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Statement from Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines on Recent Iranian Influence Efforts

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines today released the following statement:

“The Intelligence Community recognizes the importance of informing the public of foreign efforts to influence our democratic processes and, consequently, leading into the Presidential and congressional elections this year, we are launching today the first of what will be regular updates regarding such threats.

Our updates can be expected to cover a range of foreign malign activities and election security threats, as you will see in today’s update. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to concerning Iranian activity.

As I noted in testimony to the Congress in May, Iran is becoming increasingly aggressive in their foreign influence efforts, seeking to stoke discord and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions, as we have seen them do in the past, including in prior election cycles. They continue to adapt their cyber and influence activities, using social media platforms and issuing threats. It is likely they will continue to rely on their intelligence services in these efforts, as well as Iran-based online influencers, to promote their narratives.

In recent weeks, Iranian government actors have sought to opportunistically take advantage of ongoing protests regarding the war in Gaza, using a playbook we’ve seen other actors use over the years. We have observed actors tied to Iran’s government posing as activists online, seeking to encourage protests, and even providing financial support to protesters.

I want to be clear that I know Americans who participate in protests are, in good faith, expressing their views on the conflict in Gaza – this intelligence does not indicate otherwise. Moreover, the freedom to express diverse views, when done peacefully, is essential to our democracy, but it is also important to warn of foreign actors who seek to exploit our debate for their own purposes.

Furthermore, Americans who are being targeted by this Iranian campaign may not be aware that they are interacting with or receiving support from a foreign government. We urge all Americans to remain vigilant as they engage online with accounts and actors they do not personally know.”