



Siamak Namazi, Morad Tahbaz and Emad Shargi, who were released during a prisoner swap deal between US and Iran, arrive in, Qatar September 18, 2023.

Biden Announces Release Of Hostages, After Iran Gets \$6 Billion

Monday, 09/18/2023

Iran International Newsroom

US President Joe Biden issued a statement Monday announcing the release of five Americans who were held hostage in Iran but were freed and flown to Qatar.

"Today, five innocent Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home," **the statement said** and added, "I am grateful to our partners at home and abroad for their tireless efforts to help us achieve this outcome, including the Governments of Qatar, Oman, Switzerland, and South Korea."

US officials received the five freed Americans released by Tehran after they disembarked from a Qatari plane at Doha international airport on Monday, a Reuters witness said.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he had spoken to the US citizens after they left Iran and flew to Doha as part of a prisoner swap. "I can tell you that it was for them, for me, an emotional conversation," he said, adding that "President Biden has demonstrated that he is prepared to make tough and difficult decisions."

"This process, and the engagements necessary to bring it about, the freedom of these unjustly detained Americans has always been a separate track in our engagement, or for that matter our lack of engagement, with Iran. So, irrespective of what is happening or not happening with respect to a return to the nuclear agreement, we have been working independently to bring these Americans home," he noted. "We will continue to take whatever step is necessary to deal with actions by Iran in a whole host of areas that are profoundly objectionable, and that many other countries find objectionable."

Switzerland's ambassador to Iran accompanied them on the plane to Doha, the witness added.

Earlier, the five US detainees had flown out of Iran in a swap for five Iranians held in the United States, in a rare deal between the arch enemies that also unfroze \$6 billion of Tehran's funds.

Earlier in the day, Mohammad-Reza Farzin, chief of Iran's central bank announced that the \$6 billion released by South Korea with authorization from the United States was converted into 5.73 billion euros and transferred Monday to six Iranian accounts at two Qatari banks.

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson has Nasser Kanaani disclosed on Monday that two of the Iranians released in the United States will return to Iran, one individual will travel to another country, and two others will continue to reside in the US.

The controversial deal, first made public on August 10, is seen as a first step toward an unwritten deal, whereby Iran will reduce high-level uranium enrichment in exchange for more of its frozen funds being released and a lax sanctions regime by Washington.

Representative Lisa McClain 

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Make no mistake, Biden's agreement with Iran is no sweetheart deal, it's blatant funding for terrorism.

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Republican lawmakers and many Iranian Americans **have sharply criticized the deal**, calling it the highest ransom paid in history to free five people, which will free up resources for the Iranian regime to spend on weapons and support to militant organizations.

Meanwhile, Iran's President Ebrahim left Tehran for New York Monday to participate in the UN General Assembly. He is scheduled to hold diplomatic meetings while in New York. Critics of the Biden administration Iran policy also took issue with the decision to allow Raisi to enter the country, while Iran is still under sanctions and expanding its nuclear program.

Richard Goldberg

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The sanctioned president of Iran is flying on a sanctioned aircraft on a Biden-approved visa to enter the US where he is actively plotting terror attacks on US citizens. \$6 billion will arrive in his bank accounts by the time he lands. And Biden will declare mission accomplished.

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Iran's president Raisi plane departed Tehran's Mehrabad Airport to NYC at 12:45 (Iran local time). He's flight call sign is IRAN02 on an Airbus A340. He is now over the Turkey aerospace. The plane is operated by Meraj Air which is subject to sanction.

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The US dual citizens to be released include Siamak Namazi, 51, and Emad Sharqi, 59, both businessmen, and Morad Tahbaz, 67, an environmentalist who also holds British nationality. They were released from prison and put under house arrest last month.

A fourth US citizen was also released into house arrest, while a fifth was already under house arrest. Their identities have not been disclosed.

Iranian officials named the five Iranians to be released by the US as Mehrdad Moin-Ansari, Kambiz Attar-Kashani, Reza Sarhangpour-Kafrani, Amin Hassanzadeh and Kaveh Afrasiabi. Afrasiabi who was prosecuted for accepting payments from the Iranian government has apparently decided to remain in the United States.

As a first step in the deal, **Washington waived sanctions** to allow the transfer of \$6 billion in Iranian funds from South Korea to Qatar. The funds had been blocked in South Korea because of US sanctions.

Under the agreement, Doha agreed to monitor how Iran spends the funds to ensure it goes on non-sanctioned humanitarian goods, such as food and medicine.

Meanwhile, **Iran announced on Saturday** that it has withdrawn accreditation for several UN nuclear inspectors, a move that intensified criticism of Biden's Iran policy amid freeing the

frozen funds. A European Union spokesman on Sunday said the EU is “highly concerned” by Iran’s decision, and asked Tehran **to reconsider “without delay.”**

With reporting by Reuters

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