

Live Free or Die: Promiss

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March 7, 2012

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What would you do if someone was threatening to kill you? Imagine that this person not only hated you vehemently, but was thought to have killed many of his own family members in cold blood. You know for a fact he owns several weapons and strongly suspect he has been attempting to purchase more. On top of all that, he publicly proclaims his desire to kill you on a regular basis. Would you take his threats seriously?

The scenario I described might sound like the set up for a terrible summer movie, but it almost exactly parallels the behavior of Iran toward Israel and the United States over the past several years. Iran's leaders—President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—have openly declared their intention to wipe “Israel off the map” on numerous occasions. Less publicized are statements like Ahmadinejad's from 2008: “Today, the time for the fall of the satanic power of the United States has come, and the countdown to the annihilation of the emperor of power and wealth has started.” Their intentions toward the United States and Israel could not be clearer.

A growing body of intelligence suggests that the Iranians, who already possess a large arsenal of ballistic missiles, are in the process of building nuclear weapons. While they may not have the capability of striking the United States mainland from their own, they could certainly hit Israel or pass off a nuclear weapon to a terrorist organization. Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, due to meet with President Obama early this week, has openly threatened to strike Iranian nuclear facilities rather than allow them to attain nuclear capabilities on his watch. I think most reasonable people can understand why he would make this threat.

An Israeli strike on Iran is a serious matter, one which would at very minimum disrupt an already unstable oil supply. So it is understandable that the White House would want to avoid an Israeli strike if possible. Yet openly disagreeing with the Israeli threat to strike has two effects: it lessens the deterrent force of such a possibility, and it treats Israel and Iran as morally equivalent parties in a conflict. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Israel is a democracy, like the United States, which respects the rights of individuals to freely practice religion and live as they choose under the law. There are many Muslims and Christians as well as Jewish people living and working in Israel. Iran, on the other hand, recently condemned a Christian pastor to death for the crime of converting to Christianity. As of this writing, the fate of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani is uncertain.

Why does Iran want annihilate Israel? One reason is undoubtedly the growing power of Twelver Shi'ism, a sect of Shia Islam. This sect believes that the “Twelfth Imam”—whom they hold to be the legitimate leader of Islam who disappeared as a child during the late 800s—will return soon to save the world and establish the Islamic reign over the world. But to prepare the way for his coming, they believe they must destroy Israel and the United States.

While many Iranians both inside and outside Iran reject Twelver radicalism, the group has been growing in popularity in recent decades. (As many as 85% of Shia Muslims worldwide are believed to be Twelvers.)

Both Ahmadinejad and Khamenei invoke radical Twelver imagery and vocabulary regularly in their

speeches. Some analysts believe they do this to stir up the emotions of their Twelver followers, while others fear that the president and the Supreme leader themselves may truly believe this is the end of days, and that their job is to prepare the way for return of the Twelfth Imam. Twelver radicals in Iran believe the United States is weak, afraid to fight and ready to fall. This belief emboldens plans to build weapons for the purpose of destroying both Israel and the United States, however insane that may sound to people in the West. By continually offering to talk to Teheran and publicly abandoning Israel, the current administration is playing right into the radicals' hands.

If Israel conducts a pre-emptive strike on Iran, the US will undoubtedly be drawn into the conflict. Before we get involved in such a volatile conflict, we must have the military will to totally reduce the rogue nation to military powerlessness. We also will have to be willing to endure \$8.00 a gallon fuel prices.

Let me be clear, Islam is not an evil religion. Nonetheless, the men presenting themselves as the faithful in Iran are in fact evil. Their disregard for human life and international peace is very evident. Our nation will have to decide if it agrees with New Hampshire's official state motto, which was adopted at the close of World War II – “Live Free or Die.” Defending freedom will remain very expensive in terms of petroleum, cash, and American blood. As a preacher, I can never promote war as the ultimate answer. But as a realistic Christian, I can support Saint Augustine's Just War Theory. More specifically, I must support the US aligning militarily with Israel to avoid senseless killings engineered by evil factions in the earth.