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Iran's Ridiculous Distraction

Iran should answer the IAEA's concerns instead of trying to prevent the public from receiving in a timely manner widely available information about its nuclear activities

In prepared statements to the Board of Governors in Vienna today, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Ali Asghar Soltanieh criticized ISIS for posting on its website the latest report on safeguards implementation in Iran and the assessment that ISIS performs of the data contained in the report. In the remarks, Soltanieh states, "It comes as no surprise that almost at the same time that the DG [Director General] report is released, the ISIS website publishes the report as well as sort of fictitious calculations as its evaluation on the detailed information of the report."

By posting the IAEA safeguards reports on its website, which ISIS has done for several years, ISIS is responding to the public's need to view this information collectively and in a timely manner. We could hold back the reports, which we receive from numerous government and non-governmental sources. However, the international community and the broader media have a need to receive important information on issues relating to nuclear proliferation, and, in particular, information on cases in which there is an egregious lack of cooperation with the IAEA—something that the Iranian government has demonstrated for years.

This is not the first time that the Iranian government has sought to keep the public in the dark and prevent ISIS from sharing with the public the safeguards reports. Iran complained to the IAEA in a [June 9, 2011 letter](#) that ISIS disseminates the report on its website on the same day that it is released to all IAEA member states.

Rather than trying to suppress vital information, Iran should fully explain to the international community its work related to nuclear weaponization as detailed in the recent IAEA report instead of complaining about ISIS's efforts to serve the public good. By coming clean on its past and possibly current efforts to build nuclear weapons, Iran could resolve most concerns about its nuclear activities. Afterward, solving outstanding issues about its gas centrifuge program would be straightforward, as Brazil and South Africa learned many years ago.

ISIS uses data in IAEA safeguards reports to track the number of installed centrifuges at Iran's enrichment facilities and their operation. These data have recently shown the deficiencies of the IR-1 centrifuge at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant. Iran's efforts to complain about this ISIS analysis showing the poor performance of the Fuel Enrichment Plant would be better spent reexamining the wisdom of a gas centrifuge uranium enrichment program, which nearly ten years after construction started at this facility and likely over a hundred million dollars of investment, will apparently never be capable of supporting a nuclear power program. Iran's civil enrichment program may manage only to fuel a research reactor in Tehran. By doing so, it may well achieve a world record of sorts, namely producing the most expensive research reactor fuel ever.

Answering the concerns of the IAEA and the international community and receiving a foreign supply of low enriched uranium for its civil reactors and thereby avoiding continued sanctions also makes far more economical sense, unless of course Iran really intends to build nuclear weapons.