



# MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

September 26, 2024

Vice President Kamala Harris  
Democratic Nominee for President  
PO Box 96663  
Washington, DC 20077-7085

Dear Vice President Harris:

With the United Nations General Assembly convening in New York City this week, and with Americans across the country yearning for principled leadership, the moment is right for you to showcase that U.S. foreign policy is not just theoretical.

President Biden's handling of Israel's war in Gaza remains deeply unpopular and one of the long-standing concerns has been his aversion to holding Israeli government officials accountable, thus compromising the American values that should guide our foreign policy. You can send a clear message to both the American public and the world: those who violate our principles and stated policies will face real consequences.

To that end, I urge you to forcefully express the need to impose sanctions on Betzalel Smotrich, Israel's Minister of Finance, and Itamar Ben Gvir, Israel's Minister of National Security, under [Executive Order 14155](#) and the [Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act](#). Both individuals have promoted extremist ideologies, and supported and celebrated violence against innocent Palestinian men, women, and children.

On February 1st of this year, President Biden [signed Executive Order 14155](#) (EO 14155), "Imposing Certain Sanctions on Persons Undermining Peace, Security, and Stability in the West Bank" in response to persistent acts of terror being committed by Israeli extremists against Palestinian civilians. This Executive Order, while long overdue, was a welcome first step in the right direction. It enabled sanctions to be imposed on individuals responsible for or complicit in any of the following actions in the West Bank:

1. An act of violence or threat of violence targeting civilians;
2. Efforts to place civilians in reasonable fear of violence with the purpose or effect of necessitating a change of residence to avoid such violence;
3. Property destruction; or
4. Seizure or dispossession of property by private actors.



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Many believed EO 14155 had the potential to have a positive impact because it explicitly stated that government officials involved in any of the aforementioned abuses could face sanctions.

Given this context, we were dismayed and deeply disappointed to learn that, according to [reports](#), President Biden rejected the recommendation from White House officials to impose sanctions against Smotrich and Ben Gvir. What makes this even more troubling is that the decision was not rooted in their conduct or complicity in the very type of terror that EO 14155 aims to address, but rather in the principle that “the U.S. should not sanction elected officials in democratic countries.”

If this sentiment-turned-policy — which appears to allow war criminals to enjoy a relationship with the United States under their home country's system of government — would apply universally, it would make clear to the international community that our support for human rights is a political statement and not a policy position. Moreover, it would undermine the effectiveness of laws like the Global Magnitsky Act, which allows sanctions on government officials responsible for human rights violations.

Additionally, this position is not in line with the precedent set by past administrations, most notably in 2005 with the [decision](#) to deny Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, India, entry into the United States. Modi, the democratically elected head of the state of Gujarat, was found to be complicit in the [Gujarat riots](#), which resulted in the death of over a thousand people. As a result, the Bush administration revoked his visa and denied his application for a diplomatic visa. It's worth noting that India was an ally and major trade partner, and Modi was the head of one of the largest states in the country. Yet, the [determination](#) was made that Modi "was responsible for or directly carried out, at any time, particularly severe violations of religious freedom" and thus would not be permitted entry into the United States.

The White House officials who recommended imposing sanctions were not the only ones who recognized the need for action against Smotrich and Ben Gvir. [Josep Borrel](#), the European Union's foreign policy chief, is pursuing sanctions against the two ministers, whom he describes as "sinister." Irish Foreign Minister Micheál Martin and Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister Petra De Sutter also support his efforts.

Publicly declaring your support for sanctioning Betzalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and EO 14155 would send a clear message that you do not tolerate human rights abuses, terrorism, or the promotion of hate crimes. Moreover, it would be an important step in distinguishing your campaign as one that is



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committed to curbing violent extremism in the region and upholding the principle that our laws must be applied universally, with accountability that transcends political considerations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Salam Al-Marayati', written in a cursive style.

Salam Al-Marayati  
President

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

Haris Tarin  
Vice President, Policy and Programming