

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 8, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Janet Yellen  
Secretary of Treasury  
U.S. Department of Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Mr. Secretary and Madam Secretary:

We write to express concern about limitations within the legal exemptions that authorize access to information technology for the people of Iran and urge you to act swiftly to clarify allowable activities and make needed changes to enhance the free flow of information in Iran. The recent and ongoing internet disruptions during protests in Iran, which Iranian authorities have imposed to hide evidence of violence by state security forces, highlight the important role telecommunication tools play in promoting civil society in the country.

The intelligence forces of Iran have expanded their monitoring and censorship of internet content, including a prolonged and near-total shutdown of internet services in November of 2019, as well as repeated internet blocks imposed since then including in July 2020 and July 2021.

The government's systematic campaign to deny the Iranian people access to unbiased information is likely to be accelerated under President Ebrahim Raisi, who has a documented history of gross human rights abuses. As we speak, a new bill aims to grant Iranian intelligence and security agencies near-total control over the internet and social media apps inside the country and sharply highlights the need to ensure that the people of Iran have access to the tools and services they need to circumvent the state's growing online censorship and surveillance capacities.

Denying the Iranian government's ability to impose an Electronic Curtain is critical to protecting the public's right to information, free and fair political participation, human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law.

Congress has expressed bipartisan support for the availability of consumer communication and information technologies to the Iranian people, including in the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act. Recently, the House of Representatives passed H.Res.752, encouraging the Administration to assist the Iranian people's free and uninterrupted access to the internet, including by expanding General License D-1 (GL D-1) provisions and exemptions.

Recognizing that broad prohibitions against commerce with Iran had created unintended barriers to access, the Department of Treasury has issued General Licenses and exemptions for information and communications technologies. Despite these authorizations, including GL D-1,

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companies, technology groups, and human rights organizations continue to report significant impediments that prevent them from making critical informational services available.

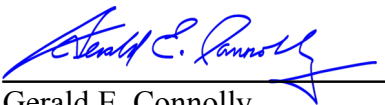
We believe it is in the interest of the United States to encourage the free flow of information in Iran to enable the Iranian people to communicate with each other and the outside world. To facilitate this, the Department of Treasury should update its existing licenses to ensure that certain information and communication technologies and Internet connectivity services are available to the Iranian people. We ask that the Department Treasury and Department of State consider reviewing the regulations in a timely manner and make appropriate changes to enhance the flow of information in Iran based on feedback from tech companies and civil society, including providing:

- Encourage technology companies to utilize current exemptions that exist under GL D-1 provisions to combat the problem of “overcompliance;”
- Clarify provisions of GL D-1 regarding the permissible items and business activities;
- Regularly review GL D-1 provisions and exemptions in consultation with technology companies and civil society;
- Expand the list of authorized provisions of hardware, software, and services incident to personal communications, including set-top boxes (STB), satellites, and web developer tools.

As we work to implement policies to deprive the Iranian government of instruments to perpetrate human rights abuses and regional instability, it is critical that we also continue to support the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people. This can be done by ensuring that modern tools of free expression and secure communications are legally available to the people of Iran.

Thank you for your assistance in this important matter and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

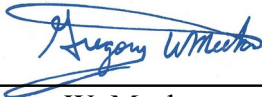


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Member of Congress

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Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



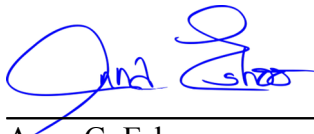
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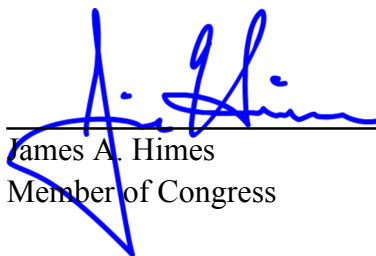
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