

H.R.9606 - Revoking Entry Granted to Iranian Mullahs and Elites Act
PAAIA Legislative Analysis

SUMMARY

The *REGIME Act* would require the Secretary of State to conduct a review into whether any Iranian regime officials or their immediate family members have received or applied for visas to travel to the United States. If it is found that an official or their immediate relative has obtained a U.S. visa, the visa is then revoked, and these individuals would be ineligible for entry into U.S. using current authorities under Section 7031(c) of the annual State Department Appropriations Act or pursuant to section 105 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010.

PAAIA's ANALYSIS

H.R.9606 is well-intentioned - the U.S. should not allow the Islamic Republic's ruling class to enjoy visa benefits. However, there is a need for clarifications so that the legislation does not target ordinary individuals who are not part of the regime's elites or in leadership roles. Here are some examples of individuals who could potentially be inadvertently impacted and banned from entry to the U.S. along with their immediate relatives:

- 1. All officers in the armed forces (IRGC or regular branches) & law enforcement.**
 - While this category contains many who should be subject to this bill, it is necessary to recognize that this group also includes college-educated conscripts who may enter as officers for mandatory 2-year service without having a choice. Iran's mandatory service compels individuals with no desire to affiliate with the regime to serve for two years. Largely, they are not supporters of the regime or its policies.
 - The legislation should allow for exemptions or waivers for innocent conscripts so that they are not blanketly being denied visa benefits that may result in separation of American families, and missed educational, work, and tourist opportunities.
- 2. Former or current employees of the Iranian executive, judicial, or legislative branch.**
 - This category is very broad. Individuals affected could include a wide range of technocrats and regular individuals who work or worked for the government. For example, doctors who may work for the health ministry or maintenance / HVAC workers in government buildings.
 - The legislation should single out individuals in senior leadership roles of the Islamic Republic, and not inadvertently punish all current or former government employees. Many of these individuals will be needed to help transition Iran into democratic society post Islamic Republic.
- 3. Immediate family members of the Islamic Republic's ruling elite.**
 - The ruling class of the Islamic Republic should never be able to send and pay for their relatives and children to be educated and live in the U.S. however, not all immediate relatives may be supportive of the Iranian regime and may have cut ties with their relatives.
 - The legislation should provide a waiver or exemptions for immediate relatives of Iran's ruling elite who have broken ties with their family and are not supportive of the Islamic Republic.
- 4. The language of the bill does not make it clear that the intention is to only apply to individuals who have worked for the Islamic Republic of Iran's government and not the Imperial State of Iran (pre-revolution) government.**
 - As written, the bill could be interpreted as blocking visas for individuals who worked for the Shah-era government. This needs to be clarified, because large swaths of the Iranian diaspora here in the United States fall into this category.

- The legislation should be clear that it does not apply to people who worked for the Shah-era government.

CONCLUSION

The majority of Iran's 80 million people are educated, digitally connected, and hold very favorable views toward America. This includes hundreds of thousands of individuals who were forced into mandatory military service and are employees of Iran's vast government bureaucracy. Blanket visa bans against them runs counterproductive to US national interests in engaging Iranian people and supporting their democratic aspirations.

The intentions of the REGIME Act are good. The goals of the legislation are ones that many in the Iranian American community have been calling for the U.S. government to implement. That said, the legislation, as currently written, needs important clarifications to ensure innocent people are not impacted and those within Islamic Republic's ruling elite are affected.