



January 28, 2021

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We commend President Biden for moving swiftly to end the Muslim ban and similar discriminatory Trump-era orders as one of his administration's first acts. To uphold our promise as a democracy where all are created equal, America must root out racism in all its forms. Ending the bans will enable countless families to reunite, including the tens of thousands of Iranian-American families who have been unable to see their loved ones for four long years.

We are pleased that the order rescinding the ban has laid out a pathway to redressing the harm it caused and a review period to assess associated policies. The National Iranian American Council and our members firmly support these efforts, and look forward to working with you to ensure a successful end to the ban that provides justice to those impacted and ends all policies that paved the way toward the ban. We would like to request a meeting to discuss our recommendations in this regard, which are outlined below.

During the 45 day review period instituted by President Biden's Proclamation revoking the Ban, we urge that the State Department set up a process to:

- Restore consular services for Iranians and other impacted nationals;
- Rescind Proclamation 9992, which limits travel for individuals present in Iran in the last 14 days, and replace it with a safe alternative;
- Process applications currently pending in "administrative processing", with expedited processing for those with family in the US and for students seeking to start studies;
- Invite those rejected under the ban to re-submit their prior visa application, and identify diversity visa lottery winners who were deemed ineligible and set up a process so that they are approved;
- Set a goal to restore the issuance of visas to targeted communities to prior levels (40K per year for Iranians);
- Waive application fees or additional interviews for those rejected under Presidential Proclamation 9645 and consider reimbursing travel expenses for those rejected under the ban;
- Eliminate the policy of rejecting Iranian nationals as automatically inadmissible based on their compulsory military service;



- Work with the Treasury Department to expedite a General License for students in sanctioned countries to start online classwork in all fields of study.

Similarly, across the 120 day period reviewing the Trump administration’s vetting program, we urge the administration to:

- End “Extreme Vetting” policies and ensure they cannot be made mandatory for specific nationals;
- Waive discriminatory Visa Waiver Program restrictions (H.R. 158) on dual nationals that paved the way for the Muslim ban and were disingenuously used by the last administration to deflect criticism;
- Launch review of DHS abuses that targeted Iranian nationals, including detentions at the border and deportation of Iranian students;
- Offer multi-entry visas to Iranian nationals on a standard basis, and provide clear public information regarding eligibility for multi-entry visas;
- Support and sign into law the NO BAN Act, either as included in the President’s immigration proposal to Congress or as stand-alone legislation.

We recognize that there is substantial work to do to fully unravel the ban and safely pave the way toward the resumption of foreign travel from targeted countries, including Iran. We hope to meet with you and your colleagues soon to discuss these priorities and how the Iranian-American community can best support the end of the Muslim ban and more just and equitable immigration policies.

Sincerely,

Jamal Abdi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jamal Abdi", written in a cursive style.

President, National Iranian American Council

To follow up on these recommendations, please contact NIAC’s Policy Director Ryan Costello at rcostello@niacouncil.org.