

**Obama urges support for Iranian 'freedom'**  
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US President Barack Obama urged the world to support the Iranian people in their fight for "freedom," one year after disputed elections triggered major demonstrations.

Obama's call came after Iranian opposition leaders canceled anti-government protests planned for Saturday, the anniversary of last year's disputed election that reinstated incumbent hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi said in a joint statement the decision was made in order "to protect the lives and properties of the people."

When Iranians went to the polls a year ago Saturday, results gave an easy victory to Ahmadinejad. Opposition candidates said the results were rigged, sparking street protests that rocked the Islamic republic and were put down with force.

"The courage of the Iranian people stands as an example to us and it challenges us to continue our efforts to bend the arch of history in the direction of justice," Obama said in the statement read by one of his human rights advisors.

"It is the responsibility of all free people and free nations to make it clear that we are on the side of those who seek freedom, justice and dignity, as surely as hope and history are," Obama said in the statement.

Obama said he looked "forward to the day when Iranians will be able to speak freely, assemble without fear and express their views without facing retribution, a day when the Iranian government will represent and foster rather than fear the aspirations of its own people."

Obama said last year's election will be "remembered for how the Iranian government brutally suppressed dissent and murdered the innocent, including a young woman left to die in the street."

No sincerity

He was referring to 26-year-old Neda Agha-Soltan, who bled to death on the ground in an image captured by mobile telephone and seen around the world, in what came to symbolize the uprising against the clerical regime.

"The courage of so many Iranians in the face of severe repression is inspiring," Obama said.

"It reminds us of democratic movements that over the years brought greater freedom and respect for universal rights to every region of the world."

The anniversary comes after the United States led a drive through the United Nations that imposed new sanctions on Iran over its disputed nuclear program.

Shortly after taking office last year, Obama offered dialogue to Iran to repair three decades of bad blood since the 1979 Islamic revolution ousted the pro-Western shah.

But the US administration says that Ahmadinejad has not responded to the offer of talks

with any sincerity.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Thursday called "regrettable" the Iranian opposition's cancellation of anti-government protests.

"It is not only regrettable that the opposition cancelled demonstrations... but it demonstrates very clearly why the Iranian regime has caused so much concern throughout the world," she told reporters during a visit to Barbados.

"When you look at the combination of their repression of their people, manipulation of their own elections, the fact they are an exporter and supporter of terrorist activities around the world, and the pursuit of nuclear weapons, it adds up to a very dangerous combination," Clinton said.

"And therefore we stand in solidarity with the people of Iran as we have since the beginning of the administration," she added.

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