

# Background Press Call on Iran Sanctions

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Via Teleconference

1:10 P.M. EST

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Just to note, we are having some technical difficulties. So while our briefers can give opening statements, unfortunately we're not going to be able to take questions. But if you have questions afterwards, you can follow up by emailing the NSC Press Office.

This is embargoed until 1:30 this afternoon, all information from this briefing will be attributed to a senior administration official. So I'll hand it over to your first breifer.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Okay, very briefly, the President will issue a statement at 1:30 explaining today's actions and his decision. The Treasury Department will also issue their press release, which will go through the 14 new designations the United States government is taking against Iranian entities and individuals.

The President's decision is to waive, once more, the nuclear sanctions that the terms of the JCPOA require the United States to waive in order to remain in the deal. But in the statement, the President will also make clear that this is the last such waiver he will issue.

He intends to work with our European partners on some kind of follow-on agreement that enshrines certain triggers that the Iranian regime cannot exceed related to ballistic missiles; related to a nuclear breakout period, to hold them to one year or less; to inspection; and that would have no sunset clause.

If the President can get that agreement that meets his objectives and that never expires, that — as he said in his October Iran strategy speech — that denies Iran all paths to a nuclear weapon forever, not for 10 years or any other shorter period of time — that he would be open to remaining in such a modified deal.

I do want to stress also that this would not entail direct negotiations with the Iranians, this would be something the United States works out with our European partners only. It would be an agreement amongst the United States and our European partners to re-impose multilateral sanctions should the Iranians surpass the new triggers that we would lay out.

That's the heart of the decision today, and I will turn it over to my colleague.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. So I'm just going to briefly talk to you about the actions that we're taking at the Treasury Department. I should have it released from authority, but just to describe them — so, our sanctions today are part of the administration's broader efforts to counter the Iranian regime's continued and growing reckless and destabilizing behavior.

As all of you have seen over the past couple of weeks, Iran's malign activity really has just been on full display. This includes its human rights abuses and censorship of protestors, including those held in Iranian prisons, as well as their continued development of threatening weapons systems.

Today, OFAC is designating 14 individuals and entities in connection with serious human rights abuses and censorship in Iran and support to designated Iranian weapons proliferators. And this is on top of our five designations from last week.

As Secretary Mnuchin notes in the statement, the United States will not stand by while the Iranian regime continues to engage in human rights abuses and injustice. We are targeting the Iranian regime, including the head of Iran's judiciary, for its appalling mistreatment of its citizens, including those imprisoned solely for exercising their right to freedom of people assembly and for censoring its own people as they stand up in protest against their government.

We are also targeting Iran's ballistic missile program and destabilizing activities. Iran is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on its ballistic missile program, and continues to prioritize these and other regionally destabilizing endeavors over the economic wellbeing of the Iranian people.

Today's actions were taken pursuant to executive orders that target serious human rights abuses by the government of Iran, censorship, and activities that restrict freedom of expression or assembly by citizens and media in Iran.

We're also taking action, again, under executive orders that target proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their supporters.

I'm just going to spend a couple of minutes briefly describing some of the designations that we have today. You'll see the rest in the press release.

So today, we're designating Sadegh Amoli Larijani, who, as head of Iran's judiciary, has administrative oversight over the carrying out of sentences in contravention of Iran's international obligation. This includes the execution of individuals who were juveniles at the time of their crime; and the torture or cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment of prisoners of Iran, including amputations.

We're also designating Rajae Shahr Prison, which has denied prisoners adequate medical care and access to legal representation. Many Iranians who recently protested against their government are imprisoned at this facility. It's a prison where prisoners participating in hunger strikes are denied medical care, where there are reported incidents of sexual abuse and unlawful executions, and where at least one prisoner had his eye gouged out by prison officials.

We're also designating Gholamreza Ziaei, who has served as the director of this prison since October of 2017.

We are also designating the IRGC's Electronic Warfare and Cyber Defense Organization, in connection with Iran's human rights abuses. This organization organizes and conducts training courses on behalf of the IRGC, and has attempted to censor Iranians' access to Western media.

Similarly, we're designating Iran's Supreme Council for Cyberspace for engaging in censorship or other activities that prohibit, limit, or penalize the exercise of freedom of expression or assembly by citizens of Iran, or that limit access to print or broadcast media.

This council was created for the purported purpose of "protecting the country from negative content of cyberspace." It restricts access to tens of thousands of websites, particularly those of international news sources, anti-regime outlets, ethnic and religious minorities, human rights groups, and popular social media sites.

We are also designating eight individuals and entities for providing support to designated Iranian weapons proliferators. This includes designations of Iran Helicopter Support and Renewal Company and Iran Aircraft Industries, which are two Iranian defense industry firms that provide key maintenance and overhaul services for Iran's military helicopters and aircraft.

And we're also designating an Iran- and China-based procurement network including — Pardazan System Namad Arman and Bochuang Ceramic, pursuant to Executive Order 13382, which again targets proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and their supporters.

A full description of these and our other designations can be found in the press release. And as was already mentioned, we'll be happy to take offline questions.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: So I'll just add — highlight a few other elements. First is that today's decision by the President, both in terms of the JCPOA and the new designations that are coming from the Treasury Department, represent the next step in the strategy that the President announced back in October, the strategy which is designed to counter the full range of the aspects of the Iran problem.

A couple of things to highlight is that the President today — in the President's statement, when he makes clear that he will expect during the term of the waivers that he'll renew in the coming days, that he'll seek a follow-on or a supplemental agreement with our European allies; that we've already been in discussions along those lines with our European allies. And so those have been quite far advanced in terms of making clear to our European allies what we expect of them, and also in agreeing on an assessment of the nature of the Iranian problem, and in seeking a collective way forward to try to counter the different aspects of that problem.

The President also, in his statement today, will make clear that he still is open and hopes to see an amendment to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which governs U.S. participation in the JCPOA, and that he hopes to see from Congress an amended INARA

that includes four elements. The first is that it must demand that Iran allow timely, sufficient, and immediate inspections at all sites that are requested by international inspectors from the IAEA.

Second, that it'd have to ensure that Iran does not come close to possessing a nuclear weapon; that it remains above a one-year breakout timeline.

Next, that it must address the sunset flaw in the JCPOA by allowing the U.S. to snap back U.S. nuclear sanctions without any expiration date if Iran doesn't comply with the new criteria the administration has set out in conjunction with Congress.

And finally, the legislation has to state explicitly in U.S. law for the first time that we view Iran's long-range missile programs and nuclear weapons as inseparable, and that Iran's development and testing of the missiles should be subject to severe sanctions.

And the last point I would mention is that among the 14 designations that the Treasury is announcing today, one that we know will have serious political impact — we think all of them, of course, will have a serious impact, but one that we know will have a serious political impact inside Iran is that of the designation of the head of the judiciary, Sadegh Larijani. It happens that he is the brother of Ali Larijani, who is the speaker of the Iranian parliament.

So in other words, the designations today politically will go to the top of the regime and will send a very strong message about the United States — that the United States is not going to tolerate their continued abuses — their continued violations of the rights of their citizens.

Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you all for joining us today. My apologies for the technical issues. Again, if you have any questions, please forward them to NSC Press. This is embargoed till 1:30 p.m. today and attribution for all of the speakers is senior administration official.

Thank you.

END

1:21 P.M. EST