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Iran dismisses GOP letter as 'propaganda ploy'

By David McCabe



Getty Images

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif chided Senate Republicans Monday for sending an open letter about the talks over the country's nuclear program, calling it a "propaganda ploy."

Zarif, in a statement issued Monday through Iran's mission to the United Nations, said that "in our view, this letter has no legal value and is mostly a propaganda ploy."

"It is very interesting that while negotiations are still in progress and while no agreement has been reached, some political pressure groups are so afraid even of the prospect of an agreement that they resort to unconventional methods, unprecedented in diplomatic history," he said.

The letter, signed by 47 Senate Republicans, suggested that the Iranian negotiators "may not fully understand our constitutional system" and warned that any nuclear deal endorsed by President Obama could someday be revoked with the "stroke of a pen."

"Anything not approved by Congress is a mere executive agreement," they said.

Some questioned the legal accuracy of the letter.

Former Bush administration lawyer Jack Goldsmith official noted on the national security blog Lawfare that Congress does not ratify international agreements, as the letter said, but rather advises and consents to their ratification by the president.

Democrats, meanwhile, sharply criticized the letter as a brazen attempt to blow up the negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

"This bizarre, inappropriate letter is a desperate ploy to scuttle a comprehensive agreement and the chance for a peaceful resolution, which is in the best interests of the United States, Israel and the world," Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) accused the Republicans of "empowering the ayatollahs," while White House press secretary Josh Earnest called it "the continuation of a partisan strategy to undermine the president's authority."

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