

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2021

Dear Mr. President:

We are deeply troubled by recent news reports that the United States may soon remove sanctions on Iran in order to return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). In light of today's talks in Vienna, and any future negotiations that may follow, we urge you to adhere to the principles outlined in the February 26, 2021, letter sent to you by five Republican Senate ranking members.

The United States must not relinquish its leverage over the Iranian regime just to return to the JCPOA, a severely flawed agreement that undermines our national security interests due to its arbitrary sunsets and limited scope. Unfortunately, recent comments from Administration officials suggest that is exactly what the U.S. intends to offer Tehran. An April 2 *New York Times* article titled "U.S. and Iran Agree to Indirect Talks on Returning to Nuclear Deal" quotes an Administration official saying that the U.S. "would not seek to retain some sanctions for leverage," because "the previous 'maximum pressure' campaign waged against Iran by the Trump administration had failed."

This sentiment is starkly similar to comments by the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran, Robert Malley. During a March 17, 2021, interview with BBC Persian, a foreign news outlet that is notoriously sympathetic to the Iranian regime, Mr. Malley disparaged current U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying:

*The maximum pressure campaign has failed. It was a failure – a predicted failure. It hasn't made life any better for the Iranian people. It hasn't made any life better for the U.S. in the region. And it hasn't brought us any closer to this better deal that President Trump spoke about. It's been bad for the U.S., for Iran, and for the region.*

The sanctions that Mr. Malley criticized are not new. They include sanctions that Democrat and Republican administrations have implemented to punish the Iranian regime for its support for terrorism, nuclear enrichment program, and ballistic missile program. The current sanctions in place provide your Administration with an enormous amount of leverage over the Iranian regime and they should be used as a tool to address all aspects of Iran's destabilizing behavior.

Senior administration officials have committed to Congress that the Biden Administration plans to take a new approach separate from the Obama Administration with respect to policy towards Iran. We hope to work with you on a path forward that prevents Iran from possessing nuclear weapons capabilities, addresses the regime's support for terrorism, holds it accountable for its egregious human rights violations, and ends its hostage-taking of American citizens. But we

oppose any attempt to return to the failed JCPOA, or any deal that offers one-sided concessions to the Iranian regime while it continues to undermine the security of the United States and our allies and partners.

Returning to the JCPOA – which means granting the Iranian regime significant sanctions relief in exchange for nuclear limitations that expire in just four years – is not a viable strategy. We urge your Administration to reset its approach immediately. Members of Congress rejected the JCPOA on a bipartisan basis in 2015. Returning to the JCPOA is not a recipe for a sustainable Iran policy, and will not protect U.S. national security interests.

Sincerely,



Senator James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee



Senator Marco Rubio  
Vice Chairman  
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence



Senator Pat Toomey  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Banking, Housing,  
and Urban Affairs



Senator Todd Young  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Near East, Central Asia,  
and Counterterrorism  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee