

September 11, 2020

To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

As organizations that advocated for and helped secure the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or Iran nuclear deal, we are pleased that all three contenders to be the next Democratic Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) have now expressed support for the JCPOA. Full adherence to the JCPOA is vital to U.S. interests and global nonproliferation efforts and benefits the security of Israel and the broader Middle East.

It is critical that a new HFAC chairman champions the United States swiftly returning to full compliance with its commitments under the JCPOA, in tandem with Iran returning to full adherence with its nuclear obligations. Any effort to complicate a mutual return to the JCPOA, such as adding unrealistic preconditions or terms, would risk scuttling the last opportunity to save the accord and avert an irreversible escalation of tensions leading to a war. Therefore, the next chair must make the following commitments:

- Work closely with a potential Biden administration, House leadership, and allied organizations to build Congressional support for a restoration of the JCPOA;
- Hold hearings and ensure the participation of witnesses with a clear track record of supporting U.S.-Iran diplomacy, including the JCPOA; warning against U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA; opposing war and criticizing the negative impacts of U.S. sanctions on Iran's civilian population;
- Halt any poison pill legislation that threatens to complicate a U.S. return to the JCPOA or violate U.S. commitments under the accord;
- Build support for "more-for-more" negotiations after a JCPOA return, premised on the notion that the U.S. should put additional incentives on the table in exchange for Iranian concessions on regional security and human rights;
- Put the repeal of Congressional sanctions on Iran on the table in order to strengthen U.S. leverage in negotiations;
- Closely examine the impact of sanctions on Iran's civilian population, including how financial sanctions have inhibited humanitarian trade at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

- Commit to investigate wrongdoing by the Trump administration relating to its handling of policy toward Iran, such as the sidelining of career civil service officers for their work on the JCPOA.

Congress has a vital role to play to ensure the United States restores the hard-fought security gains from the JCPOA and moves the accord to more sustainable ground. Amid the Obama administration's nuclear negotiations, many in Congress sought to play spoiler, undermining America's diplomats as they sought to trade in sanctions for far-reaching nuclear concessions. This dynamic cannot be repeated.

With the JCPOA hanging by a thread and U.S. diplomatic credibility tarnished, Congress must transition from potential spoiler to a supporter of diplomacy with Iran. The next HFAC Chair will have a central role in building support for restoring the JCPOA and setting the stage for serious follow-on negotiations. We urge the contenders for HFAC chair to commit to the principles articulated above and lay out their vision for how Congress can support and champion a JCPOA return and further negotiations with Iran.

Sincerely,

Arms Control Association
Beyond the Bomb
Council for a Livable World
Historians for Peace and Democracy
Indivisible
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
J Street
Just Foreign Policy
MoveOn
National Iranian American Council Action
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Peace Corps Iran Association Advocacy Committee
Project Blueprint
Security Policy Reform Institute (SPRI)
Win Without War