

**STATEMENT**

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**USADI Offers Condolences to Iranian People, Especially the Earthquake-Stricken Residents of Bam, Holds Tehran Responsible for the Horrific Level of Death and Destruction**

Last Friday a powerful earthquake, measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale, struck the city of Bam in southeastern Iran, reportedly killing more than 25,000, injuring an additional 30,000 so far and flattening more the 80 per cent of buildings in the city.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran offers its deepest condolences to the people of Iran, specifically the people of Bam for their huge loss. The USADI also holds the Iranian government responsible for the horrific level of death and destruction, which has been exacerbated as a result of the Islamic Republic of Iran's policies.

Only in the poorest regions of the world could a 6.3 Richter-scale earthquake leave so many casualties. Iran however is a wealthy country whose resources are plundered by its leaders. As a result of more than twenty four years of governmental corruption and plunder of Iran's natural riches, many towns and villages are severely underdeveloped and lack basic aid infrastructure at the time of natural disasters particularly in earthquake-prone regions such as Bam. The clerical regime has dedicated millions of dollars to the development of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destructions, spread of terrorism and fundamentalism, and expanding its military and suppressive machine.

Iran suffers regularly from earthquakes and is geologically similar to the US state of California. Unlike Californian authorities however Iranian authorities remain grossly unprepared to face such natural disasters. For any government to be this unprepared is simply depraved indifference and should be recognized by the international community for what it is, criminal.

According to reports received from Iran and the Iranian community in the United States, anger at the government is swelling among the locals. Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, appears reluctant to visit the scene shortly after the earthquake and has reportedly postponed it to Monday or Tuesday. Other senior officials such as the supreme leader Ali Khamenei and former President Hashemi Rafsanjani have also stayed back in Tehran. This has been seen by many as a sign of the government's fear of the angry population in Bam. Moreover, the government has put its security agencies on alert to prevent protests against governmental negligence. These forces are hindering the task of getting assistance to the victims.

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