

April 21, 2021

Secretary of State Antony Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20220

Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretaries Blinken, Yellen and Raimondo,

We, the undersigned grassroots organizations representing millions of Americans, call on President Joe Biden to follow through on his call for urgently-needed humanitarian relief to Iran amid the devastating toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. The suffering of people in Iran has been compounded by U.S. sanctions, which have impoverished the population and obstructed the flow of critical medicine and humanitarian goods into Iran. As then-candidate Biden [stated](#) last year, “[i]n the midst of this deadly pandemic that respects no borders, the United States should take steps to offer what relief we can to those nations hardest hit by this virus — including Iran.”

We commend President Biden for making the defeat of the pandemic his top priority, and for announcing a review of how sanctions have inhibited humanitarian trade amid the COVID-19 pandemic on Day 2 of his administration. While the President has taken sorely needed steps to inoculate tens of millions and provide economic relief here at home, the administration’s sanctions review is still ongoing.

Iran has been one of the worst-affected countries by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 60,000 Iranians have succumbed to the disease, according to official statistics, while investigations by [BBC Persian](#) estimate the real number as twice or three times as high. Despite international calls for relief last year, the prior administration chose to escalate sanctions rather than ease them, helping to impoverish ordinary people in Iran in their hour of need.

President Biden must take a different approach. Last year, Biden rightly called on the Trump administration to streamline “channels for banking and public health assistance from other countries in response to the health emergency in Iran.”

Now that he is in office, there are plenty of opportunities for the administration to deliver that relief. In addition to the President's own suggestions, the U.S. should grant Iran access to its restricted assets abroad in order to purchase food and medical supplies.

Such urgent humanitarian steps cannot be tied to our broader disputes with the Iranian government. As Biden himself said, "Whatever our profound differences with the Iranian government, we should support the Iranian people."

COVID-19 is a shared threat, and the U.S. needs to treat it like one. By prioritizing humanitarian relief for Iran and other sanctioned states, President Biden can follow through on his campaign commitment and demonstrate that the U.S. can be a force for global good.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee
Brooklyn for Peace
Charity & Security Network
Coalition for Peace Action
CODEPINK
Coloradans for Middle East Diplomacy & Peace
Council for a Livable World
Demand Progress Education Fund
Foreign Policy for America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Imagine Water Works
Institute for Policy Studies New Internationalism Project
Interfaith Peace Network of WNY
Iowa Peace Network
J Street
Justice is Global
MADRE
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Miaan Group
MoveOn
MPower Change
MuslimARC
National Iranian American Council
New York Progressive Action Network (NYPAN)
No Sanctions on Iran Coalition

NYPAN Greene
Peace Action
Peace Corps Iran Association
People's Health Movement - USA
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Ploughshares Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Progressive East End Reformers
Project South
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
ReThinking Foreign Policy
United for Peace and Justice
Veterans for Peace
Western New York Peace Center
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions
Women's March
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation

Cc: Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra; Acting USAID Administrator
Gloria Steele