

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

**DUBOWITZ:** So hi, everybody. Welcome to FDD. I'm Mark Dubowitz, I'm the Chief Executive here, and we're here at a somber time to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the murder of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian, who was brutally murdered by the regime for not having her hijab in place.

So it's a moment of sadness but it's also a time to celebrate and celebrate the Iranian people, and particularly the Iranian woman who, inspired by Mahsa Amini, launched a campaign for women, for life, for freedom.

And I -want to take a moment also to acknowledge their incredible struggle. As many of you know, the regime brutally cracked down on them, killing over 600 Iranians, arresting over 22,000, killing, I think, 79, 80 children. There were also attacks against 500 schools using chemical weapons.

So we at FDD have been tracking this for the year. We also have been acknowledging that these protests haven't stopped, even though the media has stopped covering them. And so we have a protest tracker we would encourage you to take a look at every week to see that Iranians are still on the streets and there are, you know, dozens, if not hundreds of protests every week.

I'm very, will be very pleased to introduce members of Congress when they arrive. There are votes taking place right now on the Hill. So we're really pleased that they are going to be able to attend.

But in the meantime, I want to introduce my fabulous friend and colleague, Behnam Ben Taleblu. 10 years ago, he came to us as a young researcher, and has really established himself as a leading voice, a renowned expert on Iran. He's both an expert in terms of the depth of his knowledge, and he's gracious and graceful in how he handles the issue and has situated himself in the Washington policy ecosystem.

So Behnam, I'd like to welcome you, maybe give some remarks, and take them — an opportunity for you and I to discuss this issue, and then we'll include the members of Congress when they arrive. Behnam, thanks.

(APPLAUSE)

**BEN TALEBLU:** Thank you so much, Mark, for that very kind and generous introduction. And thank you to friends familiar faces, new faces, distinguished members of the think tank audience, Washington audience, press corps, diplomatic corps, and those who are tuning in via livestream.

We all have a song, a song whose lyrics resonate not just with us but beyond us. That's what "Baraye," or "For..." in Persian, by Shervin Hajipour, became just over one year ago to thousands, if not millions of Iranian protesters.

Triggered by the brutal beating and killing of Mahsa Zhina Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's harsh and discriminatory female dress code, protests led by a new and younger generation of Iran's best and brightest and bravest took to the streets.

"For all the countless fors," sung Hajipour, or more aptly in Persian ...

"*Baraye einhameh 'baraye' gheire tekrari,*" [برای این همه برای غیر تکراری]

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

... that outpouring of Iranians mere hours after Mahsa's hospitalization and death led to a sustained wave of nationwide protests in 2022 and into 2023 that, at its height, touched over 150 different cities, towns, and villages across all of Iran's 30 diverse provinces. It also threaded together the widest ever ranging demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic protest movement to date in the 44-year history of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

What united so many Iranians were, to borrow from Hajipour, countless "fors," or countless predicates for dissatisfaction, discontent, and dissent, but all those "Fors" were rooted in one fundamental and axiomatic recognition — that the government of the Islamic Republic in its entirety is to blame.

As the many scholars and watchers of — and analysts of Iran seated here know, protests against the Islamic Republic have essentially been around as long as there's been an Islamic Republic itself. So why then do protests matter? How can they be novel? And why do they matter more at one point in time than another point in time?

The answer can be found in the dynamic and evolving nature of the contest between the state and the street in Iran and the quest for representative government. While many in the West are now familiar with the Tehran-centric uprisings about a decade apart in 1999 and 2009 tied to the Reform Movement, trend lines from the more recent and fast-evolving pattern of Iranian protests, particularly since 2017, indicates a move away from reform and towards revolution. Yes, a revolution against the Islamic Revolution.

Of note, major anti-regime protests are happening more often in Iran, with sometimes just weeks or months separating them, not decades. What's more, they are often happening, drawn from the socioeconomic and geographic periphery of the country, and often by classes or generations of people whom the regime thought they could forever co-opt or control.

For example, the protests following the killing of Mahsa in September of last year were not at all the first nationwide anti-regime protests of Iran in 2022. The regime repressed a nationwide uprising only months earlier in May of that year, triggered by a confluence of economic factors that included austerity budgets, pandemic and Ukraine war-induced food and supply chain shocks and shortages, as well as, of course, government mismanagement, that would all merge together with the countless other "fors" simmering constantly beneath the surface in Iran.

When piecing together these various rounds of protests, like a mosaic, they represent a larger nationwide struggle that is ongoing against the Islamic Republic. And don't just take it from me and don't just take it from FDD, take it from slogans heard across Iran in recent years and what they prove to you about the Iranian people.

"Gone is anti-Americanism."

"*Doshman-e Haminjast, dorough migan Amrikast.*" [دشمن ما همینجاست دروغ میگویند آمریکا است]

"Our enemy is here. They are lying when they say it's America," chant protesters. Gone are previously deemed taboos.

"Reza Shah, *Rouhet Shad.*" [رضا شاه، روحش شاد] or Reza Shah, bless your soul.

Gone are the sacred cows of not insulting the Supreme Leader.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu

“Khamenei Ghateleh, Velayatesh Bateleh,” [خامنه‌ای قاتله، ولایتش باطله]

Or “Khamenei is a murderer, his guardianship is invalid.”

Gone too is the dissonance between the center and the periphery.

“Az Zahedan ta Tehran, Janam Fadaye Iran” [از زاهدان تا تهران جانم فدای ایران],  
Or “from Zahedan to Tehran, I sacrifice my life for Iran.”

Gone too is the pretense of reform.

“Eslah-Talab, Usoolgara, digeh tamooome Maajera” Or “principalist, reformist, the jig is up,” is another.

Gone seemingly, even in the face of massive repression, is the fear of Iran's security apparatus.

“Basiji, Sepahi, Daesh-e ma Shoma-ie,” [بسیجی، سپاهی، داعش ما شمایی]

Or “Basiji, IRGC, you are our ISIS.”

As is apparent in these slogans in recent protest history, political protests are not waiting anymore for political events in Iran, like elections, to touch them off. They are happening constantly and are triggered by social, economic, and even environmental issues, resulting in a more frequent boom and bust cycle that Washington cannot afford to get caught flat-footed on and cannot afford to ignore.

Here at FDD, we're making sure that does not happen and that the Iranian people's struggle remains part of the strategic discussion and un-divorced from the need for things that are urgent, like counter-terrorism policy or counter-proliferation policy.

We will therefore continue to devise new ways and innovative ways for Washington and the international community to hold Iran's repressive apparatus to account, to oppose policies that enrich the oppressors of the Iranian people, and to shine a light on the nexus between Tehran's foreign aggression and Tehran's domestic suppression.

This means making sure that every single time the Iranian people protest, Washington is aware. To that effect, during the Mahsa protests, FDD launched an interactive protest tracker, which Mark mentioned, on our website, tallying and documenting every reported protest in Iran of various sizes, of various scales, from across social media, with sourcing, with great detail, as well as with an ongoing data collection effort to tally deaths, including of minors, as well as of arrests of protesting Iranians at the hands of the government of the Islamic Republic.

And perhaps, on a more personal note, I'm proud to say that, as an Iranian-American, in my decade with FDD, I have to tell you, I've never seen a day where we work with less vim and vigor to develop complementary policy prongs in support of the Iranian people, as we do to devise strategies to pressure the Islamic Republic.

Why? Because of all of our own “fors”, and for the “fors” that we all share, for Mahsa Zhina Amini, for Hadis Najafi, for Aida Rostami, for Ghazaleh Chalabi, for Hananeh Kia, for Sarina Esmaelzadeh, for Mona Naqeeb, for Minoo Majidi, for Fereshteh Ahmadi, for Nika Shakarami, for “Zan, Zendegi, Azadi” [زن، زندگی، آزادی], or “Women, Life, Freedom.”

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And of course, for Mohammad Mehdi Karami, for Mohammad Hosseini, for Mohammad Rakhshani, for Reza Shahparnia, for Behnam Layeghpour, for Javad Heydari, for Fereydoun Mahmoudi, for Hamidreza Rouhi, for Majid Reza Rahnavard, for Kian Pirfalak, for “Mard, Mihaan, Abadi” [مرد, میهن, آبادی], or “Man, Homeland, Prosperity.”

And obviously, to connect the dots and to respect all that came before, for Navid Afkari, for Sattar Beheshti, for Pouya Bakhtiari, and who could forget, Neda Agha-Soltan.

Thank you for your time and attention today. And I'm eager to join Mark on the panel for questions, and eager to have the members of Congress come up and grace us with their presence and insights. Thank you all so much.

(APPLAUSE)

**DUBOWITZ:** Oh, hello.

**TENNEY:** Hello.

**DUBOWITZ:** What a nice surprise.

**TENNEY:** Thank you.

**DUBOWITZ:** Hi, Congresswoman. Mark Dubowitz.

**TENNEY:** Nice to meet you.

**DUBOWITZ:** Nice to meet you, Claudia.

**TENNEY:** Tell me where I'm going.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, right over there would be great.

**TENNEY:** Anywhere — here — here — here? Let me move my big thing here.

**DUBOWITZ:** Great. You want to join — you want to join us in the meantime? Yeah, please. So ...

**TENNEY:** ... thank you, it's so nice to meet you.

**DUBOWITZ:** Congresswoman, thank you so much. Lots of votes going on on the Hill. We're — we're ...

**TENNEY:** Not a lot, just untimely.

**DUBOWITZ:** Untimely. Well, we're very grateful that you — you've joined us.

I want to just give you a little bit of background on FDD. But a simple mission statement, which I think will resonate with you, which is we're a think tank of — that's about turning ideas into action, in defense for American national security. And I think — you're a member of Congress who's all about turning ideas into action, and we've seen that in all your activity on the Hill.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

So first of all, thank you for all you do for our country. And second, this is obviously a somber week, where we're commemorating the death, the murder of Mahsa Amini, a -20 year old — 22-year-old Iranian, who was in Tehran just, you know, enjoying the day. Her hijab was not positioned properly, and she was arrested and beaten senseless and ultimately died at the hands of the regime.

I want to talk a little bit about your legislative track record on the Iran issue. Maybe we could start with the Mahsa Act. Tell us a little bit about it and what you hope to achieve with it.

**TENNEY:** Well, thank you, and thank you for having me and thank you for what you do. I appreciate it.

Once I signed on to your website — I obviously have a personal interest — good former chief of staff now joined you, who's a tremendous person and really kind of bolstered and helped us out with a lot of our Iranian, Middle Eastern agenda.

But I've always been interested, and not for — really — mostly because of a really good friend of mine who I had met, who became a client of mine in my old — before politics and everything in my old region, who was — escaped the Khomeini regime, who had worked for the Shah, and was hidden in a dairy farm in upstate New York.

So I actually learned a lot from him, and got to meet so many incredible Iranian people and meeting so many people in the Middle East and getting the opportunity to really understand how critically important this part of the world is to our national security and — and where — why it's so fragile.

So to me, I think we need to be leaders in the United States on this issue. I followed through, and as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, of which I'm not on now but I still maintain my portfolio for Foreign Affairs — I'm on Ways and Means and Science, Space, and Technology.

But I really have a passion for this part of the world. And I just think right now we are in such a fragile place and we need to advocate strongly. I'm very concerned about a lot of the actions of the administration, in terms of not taking advantage of some things we could be doing and were started in the last administration.

And so this whole situation last year with the — Mahsa Amini was just really heart-wrenching for me to see the Iranian people stand up for a young, courageous woman and all these women to stand up and throw their veils aside and stand up against the regime, knowing they're probably going to be killed or jailed or lose maybe an eye at this point. We know that that's another cruel aspect of what the regime is doing to retaliate against anyone.

So we've just taken a strong stand and really taken a deep dive into the issues there. I mean, Iran is a huge country with, I think, 90, 87, 88 million people, really situated in a way where they have also a large amount of the oil supply in the world. So they have energy issues. They've got China that they're kind of moving closer to.

So I just think right now it's such an issue, and I think the opportunity to go back with snapback sanctions — I want to say that my colleague, Josh Gottheimer, who's coming in, co-signed that letter on taking advantage of these snapback sanctions that are before the UN this — and, you know, we're going to lose some of these ballistic missile opportunities to cut that — to fold those back in October.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And the administration just doesn't seem to want to — they just want to negotiate and get engaged in hostage deals. I really am very concerned about this \$6 billion hostage exchange, especially when you hear from key leaders in Iran that say "good, we're going to take 1,000 more hostages and we're going to build back our economy just on using hostage taking."

So these are dangerous times. And I think the people of Iran expect and want the United States to be the beacon of hope and freedom and that we will stand up courageously. I just don't — I just don't see why we're not doing that and taking advantage of the moment. But I feel like this tentative foreign policy that we have and sort of the weakness in the administration is part of what's happening.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah. I want to ask you specifically about the Mahsa Act because it calls on the administration to impose human rights sanctions on — on the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as on the Iranian president, Raisi.

And it comes at a — at an interesting time because next week in New York, at the UN General Assembly, the — President Raisi will be speaking — and he'll also be speaking at some side events, including at the — at the — at Council on Foreign Relations, which has invited him to speak.

So we have this prospect of a — a mass-murdering Iranian President, not only given an opportunity and a platform to speak at UNGA [United Nations General Assembly] — again, correct, he spoke there last year — but also to speak, you know, at a think tank event.

Talk a little bit about both the Mahsa Act, with respect to human rights sanctions, but also you and, I believe, Senator Cruz introduced another piece of legislation.

**TENNEY:** Right. Yeah, the -SEVER Act, which prevents the Iranian Leader from entering the United States and getting the aid and security of our tax dollars, our security to make sure — to keep him safe. We think he should be banned from entering the United States. And that's an act I have with Senator Cruz, and we're hoping that we can stop this from happening.

I don't know why the administration is giving aid and comfort and security and a and a U.S. platform to someone who has committed just unthinkable atrocities on the Iranian people.

I mean, I went to the exhibit yesterday, which were — — the Iranian diaspora is holding in the Capitol. It's in Rayburn if you want to go see it. I mean, it's got pictures memorializing the people — over 500 protesters murdered by the regime, including Mahsa.

Also, the number of young people who've had their eyes shot out, you know, just to make their lives difficult, to — to derogate them, the grave sites that are being just destroyed of various people that were killed already by the regime. You know, we're watching on Twitter every time somebody gets arrested or taken over by the regime.

And so I — I just think it's so important that we take a stand on this. I — it's not really a partisan issue. And that I really — I don't know when Josh — when Josh is coming, but he's been a really great partner with us.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And — and actually, you know, the act that we — we did, just recognizing the bravery of women and — and people and protestors this year earlier in the House was almost unanimous. I mean, the only vote we didn't get was Tom Massie, but that's a libertarian specialized vote. He's not a — he's not against it, it's just his own — you know, his own unique brand of libertarianism.

And so anyway, we got a unanimous — so, again, it's a bipartisan issue. It's very important that we — we do this now. I just think the — you know — and I like to imagine a Middle East where we take away this factor in Iran, the state sponsor of terror, the people that are providing money and resources to some of our enemies, even now in South America and places like that, that we have an opportunity to actually bring peace and prosperity to people in the Middle East after it — following up on the Abraham Accords.

I think it's an incredible opportunity but we're not taking advantage of it, and we're missing steps all along the way.

**DUBOWITZ:** No, that's exactly right.

**TENNEY:** Yeah.

**DUBOWITZ:** I mean, I think, first of all, the notion of Raisi in New York is horrendous, given what he's done to the Iranian people. But, I mean, it's worth emphasizing of course that also Raisi and his regime are threatening Americans and American officials with assassination.

You know, we take that seriously at the FDD because FDD has been sanctioned by Iran, five individuals at FDD have been sanctioned. And of course, when Iran sanctions you, they don't expect to be seizing your assets at the Central Bank of Iran or barring you from travel to Iran, they — this — this is a — they're targeting you and they're targeting U.S. officials, they're targeting people in the think tank community, they're obviously targeting, most emphatically, Iranian dissidents.

And so for that reason, Congresswoman, I'd like to just emphasize, having Council on Foreign Relations actually give a platform to a mass-murdering dictator who's targeting Americans is something that we — we find beyond the pale.

**TENNEY:** Yeah, very — I agree 100 percent. I will tell you one other thing that I did do, because we did have this in our National Defense Authorization Act — the higher — the administration was supposed to provide us with a report on the activities of the IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps].

Of course, they never did it, so I took it upon myself to actually create our own report using open sources. And among those things are attacking Secretary Pompeo, former National Security Advisor John Bolton, all these people who have been targeted.

We put our — what we could put together with open source, we did. I did my own report, since the administration never came out with one in a timely way, so — hey, Josh.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Great to see you.

**TENNEY:** Great to see you.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

**GOTTHEIMER:** ... sorry I'm a minute late. I apologize.

**TENNEY:** Not too much time left but go ahead.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Well, you own it, so go ahead.

**TENNEY:** Thank you. No ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** I'll jump in whenever.

**TENNEY:** Thank you. We've just been complimenting you, so chime in.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Thank you, thank you.

**TENNEY:** Just — we just talked ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** So I missed it?

**TENNEY:** Yeah, I'm sorry. It's all on tape.

It's all taped. Somebody's got it.

Yeah — no — and just say thank you for you with doing the snapback sanctions letter. I guess we're the only ones that have ever done it.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Yeah that was a great thing to work together on.

**TENNEY:** Thank you. Yeah, great partner. We — I was just telling him this is a bipartisan issue. I mean, everyone knows that, even the — you know, the — our act — the bill that we did in — I think it was January, you know, everyone but Massie signed on, and I consider that unanimous.

(LAUGHTER)

**GOTTHEIMER:** Exactly.

**DUBOWITZ:** Hey, Congressman, Thank you for joining us.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Thanks for having me.

**DUBOWITZ:** Real pleasure. And thank you for all the — all the work you do on the Hill. I was saying to the Congresswoman, turning — really turning ideas into action. So we're very grateful for that. I know many of your amendments have been adopted, and I think you're in the top 10 of members of Congress who have amendments being adopted on the floor and elsewhere.

**GOTTHEIMER:** If you write thousands enough, it's just percentage.



## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

(LAUGHTER)

**DUBOWITZ:** Congressman, let me ask you this — obviously the administration is — has — negotiating a — an arrangement, a deal, call it what you will, on giving billions of dollars to the regime in exchange for some fairly limited nuclear concessions.

I wanted to note, by the way, that the — I think the notice to Congress for the \$6 billion was issued on 9/11, which was sort of a strange day to be sending the leading state sponsor of terrorism \$6 billion.

Talk a little bit about your — sort of your perspective on this arrangement, the necessity of congressional oversight and review, and also just to put it in the perspective of -the week that we're commemorating, which is the murder of Mahsa Amini and the launch of the Iranian protests against this regime.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Well, first, thank you for doing it this week. I think it's critically important, both on the 9/11 side, on the anniversary. It's just a — and thank you for all of FDD's work — because I — this issue, as Congresswoman Tenney knows, is so critical to our fight in the United States against terror and against those who seek to do us harm.

And when you talk about Iran, as we — you know, I don't know if the Congresswoman talked about this, but obviously the legislation we passed earlier this week all focused on making sure that we hold Iran accountable for their continued nuclear activity and for their continued terror activity.

And your organization always has — FDD always has, I should say — for a clear reason, that it's key to America's national security and our fight, and I think with 9/11 this week, a reminder of our fight globally against terror, against Iran and its proxies, right, and against Hezbollah and Hamas and Palestinian Jihad.

And we've seen this activity continue now directly — more directly through IRGC now than ever before, right, and in Israel more directly on the ground.

So I look at whatever deal they come — whatever ultimate conclusion, whenever — if a deal gets inked and it's finalized and done, on their side, I think it's very important — and all these deals, I've always felt this way — and we've signed letters and — on — on this front that they should come to Congress, and frankly any president should come to Congress, and ask for approval, especially on Iran, where we've been clear — and I've led letters saying that you have to come to us on legislation like this.

When they were talking about doing JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] part two in the beginning of the administration, I led a group of people, including mostly Democrats, because I wanted to send a very clear signal that if you do JCPOA part two, you have to come to the Congress and actually ask for — that should be brought before — for us for approval because of, I believe, how — and those of us who opposed the first deal realized how dangerous that it could be to support an — a country that is clearly now — and we've seen this in the last year, right — in bed with the Russians and with the Chinese against Ukrainians, on the drone front, on other activity, on the military side.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

So I think right now we're at a pivotal moment with Iran. We'll see on this. I know some of them on the Intelligence Committee now, so I — I've been fully briefed on this particular thing. So I — I'll leave other aspects of this I can't talk about — but regardless of what the ultimate agreement is, I think it's got to be brought to us for review, and I think that's very important.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, I'm glad you said that because certainly I think the administration realizes that there's — there won't be an agreement to sign, and they're trying everything they can to construct an arrangement to circumvent Congress and your authorities under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

So I'm pleased to hear that Congress is pushing for oversight because, again, it's going to be the release of not \$6 billion but hundreds of billions dollars in sanctions relief.

And you mentioned China. I wanted to ask both of you about that problem. I think — over the past couple years, I think those of us who've been tracking this have noticed that there's been a massive increase in Chinese oil purchases, and reports recently of about a million and a half barrels of — a day of Iranian oil are going to China, which is valued somewhere in the neighborhood of 25, 40, \$50 billion, depending on market prices and discounts.

Could you both talk about the China-Iran relationship, and anything that you sort of have in mind with respect to what the administration could and should be doing on China and Iran?

**TENNEY:** Right. Well, I think we alluded to this earlier, that China is moving closer and closer to Iran. They provide something like 90 percent of their resources, not just energy but food. It's one of the reasons that was stated — I'll say publicly stated that the Saudis went to broker some kind of deal between China and Iran, because China could actually enact the most leverage against Iran, because of the situation there. At least that was what they stated — there was — there — was the reason.

But China is, you know, very important there. I mean, what do you got? Iran is, I think, over three billion barrels per day they're producing. Still in the top 10 oil producers. So an important ally for China. China doesn't look at them as , you know, ethically and morally like we might look at them.

But I think it's a huge problem and it's why I think we should stop getting into hostage deals, stop keep — stop talking about the JCPOA and getting back into these deals, and really standing up to what the enrichment is — has — happening on the nuclear side, all these issues.

I just think the administration could be bolder, could take on and extend some of the good policies that came out of the last administration and build on those. I just worry that once, you know, we've got China moving that close to Iran, it's going to be almost impossible to separate that issue.

And they're continuing to allow Iran oxygen, so they can continue to be a sponsor of terror, and now giving them \$6 billion, plus hundreds of billions in energy and everything else that's happening, you're going to give them even more power.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And they're not going to — they're certainly not — I just don't buy that they're going to spend this money. As [Secretary Anthony] Blinken indicates, it's going to be monitored and only used for humanitarian aid. Does that mean we're going to deal with the — you know, the hostages and the, I think, 19,000 people who've been jailed or — and put away, you know, for protesting in the streets? I mean, what are we getting for this? I mean, I really am concerned about the nature of that. And maybe Josh could ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** They're both human rights abusers, right? I mean, start there.

**TENNEY:** Absolutely.

**GOTTHEIMER:** ... as the — the — part of the purpose of us coming together today, right? We — we know that. We know the tens of thousands of people who have been arrested in the last year in Iran, we — the — those who have lost their lives, young people who have lost their lives.

And the Chinese have a very long record of human rights abuse. So they have that in common. As the Congresswoman said rightly, you know, this is a relationship based on mutual need, right and ones that are willing to look past the stuff that we're not willing to look past.

And, you know, I think given — you know, those of us who have long believed that Iran lies about literally everything, they don't tell the truth about anything, right — the Iranian government, not the people, the government, right — and — on JCPOA, on the nuclear deals, on their failure to — of they still have commitments with Europe that they failed, as we've talked about, and the efforts we've done together, right — they — on their terror activity, their claims that they have no control over their proxies over the years, right, their attacks of Americans and our bases and our allies, you can't trust them on anything.

