

March 20, 2020

Dear President Trump, Sec. Mnuchin and Sec. Pompeo

Containing the deadly COVID-19 pandemic will require a global effort with nations deploying all available resources at their disposal. Iran has become an epicenter for the outbreak, with 1,433 deaths and nearly 20,000 infected. To help stem the continued spread of the virus inside Iran and beyond, we urge you to issue a time-bound suspension of those U.S. sanctions that make it harder for ordinary Iranians to secure basic goods and services to weather the crisis. Doing so would not just serve U.S. interests in helping contain the further spread of the virus, but would also be a powerful humanitarian gesture to the more than 80 million Iranians suffering under the pandemic.

We appreciate that some limited steps have already been taken, including licensing humanitarian trade with the Central Bank of Iran and encouraging foreign banks and governments to establish humanitarian channels with Iran. Yet, sanctions have harmed the public health sector in Iran by slowing or entirely blocking the sale of medicine, respirators, and hygienic supplies needed to mitigate the epidemic, and broad sectoral sanctions continue to negatively impact ordinary Iranians by shuttering civilian-owned businesses and decimating the value of the rial, making it harder to procure food, medicine, and other basic needs.

As a result, we recommend suspending many of the sanctions imposed by your administration since May 2018 for a period of at least 120 days, including those sanctions affecting Iran's financial and oil sectors and its civilian industries. Doing so would offer significant relief for the Iranian people at a critical time.

COVID-19 is a shared threat, requiring global solutions. Easing sanctions is one simple step that can be taken to serve the interests of the Iranian people and public health across the globe.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Churches for Middle East Peace
CODEPINK
Council for a Livable World
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Education Fund
Equality Labs
Foreign Policy for America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Ministries of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)
Greenpeace USA
Indivisible
International Crisis Group
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
J Street
Just Foreign Policy
MoveOn
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)
National Iranian American Council Action (NIAC Action)
Oxfam America
Peace Action
Peace Corps Iran Association
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Ploughshares Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Progress America
Project South
Project Blueprint
Truman Center for National Policy
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)