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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Fortieth District-California

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Asia and the Pacific

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October 25, 2012

The Honorable Tim Geithner
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Geithner and Secretary Clinton:

I am writing regarding the recent laudable decision by Eutelsat, the French satellite provider, to terminate its contract with the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) company. By implementing new Iran human rights sanctions passed by Congress, the United States can take steps to bolster this development, adding to the Iranian regime's isolation.

Eutelsat's October 15th decision removed 19 of Iran's state-owned television and radio channels from the company's "Hotbird" satellite – affecting viewers in Europe, the Middle East, and Iran. This followed Iranian efforts to jam this same satellite, also used by the BBC and Voice of America's Persian services, which had been broadcasting reports into Iran on the devaluation of its currency and related street protests.

Eutelsat has cited European Union human rights sanctions as driving its decision. Ezzatollah Zarghami, the head of IRIB, who is directly appointed by Iran's supreme leader, was put on an EU list in March, related to the broadcast of forced confessions and show trials in August 2009 and December 2011. An Iranian human rights group has applauded this move as recognition that "IRIB is an integral arm of the Iranian intelligence and security service."

As you may be aware, since Eutelsat's decision last week, its satellite has faced significant electronic interference, impacting not just the channels beaming information into Iran, but other Eutelsat customers – affecting millions in a swath from Europe to Russia, Central Asia and the Middle East. Demonstrating the close links between Tehran and Damascus, Eutelsat has confirmed that the disruptive signals originate from Syria. This jamming is prohibited under the rules of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), to which Iran belongs. In February, the ITU called for countries to take "necessary actions" to stop intentional interference with satellite transmissions. Major broadcasters in Europe and the United States, including the U.S.-Broadcasting Board of Governors, have vigorously protested this jamming and assault on the free flow of information.

The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-195, Sec. 105), which was recently augmented by the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (P.L.112-158, Sec. 403), directs the President to submit a list of persons to Congress that have been determined to have engaged in censorship and other activities against Iranian citizens. Executive Order 13628 places the responsibility for this list with the Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of State. The law notes that this list is to include those that have facilitated or supported the “international frequency manipulation by the Government of Iran or an entity owned or controlled by that Government that would jam or restrict an international signal.” Those identified on this list would be subject to visa sanctions and asset freezes.

The first submission of this list to Congress is due shortly. Inclusion of individuals who have been involved with IRIB’s jamming efforts would be an important signal of support to our allies in Europe and a morale boost to U.S. international broadcasters. Most importantly, it would be a show of solidarity with Iranians who are thirsting for unfiltered news and information. I urge you to make this inclusion. Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade