

April 24, 2023

Statement to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the Markup Hearing of H.R.589, the Mahsa Amini Human rights and Security Accountability Act (MAHSA Act)

Chairman Michael McCaul, Ranking Member Gregory Meeks, and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA) is pleased to continue its support of and advocacy for the Mahsa Amini Human rights and Security Accountability Act (MAHSA Act) reintroduced this year by Representative Jim Banks (R-IN/3rd). The legislation currently has 90 co-sponsors with strong bipartisan support.

For your background, PAAIA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that serves the interests of Iranian Americans and represents the community before U.S. policymakers and the American public. Today there are more than an estimated 1.5 million Iranian Americans living in the United States. Iranian Americans constitute one of the most successful immigrant communities in the U.S. – serving in law enforcement, the military, government, and elected office. In addition to being strong public servants, Iranian Americans are highly educated, founders and/or senior leaders at many major U.S. companies and engage in and give back to the communities in which they live. Further, a study by the Small Business Administration (SBA) found Iranian Americans to be among the top 20 immigrant groups with the highest rate of business ownership, contributing substantially to the U.S. economy.

While Iranian Americans are proud contributors to American culture, business, science, the arts, and public service, the community remains deeply connected to family back in Iran. According to PAAIA's 2023 National Public Opinion Survey, nearly fifty percent of Iranian Americans (**47%**) have immediate relatives in Iran, and only **6%** have no family there. Almost six months after Mahsa Amini's September 2022 death, the survey found that Iranian Americans overwhelmingly support the protest movement in Iran. **Nine in ten** respondents believe the protests will have a positive contribution to Iran's socio-political evolution and are in favor of the U.S. government doing something to support the protestors. The top issue for Iranian Americans with respect to U.S.-Iran relations, regardless of party affiliation, continues to be the promotion of human rights and democracy in Iran (**51%**).

The Iranian regime's gross human rights violations are clear. In response to the growing **Woman, Life, Freedom (Zan, Zendegi, Azadi)** uprising, Iranian regime forces have violently repressed free speech, executed children (those under 18 years of age), injured thousands of peaceful protestors, imprisoned over 20,000 others, and repeatedly blocked access to the internet and communications services in an attempt to prevent the world from bearing witness to these crimes.

Supporting and amplifying the voices of the Iranian people remains vital. The MAHSA Act requires that within 90 days of enactment and yearly thereafter, the executive branch review a list of sanctioning authorities and

determine whether they apply to the Supreme Leader of Iran, the President of Iran, and their offices as well as their appointees, entities, and the economic conglomerates affiliated with the Supreme Leader. The sanction authorities include existing Executive Orders 13876, which sanctions the Iranian Supreme Leader's Office and his inner circle, as well as 13553 and 13818, which pertain to human rights abuses, and 13224, which pertains to counterterrorism. The legislation would also impose visa bans for Iranian leaders and very importantly for members of their families pursuant to section 7031(c) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2021.

The legislation is intended to hold leaders of the Iranian regime accountable for human rights abuses and terrorist activities. By supporting the MAHSA Act, you are sending a message to the Iranian regime that we will hold them answerable for their actions.

PAAIA commends Rep. Banks for his leadership in introducing the MAHSA Act and the members of the House of Representatives who are supporting the legislation and pushing this bill to the House floor. We thank Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to share this perspective. PAAIA without hesitation encourages broad support for the MAHSA Act.



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