So — and so the — anyone who's surprised about the last year, on the Iranians with the Russians and the Chinese and getting in bed with them further, like, I don't know, I was — be, like, how could you even be remotely surprised about that?

**TENNEY:** Right.

**GOTTHEIMER:** So my feeling on that is I'm not surprised. I'm — I am only shocked of just how blatant they have been about their activity and their weapons support. So I think it's an alarming issue that we have to pay very close attention to every day.

And I worry about the depth of those relationships with the Chinese government because it helps the Chinese quite a bit on the oil front and puts us in a — in — puts us in an increasingly tough position.

It's why the Abraham Accords and other strategic relationships are so important in the region — and — and I think that's been huge progress — and I'm glad this administration recognized the benefits of the Abraham Accords, that's been a good thing, and trying to deepen them and extend them. That's good. Builds on the last administration's success on that front, and I think that's a huge success.

So I — you know, I believe those — from a regional perspective and from a global perspective, those are the kind of efforts we should be putting more energy into.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

**DUBOWITZ:** Well, I know — I got a note that you both have to leave, but I wanted to first thank you for coming, but I also wanted to thank you ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** I feel badly that I made the Congresswoman carry and do all the work.

Sorry.

**DUBOWITZ:** I'll note she did a great job, so.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Yeah. Thank you so much. Thank you.

**DUBOWITZ:** But also, every — everything you've done, I think to both put maximum pressure on the regime but also to provide maximum support to the Iranian people — I mean, I think at FDD, we believe in twinning maximum pressure with maximum support as a sound U.S. policy.

And even though that I think the administration has sort of backed down on maximum pressure, I think we should all get behind, on a bipartisan basis, maximum support for, you know, the 80-plus million Iranians who, at the end of the day, want life, want freedom, want prosperity. So thank you to you both for ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** Which is why you're right, that we actually have to completely tighten sanctions and continue to — tightening sanctions and — and make sure they snap back.

**TENNEY:** I think if the administration were to support our snapback sanctions request, I think that would be a huge step forward in helping. I look, we — we're running out of time, but maybe we can go together and do that.

**GOTTHEIMER:** I'm happy to do it.

... but I think that's the key we ...

**TENNEY:** Yeah, that's the key.

**GOTTHEIMER:** ... we have to keep up the pressure, because otherwise, if we you know — and I think that was working, the pressure, and you — that's why you've got to be very careful on how much you ease that pressure.

**DUBOWITZ:** No, that's exactly right. So again, thank — I would love to actually spend all afternoon talking to you — and I don't know if you — I think your staff — nope, I see one of your staff are ...

**TENNEY:** Did they call — did they actually call votes? How much time do we have?

**DUBOWITZ:** I think you — they called votes.

**TENNEY:** Did they? I — yeah.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

**DUBOWITZ:** I'll thank you again. I certainly invite you back because — we'd love to talk more about snapback, we'd love to talk more about congressional oversight of the nuclear deal, and I think we'd love to talk to you about, again, a maximum support campaign, a legislative strategy, because I think ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** To help the Iranian people.

**DUBOWITZ:** To help the Iranian people.

**TENNEY:** Yeah, it's critically important.

**DUBOWITZ:** You know, I think the United States missed a huge opportunity during these protests to provide what the Iranian people really needed on a whole host of issues, and this really practical action.

**GOTTHEIMER:** If you had a magic wand, what would you be — do today?

**DUBOWITZ:** What would I do today, with respect to the protests?

**GOTTHEIMER:** Yeah.

**DUBOWITZ:** I think — you know, magic wand would be to provide the Iranian people with everything they need to evade the security forces, right? So there are technologies that we can get in their hands. We have capabilities in the United States and through our allies, particularly, to help identify members of the security forces, name who they are, show their faces, provide technologies to — to blind the security forces. I mean, you could imagine ...

**TENNEY:** But, you know ...

**DUBOWITZ:** ... had there been, like, a cyber initiative ...

**TENNEY:** But one of the things that we did — Josh and I did together on our act that — in January was we actually — not only do we support the Iranian people, we also urged Elon Musk to provide Starlink so we could get notifications, so the world would know what was happening. We did a lot of that. I mean, we were pushing on every angle we could to give them the notoriety, the recognition. We've pushed on Parliament who — and, you know, the European Union, of course, did not pick up on our request.

But at least we got IRGC designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the US. The Parliament recognized it, they didn't finalize it. We needed the European Union to come — we've done — we've — we're pressuring it every way we can, to give the notoriety to the people so people know they're suffering, that they know that — you know, between — the regime is shooting out the eyes of healthy young people, you know, in a disgusting, you know, act against them.

And we've just — we've done a — we've put a lot of pressure. We just need the administration, I think, and I think I would love to, like, see if we could do some more work on getting more members on both sides to really come together.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, one thing on my wish list would be — and Ronald Reagan did this during the Cold War with Solidarity in Poland — was set up some kind of strike fund for Iranians who are going on strike and encouraging them to stay on strike.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

Obviously, there are no unions in Iran. They're not gonna be getting union support at all. When they go on strike, it's — they're not gonna have the money to feed their families. But I think what they're — Reagan administration understood is you can do a lot to provide ...

**GOTTHEIMER:** ...and I'm sure they're afraid because they've gotten the death penalty — people get the death penalty for speaking out.

**DUBOWITZ:** Right, right.

**GOTTHEIMER:** I mean, it's — and the fear that's — the — that they've imposed on the people there.

**DUBOWITZ:** Right. But at least provide them with a strike fund so you — when they're going on strike and they're in the — they're out there on the streets facing down the brutality of these security forces, there's a way to actually provide them with the support they need to feed their families.

You might have, you know, more than 100, 200,000 Iranians on the street as a result, you may have millions, and they — and that's ultimately going to be the decisive moment.

**GOTTHEIMER:** Well, I've got to go, but the good news is this is bipartisan. So I think that's — we've just got to keep growing the bipartisan support for this, because regardless of administration or Congress or the Senate, whoever's in charge, this has to be something that we're focused on as a country, so ...

(CROSS-TALK)

I want to thank the Congresswoman.

