

8th April 2016

Senator the Hon. Stephen Parry
President of the Senate,

Dear Mr President

I am writing in support of the recent decision of our government to remove economic sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I have recently travelled to Iran and spent significant time with many Iranian people from different walks of life in various cities. I was shocked at the human cost of the sanctions and given that the Iranian government has made significant concessions in regards to their nuclear programme it is incumbent on our government to honour the agreement.

Even with removal of the sanctions, we have a strong obligation to assist the more than 70 000 survivors of chemical warfare who were victims of Saddam Hussein being supplied with chemical weapons from democratic western nations; an extremely vulnerable group of people whose medical care was complicated and compromised by sanctions.

In Iran, it is a sobering experience to step on a plane that has not been replaced for over thirty years, with the understanding that over 1500 civilians have lost their lives in civil aviation disasters in a nation whose national carrier was previously second only to our Qantas in its safety record. The applause upon the plane landing is of shared and unspoken meaning there.

Given that our own intelligence service recommended that Iran's nuclear programme and military exercises were for deterrent purposes and that they should not be considered a 'rogue state' it is difficult to understand why we have participated in the *en masse* punishment of innocent people and seriously undermined their capacity to meet their basic economic and social needs. Even for those lucky enough to escape the worse poverty, the limitations and economic deprivation have clearly had a severely widespread detrimental effect on the psychological welfare of their often educated yet jobless or underemployed youth. This is obviously resulting in an exodus of many of their most able and talented people who are necessary pillars to building a just and well-functioning society.

It is clear that any 'human rights' concerns regarding Iran are being used as a political tool, and that the welfare of the Iranian people has not been a genuine concern of previous policies; policies which have resulted in the widespread disenfranchisement of Iranian people of their basic capacity to meet their needs while punishing them for the very disempowerment that the sanctions are exacerbating.

I am confident that I speak for the majority of Australians in stating that they would be as distressed as I was to witness and understand the severe effects of the sanctions on the Iranian people, particularly given the lack of proven efficacy that sanctions have when punishing non-target groups and the seeming lack of a severe enough security concern to justify the harshest sanctions ever imposed on a nation.

I am sure that our renewed relations with Iran have as much to offer our business and trade sectors as they do in rewarding travellers with the extraordinary hospitality and deep humanity of Iranian people,

Yours Faithfully,

Michelle Bolger