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Tehran on the Brink: The Forces Driving Iran Toward the Edge

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This paper is the second in a special series titled “The Domino Effect of the Iranian Regime?” - an analytical effort to assess whether the recent developments signal the beginning of the regime’s collapse.

Each paper in the series will examine emerging cracks in Iran’s political, military, and social structures following Israel’s unprecedented military operation. This initial assessment explores whether the current moment represents a tipping point in the Islamic Republic’s stability, or merely a temporary disruption.

Preface

Iran stands at a critical crossroads in its political history. After more than four decades under the rule of the Ayatollah’s regime - there are calls for a fundamental change to the existing order, **both from abroad and within Iran**. Sustained public anger, internal collapse of trust, entanglement in regional and global arenas, and open opposition by exiled dissidents together, create a rare combination of pressure that, under certain conditions, may culminate in regime upheaval. The question is no longer whether protests exist, but whether the ground is sufficiently fertile for the regime’s downfall - and what role the international community should play in denying the Ayatollahs a political lifeline.

As protests within Iran remained subdued over the course of the 12-day war due to fear and ongoing bombardment, opposition figures abroad have been calling for unity, coordination, and the urgent construction of a credible alternative to the ruling clerical regime. Drawing on statements by different figures of anti-regime groups and testimonies from exiled Iranian activists in Europe, **this report analyzes the growing discourse on regime change, the conditions for its feasibility, and the unresolved dilemmas** facing those who seek to replace the theocracy with a secular, democratic Iran.

Executive Summary

The Iranian opposition, both within the country and in exile, remains fragmented and lacks sufficient resources and organizational strength. In its current state, it lacks the organizational capacity and material strength to bring down the regime without significant external assistance. The regime's resilience is underpinned by its access to global financial channels, the operational reach of its state security and terror networks, and its ruthless suppression of dissent at home. These factors have ensured its continued survival despite internal and external pressures. Isolated airstrikes, including those carried out by Israel, are tactically disruptive but strategically insufficient. Without ground forces prepared to engage the IRGC and its proxy militias directly, such operations fail to alter the fundamental balance of power.

Symbolic actions, including protests, international declarations, and sanctions, have proven inadequate in driving regime change. Effective transformation requires tangible operational and material support to opposition forces capable of challenging the regime's military and security infrastructure.

Clear U.S. policy leadership is pivotal. Explicit statements affirming the necessity of regime change, coupled with coherent diplomatic and military postures, are essential to unify and energize fragmented opposition efforts.

Ultimately, dismantling the regime's grip over Iran and its regional influence will demand a comprehensive, long-term strategy. This strategy must integrate sustained internal resistance, coordinated external support, and the cultivation of the diplomatic and military conditions required for decisive change.

A Historic Opportunity: Iranian Exiles Push for the End of the Ayatollahs' Rule?

As Israeli strikes on military and regime targets in Iran continued, and following the U.S. attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, voices from the Iranian opposition in exile were growing louder. These voices call for seizing the rare momentum created within Iran to topple the regime of the ayatollahs and establish a secular and democratic government in its place.

It is important to emphasize that **there are no precise official figures that can reliably indicate the size of the opposition to the regime within Iran.** This is primarily due to the nature of the Islamic Republic as a theocratic dictatorship, which systematically silences dissent through measures such as arrests, torture, and executions. These conditions create a climate of fear, making it extremely difficult to assess the scale of domestic opposition toward the regime – those who genuinely oppose the regime, alongside those who simply refrain from expressing their views.

An indirect but significant indicator of public sentiment can be found in **electoral participation**. In the most recent parliamentary elections (March 2024), **national voter turnout reached its lowest level since the 1979 Islamic Revolution**, with less than 41% of eligible voters casting ballots nationwide. In Tehran, the turnout was even lower, at approximately 25%. Such figures strongly suggest widespread distrust and disillusionment with the regime, particularly considering explicit calls for a boycott issued by opposition movements and segments of the public.¹

Internal opinion surveys are rare and unreliable under these conditions, as fear of persecution discourages open participation. However, a notable exception is a 2020 study by the Dutch GAMAAN Institute, which surveyed Iranians inside the country through anonymous channels. The findings offer rare insight:

- Approximately 72% of respondents stated that they do not support the Islamic Republic.
- Only about 32% identified themselves as “believers in Islam.”²

Another powerful indicator of opposition is the **ongoing mass emigration from Iran**. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Iranians - including young people, educated individuals, and professional women - choose to leave the country. The primary destinations for these emigrants are Turkey, Germany, and Canada. This mass exodus reflects not only personal aspirations for a better life but also a deeper lack of trust in the regime and the country’s future under its rule.³

While exact numbers are unattainable, most safe estimates converge on the following:

- **At least half of the population either opposes the regime or does not identify with it.**
- In the major cities, the overwhelming majority of residents are actively opposed to the regime.
- In villages and peripheral areas, pockets of regime support still exist, although even in these regions there is growing erosion of loyalty.

The opposition in Iran is an extremely diverse mosaic, including political movements, public figures, former clerics, exile organizations, and ethnic groups - but currently **it lacks unified**



¹ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/iran-election-turnout-hits-record-low-hardliners-maintain-grip-parliament-2024-03-04>

² <https://gamaan.org/>

³ https://youtu.be/hh1bGtyhty0?si=rn9saL5_qGziJ2ze

leadership or a strong single front. The Iranian regime strictly suppresses any organization, therefore much of the opposition operates from outside Iran.



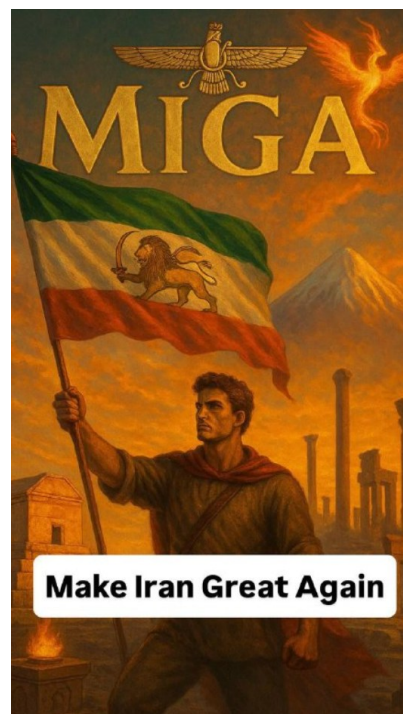
Donald J. Trump  
@realDonaldTrump

It's not politically correct to use the term, "Regime Change," but if the current Iranian Regime is unable to MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN, why wouldn't there be a Regime change??? MIGA!!!

12.8k ReTruths **69.7k** Likes

Jun 22, 2025, 11:55 PM

US President Donald Trump's post on Truth Social mulled the notion of a regime change in Iran, promoting the branding of the movement as MIGA – Make Iran Great Again, alluding to his own MAGA movement in the United States | June 22, 2025



President Trump's statement coincides with trending memes online, including by popular social media channels, calling to "Make Iran Great Again" | trending meme per Iran News⁴

⁴ Iran News on Telegram, June 23, 2025; <https://t.me/hadshotiran/4852>

The main political actors driving change from outside of Iran are as follows:

Reza Pahlavi

One prominent figure in exile is Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who fled Iran on January 16, 1979, amidst bloody protests in Tehran and other cities by masses enraged by his oppressive and corrupt regime. During his rule, Iran's relationship with Israel was strong and highly developed. However, his authoritarian rule, the growing national debt, clashes with the clergy and the middle class, his outright rejection of the place of religion in the state, along with his growing ties to the West and secular worldview - which many Iranians rejected - were all factors that fueled the momentum for the Islamic Revolution that ultimately led to his ousting in the late 1970s.

