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Iranian Opposition Leader Warns Against Sanctions

By NAZILA FATHI

TORONTO — The top Iranian opposition leader warned ahead of the talks between [Iran](#) and major powers in Geneva that tougher sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program could hurt the opposition movement more than the government of President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#).

The opposition leader, [Mir Hussein Moussavi](#), whose loss against Mr. Ahmadinejad in the disputed June election led to some of the worst unrest since the 1979 Islamic revolution, wrote in a statement that further sanctions would put an inordinate strain on Iranians.

In the statement, published [on opposition Web sites](#) on Monday, Mr. Moussavi said foreign countries should refrain from any measures that would harm the Iranian people.

“This is not sanctions against a government,” Mr. Moussavi wrote. “This would impose further pain on a nation that has already suffered a great deal by its schizophrenic rulers. We are against any kind of sanctions on people.”

The major powers are considering new sanctions against Iran in response to reports that the country has built a new enrichment facility. Iran disputes the charges and says its nuclear program is for civilian uses.

Mr. Moussavi’s comments demonstrated the concerns among opposition leaders that any new sanctions could create a backlash in Iran, generating more support for Mr. Ahmadinejad and undermining the opposition movement.

Most Iranian leaders have defended the country’s nuclear program, including Mr. Moussavi, who said during the presidential campaign that he would continue the program if he were elected president. However, he stressed the need for confidence building with the West over the program.

In his statement, Mr. Moussavi denounced Mr. Ahmadinejad’s foreign policy “as wrong and adventurous.” He also referred to “Iraq and Afghanistan as two big lessons on the two sides of the country,” indicating his concern over a possible military strike.

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