

U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg  
To Her Excellency Stacey Feinberg  
22 Boulevard Emmanuel Servais  
L-2535 Luxembourg

Luxembourg, January 14, 2026

To Her Excellency Stacey Feinberg  
United States Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg  
U.S. Embassy Luxembourg

Your Excellency Ambassador Feinberg,

With utmost respect, I present the attached open letter addressed to the President of the United States of America, Mr. Donald J. Trump, for your kind attention and formal transmission to the Office of the President.

This letter reflects serious concerns regarding the ongoing situation in Iran and the violent repression of peaceful protesters, and it addresses the matter from a legal, ethical, and historical responsibility perspective grounded in international law and fundamental human rights principles.

Given your diplomatic role and the Embassy's position as an official channel of communication, I respectfully request that this letter be conveyed to President Trump for his personal consideration.

I appreciate your consideration and the weight that your office carries in facilitating meaningful communication between civil society and the executive leadership of the United States.

Respectfully,

Ehsan Tarinia  
President, PEN Association Luxembourg

## When a Promise Costs Lives

### An Open Letter to President Donald Trump on Iran, Hope, and Historical Responsibility

Mr. Donald Trump,  
President of the United States of America,

I am not writing this letter in the language of courtesy, political expediency, or the kind of cost-free “deep concern” that for years has left the people of Iran with nothing but ashes. What is happening in Iran is not merely a “domestic crisis.” It is the **organized, systematic repression of an entire nation**—carried out through live fire, mass arrests, torture, and nationwide internet shutdowns designed to conceal crimes. And through the words you chose, you did not merely watch this crisis unfold—you **gave it hope**. Hope which, if left unsupported, will bind your name to blood in the historical memory of a nation—not as the principal perpetrator of the crime, but as the politician who **manufactured a “promise” and then chose retreat at the moment of action**.

#### 1) Iran’s Situation: Not a Protest—A Legal File of Crimes

In Iran today, the right to life, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and the right to a fair trial—rights that stand among the most fundamental in international law—are being violated broadly and systematically. Iran is a party to the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)** and is therefore bound by provisions such as the right to life (Article 6), the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment (in connection with obligations under the Convention Against Torture), freedom of expression (Article 19), and the right of peaceful assembly (Article 21). At the universal level, the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (especially Articles 3, 5, 19, 20, and 21) sets minimum standards of state conduct. Yet the Iranian regime is standing precisely where international law draws a “red line”: **bullets against unarmed citizens, internet blackouts to darken the field, and arrests and torture to silence testimony and narratives**.

These are not “mistakes” or “excesses by forces on the ground.” When the pattern repeats and the tools remain the same, it is state policy. In the language of international criminal law, when violations are “**widespread or systematic**” and directed against a civilian population, they may be examined under the category of **crimes against humanity** (a well-established legal framework in international criminal law). And more importantly: in cases like this, the world must move beyond “expressions of regret” and enter the domain of **responsibility and accountability**.

#### 2) A Politician’s Words Are Not a Joke: They Have Consequences—and Create Responsibility

This is the central point, Mr. Trump: you did not speak like many Western politicians. You spoke in a way that directly addressed the people and gave them instruction and promise. This was no longer commentary; it was a direct message.

##### Quote No. 1 (Truth Social – January 13, 2026)

You wrote on Truth Social:

**“Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING - TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS!!!!... HELP IS ON ITS WAY.”**

This is not a generic slogan. “KEEP PROTESTING” is an imperative: continue. “TAKE OVER YOUR INSTITUTIONS” means move beyond protest and consider institutional takeover—seizing control. And then you add, “HELP IS ON ITS

WAY.” You know very well that this combination, in the mind of a people standing under live fire, creates the meaning of **practical backing**—not vague sympathy.

### Quote No. 2 (Speech/Remarks in Detroit – same day)

Reports indicate you repeated the same message in your public remarks:

**“To all Iranian patriots, keep protesting. Take over your institutions if possible... I’ve canceled all meetings... And all I say to them is help is on its way.”**

The difference between an ordinary politician and the President of the United States is that his words may not always carry “direct legal effect,” but they carry **real political effect**—both in the calculations of governments and in the calculations of people.

### 3) What Does “Help Is on Its Way” Mean? We Do Not Know—But You Owe Clarity

In that same Reuters reporting, when you were asked what you meant by “help,” you did not provide a clear answer and said people should figure it out for themselves.

But Mr. Trump, the people of Iran no longer have the breath for “solving puzzles.” They live under fire. When you use language that raises expectations, you no longer have the right to leave it in ambiguity. Your ambiguity becomes **unsupported hope**. And unsupported hope, in a suppressed society, takes lives—real lives, not metaphors.

