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November 19, 2021

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

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken:

November 15th marks the second anniversary of mass anti-regime demonstrations in Iran known as the Aban protests. These demonstrations were the largest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution and a flashpoint in modern Iranian history.¹ They were also the most violently suppressed, leading them to be known as “Bloody November.” According to reports, 1,500 Iranians were killed by the regime and its security forces during the protests.² In addition to using weapons of war against the Iranian population,³ the regime employed a nationwide internet blackout⁴ to obstruct Iranian protestors, prevent their voices from getting out, and kill with impunity. These moves were authorized by Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – who was personally sanctioned earlier in 2019, along with his office⁵ - and is reported to have said, “Do whatever it takes.”⁶

Initially sparked by high-gas prices and the Islamic Republic’s economic mismanagement and corruption,⁷ these protests quickly became another opportunity for the Iranian people to show their dissatisfaction with the clerical regime and call for its overthrow. In this vein, the Aban protests follow the trajectory of past nationalist protests in Iran from 2017, which openly seek revolution, despite their seemingly non-political trigger.⁸ Protests that have since occurred, follow a similar pattern. In January 2020, Iranians took the streets to protest the downing of a Ukrainian civilian airliner by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which killed 176 innocent civilians.⁹ In July 2021, Iranians again took the streets, protesting water shortages and blackouts.¹⁰ In each instance, Iranians chanted anti-regime slogans including against the Supreme Leader and Tehran’s revolutionary foreign policy.¹¹

Your administration has claimed that its foreign policy would be based on human rights and democracy. The people of Iran, who continue to contest the regime at every available opportunity, are similarly seeking human rights, democracy, and a government that represents their values and interests. Given the gap

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/world/middleeast/iran-protests-deaths.html>

² <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests-specialreport/special-report-irans-leader-ordered-crackdown-on-unrest-do-whatever-it-takes-to-end-it-idUSKBN1YR0QR>

³ <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/exclusive-eyewitness-describes-brutal-attack-on-iran-protesters-in-mahshahr/30319712.html>

⁴ <https://www.vox.com/recode/2019/11/21/20975920/iran-internet-protests-reset-podcast>

⁵ <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/126/13876.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests-specialreport/special-report-irans-leader-ordered-crackdown-on-unrest-do-whatever-it-takes-to-end-it-idUSKBN1YR0QR>

⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-fuel-protests/irans-protests-against-gasoline-price-hike-turn-political-media-idUSKBN1XQ0CK>

⁸ <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/evolution-toward-revolution-development-street-protests-islamic-republic-iran>

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/13/world/middleeast/iran-plane-crash-missile.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg5RkqTb9OA>

¹¹ https://www.voanews.com/a/middle-east_voa-news-iran_iran-protests-spread-tehran-which-sees-biggest-anti-government-march-18/6208757.html

between the people and the regime in Iran, we see standing with and supporting the Iranian people as not only a strategic imperative but also a moral one. To that end, as your administration prepares for indirect diplomacy with the Islamic Republic over its nuclear program and issues such as sanctions relief, nuclear deal re-entry, and others gain prominence, the U.S. cannot afford to let human rights matters be ignored or moved to the back burner. Providing sanctions relief to the world's foremost state-sponsor of terrorism would only mean empowering those who engage in domestic repression and foreign aggression.

To that end, we would like your administration to respond to the following questions.

1. What specific actions has your administration taken to hold the persons, entities, and institutions responsible for the violent crackdown in Iran?
2. Why have there been no Magnitsky sanctions against persons in the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran?
3. What steps has your administration taken to promote human rights and democracy in Iran?
4. What steps has your administration taken to help enable Iranians to communicate better with one another as well as the outside world, should the regime again decide to shut-off the internet?
5. Will you commit to maintaining any and all current human rights and terrorism-related sanctions on the Islamic Republic in Iran unless there is a demonstrate and sustained change in behavior?
6. Will you commit to supporting the aspirations of the Iranian people for a more representative government in Iran?
7. Will you formally recognize the Islamic Republic's November 2019 violent crackdown on Iranian protesters which resulted in the death of at least 1,500 protesters as a massacre?

On the second anniversary of the Aban protests, we recognize the bravery of the Iranian people and commemorate their sacrifice. We ask your administration to help us send this message resolutely, through words and actions.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL
Member of Congress



JOE WILSON
Member of Congress



JIM BANKS
Member of Congress



DOUG LAMALFA
Member of Congress



PAT FALLON
Member of Congress