**DUBOWITZ:** Thank you, everybody.

(APPLAUSE)

**TENNEY:** Thank you.

**DUBOWITZ:** Thank you, Congresswoman.

**ABONYI:** Ladies and gentlemen, we will take audience questions with Mark Dubowitz and Behnam in a moment, once the representatives leave. So if you'll just sit tight, you'll have all the time in the world.

**DUBOWITZ:** Okay, I think we'll just — we'll continue the discussion. And I think what we want to do is we — this is sort of a great segue into, like, drilling into, you know, what can be done from an action perspective. What does maximum support look like for the Iranian people?

So certainly whatever's on your mind, in terms of Q&A — we've got one of Washington's top Iran experts here to analyze the situation but also to talk about, again, what does maximum support look like and what can be done?

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

**BEN TALEBLU:** And we have a wealth of expertise in the room too, covering many sides of the political spectrum. So, you know, consider it maybe a two-way street on some of the issues, particularly that are coming up, whatever your lane or vector of interest — human rights and the other, you know, great power, strategic competition, because all of this stuff, I think, as both member of Congress has alluded to, is quite interconnected.

The — domestic repression, the foreign aggression is connected. The great power patronage is connected. There are literally Chinese tech firms that are subject to U.S. sanctions today that are doing the opposite of what Mark said, which is helping the regime, not helping the people, but helping the regime identify through facial recognition software and cameras on streets who is protesting, where are they protesting, where are they going back to? Creating a — a literal database of addresses, faces, and then helping the security force merge them with names, to be able to empower Iran's apparatus of repression.

So there is breadth and depth there to discuss, but I think it was a pretty helpful discussion by both sides of the aisle here. This morning, I was testifying before the Hill. Again, a lot of bipartisan consensus on the need to do this and a lot of shared consensus.

I see many friends in the audience now. NUFDI, National Union for Democracy in Iran, also stands very strongly in favor of maximum support, amplifying many of their own policy recommendations in this space as well.

There is much more that unites us, one year after Mahsa, than divides us. So I think that — that, we definitely have in our favor.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, so if — as you think of questions — by the way, I — one of the things I kind of want to go to you is — I want to just give a huge shoutout to the Iranian-American community, particularly on the incredible work and advocacy and education that they did on the — on the Mahsa Act.

I mean, it's — as somebody who's been working in this town for 20 years and has seen other organizations who claim to represent the Iranian-American community, consistently on the wrong side of the issue, it was a real pleasure to see the Iranian-American community mobilize and in support of Mahsa's memory and in support of real legislation that I think has some real teeth. So huge shoutout to the Iranian-American community. Aykan

**ERDEMIR:** Aykan Erdemir, ADL [Anti-Defamation League]. Thank you, Mark, for — and FDD for honoring Mahsa's legacy today. And thank you, Behnam, for your really moving speech.

I have a question about transatlantic action. You know lately, we have been witnessing some momentum in the UK concerning the designation of the IRGC. We have seen similar momentum within the European Union, but ultimately, we don't see that final step.

So what role can the United States play or what leverage does the United States play in getting transatlantic allies to take that final step? I know it won't be the final, but that important step, which would begin with the designation of the IRGC.

**BEN TALEBLU:** I think it's a very critical question. We have, quite literally, members of European embassies in the room, distinguished lawyers who are working on this issue as well, quite literally finding every single angle to begin with.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

But the lack of an IRGC terror designation or a lack of an IRGC terror prescription by our friends across the pond, if you will, in the UK and in the EU space, is a symptom of a broader problem. And step one in that broader problem is there has been a mistrust in the goals.

To what purpose are these sanctions supposed to be levied? We saw, for instance, the European Union, the European Community, not trust in 2020, for example — August, September 2020, not trust the Trump administration's effort to try to restore an international arms embargo was sincere. September or August 2020.

September 2022 is also the one-year anniversary of the widest ever Iranian drone proliferation outside of the Middle East. Quite literally, Iranian drones, in spite of that broken arms embargo, are now being used against European citizens.

So step number one has to be no more “own goals”, no more spiting this side of the Atlantic or that side of the Atlantic because you disagree with that politician or disagree with that few. I think letting that embargo slide is an “own goal”, and letting the one that's coming up in October 2023, the October 18 transition day ones, letting that slide would be an “own goal”.

There is some good news coming out of Europe. Based on reports earlier this summer, the European Union and potentially the UK look like they're about to defend their own sovereign, nonproliferation sanctions architecture.

If they did this, this would be the mother of own goals. If they didn't do — I'm sorry — if they didn't do this, they would be delisting over 300 Iranian missile military nuclear entities, an example of which is actually the IRGC.

Few people know this — during the campaign, since the killing of Mahsa, where the Iranian community, particularly the Iranian diaspora in the UK and in the EU, were super active to get Parliament in those jurisdictions to put pressure on their foreign ministries to designate the IRGC, there is only one European authority where the IRGC in its entirety is designated, and it's not human rights, and it's not cyber, it's nonproliferation.

And if the European Union does not defend this sanctions architecture by October 18 — unfortunately, some of the news this summer is that they might do that — it's still a might — that the IRGC — let me say this clearly — the IRGC would be sanctions free in Europe, meaning that the IRGC would not be on a single sanctions list in its entirety.

You could have the Quds Force on something, you could have elements of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security, which — elements of which the European Council designated in 2019, if I'm not mistaken, but as a whole, that would be a major setback to that goal of trying to get a terrorism prescription, because the only authority under which the IRGC was designated in its entirety would actually have been revoked.

So while we need to build on the many successes of the Iranian diaspora and every community that is lobbying to get terror sanctions on the IRGC, not just in Europe but also in Canada, and Australia, and New Zealand, where many communities have mobilized to use similar authorities against the same target — and again, a web of interconnected sanctions on the same target would send a strong economic message, it would send a super strong political message, and it would tell the Islamic Republic that it can no longer play one side of the Atlantic or one side of the world against each other, because it would be a no-go zone. Every jurisdiction would be a no-go zone for Iran.

So step number one is recognizing where the holes are, plugging them, and doing no harm.



## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, I would just add to that, if you really want to read a fabulous book — it's actually one of my — I think one of my favorite books, not just on Iran but in general — is Roya Hakakian's *The Assassins of the Turquoise Palace*. And how many of you have read the book? Good. I'm doing a book plug here for Roya.

It's a terrific story about when Europe actually was at its finest in pushing back against regime assassinations on the continent. It tells the story of a brave German prosecutor who went after the assassins who killed Iranian Kurds in Germany, and relentlessly pushed through, you know, bureaucracy and political resistance to hold these regime officials and operatives accountable for this assassination on German soil.

It led to a big trial in Germany where all of this came out, and it led for a period of time where Iranian, quote, "diplomats" — essentially intel officials from MOIS [Ministry of Intelligence and Security] and IRGC were expelled from European soil.

It's a great story. And so my addition to Behnam's great policy recommendations is recreate *Assassins of the Turquoise Palace*, in terms of European response to Iranian threats, to European citizens. I mean, they're holding them hostage, they're attempting to kill them.

And the European response so far has been, I would say, nothing short of feckless. But there was a moment in European history where the Europeans came together and showed tremendous courage. So read the book, fantastic book, and then adopt the policy recommendations for our European friends.

**DAGRES:** Holly Dagres, Atlantic Council. Mark, FDD is not the first to float a strike fund. It's a great idea in theory, especially with the diaspora's net worth believed to be 2.5 trillion, but I'd like to know how that can be executed?

**DUBOWITZ:** Great. Hi, Holly. Nice to see you. Yeah, I mean, I think — obviously, operationally, it's a tricky thing. I mean, the question is how do you move money into Iran, how do you get that money in the right hands? And, you know, my assumption is money can be moved — there's numerous examples, some reported, some not reported, of both funds and materials being moved into Iran through various networks, American and allied networks.

How do you get that money into trusted sources? I think that's obviously going to be a — an — a tricky intelligence operation, but I think there are enough trusted sources inside Iran that the Iranian diaspora knows and that the U.S. government and allied governments know.

But I think our assumption has got to be, you know, a certain percentage of that money is just going to be stolen, it's going to end up in the wrong hands, but we — if — but a certain percentage of that money can get to the right people, can get to union organizers, can get to people who can then distribute that money within different sectors of the Iranian economy.

And again, I don't think it's just one person gets all the money and distributes it. This is within the trucking sector, this is within, you know, the education sector, within the energy sectors, and I — it's pinpointing people who are trusted and then have their own networks within those industries to get that money out in — to the right people.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And it's basically, you know, what union organizers do all over the world but it's obviously going to be done under much dangerous conditions. But I would just conclude with this — if we think that we can implement a strike fund and ensure that not \$1 ends up in the wrong hands, we will be paralyzed and we'll never do it. We're going to take some risk, we're going to understand that some of that money is going to end up in the wrong hands, but in the meantime, the — I think the benefits outweigh the costs.

Iranians who go to the streets are not only today risking their lives but their livelihood, and at the very least, we can help them with supporting their livelihood as they take to the streets.

**BEN TALEBLU:** A wise woman also named Holly Dagres said about a year or so ago into the mass — when the Mahsa protests were breaking, that, “the Iranian people deserve our support and not our skepticism”. I agreed with her then and I agree with her very much now.

In essence, there is two role models here. One of course is the one Mark talked about with Solidarity in Poland, and then the other one is the flooding of the supply side — and I see members in the audience that we've engaged with on Starlink, when we've talked about how to flood the supply side — and the parallel here is, again, in the telecom and satellite world.

You know, in the 90's and 2000's, for instance, there was tons of black market satellites emerging in Iran — satellites that were confiscated, satellites that were smuggled in, satellites that people played a premium for, satellites that were confiscated and then resold to you at that premium by elements of the Guard Corps, the Basiji, such that even though in a regulatory perspective inside Iran there were prohibitions to getting these satellites and engaging in transactions for these satellites, the flood from the supply side — the cheap, available flood from the supply side — made it impossible for the regime to sustain this prohibitive policy and had to adapt with it over time.

So in essence, you want to make sure the regime knows that the tap for any kind of foreign strike fund is never going to be turned off, and one way you can ensure this is through aggressive enforcement of oil sanctions.

Me and a colleague Saeed Ghasseminejad, have written about this extensively. There is not much that unites Trump and Biden but one thing does — their enforcement and seizure of select oil tankers, and in fact, both states using commerce and justice to do asset forfeiture — you see the story of the Suez Rajan just a week ago in the news. This is good news.

This money — I know there's many different lawsuits about different Iranian assets abroad — but it would be in the U.S. national interest — and I think the Iranian population is lucky that there's a confluence of moral and strategic interests here — for every penny, every rial, who — however you want to denominate it, of Iranian assets, from X point on seized, goes to that strike fund.

So you build in the fact that some of it is going to go to waste, fraud and abuse, you build in the fact that you need new technical, legal, political and regulatory mechanisms to essentially smuggle this money in, you have an IC [Intelligence Community] cover for that, and then ultimately, you make sure there's not a penny of taxpayer money that goes to waste, fraud and abuse, because this is confiscated oil assets anyway.

So someone like Raisi doesn't dare say that oil money belongs to the nation, when we know how Raisi likes to spend Iran's oil money.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah.

**BEN TALEBLU:** We can spend that oil money in a much better way.

**DUBOWITZ:** I think that's a good point. I also would add that, I mean, the rial-dollar exchange rate is, what, 500,000 now, rials to the U.S. dollar? So if you thought about a strike fund and what it would actually take to run a strike fund — and obviously the way you would run it is you know, you would pilot it first before you rolled it out across industries or nationally — but at that rial-dollar exchange rate, from a U.S. perspective, it would — would not be prohibitively expensive to fund that, give — given how many rials today that you get for a U.S. dollar.

So, like, let's try it. I mean at — what's going to happen at worst? All of the money ends up in a pilot in the wrong hands. OK, so we've wasted a few hundred thousand dollars. But what could happen is we start to realize — and obviously this is an iterative process as we learn about how to do this — that we could get, you know, large sums of rials in Iranian hands at fairly low expense in U.S. dollars, and it really could be a game changer in terms of broad strikes through — labor strikes through these industries that — that could cripple the regime.

