Creating the Conditions for Regime Change

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 02.03.2026

As long as the radical ayatollah regime remains in power in Iran, it will always pose a grave threat to Israel, the United States, and the entire Middle East. Israel and the U.S. must therefore remain steadfast and determined in pursuing the goal of creating the conditions for the Iranian people to retake their country and shape a peaceful future. **The aim of this position paper is to present concrete measures which Israel and the United States can take in order to achieve this goal.**

In announcing Operation Epic Fury on February 28, U.S. President Trump addressed the "great, proud people of Iran" and declared: "The hour of your freedom is at hand…take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be, probably, your only chance for generations… Now is the time to seize control of your destiny."

On March 1, President Trump repeated this message. stating: "I call upon all Iranian patriots who yearn for freedom to seize this moment, to be brave, be bold, be heroic, and take back your country. America is with you."

Similarly, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu declared on the first day of the operation: "Our joint action will create the conditions for the brave Iranian people to take their destiny into their own hands. Therefore, I turn to you, the citizens of Iran: Do not miss this opportunity…soon your moment will arrive when you will be called to take to the streets to finish the job, to topple the regime of horrors that embitters your lives."

The United States and Israel have to date advanced this goal both by eliminating senior regime figures, first and foremost Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as by bombing regime targets and symbols, including internal security and police headquarters. **In order to advance the creation of conditions for regime change, the two nations should take the following steps:**

1. **Preserve the momentum of regime degradation and deterioration:** Preserving the momentum created by the successful opening strikes will

require sustained effort on all fronts, in order to continuously degrade the regime and take it from one low point to the next. The Iranian people must become convinced that the regime is on an irreversible decline, and that there can be no hope for a better future as long as the regime clings to power. In order to accomplish this, it is important to emphasize that the current operation is not time-limited, and to close the door on an agreement which will enable the regime to remain in power. This will help convince the people that the U.S. and Israel do not intend to stop short and allow the regime to survive, rebuild, and take revenge against its opponents.

2. **Sustained disruption of the efforts to appoint a successor to Ayatollah Khamenei:** Israel and the U.S. should work to eliminate the regime's "interim leadership", as well as potential heirs from the hardline camp. This includes Khamenei's son and potential successor, Mojtaba Khamenei, a hardliner with close ties to the IRGC. Another important target is Ali Larijani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, who, while not a cleric, holds broad powers and is functioning as the "CEO" of Iran.

3. **Deepen the physical and communications disconnect between the Iranian leadership and people:** The leaders' need to hide underground already creates barriers between them and the public. To intensify this, Israel and the U.S. should disable the media outlets and internet channels through which the Iranian regime communicates with the public and transmits propaganda messages.

4. **Intensify damage to the regime installations used for internal control and repression:** A special emphasis should be placed on bases and installations serving the Basij and other regime elements involved in repressing protests. The strike on the headquarters of the Internal Security forces was highly significant in this regard.

5. **Strikes against prison facilities and personnel**: Strikes that enable the escape of thousands of regime opponents and political prisoners held in the regime's jails.

6. **Encourage defections of senior Iranian figures and units from Iran's regular army (Artesh), which is run separately from the**

IRGC: The combination of military pressure with intensified economic stress and a sense that there is no hope for the regime's survival will increase the chances of widespread defections. Achieving this goal will naturally require intensive covert activity by intelligence organizations.

7. **Actively support armed Kurdish groups in Iran and other armed militias operating along the country's borders:** Encourage cooperation among militias and opposition groups, and coordination with protest leaders, in order to enable the emergence of an opposition leadership. Enlist Reza Pahlavi and other opposition figures capable of influencing the public until an agreed-upon leadership for the opposition is established.

8. **Encourage the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to intensify their steps against Iran:** This may include kinetic action against Iran, and should certainly include the severing of diplomatic and economic ties. This will help strengthen the regime's isolation and the sense that its path leads only to a dead end.

The U.S. and Israel now face a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create the best conditions possible for the Iranian people to retake their country and shape a brighter and more peaceful future for their nation. It is critical that the successes of the first days of the war not lead to undue euphoria or complacency. We are only in the first stages of this effort, and the road ahead is long and complex. It must be remembered that in its war against Iraq, the Iranian regime demonstrated substantial stamina and capacity for suffering.

The U.S. and Israel must therefore avoid temptations to agree to calls for a premature ceasefire or to engage in futile political talks. If the two allies remain steadfast and determined, they have the opportunity to not only open the door to a better future for Iran, but to shape a new regional and global order based on peace through strength, partnership, and prosperity.

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