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius in Paris. Kerry, Ashton, and Zarif held another round of discussions on November 21, but Zarif noted that he had received "no remarkable proposals to take to Tehran" after the meeting.

Nov. 24 – Officials from Iran and P5+1 missed the deadline for a deal and announced that talks will be extended by seven months, with a political agreement to be in place by March.

Dec. 17 – Iran and the P5+1 held talks at the deputy level in Geneva. Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters that the "intense negotiations" were "very useful and helpful." No E.U. statement was released after the talks and the U.S. delegation did not provide comments to the press.

## 2015

Jan. 14, 16 – Kerry and Zarif met in Geneva to find ways to speed up negotiations. They meet again in Paris later in the week.

Jan. 15-17 – Iran and the U.S. hold bilateral talks in Geneva.

Jan. 18 – Iran and the P5+1 powers made limited progress in talks in Geneva. They agreed to meet again in early February.

Feb. 23 – Iran and the P5+1 concluded another round of talks on Iran's controversial nuclear program in Geneva. Atomic Energy Organization chief Ali Akbar Salehi and U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz joined the talks for the first time to provide technical expertise, but Secretary of State John Kerry noted that their presence was "no indication whatsoever that something is about to be decided."

March 2-5 – Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 resumed [talks](#) in Montreux, Switzerland. Separately, Zarif held bilateral talks with Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Geneva, joining the rest of the negotiators in Montreux on March 5.

March 16-18 – Kerry and Zarif [met](#) in Lausanne, Switzerland, and Moniz and Salehi joined the talks to negotiate technical details. Zarif then flew to Brussels to meet with E.U. officials. The Iranian team returned to Switzerland for more talks with U.S. officials on March 17-18.

March 26-April 2 – Iran and the P5+1 met in Lausanne, Switzerland in the final days before the deadline for a political framework. Kerry and Zarif held bilateral discussions, and negotiators from Britain, China, France, Russia, and Germany joined the talks on March 28.

April 2 – Zarif and E.U. foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini issued a joint statement announcing that Iran and the P5+1 had reached an understanding on key parameters for a comprehensive nuclear deal, with the final agreement to be drafted by June 30.

April 22-24 – Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and E.U. political director Helga Schmid met in Vienna on April 22. Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and deputy foreign minister from the P5+1 joined them later in the week to begin drafting a final agreement.

April 27 – Kerry and Zarif met on the sidelines of the 2015 Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty Conference.

May 12-15 – Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and other deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 met in Vienna to continue drafting a final nuclear deal.

May 27-30 – Deputy foreign ministers met in Vienna. Kerry and Zarif held talks in Geneva on May 30, their first meeting since the April 2 announcement.

June 3-4 – Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 met in Vienna, following a day of expert-level meetings.

June 10-14 – Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 held talks in Vienna.

June 17 – Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 held talks in Vienna.

June 22-26 – Deputy foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 held talks in Vienna.

June 28-29 – Kerry held meetings with Zarif, Mogherini, and the British, German, and French foreign ministers in Vienna. Zarif traveled to Tehran on June 28.

June 30 – Negotiators announced talks would be extended until July 7. Zarif returned to Vienna, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met with Kerry in Vienna.

July 1 – Kerry and Zarif met one-on-one, joined later by U.S., E.U., and Iranian negotiators at the deputy foreign minister level.

July 2 – Foreign ministers from Iran and the P5+1 held a series of bilateral meetings. Talks also continued at the deputy foreign minister level. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director Yukiya Amano visited Rouhani and other officials in Tehran.

July 3-6 – Talks were held at the foreign minister, deputy foreign minister, and expert level. Kerry and Zarif held several bilateral meetings.

July 7-9 – Negotiators announced talks would be extended to July 10. Meetings were held at the foreign minister, deputy foreign minister, and expert level.

July 10-13 – On July 10, negotiators announced talks would be extended to July 13. Talks continued at the foreign minister, deputy foreign minister, and expert level.

July 14 – Iran and the world's six major powers announced that they had reached a final nuclear deal.

July 20 – The U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2231 endorsing the final deal. The deal and its annexes were also delivered to the U.S. Congress, beginning a 60-day review period.

September 17 – After weeks of heated debate, the U.S. Congress fails to pass a resolution of disapproval to block the deal.

October 15 – Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi is reportedly arrested in Iran.

Oct. 18 – Iran and the P5+1 marked the deal's Adoption Day. Iran began dismantling parts of its nuclear infrastructure, while the United States and European Union began preparations to lift certain sanctions.

Nov.18 – The IAEA released a report stating that Iran had removed 4,500 centrifuges at the Natanz and Fordo facilities. It still had to uninstall another 10,000 centrifuges to reach the target of 5,000.