**ROD:** Thank you, gentlemen. Marc Rod with *Jewish Insider*. There was actually an announcement on the subject of the first question within the last hour or two that the E3 [Britain, France, and Germany] are planning on keeping their sanctions but are not going to be seeking snapback. And so I guess I'm just wondering what the logic of that could be, of saying "we think these are sanctions that are important to keep in place but we're not even going to try and get the UN to keep them."

And then just sort of a quick secondary question for Behnam. You just testified on the Hill this morning. Any insights at this point coming off of that of, you know, what the chances for bipartisan action on this are at this point?

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah. Look, on the first question, I mean, it really depends on your theory of the case, right? If you think that showing resolve and in — and putting pressure on the regime will cause the regime to escalate, then you — then you won't do snapback because you will worry that snapback sanctions will lead to increased regime nuclear escalation.

If you believe, on the other hand, that by showing resolve — and again, transatlantic resolve to the question on the Europeans — is going to cause the regime to pause or to back down, right, then snapback sanctions make eminent sense.

Now, I think this is a — just a perennial debate in Washington. I mean, what is your theory of the case? My theory of the case — and I think there's a lot of historical examples, we can go through that if we have time — is when you show resolve to the regime, particularly transatlantic resolve — and that certainly was the case that — made by the Obama administration back in the day, is that transatlantic resolve would be much more effective in getting the regime to back down — and I think they were right, and that's why the sanctions leading up to the JCPOA were highly effective, because they were transatlantic sanctions, in some cases UN sanctions, global sanctions that sent a message to the regime that there would be a[n] international price to be paid if they continue to escalate.

I would add too — and again, this is subject of much debate — most of Iran's nuclear escalation occurred with the election of Joe Biden and his decision to abandon pressure and engage in diplomacy.

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

And that — we put at FDD out a graphic regularly, I tweet it out probably once a month, to demonstrate the nuclear timeline and the political timeline. Behnam and our colleague Andrea Stricker put this together and it shows very, very clearly that the regime was not willing to escalate in the face of maximum pressure. When they started to escalate their nuclear program was right at the election of President Biden and his decision to abandon pressure.

So snapback sanctions, in my view, will not lead to regime escalation. It'll be a demonstration of transatlantic resolve and it — it's the best chance we have of getting the regime to understand that there is a significant price to be paid for continued escalatory activities.

**BEN TALEBLU:** Yeah, just a couple of very quick footnotes. Again, it's a very commendable posture by the European Union and the United Kingdom, if they defend those 300-plus names of missile military nuclear entities, but that's not like scoring a goal on the Islamic Republic, that's like preventing an "own goal", because you had signed up to remove these missile military nuclear entities in 2015 with the JCPOA anyway.

So, you know, it — there — there's no gold stars for participation in defending yourself. You're supposed to be doing that as a sovereign political entity on a daily basis anyway, but in this political climate, obviously the reason it's important is it would mark the European Union's first ever intentional violation of the JCPOA.

And that is a — where proponents of pressure can take a little bit of solace in the move. We have fundamentally different theories of the case. For example, we see Europe's lack of going to snapback as still some kind of commitment to the JCPOA. Their fear of escalation Mark was talking about, that animates it totally. But this would be big because this is Europe's first ever JCPOA violation.

And Iran is likely going to respond, and the question's going to be not to Europe but to the Biden administration — now will you have your transatlantic partners' back when Iran tries to threaten Europe? Two years ago, the Europeans laughed at the Americans for trying to prevent an arms embargo from lapsing, then two years later, the Europeans themselves became subject to a widening radius of Iranian arms proliferation.

We can't afford to make that same mistake on this one. On the Hill today, there was great interest in snapback, but again, that is where — because of the politics of the JCPOA, is one of the few areas of disunity in the hearing I heard.

I think on everything else — standing with the Iranian people, being tough on oil sanctions, being tough on non-proliferation, missile military stuff, countering the Iran-Russia-China nexus — there was great bipartisan support. And there is a page that can be taken from the way the U.S. Congress is dealing with the China issue to inform and animate how they're going to deal with the Iran issue.

Hopefully, that's where the trend lines go, but the politics of the moment, the JCPOA plus the philosophy and theory of the case, that continues to operate like the 800-pound elephant in the room.

**DUBOWITZ:** Yeah, and Behnam, I just want to expand the scope of this because right now there is a big debate about giving the Saudis domestic enrichment, and FDD has been very firm, I think in one voice, that we oppose giving Saudi Arabia domestic enrichment, right?

## Maximum Support for the People of Iran: Honoring Mahsa Amini One Year After Her Murder

*Featuring Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ),  
Moderated by Mark Dubowitz  
Introductory remarks by Behnam Ben Taleblu*

---

We think this has significant proliferation consequences. We warned back in 2015 that giving our — giving the regime in Iran domestic enrichment would lead to exactly the moment we are in with the Saudis right now.

And I fear the administration — and the Israelis — are going to cave on this question and there'll be some, you know, lovely formula or construct about how it'll be under American control and supervision and what have you.

I think all of that is nonsense because I think at the end of the day, as soon as there's domestic enrichment in Saudi Arabia, you can just mark your calendar, and at some point, the Saudis will be a threshold nuclear weapons power with their ability to project — produce fissile material.

To snapback, this is it. You snapback the UN sanctions, you reestablish zero enrichment as the international standard, and you say we will not allow it for Iran and we will not allow it for Saudi Arabia and we will not allow it for the Emiratis, or the Turks, or the Algerians, or the South Koreans, or whoever comes next.

So for that reason, snapback is not just about pressuring Iran, it's also about sending a message to Saudi Arabia and to our allies and adversaries around the world that the United States does not support domestic enrichment or plutonium reprocessing and we don't endorse proliferation.

I see a wrap up and this symbol [cut], so I wanted to thank everybody for — for coming, and look forward to chatting with you after the event. And I really just want to take this moment to say, you know, a silent prayer for the Iranian people and in memory of Mahsa Amini, for everything that they are doing to stand up for women, for life, for freedom. And let's hope, as we say, "next year in Tehran" and a free democratic and peaceful Tehran.

Thanks, everybody.

END