

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Robert Menendez
528 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Menendez:

We write to express deep concern about your speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate on February 1, 2022, in which you undermined the Biden administration's diplomacy by opposing a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran nuclear deal. As an influential Democrat and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, it is both reckless and harmful to jeopardize a Democratic administration's diplomatic efforts without any realistic alternative to the JCPOA. The JCPOA is the best viable option to both constrain Iran's nuclear program and alleviate the harsh sanctions under which people in Iran are suffering. We urge you to support U.S. diplomacy with Iran and a swift return to the JCPOA.

First negotiated by the Obama administration in 2015, the JCPOA was a landmark diplomatic achievement that [successfully reined in Iran's nuclear production](#). That progress was reversed when Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal and implemented a "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran, including blanket sanctions. Not only did this decision to renege on our word undermine U.S. credibility on the world stage, but it prompted Iran to reverse its compliance with the deal and begin to advance its nuclear program once again. This [failed campaign](#) empowered hardliners in Iran, brought us to the brink of war on multiple occasions, and created unnecessary suffering for millions. In your speech, you called for the United States to "exert more pressure on Iran to counter its nuclear program." As a Senator who criticized Trump's decision, why are you now advocating for a continuation of his unsuccessful and harmful policies?

You also threatened that "the United States will not hesitate to take any action necessary" including "the use of military force." Starting a war with Iran will not serve people in the United States or Iran — and it is everyday Iranians who will bear the brunt of any U.S. military action. As Iranians and Iranian-Americans continue to grapple with the effects of "maximum pressure," the Muslim Ban, and their [demonization and dehumanization in U.S. media and society](#), recklessly threatening war contributes to a U.S. foreign policy that treats Iranians, and Muslims more broadly, as dispensable.

We are also alarmed that you appeared to take pride in having authored "crushing" sanctions, as you called them, and that you advocated for further sanctions on Iran while ignoring their devastating impact beyond the government. Millions of people in Iran who are already dealing with a brutal government are also affected by blanket U.S. sanctions, [which have made inflation skyrocket](#), limiting access to everyday basics and healthcare — which is a human rights violation in itself, especially amidst a global pandemic. This should be concerning to you, as a Senator who professes to stand up for human rights. Further, these sanctions have prevented

families from traveling or sending money to each other between Iran and the United States, [disrupting many people's jobs, lives, and education.](#)

Since the United States began negotiations with Iran during the Obama administration, you have been a roadblock to diplomacy. And now, just as talks are reportedly entering their final phase, you are once again undermining U.S. diplomats who are trying to do their jobs.

Senator, we share many of the same goals. We too are concerned about the prospect of Iran developing a nuclear weapon, just as we are concerned about nuclear proliferation anywhere. A prompt return to the JCPOA is the best viable option to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons, and to promote safety and security for people in the United States, Iran, and around the world. We urge you to support President Biden in engaging in diplomacy with Iran, repairing the damage done by Trump, and re-entering the JCPOA.

Sincerely,

Indivisible
Justice is Global
MoveOn
NIAC
Peace Action
Peace Corps Iran Association
Ploughshares Fund
Rethinking Foreign Policy
The Quincy Institute
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)