It is important to remember that although Iranians today live under a religious dictatorship, the Shah's Iran was also a dictatorship, though some may refer to it as an "enlightened dictatorship." Mohammad Reza Pahlavi admired the West, worshipped French culture, and saw secularism as the only path to modernization and progress. But in the name of those ideals, he also imprisoned thousands of political dissidents, unleashed his secret police "Savak" to crush opposition, and, while millions of his people lived in poverty, maintained fleets of private jets and luxury cars, while collecting art and gold jewelry. This, among other factors, led to deep resentment and widespread hatred among the population.

After the direct Iran-Israel war broke out on June 13, Pahlavi called on the people three days later: "Take to the streets, bring down the regime!" He declared that the Ayatollahs' regime had reached its end and was "collapsing, with Khamenei hiding underground like a terrified rat who has lost control." The Iranian diaspora in Europe and the United States warned: "The West must not throw the regime a lifeline."

At a press conference held in Paris on June 23, 2025, Reza Pahlavi, son of the deposed Shah and a leading figure in the opposition abroad - presented his position, describing the current moment as "Iran's Berlin Wall moment." Pahlavi stressed that "the only solution is regime change," and introduced the "Iran Prosperity Plan" - a 100-day transitional roadmap that includes the establishment of interim institutions, economic stabilization, and guarantees for legal stability and public security.



Reza Pahlavi

<https://x.com/AmirMiresmaeili/status/1937106378520166844>

"If you step down, you will receive a fair trial - far more than what you gave the Iranian people," Pahlavi said in a direct address to Ali Khamenei. He also warned Western governments against throwing a "lifeline" to the regime, arguing that such a move would only lead to further bloodshed.

Pahlavi was given wide platform among Iranian opposition media, notably Iran International, to which he gave an exclusive interview calling to the demise of the cleric regime, saying “the time for the final uprising against the government is coming soon, and the people should be prepared.” He called upon the military and various law enforcement agencies to separate themselves from the government and join hands with the people, such that they will save themselves, help collapse the regime and take part in Iran’s reconstruction.⁵

However, the level of domestic support for Pahlavi remains ambiguous. It is unclear whether there are sufficient monarchists, or sufficient support within Iran to the re-introduction of the Pahlavi dynasty, "effectively returning Iran to the conditions that existed before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Liberal Organizations like the NCI

The National Council for Iran (NCI), initiated by Pahlavi, includes journalists, human rights advocates, exiles, and activists working to shape a vision for a post-Islamic Iran. Their goal is to create a political and media framework for uniting the exiled opposition. Their platform emphasizes secularism, democracy, and human rights, yet they struggle to gain broad support due to their physical and cultural distance from the lived reality inside Iran, while trying to establish a coalition for a "New Iran."

Masih Alinejad

Masih Alinejad, Iranian American journalist and prominent women’s rights activist, one of the leading voices in the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement - also supports the overthrow of the current regime in Iran and the establishment of a secular and democratic system. Alinejad has also become prominently known for being invited to speak at the Munich Security Conference for several years in a row on civilian dissent and resistance in Iran. In a post on her X account (formerly Twitter) on June 17, 2025, she called for forcing Ali Khamenei and his regime to step down entirely and urged democratic countries to apply pressure to help achieving this goal.

⁵ Iran International, “Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi: the Time for the Final Uprising Against the Government is Coming Soon; the People Should Be Prepared”, June 21, 2025; <https://www.iranintl.com/202506227716>



<https://x.com/AlinejadMasih/status/1935015817172615664?t=vj0YoqDwW2CP-yy5yTXf6Q&s=19>

However, Alinejad also opposes any attempt to overthrow the regime through war that harms civilians. She recently wrote: *“Do not kill the people of Iran who are fighting for their freedom!”* She emphasizes that any change must be carried out while protecting human rights and safeguarding innocent civilians.

Maryam Rajavi

Maryam Rajavi, President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) - firmly opposes any negotiation with the regime and stresses that there must be no return to monarchy:

“Neither the Shah nor the mullahs - the solution is a free republic with the separation of religion and state.”

