



Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
email: fadt.sen@aph.gov.au

6th April 2016

Dear Sir

Inquiry into the partial suspension of sanctions against Iran

The following submission to the above Inquiry is made by B'nai B'rith Australia / New Zealand. B'nai B'rith is the world's most widely known Jewish humanitarian, human rights and advocacy organisation, working for Jewish unity, security, continuity, and tolerance. B'nai B'rith has a presence in 50 countries around the world, and is highly respected in all those countries for its work. B'nai B'rith Australia / New Zealand is the peak body of B'nai B'rith in our region. Our members are involved in a very wide range of community service activities and support for charitable causes, and we also sponsor a wide range of projects and programs in the areas of social justice and human rights.

B'nai B'rith applauds the Australian Government's stance in relation to Iran, as expressed in the UN Human Rights Council's Report of the Working Group on Iran's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of December 2014. In that report (see <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/248/22/PDF/G1424822.pdf?OpenElement>) and also attached separately for ease of reference, Australia urged Iran –

- to implement measures promoting freedom of expression and non-discrimination;
- to cooperate fully with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, including by inviting the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran to visit that country;
- to cease all discrimination against members of religious and ethnic minorities, including Baha'is, Dervishes, Christians, Ahwazi Arabs, Balochs and Kurds, and ensure respect for freedom of religion;
- to establish a formal moratorium on the death penalty and in particular cease all planned executions of juvenile offenders and prohibit the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed by minors; and
- to guarantee the right to legitimate freedom of expression, association and assembly, and release political prisoners, including activists, lawyers and journalists, detained solely for exercising these rights.

We also note in particular the UPR recommendations that Iran should -

- take all steps necessary to reform the discriminatory provisions of penal and civil laws against women ¹; and
- abolish the discriminatory practice of forced and early marriage, high drop-out rates in schools and restrictions to university education for girls, and promote active participation of women in the society ².

¹ – from New Zealand

² - from Slovenia

As documented in the latest report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, dated 3rd March 2016, there has been no progress whatsoever on any of these issues since the recommendations were made, demonstrating the contempt held by the Government of Iran for basic human rights. That report is attached separately, and is available at http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session31/Documents/A-HRC-31-26_en.doc

While we recognise that economic sanctions were imposed in response to Iran's clear ambitions to acquire capability in nuclear weapons, B'nai B'rith believes that there should be no relaxation of those sanctions until such time as Iran demonstrates a commitment to democratic values, including but not necessarily limited to the points set out above.

Further, in the light of the avowed intention of Iran's leaders to destroy another sovereign state – Israel – any relaxation of the sanctions regime would signal Australia's sanctioning of Iran's current policies and practices.

In this context, we note that a relaxation of global sanctions in all likelihood would lead to increased Iranian revenue flowing to its recognised proxy terror organisations such as the military wings of Hezbollah and Hamas, both of which support the Iranian aim of destroying Israel. International law proscribes incitement to genocide. Such incitement is precisely what is regularly seen from these groups, the charters of which explicitly call for the destruction of Israel and the murder of Jews.

For all these reasons, B'nai B'rith urges the Australian Government to fully maintain the sanctions against Iran which are currently in place.

Yours sincerely

James Altman, OAM
Immediate Past President, B'nai B'rith Australia / NZ