

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 10, 2012

Baroness Catherine Ashton
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Commission Vice-President
European Union

Dear Baroness Ashton:

The United States and Europe have stood shoulder to shoulder in confronting the threat posed by Iran's illicit nuclear activities. We are deeply grateful to the leadership of the European Union and its member states for working closely with the United States and other responsible countries around the world in response to this grave danger.

We write to you now to express our belief that 2012 will bring a turning point in the confrontation between Iran and the international community. Despite economic sanctions that have been put in place in recent years, the strategic calculus of the Iranian regime with regard to its nuclear program has not changed. Despite repeated and continuing attempts at engagement, Iran's leaders show no willingness to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as the UN Security Council has demanded, or to negotiate seriously with the international community. Instead, Iran's nuclear program is moving forward -- sharply increasing the risks of either a military confrontation or other countries in the Middle East pursuing their own nuclear arsenals.

For this reason, we believe that it is necessary now to put additional pressure on the Iranian regime by imposing an embargo on its most important export -- oil -- and sanctions on its primary financial intermediary -- the Central Bank of Iran. We are deeply grateful that the European Union is now actively considering both of these important measures.

As you know, the Central Bank of Iran has been carrying out illicit and deceptive financial activities that are supporting the Iranian government's advancing nuclear program. For this reason, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States have moved forward with sanctions against the Central Bank. The United States Senate, in fact, recently voted 100-0 to impose sanctions that seek to cut off Iran's Central Bank from the rest of the international financial system. We believe that it is of critical importance for the European Union to impose its own sanctions against the Central Bank.


As you also know, oil is the greatest source of income for the Iranian government, and is therefore the main source of funding for its illicit nuclear activities. It is not a coincidence that Iran's oil sector is increasingly dominated by companies tied to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which is also at the heart of the Iranian nuclear program.

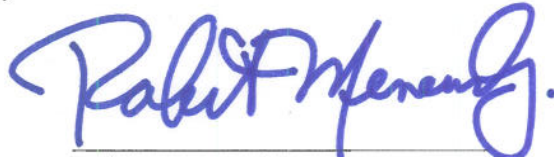
We are very encouraged by reports that the EU has resolved in principle to impose an oil embargo on Iran. We thank you for this important and powerful decision and hope that the timetable for implementation can proceed as rapidly as possible. We also believe that it is very important that an oil embargo is accompanied by sanctions against Iran's Central Bank.


We recognize that EU sanctions against the Central Bank of Iran and an oil embargo are tough measures that will have consequences that must be carefully managed. Nonetheless, we believe that both are absolutely necessary if we are to prevent the Iranian regime from acquiring nuclear weapons and thereby foreclose either a regional war or a cascade of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. We are confident that non-Iranian oil producers can be persuaded to increase oil production and ensure the stability of global markets and prices.


We thank you for your attention to this important matter, and for your leadership.

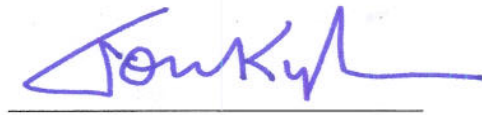
Sincerely,

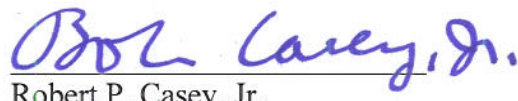

Joseph I. Lieberman
UNITED STATES SENATOR

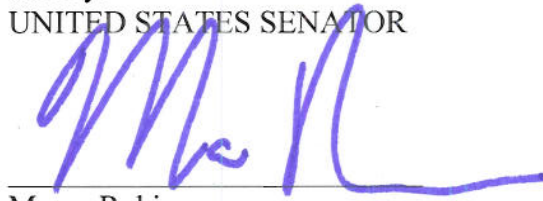

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CC: President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy
CC: Foreign Ministers of the European Union