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One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2024

The Honorable Richard Verma
Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Deputy Secretary Verma,

I appreciate the Department's letter in which it admitted that the Department had failed to produce all documents regarding its grants promoting atheism overseas and misrepresented to this Committee the nature of that programming.¹ I also appreciate your expressing "enormous respect for the congressional role . . . in oversight of the Department."² Unfortunately, I must write again to inform you that the Department has failed to produce, as requested nearly a year ago, all correspondence between the Department and Humanists International (HI).³

On May 22, 2024, my letter to you detailed the Department's lack of candor regarding this investigation.⁴ As I observed then, the Department has engaged in a pattern of obfuscation and denial regarding the details of the grant as it sought, *vis-à-vis* its grantee, to expand atheist networks abroad in violation of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution.⁵ The Department's continued non-production of the requested correspondence – including emails and text messages which are known to exist – is an unacceptable continuation of this pattern.

¹ Letter from U.S. Dep't of State to HFAC dated Apr. 29, 2024.

² House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight & Accountability, Assessing State Department Compliance with Oversight, Mar. 21, 2024 (1:57:38 - 1:57:47).

³ Letter from HFAC to U.S. Dep't of State dated Aug. 3, 2023 (requesting "all correspondence (emails, internal memoranda, calendar invites and attachments, Microsoft Teams chats) regarding" this NOFO); *id.* ("documents that HI provided to DRL that indicate how the NOFO funds were implemented in Nepal and Sri Lanka"); Email from HFAC Staff to U.S. Dep't of State Staff dated Nov. 7, 2024 (requesting "all correspondence (emails, internal memoranda, calendar invites and attachments, Microsoft Teams chats) regarding" this NOFO).

⁴ See Letter from HFAC to U.S. Dept. of State dated May 22, 2024.

⁵ Letter from HFAC to U.S. Dept. of State dated May 22, 2024.

In this regard, during recent interactions with representatives of the grantee, the Committee confirmed that the Department primarily corresponded with HI via email, as well as with text messages, throughout the duration of the grant.

Yet, this correspondence – which has been characterized as pertaining to directives by the State Department to the grantee “to neutralize language in all materials that were submitted to the State Department” and to “not include [] language [regarding atheism/humanist membership] in documents submitted to the State Department” – has not been produced to the Committee. This is notwithstanding assertions by the Department that “[a]ll the correspondence was gathered together, actually, for production to the committee.”⁶ Such revelations are alarming and remain a pressing matter for congressional oversight.

The Committee thus expects all correspondence between the Department and HI to be produced no later than August 6, 2024. Further delay in producing these emails will force me to issue a subpoena.

Finally, in your letter to the Committee dated April 29, 2024, you committed to “tak[e] immediate action” against HI, to “recoup [] misused funds,” to “refer [the matter] to the Suspension and Debarment office,” or to “refer[] the matter to the OIG for further action.”⁷ The Committee has stated its expectation “to be informed fully, and without delay, of all developments in this matter.”⁸ Accordingly, the Committee expects a comprehensive update on this matter imminently.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee

CC:
Rep. Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee

⁶ Transcribed Interview of Director & Principal Deputy to the Ambassador-at-Large Daniel Nadel, Mar. 28, 2024 (Unofficial).

⁷ Letter from U.S. Dep’t of State to HFAC dated Apr. 29, 2024, at 2.

⁸ Letter from HFAC to U.S. Dept. of State dated May 22, 2024.

Mr. Dan Nadel
Director & Principal Deputy to the Ambassador at Large
Office of International Religious Freedom

Ms. Mariah Mercer
Deputy to the Ambassador at Large
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Ms. Stacy Thompson
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