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October 22, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the November 24th deadline approaches on the Iran nuclear negotiations, I am concerned with potential actions your Administration may take with regard to Congressionally-mandated sanctions against the Iranian regime.

As the author of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-158), the Iran Freedom Support Act (P.L. 109-293), and one of the leading voices in Congress on Iran sanctions, I am acutely aware of the complexities of the Iranian sanctions architecture. It is multilayered, multifaceted and designed by Congress. Modifying these measures administratively without Congressional approval would set a bad precedent and negate Congressional intent. When asked if your Administration would seek Congressional authority to secure relief of legislatively mandated sanctions, Secretary of State John Kerry replied earlier this year that the Administration would be "obligated to under the law."

In order for any possible agreement with Iran to be viable, the mechanisms used to gain economic leverage must remain intact, enforced, and the regime must know that they can be tightened. We must maintain a significant amount of leverage to ensure that Iran completely abandons and destroys its nuclear ambitions. We have already seen, contrary to Administration assurances, the Iranian regime benefitting a great deal more than expected due to the easing of sanctions as part of the terms of the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA).

It is also concerning that, even while the negotiations are ongoing, Iran continues its support for terrorism globally and is even sending arms to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, encouraging them to continue their fight against our ally, the democratic Jewish State of Israel. Supreme Leader Khamenei's comments last week in a meeting with Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders, where he reportedly promised to support Palestinian terrorists and urged them to stockpile arms, underscores just how serious the threat of a nuclear Iran would be to Israel, and to the region as other nations will work to acquire nuclear weapons capability.

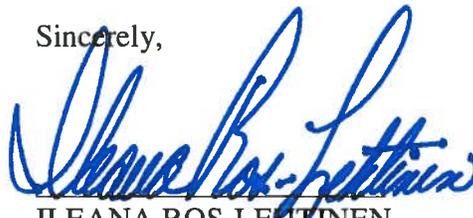
The ongoing negotiations are operating under the false assumption that the U.S., UN and others will be able to monitor and verify Iran's compliance and that any nuclear program it may have will be peaceful in nature. The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief just last week admitted that there is no way the agency can "conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities." The only way to ensure full compliance would be for any comprehensive deal to demand Iran ceases all of its enrichment and dismantle its enrichment capabilities infrastructure. Decades' worth of evidence proves Iran has a record of deceit and cannot be trusted, and the IAEA and the Department of Defense's Defense Science Board have stated that they cannot guarantee or monitor Iran's compliance to the extent needed.

The consequences of the JPOA and any future possible easing of sanctions could have serious repercussions. Another false assumption by the Administration is that sanctions relief and the so-called "snap back" strategy will work as evidenced by Iran's economy already gaining strength, diminishing the remaining leverage we have for a favorable agreement that seeks to dismantle, not just temporarily freeze or set back marginally, its nuclear weapons program. Companies and nations are already making overtures toward the Iranian regime with the intention of conducting business inside Iran's economy with the expectation of diminished economic pressure from the U.S. and international community, making it even more difficult to stave off outside interests in Iran and maintaining the sanctions in place. We cannot lose our ability to deter not only Iran's nuclear program, but its other illicit activities such as its support for terror and its ballistic missile program, as well as its pervasive and persistent human rights abuses.

It would be beneficial for your Administration and Congress to work together to finally put an end to Iran's efforts to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. However, if the Administration attempts to circumvent Congress and does not seek our approval for any comprehensive agreement and also takes unilateral action to suspend, halt, ease, alter, ignore, waive, or circumvent legal requirements under sanctions legislation, we will have no other option but to work to reverse any executive action, as well as close any loopholes and solidify, strengthen and expand existing Iran sanctions until we are satisfied that Iran cannot develop a nuclear weapon. I will continue to strongly advocate for Congress to defend the sanctions we've built against the Administration's attempt to circumvent us on any deal.

Thank you for your attention on this important matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Chairman

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa