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WASHINGTON, D.C. – On the two-year anniversary of the disputed June 9, 2009 elections in Iran, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) welcomes the addition of three Iranian government entities and one Iranian government official to a sanctions list for serious human rights abuses in Iran.

The original executive order President Barack Obama signed on September 29, 2010 named eight Iranian officials. Yesterday's designation brings the total to eleven, eight of whom USCIRF identified as severe religious freedom abusers in May 2010.

“The Iranian government brutally quashed large demonstrations protesting the outcome of the June 2009 elections, and USCIRF welcomes the imposition of sanctions for human rights abuses on Ismail Ahmadi Moghadam, head of Iran’s national police force. USCIRF identified Moghadam in May 2010 as being responsible for egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief in Iran and recommended such an action,” said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair.

As commander of the national police force, or Law Enforcement Forces (LEF), Moghadam has ordered attacks and crackdowns on a wide range of Iranian citizens, including protestors, students, reformists, dissidents, and minorities. Many dissidents and prisoners of conscience are serving long-term sentences in Iranian prisons on unsubstantiated charges resulting from the large-scale crackdown by Iranian authorities since the June 2009 elections.

“USCIRF urges the United States and international community to intensify further its demand that the Iranian government immediately release all prisoners of conscience,” said Leo.

U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (R-II) recently launched the Iranian Dissident Awareness Program (IDAP), a bipartisan, bicameral effort to raise awareness of and support for Iranian dissidents currently in prison in Iran, including religious minorities, women’s rights activists, human rights defenders, among others. “This new program is an important resource to shine a light on Iran’s appalling human rights and religious freedom record,” said Leo.

Details about IDAP can be found through its website:

http://www.kirk.senate.gov/?p=iranian_dissident_awareness_program

The President’s September 2010 executive order complies with the mandate in PL. 111-195, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act that was signed into law on July 1, 2010. This law, which had broad and bipartisan support in Congress, highlights Iran’s serious, systematic, and ongoing violations of human rights, including suppression of religious

freedom. The law mandates that the President impose sanctions on individuals responsible for or complicit in human rights and religious freedom abuses. USCIRF worked with Congressional offices on the need to develop such sanctions.

Since 1999, USCIRF has recommended, and the State Department has designated, Iran as a “Country of Particular Concern,” or CPC, due to its systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF’s principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

To interview a USCIRF Commissioner, contact Tom Carter, Communications Director at tcarter@uscirf.gov or (202) 523-3257.