



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 5, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20050

Dear President Biden:

Ebrahim Raisi, an ultra-hardline cleric was inaugurated this morning as the Islamic Republic of Iran's new President. Raisi's "election" was the result of an unfree and unfair political contest from earlier this summer featuring the Islamic Republic's lowest-ever voter turnout.¹ Raisi is the first Iranian president to take office while under U.S. sanctions.² As you know, Raisi was sanctioned under Executive Order 13876 in 2019 by the Trump administration for being appointed to the position of Chief Justice by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.³ The Treasury Department's press release, as well as numerous human rights organizations,⁴ have noted Raisi's blood-stained past and specifically, his role in the so-called Death Commission that approved the execution of more than 4,000 political prisoners in 1988.

Iranian negotiators in a briefing to the parliament of Iran have claimed that the Biden administration has agreed to not only lift sanctions on Khamenei's inner circle, but also to repeal E.O. 13876 in its entirety, which would remove Raisi from U.S. sanctions lists.⁵ Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, it seems that the parliament of Iran was briefed on the potential for such sanctions relief, while the Congress of the United States has been left in the dark as to the state of talks.

Under E.O. 13876, the U.S. maintains broad authority to sanction the Supreme Leader's office and financial empire including his network of appointees and others appointed to official positions.⁶ As you are aware, countless Iranian government officials and members of Supreme Leader's inner circle are responsible for severe human rights abuses against the people of Iran and are not immune from major corruption scandals.⁷ While the Biden administration claims that it will stand up for human rights around the world, lifting sanctions on Raisi and removing the authority with which to name, shame, and punish the Supreme Leader's inner circle would send an encouraging message to human rights abusers and kleptocrats around the world that the U.S. is willing to turn a blind eye for the right price.⁸ This is especially disturbing when for more than three weeks protests have spread across Iran as a brave act of defiance against the Islamic Republic and its bankrupt authority.

As members of the Republican Study Committee's National Security and Foreign Affairs Task Force, we are committed to investigating sanctions relief to Iran. We request that the Department of the Treasury and Department of State hand over all records of any communications, or documents provided to Iranian negotiators to Congress with regards to the lifting of sanctions on Raisi or the potential repealing of E.O. 13876.

¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/04/raisi-iran-biden-nuclear-talks-middle-east/>

² <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details.aspx?id=27844>

³ <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm824>

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/19/iran-overseer-mass-executions-elected-president>

⁵ <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/07/13/Iran-says-US-will-delist-IRGC-lift-sanctions-on-Khamenei-Raisi-if-nuke-deal-revived>

⁶ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/06/26/2019-13793/imposing-sanctions-with-respect-to-iran>

⁷ On corruption : <https://iranintl.com/en/iran-economy/iran-near-bottom-transparency-international%E2%80%99s-2020-corruption-index>

⁸ <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/coming-sanctions-battle-over-iran%E2%80%99s-new-president-189105>

We would also like to request an answer the following questions no later than Friday, August 13th 2021, at 5:30 PM.

1. Is the official report by the Iranian negotiating team to the Iranian parliament accurate that the United States has ever offered to repeal E.O. 13876, or to lift sanctions on Khamenei's inner circle (to include Raisi)?
2. Does the administration intend to repeal E.O. 13876 and what efforts is it taking to defend this authority?
3. What non-nuclear sanctions is the administration considering in order to stand with the Iranian people and punish their oppressors?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL
Member of Congress



JIM BANKS
Member of Congress



JOE WILSON
Member of Congress