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

November 22, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

On November 13, 2023, your administration allowed the Islamic Republic of Iran, the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, access to previously restricted funds. This follows the brutal October 7 terrorist attack by one of Iran's terrorist proxies, Hamas, frequent Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi rocket fire on Israeli civilians, and attacks by Iranian proxies on American servicemembers. I am deeply troubled by this decision, and we urge you to reconsider.

As you know, your administration re-issued a sanctions waiver allowing Tehran to access up to \$10 billion worth of restricted funds.¹ In addition to permitting Iraq to continue to import Iranian electricity and pay for this trade for another 120 days, the new waiver permits the conversion of the frozen funds into euros. This deviates materially from standard practice before 2023. I am gravely concerned that this expanded access will support more violence against Israel, the U.S., and our allies.

The timing of this waiver is exceptionally alarming. Iran has financed Hamas and other regional proxies, and reports indicate Iran's continued investment in nuclear, missile, and drone programs. While I understand that Iraq has long had issues with its electricity supply, I still find your administration's stated justification for this \$10 billion waiver to be insufficient. Iran is the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism and has a track-record of abusing humanitarian trade² leniencies to finance hostile actions.

The Islamic Republic has not ceased in its enmity towards the sole Jewish and democratic state in the Middle East,³ nor have its threats against U.S. interests and security diminished. On the contrary, we have seen Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria escalate hostilities in recent weeks with over 61 attacks on U.S. troops in the region.⁴ Iran and its proxy network continue to double-down, even in the face of pinprick U.S. military responses.⁵ Our country and the American people cannot afford to be intimidated by the largest state sponsor of terrorism. We must reverse this and change course and apply maximum pressure to restore U.S. deterrence on the regime.

¹ <https://apnews.com/article/iran-iraq-sanctions-waiver-816c2ba3f8eae10553ed07304e02db0f>

² <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/04/03/turkish-public-lender-pleads-not-guilty-for-evading-iran-sanctions/>

³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/07/joe-biden-middle-east-israel-iran/670530/>

⁴ <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2023/11/19/how-the-us-strikes-a-balance-in-responding-to-attacks-on-its-forces/>

⁵ <https://taskandpurpose.com/news/us-military-attacks-syria/>

I respectfully ask you to answer the following questions:

1. What procedures will the administration institute to ensure these funds will be used solely for humanitarian purchases?
2. How will the administration ensure that the fungibility of funds provided under this waiver will not enable Iran to redirect its existing resources towards terrorism or military activities?
3. Why has this administration permitted funds to be converted to euros?
4. Did your administration exhaust all other options for improving Iraq's electricity supply by developing its own resources or drawing from other neighboring countries?
5. Exactly how much money, if any, has been moved from Iraq to Oman and what transactions have been authorized?
6. The waiver also certifies that France, Italy, and Oman "face exceptional circumstances" and could not significantly reduce their petroleum and petroleum product purchases from Iran. Did the administration consider alternatives to solving these issues other than issuing a waiver? If so, what was considered?
 - Because the mandated Report to Congress did not address this issue, please explain what "exceptional circumstances" France, Italy, and Oman were facing that did not allow them to reduce purchasing petroleum from Iran.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this important request and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



BRYAN STEIL
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State