

May 26, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield
U.S. Representative to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Dear President Biden and Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield:

We, the undersigned Iranian American organizations, write with the utmost concern and dismay regarding the appointment of Mr. Ali Bahreini, the Islamic Republic of Iran's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, as Chair-Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) 2023 Social Forum. We urge your Administration to lead efforts at the UNHRC to retract this appointment and work diligently to prevent the Islamic Republic from obtaining such appointments in the future.

Václav Balek, President of the UNHRC, announced the appointment of Mr. Bahreini in a [letter dated May 10, 2023](#). The UNHRC President must appoint the Chair-Rapporteur from among those candidates put forward by the five regional groups. Only the Asia-Pacific Group nominated a candidate. Disappointingly, neither the US nor any of its allies in the Western European and Others group nor in any other group responded to the announcement that Iran was the only candidate. Alternative choices should have been offered in the nominating process.

We condemn the choice of Iran to this pivotal role as the Chair-Rapporteur of UNHRC's Social Forum particularly as it will focus on the "contribution of science, technology and innovation to the promotion of human rights, including in the context of post-pandemic recovery." As Chair-Rapporteur, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran will be involved in the framing of the event's agenda and deciding what specific topics should be discussed as well as who will be invited to participate. Having the Islamic Republic, an egregious human rights violator, lead this Forum is an affront to human rights and to the UN Charter principles. We remind you of the following:

- The UNHRC, through its [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), is presently investigating the IRI's [killing of more than 500 peaceful protesters](#) including children, its [arrest of more than 22,000 men, women, and children](#) for the peaceful expression of dissent, and its documented [maiming, blinding, torture and sexual abuse](#) of large numbers of protesters and detainees, including [children](#);
- The UNHRC's own appointed top expert on Iran, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran, Javād Rehmān, has described the Islamic Republic's actions over the last months as rising to the level of "[crimes against humanity](#)";
- The Islamic Republic's catastrophic and politicized [handling of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), in which it refused to import Western vaccines, costing hundreds of thousands of Iranian lives.

We believe that the appointment of an Islamic Republic of Iran official to chair this UNHRC body reflects a shocking ethical blindness. Furthermore, we are extremely disappointed that UNHRC Ambassador Michele Taylor did not track this issue and encourage other candidates to run for the position.

Your Administration has a commendable record of championing human rights as an integral component of U.S. foreign policy. This includes recent efforts to remove Iran from the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women as well as imposing targeted sanctions against some of the regime's most heinous human rights violators. We ask that you take every action possible to prompt the retraction of this appointment. Maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of the UNHRC remains vital; therefore, we also encourage U.S. leadership at the Council to help prevent such appointments from occurring in the future.

Respectfully,

Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans (PAAIA)
Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI)
Iranian American Bar Association (IABA)