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Mansur - S. H. H. H.  
PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 November 1979

Dear Mr. President,

Thank you for your letter of 14 November about the appalling situation which your people are facing in Iran. I was glad to be able to discuss the problem with you on the telephone on Monday.

I am following developments closely. As I said in the House of Commons yesterday I admire the restraint with which you have dealt with the situation and your refusal to yield to blackmail. I have noted in particular that each of your actions has been a measured response to Iranian provocation and that you have made it clear both to public opinion at home and to the world at large that you are determined to continue acting with both firmness and restraint. As you know we, together with our European partners, have been doing what we can in Tehran to press the Iranians to release the hostages without condition.

It was kind of you to refer to the help which our own people have been able to give to yours in Tehran. I very much hope that we will be able to continue to render such assistance until the crisis is over. In that connection, I have been considering your suggestion that we should make a public gesture of our disapproval of Iranian behaviour by reducing the size of our diplomatic staff in Tehran. We have been keeping the level of our staffing at the Embassy under constant review with the aim of ensuring that it is no more than sufficient for operational needs.

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There will be some thinning out over the next few weeks. But we have not hitherto believed it wise to make a political point of any reduction, partly because we doubt whether the Iranians would be much impressed and partly because of the risk of retaliatory action against those remaining.

It seems to me that, if the Iranians are to be impressed at all by the sort of move you suggest, it would be necessary for a sufficient number of us to take action together. This could also reduce the risk of retaliation to which, as you know, our Embassy is particularly vulnerable. We are therefore going to consider your suggestion urgently with our European partners and we shall continue to keep in the closest touch with them about how we can most effectively help. In the meantime you will have seen that the statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Nine which I mentioned to you on Monday was duly issued yesterday. I hope you will have found its terms helpful.

I agree with you that we are dealing here with a question of fundamental principles as well as a question of human lives. On both you have our full support.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Thatcher

The President of the United States of America