

## **Seven Iranian American Organizations Call for an Independent Investigation into the Discriminatory Treatment of Iranian-American Civil Servant, Sahar Nowrouzadeh**

Dear Members and Friends,

Several prominent Iranian American organizations united to call for an independent investigation into the discriminatory targeting of an Iranian American civil servant, Sahar Nowrouzadeh. After she was prematurely reassigned from the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, documentation [reported by Politico](#) revealed that her reassignment was at least in part due to questions about her political loyalty and where she was born. This information was so concerning that ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs and Oversight Committees have written the administration to demand answers. The letter of the Iranian American organizations follows:

"The Honorable John Kelly  
Chief of Staff  
White House  
[1600 Pennsylvania Avenue](#)  
[Washington, DC 20500](#)

The Honorable John Sullivan  
Acting Secretary  
Department of State  
[2201 C St NW](#)  
[Washington, DC 20520](#)

Dear General Kelly and Acting Secretary Sullivan,  
We, the undersigned Iranian-American organizations write with the utmost concern regarding the administration's clear

political and discriminatory targeting of civil servant Sahar Nowrouzzadeh. Career public servants are afforded protections against politically-motivated firings, and numerous protections have made it illegal for workers both inside and outside the government to be fired on behalf of their race, heritage, or religion.

On March 15, 2018, the ranking members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Elijah Cummings, and House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot Engel, sent a letter on this subject to the White House Chief of Staff, General John F. Kelly, and the Deputy Secretary of State, John J. Sullivan. In their letter, they revealed receiving new documents indicating that "high level officials at the White House and State Department worked with a network of conservative activists to conduct a "cleaning" of employees..." including Ms. Nowrouzzadeh.

Nowrouzzadeh is a distinguished Iranian American whose invaluable contributions to American national security led to her promotion to prominent positions in the White House, State Department, and Department of Defense. She served in both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, thus demonstrating her proven track-record of adapting her work to the priorities of the sitting president, rather than any political party or preference. Given her prior experience and knowledge of Persian, she could have been an invaluable asset to the Trump administration.

Yet, recent evidence indicates Trump administration officials sought her ouster based on discriminatory intent. Recent documents reveal that when Nowrouzzadeh asked her supervisor Brian Hook for help when confronted with personal attacks from political groups seeking her ouster, officials at the State Department and White House did not defend her but instead used character smears to force her out of her position on the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department.

Julia Haller, White House Liaison, wrote that Nowrouzzadeh "was born in Iran," which is false and, even if accurate, should have no bearing on this matter. Haller's suggestion that Nowrouzzadeh's Iranian heritage should be a factor in assessing whether Nowrouzzadeh could loyally serve in the U.S. government betrays discriminatory intent that appears to be in clear violation of federal protections.

Finally, internal emails reveal that, despite terminating Ms. Nowrouzzadeh's position on the Policy Planning Staff three months early for the foregoing improper reasons, State Department officials then tried to offer a misleading characterization of her actions: that she had been "return[ed] to a parent office of a civil servant at the completion of a detail assignment" - an objectively false statement. Such an ex post facto "cleaning" of the objective facts further raises red flags and evidences discriminatory intent, which is not only improper but also unlawful under federal law.

As organizations dedicated to ensuring that Iranian Americans contribute their extraordinary talents to civic life in the United States, failure to ensure accountability on Nowrouzzadeh's unjust ouster risks deterring a generation of Iranian Americans eager to contribute to government service, national security, and civic life in the United States.

We urge the White House and State Department to fully comply with the requests from the ranking members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Elijah Cummings, and House Foreign Affairs Committee, Eliot Engel, in their letter on this subject dated March 15, 2018. We also urge the administration to empower an independent investigation into the ouster of Nowrouzzadeh and other civil servants that holds those involved appropriately accountable.

Our groups would be willing to meet with you regarding these concerns in the hopes of charting out an acceptable path forward.

Sincerely,

Center for Human Rights in Iran  
Iranian Alliances Across Borders  
Iranian American Bar Association  
National Iranian American Council  
Pars Equality Center  
Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans  
United for Iran"