

Iran and Syria: Next Steps

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993.



Articles & Testimony

Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Four months ago, I had the privilege of testifying to this committee when the hope and optimism of the potential for democratic change in the region was at its height. Now that we have seen what reactionary forces in the region can do in an effort to snuff out the will of the people, using the most repressive and inhuman tactics, I come before you today with the region in a more sober and somber mood. However, it is important to note that we are still witnessing the early days of the vast tectonic shift that is underway in the Middle East. While we need to be vigilant about who we embrace in the march of change sweeping the region and be appropriately cautious to prevent new authoritarians from reaping the benefit from the fall of the old ones, we should not be so frightened of the possibility of change that we fail to see the enormous opportunities that change can bring.

Nowhere is this more the case than with Syria. While the U.S. military is engaged in an important humanitarian mission in Libya, the Middle East's real strategic drama is being played out in Syria. At stake is not just whether millions of Syrians will finally find freedom and liberty after four decades of dictatorial rule by the Asad family -- though that is surely a critical component of the Syrian story. And at stake is more than the survival of a regime that has been a consistent source of tension, threat, and challenge to U.S. interests on numerous fronts for nearly all of the Asad family's decades of control -- though that too is a key aspect of U.S. concern for the fate of the country. Rather, at stake is the opportunity to strike a painful, perhaps decisive blow to the axis of anti-peace, anti-Western, anti-American regimes that is headquartered in Tehran, runs through Damascus, then on to Beirut and Gaza, and has aspirations to extend its reach to Baghdad, the Gulf, and beyond...

[Download Dr. Satloff's full prepared remarks \(PDF\).](#)

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/SatloffTestimony20110623.pdf> ❖

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