

December 9, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden and Members of Congress:

We write to you as faith leaders deeply concerned by the escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran. The recent murder of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh and the coterminous movement of US warships to the Gulf region have sharply raised the risk of armed confrontation. Our faith traditions teach us that in times of uncertainty and conflict, the best way forward is through diplomacy and peacemaking, not war or threats of violence.

While the possession of nuclear weapons by any country, including our own, poses a clear and present danger to global human security, the policy of “maximum pressure” against Iran has failed to stem this danger. To the contrary, the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, imposition of crippling economic sanctions, and assassination of General Qassim Soleimani last January have only heightened nuclear challenges. After the United States renounced the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran began to enrich nuclear materials at levels exceeding the caps in the agreement, shortening the amount of time it would take for Iran to build a nuclear weapon, should it decide to do so.

At the same time, U.S. and international sanctions have had a devastating effect on millions of innocent Iranian citizens, who have suffered shortages of critical health and humanitarian supplies even as COVID-19 devastates the country. Rather than prompting change in Iranian foreign policy, coercive economic measures have caused undue hardship for Iran’s civilian population and undermined global efforts to stem the pandemic.

To prevent this situation from deteriorating, we ask you to publicly condemn the assassination of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, demonstrate restraint, actively seek the de-escalation of tensions, and support the expeditious return by both sides to the terms of the JCPOA. More threats, sanctions and use of military force will only further destabilize the region and result in the loss of precious human life on all sides. War will impact the most vulnerable, causing irreparable harm and dimming prospects for peace.

During this extremely challenging time for all Americans, we are grateful for your public service to our country. Please know we are lifting you all up in our prayers and that we thank you for the consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

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