



Dear Friend,

Greetings from the Project on Middle East Democracy!

Last week the House and Senate both finally approved the conference report for the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution, clearing the path for the appropriations committees to begin allocating funds for FY 2009. The House had also hoped to take action last week on the FY 2008 war supplemental appropriations bill, but this was delayed until later this week. In the Middle East, concerns persisted surrounding repression in Egypt and the recent extension of emergency rule, while an IAEA report stoked debates on tensions with Iran. This week, keep an eye out for a [Capitol Hill event](#) tomorrow by the Campaign for a New American Policy on Iran, urging increased efforts at diplomacy with Iran.

For more detailed coverage of the debates surrounding U.S. foreign policy and the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, be sure to check out POMED's blog, [the POMED Wire](#).

## The Weekly Wire

June 9, 2008

### *Legislation:*

On Monday (6/2) **Sen. Evan Bayh** (D-IN) introduced Senate resolution [S.RES.580](#) expressing the sense of the Senate on preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. The resolution urges the President to assert his existing authority in tightening sanctions against Iran and to lead an international effort that will pressure Iran to suspend its nuclear programs.

On Wednesday (6/4) **Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL) introduced resolution [H.R. 6178](#) to strengthen existing legislation sanctioning people aiding nonproliferation activities by the government of Iran, Syria, and North Korea.

On Wednesday (6/4) **Rep. Ellen Tauscher** (D-CA) introduced [H.R. 6190](#) which would restore the State Department's responsibility over Police Training Teams used to advise, train, support, and equip the Iraqi Police Service. The intent of the resolution is to increase the number of civilian police advisors involved in training Iraq's police forces.

The resolution would require that the State Department provide a majority of the members of the Police Training Teams.

On Wednesday (6/4), the House approved the [conference report](#) for the **Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Resolution**, [S.Con.Res.70](#), in a [48-45](#) vote. On Thursday (6/5), the House followed suit, passing the resolution in a [214-210](#) vote. This now clears the way for the appropriations subcommittees to begin work on FY 2009 spending bills this week.

On Thursday (6/5) **Rep. Alcee Hastings** (D-FL) introduced [H.RES.1249](#) urging the government of Iraq to recognize the right of Israel to exist and to establish diplomatic relations.

### *Committee Hearings:*

On Wednesday (6/4) the **Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight** of the **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled "[The Future of U.S.-Iraqi Relations: The Perspective of the Iraqi Parliament.](#)" Featured witnesses included the Honorable **Nadeem Al-Jaberi** and the Honorable Khalaf Al-Ullyan, both members of the Council of Representatives of Iraq. Members questioned the parliamentarians about recent developments in Iraq and their views regarding a possible Status of Forces Agreement. To read POMED's notes on the hearing, [click here](#).

On Thursday (6/5) the **Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia** of the **House Committee on Foreign Affairs** held a hearing entitled "[More Than Just Enrichment: Iran's Strategic Aspirations and the Future of the Middle East.](#)" Witnesses included **Judith Yaphe**, Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University, **Ray Takeyh**, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council of Foreign Relations, and **Jon B. Alterman**, Director and Senior Fellow of the Middle East Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Subcommittee Chairman **Gary Ackerman** (D-NY) gave an [opening statement](#). To read POMED's notes on the hearing, [click here](#).

### *In Washington:*

**Engagement or Isolation?** Debate over whether to engage inimical governments such as Iran and Syria continued amongst [policymakers](#) while criticism of the current policy [continues](#). To some, possible dialogue between [Fatah and Hamas](#) suggests [the failure of non-engagement](#), but many still see support for engagement with Syria or Iran as a [failure to understand reality](#), [exceedingly complicated](#), or a [sign of weakness](#). Recent polling suggest the U.S. public seems to [favor engagement](#), and some believe increasing dialogue and improving relations between the governments of Iraq and Iran [may undermine](#) U.S. attempts to isolate Tehran. One analyst criticized the use of the list of [state sponsors of terrorism](#) as imprecise and counterproductive, recommending reforms to the process of maintaining the list.

