

March 7, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary, U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Under no illusion about the challenge posed from the outset of the Biden Administration by the Islamic Republic of Iran's steady buildup of highly enriched uranium and its other violations of the 2015 nuclear deal subsequent to the U.S. withdrawal in 2018, I write to express American Jewish Committee concerns about the prospect of restoring the 2015 agreement, as reports indicate is now likely.

As you know, after private discussions with then-Secretary Kerry, then-Under Secretary Sherman, and other officials, as well as a range of congressional and international consultations, AJC in August 2015 took a public position opposed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. We did so while acknowledging the Obama administration's intention to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability – an intention we felt was undermined by the deal's shortcomings, including its time limits on uranium enrichment restrictions and the deployment of advanced centrifuges, its curbs on intrusive IAEA inspections, and, here at home, the failure to achieve any bipartisan consensus in support of the deal.

In addition, we feared that the JCPOA's suspension of the oil embargo and release of funds frozen under U.S. and international sanctions would provide Iran the wherewithal to increase its regional aggression, facilitating supplies of more advanced weapons to Hezbollah and other terrorist groups that threaten regional and global security, while further entrenching an oppressive theocracy. We were alarmed, as well, that the 2015 agreement contained no provisions to curtail Iran's ballistic missile program.

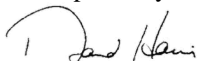
Much of what we feared in 2015 has come true: In the six-plus years since the deal was implemented, Iran's regional behavior has crossed one red line after another, with periodic missile and drone attacks by Iran and its proxies on U.S., Israeli, and GCC targets. Its missile program has advanced. And, provided the excuse of the U.S. withdrawal and reimposition of sanctions, it has leapt ahead in the deployment of sophisticated centrifuges and the stockpiling of near-weapons-grade fissile material.

In your confirmation hearing and other remarks over the last year, you have stated that the Administration's objective in re-entering negotiations with Iran was to produce a "longer and stronger" agreement, implying recognition of the unfulfilled aspirations of the 2015 nuclear deal. It is AJC's earnest hope that the process underway in Vienna since last spring will yield the agreement you set as your goal.

If, on the other hand, the final result in Vienna is a return to essentially the same inadequate 2015 package, which replenishes Iranian coffers and leaves our regional allies exposed to escalating conventional threats – with the source of those threats only slowed but not blocked from achieving military nuclear capability – we will be left to wonder on what basis such an agreement advances regional and global security.

Recognizing the multiple crises confronting the Administration at home and abroad, in particular the unprovoked and devastating Russian war on Ukraine, I look forward to discussing AJC's concerns about the prospective Iran deal at your convenience. With the assurance of my profound esteem and best wishes,

Respectfully,



David Harris