

Iran's Ill-Tempered Letter to the IAEA

by [Simon Henderson \(/experts/simon-henderson\)](/experts/simon-henderson)

Sep 30, 2013

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Simon Henderson \(/experts/simon-henderson\)](/experts/simon-henderson)

Simon Henderson is the Baker fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute, specializing in energy matters and the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf.



Brief Analysis

An official Iranian protest to the world's nuclear watchdog could be an attempt to undermine its role in verifying the regime's compliance with potential diplomatic agreements.

On September 26, while Iranian president Hassan Rouhani exuded charm and reasonableness to the world's leaders and media in New York, the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna released correspondence from Tehran that gave a radically different impression. In a [vitriolic twenty-page protest \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-september-12-2013-letter-to-the-iaea\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-september-12-2013-letter-to-the-iaea) littered with exclamation points, the regime harshly criticized the August IAEA report on Iran's nuclear activities.

At its politest, the letter -- dated September 12 and released with Tehran's approval -- accuses the agency of stepping beyond its statutory and legal mandate. But the language grows increasingly heated when Tehran insists that its controversial program is focused solely on "peaceful nuclear activities" that have been "unlawfully put on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council." The letter accuses the council of taking "a wrong approach by adopting its politically-motivated, illegal and unacceptable resolutions against Iran," claiming that "any request by the Agency stemming from these resolutions is not legitimate and not acceptable." The letter ends by declaring that "claims and baseless allegations against the Islamic Republic of Iran's peaceful nuclear activities are unprofessional, unfair, illegal and politicized."

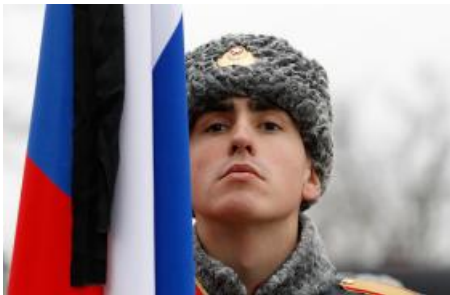
As with past Iranian diplomacy, the protest raises questions about whether Tehran speaks with more than one voice, and whether internal political differences are being fought out in public. The Rouhani camp appears to realize that some of the letter's language is at odds with the impression they have tried to make. The document's only overlap with Rouhani's remarks in New York was its mention of the Non-Aligned Movement, which Tehran clearly regards as supporting its position on the nuclear issue.

In any case, Iran's criticisms of the IAEA raise further suspicions about its intentions -- the regime may be seeking a

political deal that avoids intrusive inspections of what its nuclear program consists of now and what it has worked on in the past. Such a deal would not, in the words of President Obama, be "meaningful, transparent, and verifiable." The letter also raises questions about the breadth of support in Iran's ruling circles for a positive tone and the actions needed to resolve the nuclear impasse.

Simon Henderson is the Baker Fellow and director of the Gulf and Energy Policy Program at The Washington Institute. His publications include [Nuclear Iran: A Glossary of Terms](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/nuclear-iran-a-glossary-of-terms) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/nuclear-iran-a-glossary-of-terms>), coauthored with Olli Heinonen. ♦

RECOMMENDED



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[The Ukraine Crisis Isn't Over: Russia Has Lied About Troop Withdrawals Before](#)

Feb 16, 2022

♦
Anna Borshchevskaya

([/policy-analysis/ukraine-crisis-isnt-over-russia-has-lied-about-troop-withdrawals](#))



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[As China Thrives in the Post-9/11 Middle East, the US Must Counter](#)

Feb 16, 2022

♦
Jay Solomon

([/policy-analysis/china-thrives-post-911-middle-east-us-must-counter](#))



BRIEF ANALYSIS

Unpacking the UAE F-35 Negotiations

Feb 15, 2022

♦
Grant Rumley
(/policy-analysis/unpacking-uae-f-35-negotiations)

TOPICS

Arab & Islamic Politics (/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

Proliferation (/policy-analysis/proliferation)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

Iran (/policy-analysis/iran)