

July 7, 2020

Dear Vice President Biden,

As the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee, you have the opportunity to reformulate U.S. foreign policy and national security strategy to achieve the necessary, fundamental re-envisioning of the United States' role in the world. A critical way to achieve this is through national security and foreign policy personnel appointments.

As you consider members of your potential transition team and administration, we urge you to appoint personnel that meet a set of basic principles to ensure the mistakes of the past are not recreated. These principles should include public:

- 1) Recognition of mass inequality, white nationalism, climate change, pandemics, and authoritarianism as critical national security challenges that must be prioritized;
- 2) Advocacy for international cooperation, not competition, including "great power" competition, to resolve common challenges and create accountability for abuses;
- 3) Embrace of reducing the Pentagon's budget to fully resource and prioritize nonmilitary solutions – such as peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and diplomacy – as the primary tools to address violence and violent conflict, including as the main approach to addressing violent groups that perpetrate terrorism;
- 4) Support for the United States' accession to, robust engagement with, and funding of international treaties and agreements, as well as international bodies and organizations that enhance international norms and rule of law, and limit and reduce the amount of nuclear weapons and materials in the world;
- 5) Emphasis of the importance of engaging and prioritizing the importance of civil society and local stakeholders in national security and foreign policymaking.

The personnel you choose to staff your potential transition team and future administration will reflect your administration's policy priorities and its approach to international engagement. The failure to hold George W. Bush administration officials accountable for disastrous and unlawful decisions that made the United States and the world less safe impeded the Obama administration's ability to carry out its stated agenda and rectify harmful errors of the past. It also allowed people complicit in some of the most dangerous national security decisions in our country's history to gain power in the Trump administration. As such, it is important that the track record of potential personnel is scrutinized carefully. We urge you to disqualify individuals for appointments to national security positions if the individual:

- 1) Participated in, was complicit in, advocated for, or had knowledge of and cannot document opposition to the CIA's torture and extraordinary rendition program or torture by the U.S. military during the Bush administration or any other administration, or was involved in preventing the release of the Senate-commissioned torture report or declassifying the program during the Obama administration;

- 2) Opposed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or advocated for the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" policy toward Iran;
- 3) Supports Israeli settlements, Israeli annexation of Palestinian land, or opposes the rights of U.S. residents to boycott as a form of constitutionally-protected protest against the U.S. government's or foreign governments' policies;
- 4) Has worked for or served on the board of a for-profit entity that received money from the agency they would work in; has worked for or served on the board of an entity that received money from an undemocratic foreign government or its auspices; has been affiliated with, is a member of, or received funding from organizations or individual donors to such entities that espouse hate, xenophobia or racism against a particular group or community, in the last ten years, *and* would not agree to abide by, at minimum, the requirements of Executive Order 13490.
- 5) Advocated for and has not publicly disavowed for their support of U.S. military interventions in pursuit of political objectives, covert operations that resulted in civilian harm, and/or United States policies that provided weapons, military equipment, or security cooperation to governments, security forces, and/nonstate actors that commit human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, genocide, or war crimes in the past 50 years.

The Trump era has sparked a long overdue, and fundamental rethinking of U.S. national security within the Democratic party. A potential Biden administration presents an opportunity to begin to challenge the institutions and groupthink that have led to a disastrous, overly-militarized, unilateral approach to foreign affairs, and put the United States in a position to credibly lead on addressing the existential threats the world faces in the coming century. Without national security and foreign policy personnel who are willing to learn from the mistakes of the past and understand the need for change this moment presents, we fear our country — and the world — risk descending into climate and economic chaos fueled by further corruption and authoritarianism. We expect a potential Biden administration to reflect the urgency of this moment in its personnel appointments.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee  
 Beyond the Bomb  
 Center for Biological Diversity  
 Center for Constitutional Rights  
 Common Defense  
 Data for Progress  
 Demand Progress  
 Democracy for America  
 Earth Action, Inc.  
 Historians for Peace and Democracy  
 If Not Now  
 Indivisible  
 J Street  
 Just Foreign Policy  
 Justice Democrats

Justice Is Global  
 MoveOn  
 National Iranian American Council Action  
 Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
 Our Revolution  
 Peace Action  
 People's Action  
 Progressive Change Campaign Committee  
 Revolving Door Project  
 September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows  
 Social Security Works  
 Sunrise Movement  
 Veterans for Peace  
 Vets for the People  
 Working Families Party  
 Win Without War