The world must stop ignoring Iran's pattern of obstructing nuclear inspections

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The Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated a long pattern of obstruction regarding inquiries and investigations into its nuclear activities, and that pattern persists more than two years after the conclusion of a landmark nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers.

The conclusion of that agreement in 2015 was to some extent dependent upon the neglect of certain controversial issues, including access to Iranian military sites, where the regime apparently carried out research and development related to weaponization aspects of the country's nuclear program. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action effectively skirted this issue by making it theoretically possible for the International Atomic Energy Agency to ask for and receive access to military sites, but only following a month-long process during which the Islamic Republic could work to erase evidence of past activities.

This is exactly what happened at the highly suspect Parchin military base, from which the IAEA obtained soil samples that still showed the presence of some nuclear material after satellite imagery showed the site being partially demolished and sanitized. Despite this fact, the IAEA closed the file on the past military dimensions of the Iranian nuclear program so that the JCPOA could go forward toward implementation.

This and other instances of Iranian deception and international neglect were the focus of a [recent report](http://isjcommittee.com/2017/09/isj-report-review-irans-nuclear-weapons%E2%80%90related-conduct/) published by the International Committee In Search of Justice (ISJ), the non-profit NGO that I head up in Brussels. The report drew upon public information and intelligence gathered by the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), the main Iranian opposition group with a solid record of exposing information about the regime´s nuclear project. The new information identifies a much broader pattern of behaviors going far beyond well-publicized issues like Parchin.

But even without this additional intelligence, the Parchin situation and the Iranian regime's repeated insistence that military sites are simply off limits to international inspectors should be enough to demonstrate to the world that the JCPOA has likely not halted Iran's nuclear activities, much less convinced the regime to cooperate with the international community.

Sadly, various world powers seem to be well aware of the shortcomings of the JCPOA, yet remain committed to preserving that agreement and arguing that it is serving its purpose effectively.

Regardless of one's position on the JCPOA, it is indefensible to suggest that the agreement has succeeded in its objective of halting Iran's progress toward a nuclear weapon, or even that the resulting inspections have closed the issue of the past military dimensions of the program.

Anyone familiar with Tehran's pattern of deception for the past two decades should recognize the need for coordinated international insistence upon immediate and unrestricted access to Parchin and other military sites, as well as access to the sites and personnel associated with the Organization of Defense Innovation and Research, which has been identified as the institution at the heart of weaponization aspects of the Iranian nuclear program. It is simply naïve and utterly dangerous to overlook Tehran's deceptive behaviors just for the sake of preserving the nuclear deal and pretending the issue of possible military dimensions is resolved.

So far, President Trump has remained silent on whether he plans to certify before Congress that Iran is complying with its obligations under the agreement, as he will be required to do on October 15.

To the extent that the recent report relies upon information from the IAEA's publicly available documents, it establishes that the nuclear monitoring agency has effectively cast its own findings aside. For instance, the report quotes one IAEA document, published just on the verge of the JCPOA's implementation, as saying, "The Agency assesses that the extensive activities undertaken by Iran since February 2012 at the particular location of interest to the Agency seriously undermined the Agency's ability to conduct effective verification."

Despite this fact, the Agency now acts as if Tehran's ongoing patterns of obstruction are not grounds for suspicion about its compliance. The IAEA has repeatedly insisted to the world that Iran is in compliance with the nuclear deal, but in so doing it has not only ignored the issue of what remains unknown about possible military dimensions, but it has also ignored confirmed, if minor, violations of the JCPOA's limits on Iran's stockpiles of nuclear materials and nuclear byproducts.

To the extent that Iran refuses to cooperate with the international community, the nations of the world should show that they can do better by cooperating among themselves in order to exert the pressure that is necessary to make absolutely certain that this theocratic regime is no longer pursuing the capability to build weapons of mass destruction. Giving Tehran a free pass is simply too dangerous.