This is precisely where the rebuke begins: if you did not intend to raise the cost of repression for the Iranian regime—if you did not intend meaningful political action—then why did you speak in the language of promise? You could have done what many European politicians do: issue a generic statement, or at most tweet a condemnation while sipping morning coffee and eating cake—and stop there. But you went further. And as a result, your responsibility goes further.

### 4) “Rescue” and “We’re Ready”: You Raised Expectations Even Higher

You did not only say “help is on its way.” A week earlier, you said things that, for the people of Iran, carried an even clearer and heavier meaning.

### Quote No. 3 (Truth Social – January 2, 2026)

According to Le Monde’s reporting, you wrote:

**“If Iran shoots and violently kills peaceful protesters... the United States of America will come to their rescue.”**

And then you added:

**“We are locked and loaded and ready to go.”**

This is no longer “sympathy.” This is the language of creating expectation for action. Even if you later claim, “I was only warning them,” the reality is that for people standing under bullets, these words translate into **real support**.

### 5) Performative Neutrality Is Not Neutrality

In international law, some obligations are so fundamental that they are recognized as **jus cogens** (peremptory norms) or **erga omnes** obligations (owed to all). When grave crimes and widespread violations occur, states cannot hide behind silence and claim to be “neutral.” Silence, in practice, signals to the repressive regime that the cost is manageable.

In such situations, there is a simple principle: if a regime has forfeited legitimacy through egregious violations and preserves itself through violence, other states must not inject **artificial legitimacy** into it through political and diplomatic behavior. This is the logic behind the legal doctrine of **non-recognition of situations created by serious breaches**—not as a slogan, but as a rule for state conduct in the face of major violations.

If you truly want to stand on the right side of history, you must turn this rule into policy: **a clear “no” to the political legitimacy of a killing machine.**

## 6) We Expect Action

When “action is on its way” is said, for people standing under bullets it is not an abstract concept or propaganda. It is a promise. A promise that, if not translated into tangible action, will not only produce deep disillusionment, but will be paid for with human lives—and will ultimately embolden the apparatus of repression.

We do not know—and we cannot know—what exactly you meant by “help.” But what we do know is that when such a statement comes from the President of the United States, it creates expectation. And that expectation now exists. The people of Iran are waiting. History is waiting as well.

## 7) If You Did Not Intend to Act, You Had No Right to Pull People into the Realm of Hope

Mr. Trump, this is not only foreign policy; it is political ethics.

You did not tell the people of Iran “I am concerned.” You said, “keep protesting” and “help is on its way.” You said if there is killing, “we will come to their rescue.” You said, “we’re ready.”

When a politician speaks with this level of explicitness, he cannot later hide behind neutral phrases. If your intention was merely to play a media role, you had no right to use words that people facing death will understand as **a promise**.

## 8) “Blood on Your Hands”: Understand This as Historical Judgment, Not a Criminal Accusation

I am not accusing you of direct perpetration of these crimes. The killer is the Islamic Republic. The direct bearer of the gun is the Iranian regime.

But the moral and political responsibility of **manufacturing unsupported hope** is something else.

If, after these words, you take no meaningful action, this is how it will be recorded in Iranian historical memory: someone who called people to stand—and then, when bodies fell in the streets, hid behind words. And in the language of public moral judgment, that is what it means to have **blood-stained hands**—not a court verdict, but a verdict of history.

And I say this plainly: if that happens, you will live with this judgment for the rest of your political and personal life, and Iranians will never remember you well—not out of vengeance, but out of experienced truth.

## 9) Why the Islamic Republic Is Dangerous to the World

The Islamic Republic is not merely a domestic matter between a government and its citizens. By virtue of its ideological nature, security structure, and behavioral pattern, it has become a chronic source of instability on a regional and international scale. The danger it poses is not a political claim; it is an observable outcome of four decades of performance.

First, the export of ideology and crisis has functioned as a pillar of its foreign policy. From its inception, it has compensated for fragile domestic legitimacy through external intervention, transferring tension and violence to other countries through networks of proxy forces. This policy has not only violated state sovereignty; it has intensified internal conflicts and blocked diplomatic pathways.

Second, by turning violence into an official instrument of policy, the Islamic Republic has normalized a dangerous model in international affairs—one in which hostage-taking of foreign nationals, political extortion, and threats to diplomatic security are used as bargaining tools. These behaviors challenge fundamental principles of international relations, including diplomatic immunity and the security of foreign citizens, and they erode trust among states.

