

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

In late September, the media and Iranian American human rights advocates began reporting that the Trump administration had reached a deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran to deport Iranian citizens back to Iran.¹ According to these reports, the administration sent 45 people to Tehran via Qatar in late September or early October. Some of these individuals stated that they “begged not to be sent to Iran because they feared for their lives.” Once they landed in Tehran, they said that they were “made to fill out forms explaining why they had left Iran and sought asylum in America,” and were “called in for interrogation by the intelligence wing of the Revolutionary Guards Corps.”² On December 7, 2025, the administration deported another approximately 50 Iranian citizens to Iran, this time through Kuwait. On January 25, yet another flight deported approximately 14 Iranians; the number would have been much higher if not for a major measles outbreak at the detention site and widespread bipartisan pushback.

Given Iran’s horrific human rights record, we are deeply concerned that the Trump administration is returning people to a country where they may be persecuted or tortured, in violation of U.S. and international law. As you know, the United States has long been a safe haven for Iranians fleeing oppression and persecution by the Iranian regime because of their political ideology, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. In the eyes of the regime, some of these ‘crimes’ are punishable by death, and deportees have stated they’ll likely face such sentences if sent back to Iran.³

Iran’s violations of human rights are extensive, well-documented, and horrifying. Basic rights, like those of the freedom of expression, religion, and assembly are not only infringed upon – they are violently suppressed through torture, imprisonment, forced disappearances, and executions. You and others in the Trump administration spoke extensively about the horrors of the Iranian regime when attempting to justify the June 22, 2025, U.S. military strikes on Iran’s nuclear program. More recently, you personally have spoken against the regime’s violent suppression of protesters that experts believe have left more than 6,800 people dead – a figure that continues to climb.⁴ Yet despite your acknowledgement of the Iranian government’s wanton disregard for basic human rights, the Trump administration has chosen to return Iranian citizens to the very place that they fled for their lives.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/30/world/middleeast/us-iran-deportation-flight.html>

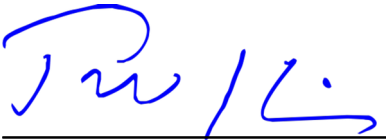
² <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/07/world/middleeast/us-deports-second-planeload-iranians.html>

³ <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/iranians-lgbtq-asylum-deported/>

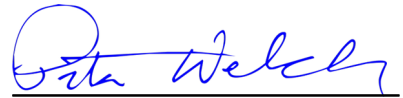
⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/02/03/iran-protests-deaths-crackdown/>

Throughout your career in the Senate, you were an advocate for Cubans escaping oppression and persecution by the Castro regime and for the protection of political dissidents and religious minorities around the world. We were glad to work with you on these issues. Now we ask you and the Trump administration to ensure that the United States does not violate U.S. and international law by returning people who have a well-founded fear of persecution and torture by the brutal Iranian regime.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



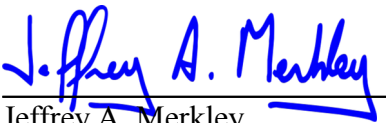
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



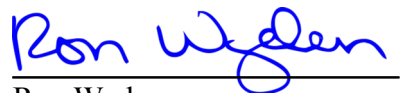
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator