

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 2, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We urge you to deny visas for Iranian President Raisi and his delegation to attend the United Nations General Assembly in New York City in September. Raisi's involvement in mass murder and the Iranian regime's campaign to assassinate U.S. officials on American soil make allowing Raisi and his henchmen to enter our country an inexcusable threat to national security.

Raisi's record as a violator of human rights is long-standing and clear. In 1988, while deputy prosecutor of Tehran, Raisi served on a Death Commission which sentenced approximately 5,000 prisoners to death, including women and children, without the right to appeal or a fair trial.<sup>1,2</sup> Raisi is proud of his record; in 2018, he defended the commission, calling it "divine punishment" and "one of the proud achievements of the system."<sup>3</sup> In the decades since, Raisi continued to subject the Iranian people to extrajudicial prosecution, torture, and execution, such as during the 2009 Green Revolution or in his more recent tenure as the head of Iran's judiciary.<sup>4</sup> Raisi's role in these gross human rights abuses led the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to sanction him in 2019, pursuant to Executive Order 13876.<sup>5</sup>

While Raisi continues the regime's wave of repression at home, agents of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, plot to assassinate current and former senior U.S. officials in the United States. In March, the *Washington Examiner* reported that the Department of Justice had indictable evidence that IRGC Quds Force operatives were planning to assassinate former U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton.<sup>6</sup> The IRGC has reportedly been plotting similar efforts against former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, former CENTCOM Commander Kenneth McKenzie, and other former officials.

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<sup>1</sup> Farnaz Fassihi, "A Roadblock for Iran's President-Elect: He's on the U.S. Sanctions List," *The New York Times*, June 22, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/19/world/middleeast/ebrahim-raisi-iran-president.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Zvi Kahn, "Iran's Leading Presidential Candidate Has Committed Crimes Against Humanity," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, June 17, 2021, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2021/06/17/irans-candidate-crimes-against-humanity/>.

<sup>3</sup> United States Institute of Peace. "Controversy on Raisi's Visa for U.N. Summit," *The Iran Primer*, August 5, 2021, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2021/aug/05/controversy-raisi-visa-un-summit>.

<sup>4</sup> "Iran Primer: President Raisi's Record on Human Rights," *Center for Human Rights in Iran*, July 21, 2021, <https://iranhumanrights.org/2021/07/iran-primer-president-raisis-record-on-human-rights/>.

<sup>5</sup> "Treasury Designates Supreme Leader of Iran's Inner Circle Responsible for Advancing Regime's Domestic and Foreign Oppression," U.S. Department of the Treasury, November 4, 2019, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm824>.

<sup>6</sup> Tom Rogan, "Iran plotting assassination of John Bolton, others, even while Biden negotiates nuclear deal," *The Washington Examiner*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america-courage-strength-optimism/iran-plotting-assassination-of-john-bolton-others-even-while-biden-negotiates-nuclear-deal>.



According to news reports earlier this month, the IRGC is also targeting current U.S. officials as part of its assassination campaign.<sup>7</sup>

If recent reports are true that Raisi plans to attend the UN General Assembly, the White House must deny Raisi and other Iranian officials visas to attend.<sup>8</sup> Allowing Raisi to travel to the United States—while his agents actively work to assassinate senior American officials on U.S. soil—would gravely endanger our national security, given the likely presence of IRGC agents in the Iranian delegation. Furthermore, granting a mass murderer like Raisi a visa to enter our country would also legitimize his repression. It is a risk we cannot and should not take.

There is strong precedent for denying an entry visa to foreign leaders. In 1988, the United States barred PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat from entering the United States to attend a meeting of the United Nations.<sup>9</sup> In 2014, President Obama denied an entry visa to Iranian UN Ambassador Hamid Aboutalebi, who was involved in taking American diplomats hostage in 1979.<sup>10</sup> In 2020, the United States declined to issue a visa for Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.<sup>11</sup> Ebrahim Raisi's role in the regime's human rights abuses and Iran's continuing efforts to murder American officials should more than disqualify him from receiving a visa to the United States.

Thank you for considering this important matter of national security.

Sincerely,



Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



Rick Scott  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Chuck Grassley  
United States Senator

<sup>7</sup> Jana Winter, "Exclusive: U.S. government warns that Iran may try to kill American officials as revenge for killing top general," *Yahoo News*, July 13, 2022, <https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-us-government-warns-iran-may-try-to-kill-american-officials-in-revenge-for-killing-top-general-162641423.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Edith M. Lederer, "Nearly 160 world leaders plan to attend UN September meeting," *Associated Press*, July 19, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-united-nations-general-assembly-zelensky-biden-covid-0d45eaf5de9d674c71141dc8ae309b17>.

<sup>9</sup> Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Denies Entry Visa to Arafat," *The Washington Post*, November 27, 1988, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/11/27/us-denies-entry-visa-to-arafat/152cd8b4-2d9b-4f31-8acd-cheb79b7098/>.

<sup>10</sup> Ken Dilanian, "Obama blocks visa for Iran's U.N. ambassador," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 18, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/world/worldnow/la-fg-wn-obama-visa-iran-un-ambassador-20140418-story.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "U.S. denies Iran's Zarif a visa to attend U.N.: U.S. official," *Reuters*, January 6, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security-un-zarif/u-s-denies-irans-zarif-a-visa-to-attend-u-n-u-s-official-idUSKBN1Z605T>.



*Joni K Ernst*

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Joni K. Ernst  
United States Senator

*Ted Cruz*

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Ted Cruz  
United States Senator

*Marsha Blackburn*

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United States Senator