Third, its nuclear project and continuous militarization have remained a persistent source of anxiety for global security. Lack of transparency, violations of international commitments, and the instrumental use of the nuclear file to buy political time have ensured that the issue is not resolved but instead becomes a lever for threat and extraction. In such conditions, the risk of proliferation and an arms race is not theoretical; it is a plausible consequence.

Fourth, by ruthlessly repressing its own people, the Islamic Republic sends a clear message to the world: state violence, if it carries no cost, can continue indefinitely. This message travels beyond Iran's borders and teaches other authoritarian regimes that fundamental human rights can be violated without paying a serious political price. This normalization of repression is a direct threat to a global order grounded in human rights.

Fifth, the continued existence of the Islamic Republic as an ideological autocracy undermines any prospect of sustainable stability in the Middle East. Experience shows that whenever internal pressure rises, the regime exports crisis outward to divert attention. The result is a cycle of tension, instability, and insecurity that affects not only the region but global interests as well.

For these reasons, standing against the Islamic Republic is not merely solidarity with the people of Iran; it is a rational necessity for collective global security. Ending the political life of this regime means reducing a permanent source of crisis, weakening the model of state repression, and opening the way for an Iran that—rather than being a threat—can become a responsible, predictable partner of the international community.

As long as the Islamic Republic remains in power, it is not only a danger to the people of Iran but an active, expanding danger to the world.

## 10) Iran After the Islamic Republic: The People Have Already Defined Three Red Lines

The habitual excuse of politicians is: "We don't know what comes next." That excuse is no longer acceptable.

Iran after the Islamic Republic is neither a dangerous unknown nor a vacuum the world should fear. On the contrary, the end of this ideological regime would mean removing one of the most chronic sources of regional and international instability and opening a set of political, economic, and security opportunities for the world. Fearmongering about "Iran's tomorrow" is less rooted in reality than in narratives repeated for years to justify appeasement of the status quo.

First, Iran after the Islamic Republic will be a country whose foreign policy is defined by national interests, not ideology and permanent enemy-making. Ending a regime that seeks its survival in crisis and tension naturally reduces the level of threat to neighbors and international partners to near zero. An Iran that no longer needs to export crisis to mask domestic failure will have no reason to intervene and destabilize others.



Second, a free Iran can quickly become a responsible, predictable, law-abiding actor in the international system. Adherence to international commitments, transparency in diplomacy, and respect for accepted global rules will not be luxury choices but necessities for rebuilding the country. Such an Iran will not carry a permanent crisis file, nor will it rely on coercion and extortion as a tool.

Third, from a security perspective, Iran after the Islamic Republic will be a force for de-escalation, not a source of it. Ending proxy networks, stopping hostage diplomacy, and abandoning the language of threats directly reduces security risks for the region and the world. This transformation lightens the security burden on many states and makes constructive cooperation possible.

Fourth, Iran's future has the capacity to become a reliable economic partner. A country with immense human and natural resources, an exceptional geopolitical position, and a large market can become a driver of regional growth if it operates under the rule of law and economic transparency. In that environment, instead of sanctions and tension, mutual economic interests replace them—and that, in itself, becomes a durable guarantee of stability.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, Iran after the Islamic Republic will be built on the free will of its people. Iranians have already defined their red lines:

- A **secular government**, based on the complete separation of religion and state;
- The preservation of **territorial integrity**—not one millimeter of Iran's land must be reduced or separated;
- A **real democracy**: free elections, peaceful rotation of power, rule of law, an independent judiciary.

The final form of government—republic or a parliamentary constitutional monarchy—must be determined through a free public referendum. This is the right of a nation, and international law recognizes it as the right of self-determination.

So you do not need to worry about the “type of government.” You only need to defend the people's right to choose. That is all.

Therefore, “Iran's tomorrow” is neither a threat nor an unquantifiable risk. Iran's tomorrow is an opportunity—an opportunity to end the cycle of crisis, to restore rationality to regional politics, and to shape a country that exports stability and cooperation instead of tension.

Iran after the Islamic Republic will not be a danger to the world—but it can be one of the greatest opportunities for the region's future and for the international order.

## Closing Words

Now the people of Iran have the right to ask: were these only words, or a political commitment?

We do not know what you meant by “help is on its way.” But we do know one thing: the people of Iran are waiting—not to be “saved,” but to see whether the hope you created has any real backing.

If action proportionate to the depth of this tragedy does not occur today, your name will not be recorded alongside those who stood with freedom, but alongside the long list of those who could have done something—and did not.

This is a test not only for Iran, but for the credibility of the claim of moral leadership in the world.

This letter is not courtesy.

And it predicts the future judgment today: **history remembers only “action” from among all words.**

**Ehsan Tarinia — Luxembourg**