

The latest on Iran & the JCPOA from those who know best

June 28, 2021

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is officially charged with monitoring compliance by Iran and other nations with both the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the JCPOA.

In a series of recent reports and interviews, the **Director General of the IAEA**, Rafael Grossi, and other experts, make five key points:

- Iran has likely been in violation of the NPT and the JCPOA from before the Trump Administration's ill-conceived exit from the nuclear deal
- These violations are not merely historical curiosities, but rather go to core nonproliferation issues
- Iran has, for over a year, refused to provide adequate explanations of undeclared nuclear material, at undeclared nuclear sites, both of which violate JCPOA and NPT
- At this point, simply re-entering the JCPOA is not a scientifically valid approach
- In addition, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has made clear the on-going negotiations have not borne fruit to-date because the Iranians have not yet decided to return to the JCPOA limits

Iran has likely been in violation of the NPT and the JCPOA according to Grossi

- "We found traces of uranium that has been subject to industrial processing in different places, which had not been declared by Iran. That is a big problem.... We know that something happened here. There is no way round it. We have found this. There was material here. When was this? What has happened with this equipment? Where is the material? They have to answer."¹
- "The presence of multiple uranium particles of anthropogenic origin, including isotopically altered particles, at location 1, which was not declared by Iran, is a clear indication that nuclear material and/or equipment contaminated by nuclear material has been present at this location....the Agency is deeply concerned that undeclared nuclear material

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-%20un>

may have been present at this undeclared location and that such nuclear material remains unreported by Iran under its Safeguards Agreement.”²

- “Iran has not answered the Agency’s questions with regard to location 2 and the Agency has yet to clarify the current location of the natural uranium in the form of a metal disc. With regard to the presence of anthropogenic uranium particles at locations 3 and 4, and to the questions regarding these locations, Iran has yet to provide answers.”³

These violations are not merely historical curiosities, but rather go to the heart of nonproliferation issues in Grossi’s view

- “The lack of progress in clarifying the agency’s questions concerning the correctness and completeness of Iran’s safeguards declarations seriously affects the ability of the agency [IAEA] to provide assurance of the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme.”⁴
- “Some people banalise this and say, ‘this is old stuff.’ We have to get to the bottom of this, not for any academic obsession of the director general but because it is non- proliferation relevant”⁵
- “Iran’s failure to provide credible explanations for traces of uranium found at two undeclared sites is ‘a big problem’⁶

Grossi reports Iran has, for over a year, refused to explain undeclared nuclear material, at undeclared nuclear sites, both of which violate JCPOA and NPT

- “After 18 months, Iran has not provided the necessary, full and technically credible explanation for the presence of the nuclear material...”⁷
- “After many months, Iran has not provided the necessary explanation for the presence of the nuclear material particles at any of the three locations where the agency has conducted complementary accesses (inspections).”⁸

² <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-director-general-urges-iran-to-resolve-issues-related-to-%20four-undeclared-locations>

³ <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/the-iaeas-latest-iran-npt-safeguards-report-no-progress-no-accountability>

⁴ <https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/iaea-director-general-urges-iran-to-resolve-issues-related-to-%20four-undeclared-locations>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-%20un>

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-un>

⁷ <https://www.iaea.org/iaea-director-generals-introductory-statement-to-the-board-of-governors-1-march-%202021>

⁸ <https://www.iaea.org/iaea-director-generals-introductory-statement-to-the-board-of-governors-7-june-2021>

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The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) called on the IAEA to refer Iranian non-compliance to the UN Security Council

- “It is imperative that the [IAEA] Board of Governors seek a new resolution...to condemn Iran’s lack of cooperation with the IAEA’s investigation. At the last Board meeting, a condemnatory resolution was pulled at the last minute because Iran agreed to make progress on these safeguards issues, something that has not occurred...IAEA member states should also consider a resolution referring Iranian non-compliance to the UN Security Council.”¹⁰

At this point, simply re-entering the JCPOA is not a scientifically valid approach

- “Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), also said Iran and the US could not simply return to the old nuclear deal on exactly the same terms as signed in 2015, but needed a new understanding on how to handle Iran’s increased nuclear knowledge, and its possession of more advanced centrifuges.”¹¹
- “More broadly, [Grossi] said a linear return to the old JCPOA was not feasible in the talks in Vienna. ‘It is not possible. Iran has accumulated knowledge, has accumulated centrifuges and has accumulated material.’”¹²
- “There needed to be what [Grossi] described as ‘an agreement within an agreement, or an implementation roadmap’ on how to address Iran’s improved nuclear strength, including its use of more advanced centrifuges than allowed under the 2015 agreement”¹³
- Grossi: “They have developed new centrifuges. Research and development has taken place. It was not allowed by the original JCPOA. It has happened and now the issue is how to deal with the results. What you absolutely

⁹ <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/21/06/gov2021-29.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/detail/the-iaeas-latest-iran-npt-safeguards-report-no-progress-no-accountability>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-un>

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-un>

¹³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-un>

need is a way to verify that if they have that knowledge it is not being used to make bombs.”¹⁴

Secretary Blinken made clear the ongoing negotiations have not borne fruit to-date because Iran has not yet decided to return to the JCPOA limits

- "Iran, I think, knows what it needs to do to come back into compliance on the nuclear side, and what we haven't yet seen is whether Iran is ready and willing to make a decision to do what it has to do. That's the test and we don't yet have an answer"¹⁵
- "It remains unclear whether Iran is willing and prepared to do what it needs to do come back into compliance...Meanwhile, its program is galloping forward.... The longer this goes on, the more the breakout time gets down... it's now down, by public reports, to a few months at best. And if this continues, it will get down to a matter of weeks."¹⁶
- “We don't know at this stage whether Iran is willing and able to do what it would need to do to come back into compliance.”¹⁷
- “...we’ve clarified increasingly what each side would need to do to come back into compliance with the JCPOA, but it remains an unanswered question whether Iran is actually prepared to do what it needs to do to come back into compliance. The jury is still out on that.”¹⁸
- Senior U.S. Official: "We can't get into a situation where the U.S. does more than is required by the deal in terms of sanctions relief and Iran is going to do less ... than what is required in terms of coming back into nuclear compliance...”¹⁹

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/26/iran-failure-explain-uranium-traces-big-problem-iaea-un>

¹⁵ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/week-transcript-13-21-secretary-antony-blinken-rep/story?id=78244277>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2r6rcydui3Q>

¹⁷ <https://www.c-span.org/video/?507953-1/secretary-state-nominee-antony-blinken-testifies-confirmation-hearing>

¹⁸ <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-with-yonit-levy-of-channel-12/>

¹⁹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/reviving-nuclear-deal-possible-if-iran-makes-political-decision-u-n1266605>