Nov. 22 – The P5+1 issued a document outlining the redesign and reconstruction of Iran's Arak nuclear reactor. It specified roles for each of the countries.

Dec. 2 – The IAEA concluded that Iran had worked on a "range of activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device," despite its denial of any work on a nuclear weapons program.

Dec. 15 – The IAEA's board decided to close the inquiry into the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program. The unanimous decision by the 35-nation group

ended the 12-year probe while allowing inspectors to continue monitoring Tehran's program.

## 2016

Early January: Saudi Arabia executed Sheikh Nimr al Nimr, a prominent Shiite leader who supported anti-government demonstrations, along with 46 others for alleged terror-related offenses. The move prompted protests or condemnation from Shiites in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, Turkey, Pakistan, India, Lebanon, and Yemen. In Iran, protestors burned part of the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and stormed the compound.

Demonstrators tried to attack the Saudi Consulate in Mashhad. Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Bahrain, and Djibouti severed diplomatic ties with Iran, and the UAE downgraded its relations with the Islamic Republic.

Jan. 12-13 – Ten U.S. sailors and their two vessels were [detained](#) by the IRGC Navy on after they mistakenly entered Iranian waters near Farsi Island. The sailors were brought to an Iranian base on the island and released the next day after a telephone call between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and a flurry of diplomacy.

Jan. 16 – Iran and the P5+1 marked the nuclear deal's Implementation Day after the IAEA's director general confirmed that Iran has taken the necessary steps to start implementation of the nuclear deal. The United States, European Union, and United Nations lifted or suspended certain sanctions. Iran also regained access to the international financial system, repatriated billions of dollars in frozen assets abroad, and returned to the oil market.

The same day, the U.S. State Department confirmed the release of [four Iranian-Americans](#) as part of a prisoner swap with Iran. They were Jason Rezaian, Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini, and Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari. A [fifth American](#), Matthew Trevithick, was also released separately. In exchange, the United States offered clemency to seven Iranians, six of whom had dual citizenship.

Jan. 22-23 – Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Iran. During the visit, Iranian and Chinese officials signed 17 agreements in energy, industry, transportation, technology, and other fields.

Jan. 25-29 – In his first trip to Europe, President Rouhani traveled to France, Italy, and the Vatican. He signed a series of trade deals with French and Italian companies.

March 24 – The United States indicted seven Iranians for their involvement in “a coordinated cyber assault” against the United States. On the same day, the Treasury Department issued new sanctions against organizations related to Iran's missile program and those with connections to Mahan Air, an Iranian airline designated as a supporter of terrorism.

April 20 – On April 20, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a [judgement](#) that held Iran financially responsible for terrorist attacks dating back to the 1983 Marine Corps barracks bombing in Beirut. It cleared the way for families affected by attacks to collect nearly \$2 billion in funds tied to Iran’s central bank.

June 15 – President Rouhani announced that Iran had filed a lawsuit against the United States in the International Court of Justice regarding the U.S. seizure of frozen Iranian funds.

Aug. 1 – Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei questioned the economic benefits of the JCPOA for the people of Iran and cited it as evidence that it was useless to negotiate with Washington. He also rejected the notion of negotiating with the United States on any regional issues.

Aug. 16-22 – Iranian officials confirmed that Russia was using a base inside Iran to launch air strikes in Syria. After significant backlash, Iran announced on August 22 that Russia was no longer using the base.

Aug. 26 – Following the temporary use of an Iranian air base by Russia, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani reiterated that Tehran’s strategic partnership with Moscow had not ended.

Also on that day, Foreign Minister Javad Zarif requested that the U.S. Department of the Treasury produce a letter assuring foreign banks and institutions that they could do more businesses with Iran. Previously, Iranian officials had also requested that Washington encourage foreign institutions to work with Iran.

Sept. 22 – In his [speech](#) at the U.N. General Assembly, President Hassan Rouhani called on "certain countries in the region" to stop "bombarding their neighbors and put an end to their support for Takfiri terrorist groups." He singled out Saudi Arabia for the "spread of hate ideology and trampling upon the rights of neighbors," referring to its involvement in Yemen. Rouhani also criticized the United States for not fully adhering to its obligations under the nuclear deal.

Nov. 8 – Iran announced that it was prepared to sign a deal with the French company Total SA to develop an Iranian offshore gas field. The deal, reportedly worth \$6 billion, involved Total and the China National Petroleum Corp, which would work with the state-owned Petropars to develop the field.

*Garrett Nada, Cameron Glenn and Daniel Schnur also contributed to this timeline.*