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Iran considers intervention in Iraq

Iranian President warns Islamic republic will combat terrorism Sunni extremists in neighboring Iraq.

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TEHRAN - Predominantly Shiite Muslim Iran will combat terrorism by Sunni extremists in neighboring Iraq, President Hassan Rouhani warned Thursday.

Rouhani did not say exactly what Iran intended to do to help stop an offensive by fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that is pushing toward Baghdad after seizing several cities and towns to the north.

"This is an extremist, terrorist group that is acting savagely," Rouhani said live on state television, adding that Tehran will not "tolerate this violence and terror."

"For our part, as the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran... we will combat violence, extremism and terrorism in the region and the world," said an agitated Rouhani.

Rouhani said he would head to a meeting of Iran's Supreme National Security Council following his speech.

That body decides on the Islamic state's major foreign policy and security policies, and it would have to approve any military support Tehran might want to provide to Baghdad.

The president spoke after the heavily armed militant group -- which has overrun major

Iraqi cities and towns in the face of little effective resistance from security forces -- said it was pushing towards Baghdad.

Iran is seen as an ally of Iraq's Shiite prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, whose government's swift loss of control has raised concerns over its ability to stop the ISIL offensive.