

STATEMENT REGARDING IRANIAN ATTACKS ON THE FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES AND ITS PERSONNEL

On August 24, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran sanctioned Washington, DC-based think tank the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), and its CEO Mark Dubowitz. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' official [translation](#) asserted that its designation "will be without prejudice to any further legal measures that the other administrative, judicial or security institutions and organizations may take in order to counter, prosecute or punish the above-mentioned persons or their other Iranian and non-Iranian collaborators and accomplices for their actions and measures against the Iranian government and people's national security and interests."

As members of the public policy and NGO community of which FDD is a part, we take strong exception to sanctioning a research organization because of a difference of political views, whether by Iran or other governments. We also condemn the suggestion that Iran's security institutions might "punish" FDD personnel. This is a further example of a troubling trend whereby governments attempt to stifle and intimidate independent researchers; colleagues of ours have been targeted by several countries in a variety of ways, from harassment to denial of access to expulsion to imprisonment. Efforts such as these, no matter their provenance, should be met with condemnation from all serious researchers, regardless of our political persuasion. The leadership in Tehran should understand that these actions redound solely to their own discredit, rendering even more difficult a balanced discussion on the merits of various Iran-related policy options.*

We are all accustomed to disagreement, and indeed often differ on questions relating to the Islamic Republic of Iran and U.S. policy. On this matter, however, we stand together in condemning attempts to intimidate a non-governmental organization and its staff.

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****All signatories sign in their personal capacities and do not represent institutional positions.***