



Iran: Can we become a beacon of hope through business?

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There are legitimate reasons to fear nuclear weapons in the hands of the mullahs. There is now an on-going discussion between the regime in Iran and Western powers. But the question marks are many: Is Obama's regime strong and skillful enough to manage these negotiations? Will Israel see a need to intervene militarily? Will sanctions be lifted and what will that mean for foreign direct investments?

For Iranians inside the country there are frustrations and sorrows, and fear that the economic hardships will get worse. And those who fight for democracy and human rights may fear being hauled off to prison and torture.

Fear is also a key characteristic of Islam. I have met so many former Muslims and long-term workers in the Muslim world who have told me this.

The problems and challenges are both on a macro and micro level; it is about dealing with major international relations but also the lack of jobs for individual Iranians. The growing unemployment sometimes affects Christians even more because of discrimination. That forces many Christians to leave the country.

Iran has some of the worst drug related problems in the world. Prostitution is growing and human trafficking plays a part in this. Due to both internal and external factors, like sanctions and a repressive regime, unemployment and poverty have risen, and with that comes many social problems and evils, like drug addiction and prostitution.

It can be quite easy, unfortunately, to paint a dark and sad picture when it comes to the situation in the country and when it comes to Iran and terrorism, proxy wars and nuclear threats.

But there are also other parts of the story. We have witnessed a major and historic shift in Iran since 1979. The Islamic revolution has turned millions of people away from Islam. Millions are hearing about Jesus via satellite TV. Thousands and thousand of people are starting a new life with Christ.

I have been working with key Christian leaders around the world for about 20 years, all involved in and for Iran. As we have met once or twice every year we have acknowledged **one critical need and gap: jobs with dignity**. There are many Iranians in the Diaspora who would love to do more business with Iran. When the sanctions are lifted the opportunities will be many.

We know one thing for sure: all dictatorships fall. It is a matter of time. Even the seemingly staunchest regimes may crumble relatively quickly. We learned that from the Soviet Union and the Communist states in Eastern Europe.

One day things will change even in Iran. The borders may open soon and create all kinds of opportunities. But will there be overwhelming and uncoordinated efforts, albeit with good intentions, doing more harm than good?

Water is a necessity of life. But too much water in too short of a time can become a flood and cause a disaster. We need to provide irrigation channels, so water can flow to become a blessing.

Part of this irrigation channel is jobs with dignity. We need to learn and prepare in various ways to serve the people and the country of Iran by developing businesses.

Right now there are many restrictions for some nationalities to engage in business in Iran. Many non-Western countries have other opportunities.

Every Christian, who loves God and Iran, should prayerfully consider what the needs are and how one can work with others. We want to be beacons of hope – also by doing business as mission.

The [Business as Mission Think Tank](#) has published an important report, which I hope will be read by many.

To read and download the report, click here -> [Business as Mission in Iran: Laboring in the Dark](#)