**Status of Forces Agreement for Iraq?** The future of a U.S.-Iraqi security agreement seems in [doubt](#) due to its [unpopularity among the Iraqi public](#), [Iraqi politicians](#), and [members of Congress](#) who all fear the establishment of permanent bases and a loss of Iraqi sovereignty. Some feel that the agreement will [entrench us further](#) in Iraq, while [U.S. officials](#) and others [disagree](#).

In light of some [positive developments](#) in Iraq, some warn that [early withdrawal of U.S. troops](#) could weaken Iraq's fragile democratic government, while others cited that a [majority of Iraqis](#), including some [Iraqi Parliament members](#), no longer support a U.S. presence. Others made [recommendations for the next U.S. President](#) on how to continue the progress made in Iraq.

**Questions Around Foreign Aid:** Debates on U.S. foreign assistance programs continued as some [lauded the Bush administration's Millennium Challenge Corporation](#) while others [called for a major overhaul](#). Questions were raised concerning [assumptions underlying the ongoing debate](#). Last week, the State Department [reinstated the Fulbright grants offered to Palestinians](#) in Gaza, reported to have been withdrawn last week due to security concerns.

**Annual AIPAC Policy Conference:** Last week was marked by the [annual policy conference](#) of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The conference featured [speeches](#) by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader John Boehner, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, as well as the final three Presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton, John McCain, and Barack Obama.

### *In the Middle East:*

**Debates Over Arab Reform:** Some questioned the [viability](#) of the Arab state, especially its ability to handle a [youth bulge](#), [internal political reform](#), and [bourgeoning technologies](#). [Economic pressures](#), [food shortages](#), and the [slow pace of political reform](#) still pose substantial threats to the goal of democracy. Some observers [focused on](#) the need for an independent judiciary as the first step toward real reform amid [continued political tensions](#) in Lebanon.

**Creative Dissent in Egypt:** Many highlighted the [use of the internet](#) and [other creative avenues](#) for [free expression](#) and responses of the Egyptian government both [towards dissenting voices](#) in general and specifically [towards the internet](#). Some have called for [international pressure to ensure continued access](#) to the internet while others suggested that the internet [may actually deter democratizing forces](#). Meanwhile, others examined the effects of increased repression on the growing [internal divide](#) in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

**Iran and Syria:** Reactions [continue](#) regarding the International Atomic Energy Agency's report that Iran has [not cooperated fully](#) with its investigations. The IAEA [called on Iran to cooperate](#) as soon as possible to ensure compliance with requirements under the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#). Iran has called the [U.N. Security Council's demands illegal](#) and claims that Iran has [not violated the treaty](#). Some warn that [Middle East is drifting toward a great confrontation](#). In addition, some suggest that a recent [resurgence in pro-American feelings in Iran](#) is the result of an increasing sense of [disillusionment with their current government](#). Meanwhile, [Syria has agreed to allow United Nations nuclear inspectors](#) to investigate the alleged site of nuclear reactor attacked by Israel last September.

**Jewish Ambassador Appointed in Bahrain:** After Bahrain [appointed](#) the Arab World's [first Jewish ambassador](#), some suggested that it reflects [a climate of tolerance](#) toward

minorities in Bahrain as well as Bahrain's [serious interest in democracy](#). Meanwhile, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia [called for dialogue](#) between Islam and other faiths.

**Islam and Democracy:** In the context of current tensions in Turkey surrounding the [attempt the ban](#) the ruling AKP, some [traced the historical evolution](#) of political Islam in Turkey, a move widely expected to [undermine Turkish democracy](#) in the name of secularism. Others focused on the [increased role of Hezbollah](#) in Lebanese politics.

*Also Worth Reading*

In the recent issue of *Dissent* magazine, **Fawaz Gerges** has [an in-depth look](#) at the Lebanese political scene following the recent agreement brokered in Doha, Qatar, focusing particularly on the role of Hezbollah and the options for moving forward with needed reforms. "The future of any Lebanese government will now depend on whether Hezbollah is willing to make the transition from a paramilitary organization into a full-fledged political party and make the compromises that such a transition entails, which, above all, include representing the interests of disenfranchised Lebanese Shia, not outside powers. Similarly, other confessional-based groups must recognize that the only way to bring about long-term stability in Lebanon is to give the Shia community—which represents more than 40 percent of the population, and which has the least say in politics—a greater role in governance."