



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

J. HERBERT NELSON, II  
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Peacemaking is at the heart of the Christian Gospel, and it is intended to guide us as citizens to advocate and work for peace in our own nation and around the world. As a denomination, we have supported the framing of international treaties whose purpose is to make the world safer for all its citizens. Treaties are most effective when they involve the largest possible number of nations agreeing to take specific measures to reduce risks of war. The Iran Nuclear deal is such an example, in that it involves not only Iran and the United States, but also the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia, and China, all stewards of nuclear arsenals that are potential threats to our whole planet.

The potential for containment of Iran's nuclear ambitions and the reduction of the potential for nuclear conflict has been severely jeopardized by the decision of President Donald Trump to withdraw the United States from the Iran Nuclear Treaty. This step has been taken in direct rejection of the counsel of the other members of the treaty and, in the eyes of many, under undue influence by Israel and Saudi Arabia, whose antipathy for Iran also contributes to the destabilization in the region.

The nuclear agreement with Iran, which will remain in place for the other signing nations, although made significantly weaker by the U.S. withdrawal, has seven strengths:

1. It is verifiable, via on-site inspections of known facilities, even on a rapid basis.
2. It required destruction and export of nuclear material that could have been enriched to weapons grade.
3. It stopped Iran's potential weapons building for ten years.
4. It improved relations worldwide and lessened the hostility and resentment by everyday Iranians toward nations that had imposed sanctions.
5. It removed sanctions allowing for economic development and reduced the influence of hardliners in the Iranian government.
6. Iran is complying with the terms of the agreement, even though the U.S. continues to impose some sanctions.
7. The agreement opened more possibility for multiparty negotiations to end or suspend the proxy and civil war in Syria, where Iran and the U.S. had, at points, been unstated allies in fighting the so-called Islamic State (or ISIS).

In withdrawing from the Iran agreement, the United States disregards the demonstrated values and effectiveness of this agreement thus far and offers no acceptable alternative beyond harsh rhetoric.

We urge members of the U.S. Congress to use their good offices to move the administration back into this partnership, to the end that the level of danger from nuclear proliferation is reduced, rather than increased. While no international treaty is perfect, interim agreements such as this are essential to guiding the nations of the world toward peace rather than war

In the faith we share,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "II" at the end.

Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)