



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
Foreign Secretary  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
[Via email](#)

16 October 2020

Dear Foreign Secretary

As you will be aware, the United Nations arms embargo on Iran is due to be lifted on Sunday. This is deeply troubling and I write to ask what action the United Kingdom government intends to take in the light of this disturbing development.

While recognising the major flaws in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – not least its failure to address Iranian expansionism and its support for terrorist groups, including Hezbollah and Hamas – the Trump administration’s decision to unilaterally withdraw from the agreement in 2018 has clearly done nothing to tackle the enormous threat which the Islamic Republic poses to peace and stability in the Middle East. It is hugely disappointing that – thanks, in part, to that decision – it was not possible to secure international consensus to extend the arms embargo.

The lifting of the arms embargo was always intended to incentivise Iranian compliance with the terms of the JCPOA. Last month’s report from the International Atomic Energy Agency confirms that, in contravention of the agreement, Iran continues to expand its stockpile of enriched uranium. According to the IAEA, Iran has breached: the limit on enriching uranium to no more than 3.67 percent uranium-235 for 15 years; the stockpile limit of 300 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride gas (UF6) enriched to 3.67 percent (about 202 kilograms of uranium by weight) for 15 years; restrictions on the number of advanced centrifuges installed and the 10-year prohibition on accumulating enriched uranium from advanced machines; and the prohibition on any uranium activities, including enrichment, at Fordow for 15 years.

Moreover, in contravention of several UN resolutions dating back to 2006, and despite the embargo, Iran has successfully developed an indigenous ballistic missile and missile defence capacity. Indeed, in August, Iran proudly unveiled two new missiles: the Qassem ballistic missiles with precision-guidance and a range of 1,400km and the Abu Mahdi cruise missile with a range of over 1,000km.

It is simply incomprehensible that Iran should be rewarded for such behaviour with the ending of an arms embargo which sought to prohibit it acquiring advanced weaponry.

The dangers presented by the lifting the embargo are far from theoretical. You will be aware that last week Russia’s ambassador to Iran, Levan Dzagharyan, said that his country would be willing to sell the Islamic Republic its S-400 missile defence system. This follows comments last month by Russia’s deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, that “new opportunities will emerge in our cooperation with Iran” after the arms embargo expires.



Given Iran's constant threats against it – manifested, in part, by its support for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad – the expiration of the embargo is hugely concerning for the State of Israel. It can also only strengthen Iran's other nefarious activities throughout the region, further destabilising Iraq and Lebanon, and adding to the bloodshed and tragic loss of life in Syria.

It is reassuring that the European Union's arms embargo will remain in place until 2023. I would be grateful if you could outline what steps the UK will take to strengthen sanctions against Iran after 31 December, both with regards to the arms embargo but also the wider danger it poses to our allies in the region.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve McCabe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve McCabe MP (Birmingham Selly Oak)  
Chair of Labour Friends Israel