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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

December 20, 2024

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As you know, Section 7031(c) (“Anti-Kleptocracy and Human Rights”) of the annual appropriations acts generally requires the Department of State to bar the entry into the United States of foreign officials involved in significant corruption or a gross violation of human rights. This visa ban requirement is triggered whenever the Department has “credible information” about an individual’s involvement in such acts. To provide a measure of diplomatic flexibility, Section 7031(c) allows for certain exceptions to the visa ban, or for it to be imposed confidentially rather than publicly.

This provision of law helps implement the U.S. commitment not to provide safe haven for individuals who are responsible for human rights abuses or corruption, and it has proven to be a powerful tool for putting a spotlight on specific perpetrators and spurring accountability. I believe that greater transparency into how the Department has implemented Section 7031(c) would serve the public interest and Congress’s interest in effective oversight. While the Department’s reports of the specific visa bans it has imposed confidentially under Section 7031(c) are classified, I request that the Department provide in unclassified form certain aggregate statistics for each of the last four years:

- How many cases the Department reviewed to determine whether the Section 7031(c) “credible information” standard was satisfied;
- How many individuals the Department found ineligible for entry under Section 7031(c) for whom it imposed a visa ban confidentially rather than publicly;
- A breakdown by region and a breakdown by the type of act (i.e., significant corruption or human rights violation) for those confidential visa bans; and,
- How many times the Department invoked each of the two exceptions and each of the two grounds for a waiver that Section 7031(c) provides.

I believe the release of this information would increase confidence in the Department’s approach to implementing this important mandate, without infringing on the Department’s ability to preserve the option of confidentiality with respect to specific cases.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin  
Chairman