

[Text of Menendez-Lieberman-Ayotte letter on Iran]

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

Over the past four years, Democrats and Republicans in Congress have set aside their differences and worked together on a bipartisan basis with your Administration to put in place the most stringent sanctions ever against Iran. We appreciate your continued, strong implementation of these sanctions, which combined with the leadership of our allies, has led a growing number of countries and companies to curtail or reduce trade with Iran across a range of sectors -- including energy, shipping, and telecommunications. These measures are now having a substantial impact on the Iranian economy, as demonstrated most dramatically by the sharp drop in the value of Iran's currency this year.

Nevertheless, the Iranian government has continued to press forward with its nuclear program. It has quintupled its stockpile of low enriched uranium since 2009. It has taken a significant step closer to possessing weapons-grade uranium by enriching up to 20 percent. And it has raced towards completion of its hardened Fordow enrichment facility, more than doubling the number of centrifuges installed there just since the summer of this year.

At the same time, Iran continues to reject the demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency, including refusing to allow inspectors to visit sites where nuclear weaponization work is suspected to have occurred. These facts mean that Iran today is now moving dangerously closer to a nuclear weapons capability.

For this reason, we believe there is no national security challenge that is more urgent and essential to resolve during your second term than Iran's pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. We share your commitment to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and strongly agree with your statement that, "[t]he clock is ticking. If [the Iranians] do not meet the demands of the international community, then we are going to take all options necessary to ensure they don't have a nuclear weapon."

In order to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons, we urge you to consider the following steps:

First, we strongly believe there should be absolutely no diminution of pressure on the Iranians until the totality of their nuclear problem has been addressed. The time for limited confidence building measures is over. Iran must understand that it has a closing window of time in which to show it is serious about wanting to reach a diplomatic solution. This requires Iran to quickly and fully implement UN Security Council resolutions, including the suspension of all enrichment and reprocessing activities. Iran should also permit the removal from its territory of all uranium enriched to the twenty percent level.

We remain very skeptical of any proposal that would allow the current Iranian government to possess an enrichment capability in any form, given its long track record of deceptive and illicit conduct. We also believe that, at an absolute minimum, a successful resolution of the Iranian nuclear file must include the complete closure of the Fordow facility; full cooperation by Iran

with the IAEA and the resolution of all outstanding questions about possible weapons dimensions of the program; and an extremely intrusive and comprehensive inspection regime for the foreseeable future.

Second, until these objectives have been achieved, we believe that the United States must make use of all elements of our national power to pressure Iran. This should include aggressive implementation of existing sanctions and the adoption of new, even stronger ones. We should also work to deepen Iran's diplomatic isolation by encouraging countries to expel Iranian diplomats and close Iranian missions, as Canada recently did, given Iran's use of its embassies and consulates to engage in proliferation and terrorism-related illicit activities.

Third, as you begin your second term as President, we ask you to reiterate your readiness to take military action against Iran if it continues its efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon. In addition we urge you to work with our European and Middle Eastern allies to demonstrate to the Iranians that a credible and capable multilateral coalition exists that would support a military strike if, in the end, this is unfortunately necessary.

Fourth, we urge you to expand America's outreach and support to the Iranian people and support of the cause of human rights and democracy in Iran. As we have seen across the Middle East over the past two years, autocratic regimes that appear entrenched and invulnerable can collapse with stunning speed. We believe that the current government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will eventually end up in the ash heap of history, not because of the efforts of the United States, but because of the desire of the Iranian people to enjoy the basic freedoms that are their universal right, and that many of their neighbors increasingly are demanding.

It is critically important for the U.S. to stand clearly and vocally on the side of the Iranian people today and support their quest for freedom -- regardless of the status of negotiations with the Iranian government.

We thank you for your continued leadership on this critical issue and look forward to continuing to work with you to stop Iran from getting nuclear weapons capability.