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US: ‘Last Chance’ for Iran to Shut Down Civilian Nuclear Program

By Jason Ditz

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Making sure that the level of demands that they are issuing are so high that Iran cannot possibly meet them, [US officials today said that the upcoming Turkey meeting is Iran’s “last chance” to abandon its entire civilian nuclear program, shut down all enrichment facilities and “surrender” all of their nuclear fuel to the West.](#)

The demands are much broader than anything US officials ever indicated they would seek earlier, but were in keeping with those [that Israeli officials have recently been pushing for](#), particularly the demand that Iran simply give their nuclear fuel to the West as some sort of bribe for not being attacked.

Under Iran’s IAEA safeguards agreement, they would be under no obligation to do any of these things. President Obama has conceded in the [past that Iran has a “right” to a peaceful civilian nuclear program](#), which indeed is the right of every signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but seems now to have given up this position, at least in practice.

The vast majority of Iran’s uranium is enriched to 4.5 percent, for use in the Russian-built Bushehr power plant. A smaller amount has been further enriched to 20 percent, with the goal of being converted to fuel rods for the US-built Tehran Research Reactor, a source of medical isotopes. 20 percent is technically “highly enriched uranium,” but is far below weapons grade. Experts agree that uranium would need to be enriched to at least 90 percent, and potentially even higher, to make a nuclear weapon.