



AMERICAN
IMMIGRATION
LAWYERS
ASSOCIATION

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House of Representatives
521 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
2267 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Via email

January 16, 2026

RE: Congress Must Ensure Swift Action to Protect Individuals Impacted by the Iranian Crisis

Dear Leaders of the Senate and House

On behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, we request that you urge the Trump Administration to use the full range of statutory authorities available under U.S. law to take immediate whole of government action to ensure the safety and security of all people impacted by the current crisis in Iran. As an organization of more than 18,000 immigration lawyers, we are concerned about the safety of Americans and their family members in Iran, as well as Iranian nationals in the United States.

During the past two weeks, unrest and protest in Iran has led to the [arrests and killings of thousands of Iranians](#). The State Department (DOS) has issued a [Level 4 Travel Advisory for Iran](#), warning U.S. citizens “[d]o not travel to Iran for any reason. U.S. citizens in Iran should leave immediately. U.S. citizens are at risk due to terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, arbitrary detention of U.S. citizens, torture, and wrongful detention.”

Moreover, the Administration has demanded that Iranian nationals be treated with “humanity” by their own government and has promised them that “[help is on its way](#).” These statements should be matched with concrete action. Given the statutory authority that Congress has given to the Executive to address situations like this, there are affirmative steps that can be taken immediately to ensure that at-risk individuals can access lawful pathways to safety in the United States - and that no one is forced to return to danger.

As leaders of Congress, we urge you to ensure that President Trump takes the following actions swiftly:

Inter-Government Agency Actions

- All U.S. Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents and their family members should be provided assistance to ensure their departure from Iran.
- The Secretaries of Homeland Security and State should authorize Temporary Protected Status and/or Deferred Enforced Departure to provide temporary relief for Iranian nationals currently in the United States who cannot safely return to Iran.

Department of State Actions

- Despite Presidential Proclamation 10949 banning the processing of nonimmigrant and immigrant visas for Iranian nationals, DOS must expeditiously process the visas of Iranian nationals. Their visas should be processed at any U.S. consulate in the world they may safely reach.

Department of Homeland Security Actions

- USCIS should expedite the review and resume processing of all cases involving Iranian nationals, including but not limited to requests for humanitarian relief, waivers, nonimmigrant and immigrant petition processing, as well as parole.
- DHS should issue a Federal Register Notice declaring the current crisis in Iran as an emergent circumstance for granting Special Student Relief (SSR) for Iranian students.
- DHS should immediately place a temporary moratorium on removals of Iranian nationals, and those in immigration custody should be assessed for release or release with any necessary conditions.
- The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA) and Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) should robustly exercise prosecutorial discretion for pending removal cases involving Iranian nationals, including dismissal, termination, administrative closure, or stipulations to relief or facts such as country conditions for those with applications for relief.
- ERO should extend Orders of Supervision for Iranian nationals who may be approaching the end of their period of supervision.

We appreciate your urgent consideration of these recommendations and are available to discuss them with your staff. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Sharvari (Shev) Dalal-Dheini at sdalal-dheini@aila.org or Greg Chen at gchen@aila.org.

Sincerely,



Executive Director



President

THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

cc: Senator Rand Paul, Chairman of Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Senator Gary Peters, Ranking Member of Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman of Judiciary Committee

Senator Dick Durbin, Ranking Member of Judiciary Committee

Representative Andrew Garbarino, Chairman of House Committee on Homeland Security

Representative Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member of House Committee on Homeland Security

Representative Jim Jordan, Chairman of House Judiciary Committee

Representative Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member of House Judiciary Committee

Senator James E. Risch, Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Ranking Member of Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Representative Brian Mast, Chairman of House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Representative Gregory Meeks, Ranking Member of House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration

Members of the House Subcommittee on Immigration Integrity, Security and Enforcement

Members of the House Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

Members of the Senate Subcommittee on State Department & USAID Management, International Operations, & Bilateral International Development

Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, & Counterterrorism

Members of the House Middle East and North African Subcommittee