



August 31, 2026

Secretary of the Treasury Scott K. H. Bessent
U.S. Treasury Department
1500 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20220

Secretary of State Marco Rubio
U.S. State Department
2201 C St NW
Washington DC, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Bessent and Secretary Rubio,

We write to notify the Treasury Department and State Department of the escalating harm caused by the imminent suspension of long-standing general licenses that had enabled American universities, educational testing and assessment organizations, and other entities to provide educational opportunities to Iranian nationals.¹ This move was announced last week as part of “Operation Economic Outcast,” also known as “Economic D-Day,” yet has no conceivable impact on the Iranian government - the alleged target of the revitalized pressure campaign on Iran. Instead, it is already being felt by American entities and Iranian students. In light of recent developments in which Iranian students have been barred from taking key exams required for academic studies by U.S. organizations, we call on the Treasury Department to immediately reinstate 31 CFR § 560.544, authorizing certain educational activities by U.S. persons in third countries, and Iran General License G, authorizing certain academic exchanges and the exportation or importation of certain educational services. We also urge that Treasury reverse the suspension of additional licenses announced last week that enabled Iranian Americans to send personal remittances to family in Iran (31 CFR § 560.550), and that allowed for sports exchanges between the U.S. and Iran (Iran General License F). We urge the Treasury Department and the

¹ The following sanctions exemptions have been announced as suspended by the Treasury Department, effective September 8, 2026: (1) 31 CFR § 560.544 (“Certain educational activities by U.S. persons in third countries authorized”); (2) 31 CFR § 560.550 (“Certain noncommercial, personal remittances to or from Iran authorized”); (3) 31 CFR § 560.554 (“Importation and exportation of services related to conferences in the United States or third countries authorized”); (4) Iran General License F (“Authorizing certain services in support of professional and amateur sports activities and exchanges involving the United States and Iran”); and (5) Iran General License G (“Certain academic exchanges and the exportation or importation of certain educational services authorized”). <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/936786/download?inline>

Administration to move swiftly before the United States causes more harm to its own interests and inflicts needless hardship on ordinary Iranian citizens.

Following Treasury's announcement of an "Unprecedented Campaign Against (the) Iranian Regime" last week, Educational Testing Services - which administers Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) tests for aspiring students across the world - has announced that it has "immediately suspended" testing administration in Iran, citing "strict compliance with U.S. sanctions laws." Likewise, the popular language learning application Duolingo has announced that its Duolingo English Test - accepted by institutions across the globe to verify English proficiency - is "unavailable in Iran and for users with Iranian IDs." The general licensing that the U.S. revoked had previously allowed these tests to be administered to Iranians in and outside of Iran's borders. For years, Iran was among the nations with the highest demand for TOEFL examinations.²

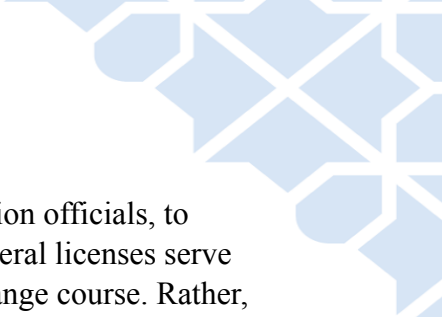
Regrettably, the severing of these key global educational testing platforms will create major hurdles for Iranian nationals pursuing international education. These effects will not be limited to Iranian nationals seeking educational opportunities in the United States, as the tests are now utilized by tens of thousands of institutions across a majority of the nations of the world. This is deeply unfair, and is based solely on nationality. For a nation founded on equality and freedom, this runs contrary to the principles that our democracy was founded upon.

There are other immediate harms that will become clear as these policies go into effect. Iranian students will now be doubly blocked from studying in the United States. First, by the travel ban that bars U.S. visas for Iranians, and second by sanctions that have suspended access to English proficiency exams and will block universities from enrolling students or hiring faculty and staff who are ordinarily resident in Iran.

The suspension of additional General Licenses will have similar harmful effects on the wrong targets. Notably, Iranian Americans will imminently face the prospect that paying for a family member's healthcare, rent, groceries or elder care via remittances could be punishable by enormous fines or decades in prison if the family member is inside Iran. At a time when internal repression is enormous, and the economy has been decimated by sanctions, blockade and war, such a move to bar Iranian Americans from supporting loved ones via financial support is unjustifiable.

Additionally, the choice to suspend General License F, authorizing sports exchanges between the U.S. and Iran, carries significant risk of complicating the the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles and reflects poorly on the U.S. as a host nation while yielding no discernible benefit.

² Testing for Iranian Students Reinstated but Sanctions Concerns Linger, National Iranian American Council, July 29, 2010, <https://niacouncil.org/testing-for-iranian-students-reinstated-but-sanctions-concerns-linger/>.



We have seen no attempt by the Treasury Department, or separate administration officials, to explain how the suspension of these humanitarian, academic, and cultural general licenses serve U.S. interests or will play any role in pressuring the government of Iran to change course. Rather, the explicit harm of these moves will be borne by American schools and academic organizations, Iranian Americans, and ordinary Iranian citizens, particularly those who aspire to study abroad or have familial ties with the United States.

Again, we urge you to reverse these harms by immediately ending the suspension of general licenses on Iran as announced last week. No other move will be sufficient to stop these harms from mounting.

Sincerely,



Jamal Abdi
President, NIAC

