



SUTA  
P.O. Box 12391  
La Jolla, CA 92039

August 14, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
US Department of State  
2201 C Street. NW  
Washington DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

It was our understanding that the stated policy of this administration, as outlined in the President's State of the Union address and many remarks by other high ranking officials including yourself, was to encourage cultural and scientific exchange between the people of Iran and America. Regrettably, we have recently witnessed unnecessarily harsh and humiliating treatment of Iranian professionals upon their recent attempt to legally enter the United States. The Iranian-American community in general, and our association in particular, are puzzled as to how the ill-treatment of these professionals would serve this administration's stated policy.

These professionals and their families were granted visas to enter the United States following State Department's appropriate security clearances to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> reunion of alumni of Sharif University. Upon arrival at the United States borders they were informed that their visas had been revoked. Most of them were detained for over 24 hours and subsequently returned to the country of departure. Some were handcuffed and chained; members of families were separated and incarcerated in very unpleasant conditions along with criminals. Needless to say, we are extremely disappointed and outraged by this unjustified and unnecessary mistreatment of the members of our professional organization.

The Sharif University is, currently the best technical university in Iran and is commonly referred to as MIT of Iran. The theme of our 4<sup>th</sup> International reunion was earthquakes, a natural disaster shared by both California and Iran. We also had seminars on entrepreneurship and venture capital structure. Our first gathering was held in San Diego, CA in 2000 with over 500 attendees, including

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about 80 participants from Iran. Our organization is a legal US entity and a large number of our members reside in the US with the majority currently being citizens of the United States working in academic, scientific and technological institutions in the United States.

We informed the US Department of State several months ago regarding this event and in every case we sent formal invitations to the US consulates around the world. The organizing committee was pleased to hear that the majority of the interested parties from Iran were granted visas. Thus, it came as a complete surprise to us when a few days prior to the event, a drastic shift of policy occurred, and the visas of the reunion participants were revoked. We feel that the harsh, and in some cases inhumane treatment of our members, was conducted without justification. They had each spent several thousands of dollars in traveling funds, relying on the assumption that when a US consulate issues a visa and the security clearance is granted as part of the process, they can travel with confidence. Apparently, this was not the case and these individuals not only endured substantial financial losses, but in some cases are psychologically traumatized.

While we were excited and supportive of your declaration to extend scientific and cultural exchanges between American and Iranian people, the recent unexplainable treatment of our members has created many doubts on the sincerity of these claims. We were hoping that your policy will help us build bridges between the people of the two nations and we envisioned this reunion as a stepping-stone aiding this administration's policies. Unfortunately, this bridge may have been severely damaged.

In summary, we, as a part of the Iranian-American community, are greatly disturbed by this event. While as citizens and legal residents of this country, the security of the United States is of utmost importance for us, we are puzzled by and cannot understand how the long term viability of your policies are served by harsh and inappropriate treatment of Iranian professionals. In particular, we would like to bring to your attention the following questions raised to us by many members of the Iranian-American community and other citizens who read about this saga in major newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 5, 2006), *The Houston Chronicle* (August 8), and *The New York Sun* (August 9, 2006), for which we do not have an adequate response:

- Since the American consulates involved in the visa processes had obtained phone numbers, fax numbers, and email addresses for all the visa grantees, why the individuals whose visas were apparently revoked were not notified in-time to abort their trips?

- Why were these to-be reunion participants and their families including young children, who were entering legally into the US, subjected to harsh treatments at the U.S ports of entry?

We hope that you kindly review this issue and take steps to rebuild the damaged trust of the Iranian-American and Iranian people by preventing the recurrence of such regrettable and unnecessary incidents in the future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zahed Sheikholeslami', written in a cursive style.

Zahed Sheikholeslami, Ph.D.  
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