

# U.S., Iran Are Negotiating An Obama-Rohani Meeting

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Intense U.S.-Iran negotiations appear to be underway at this time, on various levels. They have included meetings this week in New York between Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif and U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, and an April 14 Washington meeting between Central Bank of Iran governor Valiollah Seif and U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Jack Lew.[1]

According to an April 19 report on the Iranian website Sahamnews.org, which is affiliated with Iran's Green Movement, President Obama asked to meet with Iranian President Hassan Rohani in two secret letters sent in late March to both Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Rohani.

According to the report, Obama wrote in the letters that Iran has a limited-time opportunity to cooperate with the U.S. in order to resolve the problems in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and promised that if Iran agreed to a meeting between him and Rohani, he would be willing to participate in any conference to this end.

The Sahamnews report further stressed that Supreme Leader Khamenei discussed the request with President Rohani, that Rohani said that Iran should accept the request and meet with Obama, and that such a meeting could lead to an end to the crises in the region while increasing Iran's influence in their resolution. Rohani promised Khamenei that any move would be coordinated with him and reported to him. According to the report, Khamenei agreed with Rohani.

The Sahamnews report also emphasized that Khamenei's recent

aggressively anti-U.S. speeches were aimed at maintaining an anti-U.S. atmosphere among the Iranian public, whereas in private meetings he expresses a different position.

Further hints regarding Obama's wish to meet with Iranian officials could be found in both American[2] and Iranian[3] media.

Following Khamenei's recent harsh attacks on what he termed the U.S. administration's misconduct and its failure to implement the economic and banking aspects of the JCPOA,[4] Khamenei's representatives from Iran's pragmatic camp have been openly talking with U.S. officials in order to extract from the U.S. more concessions that are not part of the JCPOA.

After Secretary of State Kerry's April 19 New York meeting with Foreign Minister Zarif, the two announced that their discussions would continue on April 22. Zarif said that the meeting had been aimed "to ensure that Iran obtains the interests that it anticipates [receiving] from the JCPOA... The main focus of the talks concerned the correct implementation of the JCPOA so that the sides, especially the Iranian people, will receive what is coming to them under this agreement." [5]

Secretary of State Kerry said that progress had been made in several issues, and that the two would meet again on April 22: "We agreed to – we're both working at making sure that the JCPOA, the Iran agreement – nuclear agreement – is implemented in exactly the way that it was meant to be and that all the parties to that agreement get the benefits that they are supposed to get out of the agreement. So we worked on a number of key things today, achieved progress on it, and we agreed to meet on Friday. After the signing of the climate change agreement, we will meet again to sort of solidify what we talked about today." [6]

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[1] *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 2016.

[2] See, for instance, an article in *Foreign Affairs*, March 7, 2016, by a representative of the National Iranian American Council.

[3] *Kayhan* (Iran), April 3, 2016. See also MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6373, [Power Struggle Between Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's Ideological Camp And Rafsanjani's Pragmatic Camp Intensifies – Part III: Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Speaks Out Against Pragmatic Camp Leaders Rafsanjani, Rohani](#), April 5, 2016.

[4] See MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 6373, [Power Struggle Between Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei's Ideological Camp And Rafsanjani's Pragmatic Camp Intensifies – Part III: Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Speaks Out Against Pragmatic Camp Leaders Rafsanjani, Rohani](#), April 5, 2016.

[5] ISNA (Iran), April 20, 2016.

[6] State.gov, April 19, 2016.