

## Iran Threatens Israel with Destruction, But the Times Doesn't Hear It

Jonathan S. Tobin 02.03.2012 -

Today's speech by Iran's Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, about the sanctions on his country and its determination to persist in its quest for nuclear capability was a significant news event. Khamenei served notice on the United States that he would not be bluffed into giving up his nuclear plans. Though he conceded the economic pressure on his country has hurt, he said Iran is undaunted and would retaliate against the United States should its nuclear facilities come under attack. All this was reported in newspapers around the world, including the *New York Times*, which posted a story on the speech Friday morning.

However, there was something missing from the *Times* report of Khamenei's speech that was reported elsewhere. Other accounts noted that in addition to threatening the United States, Khamenei said this: "The Zionist regime is a cancerous tumor and it will be removed." While we don't know how or why a mention of this element of the speech managed to get excised from the account in the *Times*, it's a question worth pondering.

Any discussion of the nature of the Iranian nuclear threat that ignores the regime's murderous intentions toward Israel is clearly incomplete.

An Iranian bomb would change the balance of power in the region and endanger all moderate Arab regimes while strengthening the hand of Tehran's terrorist allies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas (though relations between Gaza and Iran have cooled recently). It would also threaten the free flow of oil from the Gulf to the West and diminish the strategic position as well as the security of both the United States and Europe.

But it is only Israel that Iran has promised to destroy. That is why placing a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime pledged to the eradication of the Jewish state is a different order of threat than Khamenei's usual bluster aimed at the United States. Because of its small size and concentrated population, one or two nuclear explosions would mean another Holocaust.

So when Khamenei repeats the Islamist regime's pledge to make good on its threat to destroy "the Zionist regime" in the same context as its vow to satisfy its nuclear ambitions, this is no minor rhetorical point. It is, instead, tangible evidence that Israel's alarm about Iran is justified and that the question of what to do about this threat is a matter of life and death for millions in the Jewish state.

For the *Times* to eliminate Khamenei's threat to Israel from its coverage even as it accurately reports other elements of the speech is more than curious. At the very least, it is an egregious error of judgment. At worst, it smacks of an effort to skew the discussion about Iran away from the imminent peril that its Tehran's nuclear program represents.

Those who seek to dismiss the justified fears expressed by friends of Israel about the Obama administration's hesitancy in taking actions and efforts to forestall an Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear facilities wish to lower the temperature of the discussion and ignore Khamenei's threats. But doing so makes it impossible to make a rational decision about averting the danger. Further prevarication such as that going on in Washington right now about Iran is exactly what Khamenei is hoping for as Iran seeks to run out the clock and achieve its ambitions before the West or Israel acts to stop them. Those who believe a nuclear Iran can be "contained" or doubt Iran's evil intentions need to understand what Khamenei said and what he meant by it. But that won't happen if major media outlets suppress the full story about Iran.