

Masih Alinejad

October 13, 2022

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Thank you for your recent statement in support of the Iranian people bravely protesting the brutality of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Your words were powerful and inspire the Iranian people as they fight for their rights.

Through their brave protests, Iranians have been trying to telegraph to the international community that the Iranian system is unreformable. Decades of repression under reformist, pragmatic, and conservative presidents have made life there unbearable. The problems of the regime stem from its revolutionary ideology, ossified leadership, antisemitism, and a structural anti-woman mindset. The Islamic Republic is a radical cause, not an ordinary country. Its supreme leader has consistently prioritized the welfare of his terror proxies over his own people.

Your administration has made the contest between autocracy and democracy as a central theme of its foreign policy. Iran should be part of that conversation. It is well past time to isolate the Iranian regime, while empowering the Iranian people to fulfill their democratic aspirations. I respectfully submit the following recommendations for the U.S. government to employ to reorient U.S. policy towards listening to the demands of the Iranian people, not their oppressive leaders.

- It is time for the president of the United States to use the bully pulpit of his office to deliver a major address on Iran—speaking to its people, its diaspora, and the world. It is a powerful tool to express support and empower the Iranian people towards realizing their own aspirations for a free and democratic Iran.
- The U.S. government and its allies in the E3 (the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) should halt nuclear negotiations with the Islamic Republic while Iranian authorities are suppressing protests and throttling the internet. Trying to revive the nuclear deal risks resourcing, via sanctions relief, the very oppressors of the Iranian people. Resolving this contradiction is paramount, and halting negotiations at least while Iranian protesters are being killed, injured, and detained would be a first step in that direction.
- The United States should thereafter introduce human rights as a condition of continuing with the Iran nuclear negotiations. It should also refuse to greenlight release of frozen funds in foreign banks to the Iranian establishment, conditioning doing so on tangible improvement of the human rights situation.

- The United States should support and advocate for the establishment of an independent United Nations (UN) investigative mechanism to hold Iranian leaders and security forces accountable for the oppression of the Iranian people. The Iranian state is incapable of mounting independent investigations on its own. This has been seen repeatedly throughout the last few years, especially after its downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 in 2020.
- The United States should continue to work with Starlink and other companies with similar capabilities to provide a free and secure internet for the Iranian people. The U.S. government should also work with its allies and partners to explore ways to jam Iranian systems which are used to shutdown internet access in Iran.
- The United States should create a special channel exempt from U.S. sanctions to disburse frozen Iranian funds in foreign bank accounts abroad to striking workers inside Iran. The potential convergence of labor and political protests would represent a significant threat to the Islamic Republic.
- The president and senior members of the Biden administration should hold both private and public meetings with members of the Iranian diaspora, Iranian dissidents, and opposition groups. Given the connection of its membership to Iranians fighting for their lives on the ground, establishing this communication and network would be invaluable for the U.S. government.
- The U.S. Congress should hold public hearings on the protests in Iran and threats targeting U.S. citizens, including members of the Iranian diaspora, emanating from the Iranian regime to raise awareness of these challenges.
- The United States should work with and encourage social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter to hinder Iran's cyber army's efforts in suppressing the voices of Iranian activists through tactics like shadow banning. The U.S. Congress must exercise the necessary oversight of social media companies in this regard as well.
- The United States should expel former officials of the Islamic Republic who are sympathizers with the Iranian regime and work against U.S. interests, including Mohammad Jafar Mahallati, Iran's former ambassador to the United Nations, who teaches at Oberlin College, and Hossein Mousavian, Iran's former ambassador to Germany, who holds an affiliation at Princeton University.
- The United States should also encourage its allies and partners to isolate Tehran diplomatically. Reducing diplomatic presence, shuttering embassies, refusing meetings, and mounting campaigns to strip the Islamic Republic of its membership in international organizations, like the UN Commission on the Status of Women, will go a long way in forcing change in the Iranian establishment. Similar efforts were undertaken to strip Russia of such positions over its invasion of Ukraine, especially its suspension at the UN Human Rights Council.

- The United States and its European allies and partners should pursue multilateral sanctions against Iran's senior leadership for human rights abuses, making use of their respective Magnitsky Act authorities and harmonizing their respective designations. The United States and Europe should also take a hard look at the families of regime officials who are living in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere profiting off the Iranian establishment's corruption, and seek to revoke their visas and confiscate their assets. Similar efforts have targeted Russian oligarchs in the aftermath of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.
- The U.S. government should strictly enforce its sanctions that are already on the books, including efforts to seize Iranian oil tankers.

I urge your administration to seriously consider these policy recommendations. They would go a long way in ensuring that the United States and its allies and partners have a comprehensive Iran policy, not just a nuclear deal policy, that empowers the Iranian people and not the Islamic Republic's brutal regime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Masih Alinejad', with a stylized, cursive script.

Masih Alinejad