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Resist Trump's War With Iran: Messaging Guidance

Donald Trump's long-running efforts to incite conflict with Iran are once again ramping up. We need to take action to deescalate, block Trump's path to war, and completely reorient our approach to U.S.-Iran relations.

Donald Trump is yet again recklessly escalating tensions with Iran — a sign that he may be aiming for an “October Surprise.”

- There is a serious risk that Trump plans to spark deadly conflict with Iran in the hopes of boosting his personal electoral prospects or, worse, delaying or disregarding the results of the election.
- This September, Trump threatened to attack Iran [1] in response to supposed intelligence that Iran had considered assassinating a U.S. ambassador — intelligence that turned out to be flawed [2]. Now, Team Trump is instigating conflict with Iran via Iraq. [3]
- Trump's aggressive rhetoric, systematic attacks on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), manipulation in Iraq, and imposition of new sanctions [1] are all bald-faced attempts to incite conflict, and even all-out war.

The Trump administration's efforts to invoke snapback sanctions under the JCPOA are dangerous and illegitimate.

- After a failed, legally-spurious attempt to extend a UN arms embargo on Iran [1], the Trump administration attempted to invoke the “snapback” of multilateral UN sanctions that had been lifted under the JCPOA.
- In the administration's own words [1], the United States has already withdrawn from the JCPOA. As the other four members of the Security Council immediately agreed [2], the United States therefore has no standing to invoke the snapback and reimpose sanctions.
- This snapback campaign is a transparent ploy to destroy the remaining framework of the JCPOA, sabotage a future administration's attempts at diplomacy, and establish a pretext for violent conflict.

Trump's campaign of reckless anti-Iran aggression has been unrelenting, and has repeatedly brought us to the brink of war.

- Trump entered office with some of the most promising inroads to peaceful relations with Iran in decades. Instead, he:

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- Established a policy of hostility and antagonism toward Iran from day one; [1]
- Hired advisors and took the counsel of outside warmongers who have long promoted regime change and war with Iran; [2]
- Violated and unilaterally withdrew from the successful multilateral Iran nuclear deal; [3]
- Engaged in economic warfare by unilaterally imposing crushing sanctions on Iran and threatened sanctions against our European allies, even though Iran was still complying with the agreement; [4]
- Increased regional tensions through bellicose rhetoric, a “maximum pressure” campaign, and a bolstered, confrontational U.S. military presence in the region; [5]
- Assassinated a top Iranian military commander without consultation or authorization from Congress and in violation of international and domestic law; [6] and
- Imposed additional sanctions during a deadly global pandemic, further suffocating a nation in crisis and fueling the spread of the disease globally [7].
- While Trump ultimately made the right decision in pulling back from the brink of war in January, it was his fault that we were there in the first place.
- The recent bellicose rhetoric and attacks on the JCPOA are simply the latest escalation in a long-standing pattern of reckless aggression against Iran. We know all too well that these actions can easily spiral out of control.

We must deescalate, end sanctions, and block the path to war. Now.

- We have already seen where escalation leads. Now is the time to *stop* all incendiary rhetoric, *block* Trump’s path to an October surprise, and *immediately engage* in a massive diplomatic effort for peace.
- In the near-term, Congress should consider the following legislative options:
 - Pass legislation, with a veto-proof majority, pursuant to the 1973 War Powers Resolution to block an unauthorized war, including by overturning Trump’s threatened veto on S.J.Res.68;
 - Bar funding for an unauthorized war;
 - Clarify that Congress has not authorized war;
 - Repeal the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF);
 - Indefinitely waive all sectoral economic sanctions on Iran; and
 - Move toward a return to diplomatic engagement and reaccession to the JCPOA.
- To make that happen, we need a massive display of people-power.

Only Congress can decide whether U.S. forces should be put into harm's way.

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- This year, bipartisan majorities in both chambers, backed by vast grassroots support, decisively rejected a unilateral, Trump-led march to war by passing the landmark Iran war powers resolution, S.J.Res.68. Unfortunately, this measure was later vetoed. [1]
- Congress previously sought to block offensive executive military action against Iran in the fiscal year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act. But even this most basic level of congressional oversight was too much for the Trump administration and much of the Republican party, which stripped the language in the bill's final negotiations. Sadly, we're now seeing the results of that dereliction of duty. [1] [2]
- Members of Congress and experts have stated that the current authorizations for the use of military force (that authorize the post-9/11 wars) *do not authorize war with Iran*. [1] [2] [3]
- But even with Congressional approval, war with Iran would be futile, catastrophic, and immoral.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been disastrous. War with Iran would be too.

- War with Iran with the goal of ending its nuclear program or changing the regime would require a massive U.S. invasion and occupation that would be just as fruitless, just as costly, and just as deadly as the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan [1][2]
- Starting a war with Iran would likely destabilize an entire region, funnel U.S. resources into an unwinnable conflict, and unleash mass-scale human suffering on Iran's 80+ million civilian population and beyond. [1]
- Even a military conflict short of full-scale war will result in the continued suffering and loss of life that has already marked decades of U.S. endless war in the Middle East.
- If we have learned anything from the almost two decades of destructive, futile, endless wars, now is the time to act like it.

People across the United States oppose war with Iran.

- The U.S. public does not want a war, the only question is if Washington's leaders will listen to them and choose a different path.
- A POLITICO/Morning Consult poll found that the overwhelming majority of Americans approved of Trump's ultimate decision to de-escalate this January. [1]
- A Gallup poll found that 78 percent of Americans think the U.S. should rely on non-military tools like diplomacy versus 18 percent who preferred the U.S. use military force against Iran. [1]
- A Harvard CAPS/Harris poll conducted last summer found only 5 percent of American voters wanted to declare war on Iran. [1]
- A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that just 29 percent supported Trump's policy of withdrawing from the Iran nuclear agreement. A CNN poll found that 63 percent said the U.S. should not withdraw. [1] [2]

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- An ABC News poll found that 56 percent of Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of Iran, while 52% think that the assassination of Soleimani made the U.S. less safe. [1]

Escalation undermines the fight for democracy, justice and liberation in Iran and here at home.

- Iranian activists have spent decades fighting for peace, women's rights, normalized relations with the U.S., and a more just and democratic society. Donald Trump's actions have sidelined these voices — the very ones that we should be uplifting and empowering — and instead rallied support for the government's hardliners. [1]
- Reports that U.S. citizens and Green Card holders of Iranian descent were held for questioning at the U.S. border for up to 10 hours during the period of raised tensions this January are a chilling reminder of how quickly the prospect of war erodes our domestic civil rights. [2]
 - This comes on top of the administration's decision to ban Iranian nationals from entering the U.S. as a part of the racist Muslim Ban.
- Normalizing relations is necessary not only to prevent all-out war, but to strengthen the fight for inclusive democracy and to protect the rights of marginalized communities abroad and at home.

Win Without War, and our allies and partners, are fighting for peace.

- Grassroots organizations from around the country — representing the progressive foreign policy, anti-militarism, Iranian-American communities, and more — are building a movement to stop the war, de-escalate, and build peace between the U.S. and Iran.
- We support the people of Iran in their movements to combat the dual threat of a repressive government at home, and an antagonistic, imperial threat from abroad. We know that true liberation comes from below.