Her vision includes free elections, the abolition of the death penalty, gender and ethnic equality, and freedom of religion.

On June 22, Rajavi posted an official call to oust Khamenei and overthrow the Iranian regime. According to Rajavi, “Now Khamenei must go. ... No to appeasement, no to war—yes to regime change, i.e., changing the religious dictatorship by the Iranian people and the Iranian Resistance. Forward toward a free Iran and a democratic, non-nuclear republic with separation of religion and state and gender equality.”⁶

⁶ National Council of Resistance of Iran, “Mrs. Maryam Rajavi: Now Khamenei Must Go”, June 22, 2025; <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/ncri-statements/terrorism-fundamentalism/mrs-maryam-rajavi-now-khamenei-must-go/>

Mrs. Maryam Rajavi: Now Khamenei Must Go

Written by Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) 22nd June 2025



In remarks delivered at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on June 18, 2025, Rajavi said:

"We have told Khamenei once - and we say it once more today: Go ahead, negotiate, and surrender. Drink from the poisonous chalice of abandoning the nuclear bomb and war. But Khamenei will never accept this, because he sees every concession as the fastest path to his downfall. He does not fear death enough to end his own life, yet he is willing to drag the defenceless people of Iran into war, terror, and insecurity. Still, the Iranian people will give this regime no more chances."

"I reiterate the Third Option: No to appeasement, no to war - yes to regime change. That is, the overthrow of the religious dictatorship by the Iranian people and the Iranian Resistance. Forward to a free Iran and a democratic, non-nuclear republic with separation of religion and state and gender equality."



https://x.com/Maryam_Rajavi/status/1935380492850692482?t=7BYplE_iosNjg3oKWN1BaA&s=19



Former mayor of New York City and prominent Republican figure Rudy Giuliani posted a public endorsement of Iranian opposition leaders, Rajavi and Pahlavi, which gained 221.7K and 861.8K views, respectively | x.com/@RudyGiuliani

The women's and youth movement - "Women, Life, Freedom"

This is the most authentic and grassroots-based movement in Iran, which gained momentum following the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. It consists mainly of women, youth, students, artists, and academics, and is considered the beating heart of the protests inside Iran. The movement excels in mobilizing broad public support and transcending gender, ethnic, and class divides. However, it operates under severe repression and lacks a formal leadership structure, making long-term continuity difficult without political organization or institutional support. Additionally, their widespread support among the Iranian population and the degree to which they represent a significant swath of the public remains highly questionable.



A woman without a headscarf holds a sign reading, "For Freedom" in Farsi, amid protests against the Islamic Republic of Iran's mandatory hijab law in Tehran in October 2022.

<https://time.com/7265646/iran-international-womens-day-narges-mohammadi-nobel/>



Protests over the killing of young woman Mahsa Amini in Iran

<https://www.maariv.co.il/news/world/article-948348>

Former reformists

This group is made up of figures who were once part of the Islamic Republic's establishment - most notably former President Mohammad Khatami. They advocate for gradual reforms within the current system rather than regime change. Despite past efforts to promote limited openness, the public has largely lost trust in them, viewing them as beneficiaries of the system who failed to prevent oppression. Their influence today is limited but still resonates among certain moderate factions within the elite.

Families of victims and social protests

Figures like Mahsa Amini, Nika Shakarami, and others represent private individuals whose deaths or actions became powerful symbols of resistance. The families of these victims, who dared to speak publicly against the regime, have become potent tools of protest both domestically and internationally. These are not inherently political actors but rather moral voices that deeply resonate with the masses. Their strength lies in their authenticity, but they remain highly vulnerable and lack organizational power.

Ethnic and separatist organizations

These include groups such as the Balochi Jundallah, Ahwazi Arab movements, and Kurdish organizations like PJAK. Some of these groups have **military wings** or Islamist elements, and

the regime views them as existential threats to national unity. Among some citizens, their ethnic demands are seen as divisive, limiting their domestic support. However, in marginalized and discriminated regions, they wield notable influence as representatives of oppressed minorities. During the Israeli campaign against Iran - “Am Kelavi” (“Rising Lion”), there were comments by certain minority groups members that pointed out their hope for the end of the Ayatollah’s regime:

Sadiq Raisani - an activist of Free Balochistan Movement tweeted on his X (former Twitter) account:

“The #Iranian regime's oppression in the region is about to end soon, as its long hands have been cut off from Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq. Hopefully, the world will soon see the liberation movements of the Iranian-controlled regions of #Balochistan, #Kurdistan, and #Ahwaz appear on the world map with the support of the United Nations.”

<https://x.com/RaisaniSadiq/status/1936728853256237256>

“The Iranian regime is collapsing -

Baloch, Kurds, Ahwazis, and all oppressed nations - it's time to prepare for freedom.

This is not just the end of a regime, it's the end of a chapter in history.

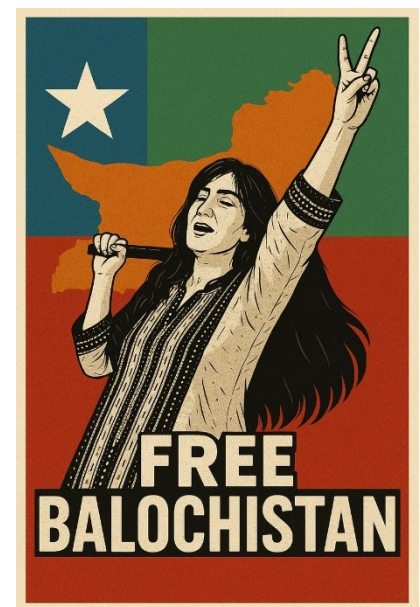
#IranProtests #FreeBaluchistan #FreeKurdistan #FreeAhwaz”

<https://x.com/RaisaniSadiq/status/1937195848879747076>

Voices from the Iranian exile community are pointing to a growing consensus: the current regime has lost its legitimacy, and the present military escalation is seen by many as a historic opportunity to reshape Iran’s future. These key figures are not calling for all-out war, but rather for an organized transition that would ensure individual rights, democratic governance, and the separation of religion and state. Whether the Iranian people inside the country are willing or able to rise to this challenge remains an open question.

Iranian Dissidents in Europe Speak Out: “No Revolution Without Unity”

The following section presents a series of brief interviews conducted with Iranian dissidents currently residing in Europe. While these individuals hold diverse perspectives on the situation within Iran, they are united in their opposition to the Islamist regime. Despite the challenging circumstances, all maintain contact with relatives and friends in Iran, striving to remain connected to developments on the ground.



A viral post by ‘Balochistan Army’ on X:

<https://x.com/BaluchFighter/status/1938084895030657382>

Source 1: Iranian PhD student currently living in Germany.

“MEK is as fanatic as the regime.”

Her whole family lives in Tehran and she has been active in demonstrations in favor of Mahsa Amini in 2022, as well as on social media.

She explained that, at present, people in Iran are primarily *“shocked and scared for their lives under the bombings,”* which, in her view, is the main reason they have not taken to the streets in protest against the regime. Nonetheless, she suggested that a meaningful opportunity for change could emerge if the opposition abroad were to initiate a movement that would offer hope for the country’s future.

Reflecting on the internal dynamics within Iran, she remarked: *“I wouldn’t do anything as well if I were in Iran at this moment, because there is a lack of a united idea.”* In her assessment, without a clear direction and a unification of the various groups opposed to the regime, popular mobilization is unlikely: *“Without a clear path and a unification of the different groups, people will not rise.”*

Regarding Reza Pahlavi, she acknowledged that he enjoys significant support among Iranians and possesses strong abilities in bringing people together. However, she expressed reservations about his political capabilities, noting that some Iranians fear his ascent to power could return the country to what they perceive as its “dark years.” Nevertheless, she described him as *“the best shot the Iranians currently have”* and emphasized that he *“needs to find a way to convince the majority of the Iranians.”*

After listening to one of Reza Pahlavi’s speeches, she conveyed the belief that he is actively preparing the ground for collective action. She argued that, should the army signal its alignment with the people, *“everyone will join instantly (at least, most of the people).”* She further noted that, in contrast to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Sepah - whom she described as the people’s “archenemies” - the regular army is regarded more favorably by the population.

Regarding the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), she voiced strong opposition, asserting that *“they are as fanatic as the regime.”* Finally, when asked whether she believed that the Israeli offensive might have led some Iranians to rally around the regime, she categorically responded: “No.”

Source 2: Iranian political scientist residing in Italy

“The Iranians do not seem able to go beyond the ‘street phase.’”

The source is highly knowledgeable about the Iranian regime and its activities and is well-connected with Italian institutions as well as the broader anti-regime political sphere. His parents currently reside in Tehran. Actively engaged in institutional efforts against the regime, he promotes initiatives in Italy and across Europe aimed at exposing and countering the regime’s operations - areas in which he possesses significant expertise.

Reflecting on previous waves of protests, he noted that Iranians have shown great determination in taking to the streets and mobilizing large numbers of people. However, in his view, these efforts have repeatedly lost momentum once the regime's crackdowns began: *"The Iranians do not seem able to go beyond the 'street phase.'"* He observed that, in the current context, no mass street demonstrations have occurred thus far. This, he argued, reflects a deeper recognition that meaningful change requires *"a strong and unified opposition in order to oust the regime."*

To achieve such mobilization, he emphasized the necessity of establishing a council that represents "every voice" and brings together the different "souls" of Iran under a single "umbrella." While he acknowledged that Reza Pahlavi has made efforts to engage with various groups, he pointed out that many Iranians remain distrustful of him. Moreover, he expressed concern about significant regime infiltration within Pahlavi's inner circle of advisers. This point, he noted, is supported by findings published in a recent article by the Middle East Forum:

"His organization is also penetrated by Iranian intelligence. Certainly, Reza Pahlavi realizes this. Inability or unwillingness to root out these infiltrators is problematic."

Finally, he warned that a future government led by the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) would be disastrous, asserting that such a scenario could prove *"possibly worse than the current regime."*

Source 3: An activist affiliated with the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) residing in Italy

"Iranians are unable to move beyond the fight for liberation"

She is deeply engaged in anti-regime advocacy and frequently travels to Paris and other parts of Europe to raise public awareness regarding the Iranian regime's human rights violations.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran is a political organization founded in 1981 by Abolhassan Banisadr and Massoud Rajavi. Based in France and Albania, it seeks to achieve regime change in Iran and establish a democratic and secular republic founded on secularism, free elections, freedom of expression, equal rights for women, and broader human rights. Since the disappearance of Massoud Rajavi in 2003, shortly before the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, the NCRI has been led by his wife, Maryam Rajavi. Although the NCRI is often described by analysts and journalists as a coalition of Iranian dissident groups functioning as a parliament-in-exile, it is, in practice, dominated by the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK), acting as its diplomatic arm. A RAND Corporation report notes that the NCRI has effectively become a subsidiary of the MEK and highlights the organization's concealed Marxist and Islamist ideological elements, as well as its practice of gender segregation.

According to the source, widespread protests within Iran were unlikely to occur until the Israeli air raids conclude, as the Iranian population is currently too fearful to mobilize. Regarding Reza Pahlavi, she expresses clear disapproval, arguing that he lacks an organized force on the ground - an essential prerequisite for meaningful opposition. She further asserts that "Reza Pahlavi defended his father's actions and surrounded himself with former SAVAK members," which, in her view, undermines his credibility. In contrast, she contends that only the MEK and the NCRI possess operational forces inside Iran. From her perspective, other opposition factions consist merely of isolated individuals expressing disparate views, with the regime having successfully

dismantled virtually all other organized dissent, including groups such as the Fedayin and the Khebat Party.

Like other dissident sources, she believes that Iranians are unable to move beyond the “fight for liberation” - defined here as sporadic street demonstrations - without a unified opposition capable of articulating a coherent plan both for overthrowing the regime and for governing in its aftermath. At the same time, she cautions that those who take to the streets represent only a minority of the population, noting that “*a revolution is never perpetrated by the majority.*” On the figure of Khamenei, she affirms that most Iranians regard him as the principal architect of the country’s current crisis.

In conclusion, all interviewed sources converge on several key points. They agree that without a unified opposition and a clear roadmap for “the day after,” Iranian protests will remain trapped at the stage of street protests, leaving participants vulnerable to the regime’s retaliation - as has occurred in previous cycles of unrest. Two of the three sources view Reza Pahlavi as the only actor who could, at least temporarily, coordinate the disparate opposition groups during a transitional period, though they also voice significant reservations about his leadership and his advisers. The NCRI-affiliated source, by contrast, is dismissive of Pahlavi’s role, insisting that “only MEK and the NCRI have the necessary ground forces.”

Finally, there appears to be consensus among the sources that no regime change was likely to take place, even if the Israeli military campaign would have continued. On the question of the MEK, the NCRI activist alone expressed support for the group. It is worth noting that in prior conversations, a member of the Baha’i community voiced strong opposition to the MEK, reinforcing the deep divisions that persist within the Iranian opposition.

Can Iran’s Fractured Opposition Bring Down the Regime - or Is Revolution Still a Distant Dream?

At present, the Iranian opposition - both internal and external - remains too fragmented and weak to seriously threaten the stability of the regime. Despite numerous initiatives and protests, these efforts have yet to pose a decisive challenge to a regime that functions as a global terror entity, leveraging the full machinery of state power. The Islamic Republic relies on vast global financing networks, brutal repression of dissent, and the full mobilization of military and intelligence organs to maintain control.

The external opposition, particularly those groups operating in exile, has proven incapable of toppling the regime through rhetoric or calls to action alone. Without a credible internal ground force to spark and sustain an uprising, regime change remains beyond reach. A genuine transformation in Iran will require an operation rooted in the Iranian people themselves - an uprising supported by tangible capabilities, not just external encouragement.

Israel's recent actions illustrate this dynamic. **While the Israeli Air Force successfully targeted Iranian infrastructure, these strikes lacked a critical ground component.** Without boots on

the ground, that is, infantry capable of engaging Iran's military, intelligence services, the Quds Force, and Basij militias - such operations cannot dismantle the regime's coercive apparatus. **The hundreds of thousands of IRGC-affiliated personnel are armed, trained, and deeply embedded in Iranian society. The opposition, in its current form, does not have the means to confront such a force.**

Overthrowing the Iranian regime would therefore require not only grassroots mobilization but also sustained physical, intelligence, and operational support from external actors. Declarations, protests, and even severe U.S. sanctions - such as those imposed on the IRGC - have so far failed to curb Iran's ambitions, as seen in its near-nuclear capability prior to the latest Israeli strikes, according to IAEA assessments.

Encouragement from opposition groups in the diaspora and symbolic military actions, such as Israeli or American strikes, can inspire hope that change is possible. **Yet hope alone is insufficient. Only material assistance, including arms and logistics, can enable the opposition to act decisively.** This does not argue for igniting a civil war in Iran, but rather highlights the scale of effort required to dismantle a regime that exports terror across the Middle East, threatens Israel, endangers moderate Sunni states, and projects hostility toward Europe and the U.S.

Furthermore, unequivocal statements from the White House in support of regime change are essential to galvanize the opposition and set the stage for strategic alignment. For any real opportunity at change to emerge, diplomatic and military conditions must mature to a point where opposition groups can engage in physical, coordinated, and deliberate actions.