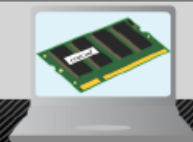


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NUKEWARS

Iranian Nobel laureate urges wider US-Iran talks: interviewby Staff Writers
Rome (AFP) Dec 22, 2008

Iranian Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi urged Washington on Monday not to turn a blind eye to violations of human rights and democratic principles in its rush to "talk nuclear" with Tehran.

But Ebadi, who had her Tehran offices raided by Iranian police on Sunday, also called on incoming US president Barack Obama to meet Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "without pre-conditions."

In an interview with the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera, she said: "It's the only way to fix the age-old disagreements between Iran and the United States. This crisis cannot endure indefinitely."

The United States "cannot continue to concern itself exclusively with its own security.

"In Iran, all decisions are taken behind closed doors without the possibility of control or criticism as exists in democracies," she said.

Iran "does not have a transparent government, that's the real problem from which all others flow, from terrorism to nuclear" fears in the West, she added.

Obama earlier this month vowed "tough but direct diplomacy" with Iran, offering incentives along with the threat of tougher sanctions to disarm the Islamic republic's nuclear drive.

"Iraq has shown us that war is not the best means through which to resolve conflicts. At some point or other, you have to sit down at the same table and talk. There is no other way," Ebadi maintained.

Iranian police on Sunday shut down the office of the Nobel peace laureate and lawyer, in a sign of a toughening crackdown against rights campaigners.

Ebadi, who won the Nobel peace prize in 2003 for her campaigning, was in the office at the time of the raid and condemned the police action but vowed that human rights advocates in Iran would be unfazed.

She made no mention of the raid in the Corriere della Serra interview.

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NUKEWARS

Outside View: Is Ahmadinejad in trouble?



Washington (UPI) Dec 17, 2008

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may lose the June 2009 presidential election. And a more pragmatic figure, one willing to engage the United States and the international community on Iran's nuclear program, may assume power. But no one, especially in the United States, should count on a dramatic change in Iran's policies, even if Ahmadinejad loses.