



One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

September 28, 2015

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to urge you to sanction senior Iranian officials for serious human rights abuses against the people of Iran.

In announcing the nuclear agreement with Iran you stated, “American sanctions on Iran for its support of terrorism, its human rights abuses, [and] its ballistic missile program, will continue to be fully enforced.” However, since September 2013—roughly the start of the nuclear negotiations—your Administration has designated only one Iranian official and two other entities for human rights violations.

While President Rouhani’s administration seeks to present itself as moderate, its treatment of the Iranian people proves otherwise. A March 2014 report from the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran found that Iranian authorities incarcerated at least 895 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. The State Department reached a similar conclusion in its 2014 Country Report on Human Rights, condemning Iran’s continued “arbitrary or unlawful killings, including, most commonly, by execution after arrest and trial without due process.” Indeed, one leading international human rights organization recently warned of an “unprecedented spike” in the number of executions in Iran.

Mr. President, these significant, ongoing human rights abuses have all taken place during the Rouhani administration. But this is not new. Human rights abuse has been a consistent policy of the Iranian regime since it took control. This longstanding brutality has been carried out by some officials who still hold power. For example, Iran’s current Justice Minister is widely accused of playing a key role in the continuing suppression of dissidents today, as well as the mass executions of the late 1980s.

Of course, Iran also continues to hold four Americans: former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati, Pastor Saeed Abedini, *Washington Post* correspondent Jason Rezaian and former FBI agent Robert

Levinson. Two of these Americans are also Iranian citizens. Amir Hekmati was visiting his grandmother when he was arrested while Pastor Abedini was sharing his Christian faith. Like thousands of Iranians over the past three and a half decades, they were taken from family and friends and convicted of vague charges without due process, often in closed trails.

U.S. law is clear. If an Iranian government official is “responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, the commission of serious human rights abuses against citizens of Iran,” they should be sanctioned—their assets blocked, bank accounts frozen, and travel to the US prohibited. I urge you to make the designations necessary to apply these sanctions.

As one witness recently reminded the House Foreign Affairs Committee, when talking about Iran “one may be referring either to its government or to its people, but one may not be referring to both, because they are not on the same side.” Designating and sanctioning Iranian officials—including senior members of the Rouhani administration—for their role in human rights abuses will remind the Iranian people that the American people are on their side, not the side of the brutal Iranian regime.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Royce". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman