



Iranians favour direct talks with US, mutual access for journalists, more trade

Author: Moussa Ahmad

Source: BI-ME

Published: 08 April 2008

Print

IRAN. A new WorldPublicOpinion.org polls finds that although Iranians continue to view the United States negatively, they strongly support steps to improve US-Iran relations.

Iranians support a number of measures for building closer relations between Iran and the US. The poll showed that 57% favour "direct talks on issues of mutual concern," between the Iranian and American governments, while 69% favour talks "to stabilise the situation in Iraq."

Some 64% favour greater US-Iran trade and 70% favour "providing more access for each others' journalists".

Another 63% would like to see "greater cultural, educational, and sporting exchanges" whilst 71% favour having "more Americans and Iranians visit each others' countries as tourists".

A nationwide random sample of 710 Iranians was surveyed from 13 January to 9 February by WorldPublicOpinion.org, an international research project managed by the Programme on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland, in partnership with Search for Common Ground. Parallel questions were asked to an American sample to compare American and Iranian views.

This support is especially striking given the widespread perception that the United States is hostile to both Iran and Islam. Most Iranians (84%) assume that a goal of US policy is to weaken and divide the Islamic world. About two in three (64%) also think the United States purposely seeks "to humiliate the Islamic world."

Nonetheless, there has been some lessening of the sense of threat and an easing of hostile attitudes toward the United States as compared to WorldPublicOpinion.org polling in Iran in late 2006. For example the percentage viewing US bases in the Middle East as a threat to Iran has dropped 18 points from 73 to 55 percent.

"It appears that as the sense of threat has subsided, there has been some thawing of Iranian hostility and a greater readiness to enter into closer relations with the United States," said Steven Kull, Director of WorldPublicOpinion.org.

The poll also probed Iranian views on nuclear issues. Six in ten believe that nuclear weapons are contrary to Islam, but four out of five insist Iran should have the capacity to produce nuclear fuel for energy.

For more information about this poll, its methodology, and other findings, visit www.WorldPublicOpinion.org