

Remarks by Secretary Mike Pompeo
Free Iran World Summit
July 10, 2021

Thank you for that kind introduction. And thank you to the Iranian American Community of Texas for hosting me today. It is a pleasure and an honor to be here with you. Even in times as difficult as we have had the past few years, there remains so much to be grateful for in the United States. Here, we are free to associate with individuals who share our passions and interests. Each person is free to worship God as they see fit.

We are free to debate those with whom we disagree. We are free to peacefully protest against actions taken by our government which we feel violate our rights. We cherish the dignity of human life here and understand that it is the government that serves the people, and not the other way around.

Let us begin at the beginning. The revolution of 1979. Of course, the beautiful history of Persia could begin so, so much earlier. And to understand the civilizationally important history, the story must begin hundreds and hundreds of years before that. So, one could pick other starting points, but at this moment, the revolutionary founding of the theocratic regime resides at the heart of today's Iranian conflicts. There are of course multiple conflicts, and each of them worth addressing. The conflict between the Iranian regime and Israel and the Great Satan America, the conflict between the Iranian regime and the Gulf State and Sunni Arabs, and the conflict between the Iranian regime and modernity are important to understand.

But one conflict is the most important to understand to restore Iran to its rightful place in history. This is the real fight and it began in those frightful first moments of the revolution in 1979. The central fight is the one in the streets, and in the mosques and in the minds of Iranians – it is the divide between the people and the organized opposition seeking freedom and democracy on the one side, and the entirety of the regime on the other.

I am proud that I have been on the right side of this fight for over a decade now. As far back as 2010 I spoke of the Iranian people and their history, their kindness and their respect for reason, knowledge and human life. They too are tolerant people -- a homeland for Arabs and Jews, Christians and Muslims can be found on Iranian soil. Iranians want to prosper in their faith and protect their families – this is as true in Tehran as it is in Los Angeles, Austin, Nashville or Kings Point.

The regime, of course, is headed by Khamenei, Raisi and the IRGC. It is revolutionary in its zeal. It is brutal. It is theocratic. It is craven and kleptocratic. Its leaders will kill their own by the thousands and then choose those who committed these massive atrocities to now lead their terror organization and their regime. Its leaders can shoot

down a civilian airliner killing hundreds of civilians and think nothing of denying responsibility and hiding that black box from the world.

Zarif wears a western suit and speaks English with a smile, but he is a terrorist who would kill his own people to save the regime just as quickly as any other of the Ayatollah's henchmen. And now, Ebrahim Raisi; He will take on the role as heir apparent to the faith and determined negotiator who conquers America by getting the immoral sanctions placed upon the people lifted and improving life for all.

They – all of them – will keep the show going, as long as they can. I am confident the people of Iran won't let it continue. Because their audience wants the show to come to an end. The regime, they are prepared to use the IRGC, the Basij and any tool to keep their grip on power.

This misunderstanding--is understanding that there are no moderates. They are all revolutionary--recognizes and ultimately results in the fact that this regime is largely unchangeable by American policies, but we can weaken them and we did. It is what the Trump Administration's work did. Our mission was simple and I presented it in May of 2018. At the top of this list we demanded that the regime comply with twelve simple requirements and made clear that if the regime failed to do so we would take every American tool and apply real pressure. This is a regime that has the power to kill its own people and to foment terror around the world and we wanted to deny them resources to do that.

The power destruction of the regime that resulted from our sanctions and our maximum pressure was real, but its application for under two years was insufficient to fully achieve its end goals. The regime is at its weakest point in decades. With no ability, no ability to sell more than a few hundred thousand barrels of crude per day, no money – no money for foreign exchange; less than 10% of their foreign exchange reserves continue to this day. Facilities blowing up all over the place– not only inside of Iran but across the world and at sea.

And the IRGC-conquering-hero was erased from the map of evil that the regime had used to keep down the patriots at home and those who wanted good things for Iran abroad. We sent the Rial tanking to unprecedented weakness. And we filled the administration, the Ayatollah, with the paranoia that was justified by understanding that the revolution cannot be maintained forever, and will not be. And the resistance forces inside of Iran, these noble Iranian patriots, are as strong as they have ever been and provide optimism to all who support them.

And the people of Iran? Our Administration's policies supported the Iranian people at every single turn.

We were there. Where labor union strikes or product boycotts, we made clear that these were the result of revolutionary incompetence, not failures of the Iranian people, and we

did our best to provide support to those who sought to be lifted out from under the yoke of the regime.

You can really see the effects of the last years in this past week's election. Ever more desperate, the fraud had to be increased and the Iranian people know this, as does the Ayatollah.

Since 1979, every election in Iran has served only to give an appearance of republicanism to a corrupt, brutal theocracy. The 2021 presidential election, however, is vastly different from those before it, primarily because it is taking place when the theocratic regime is at its most precarious state since 1979, and its prospects of survival are openly questioned by regime insiders and challenged by a restive, freedom-loving nation. In short: very few people actually voted FOR Raisi.

This was a boycott. Turnout was the lowest since 1979, marking a total rejection of the regime and its candidates. It was, in fact, a boycott— and the regime knows it. They can publish whatever numbers they want, but make no mistake. Turnout was insignificant and the fact that this is a “show” laid bare for the entire world to see.

This election is heavily impacted by a series of major social upheavals, including the 2017, 2018, and 2019 uprisings, whose main slogan was:

"Hardliners, reformers, the game is over now," and “Death to the dictator,” this shakes the very foundations of the regime in its entirety. These uprisings demonstrated the Iranian pin no hope on elections as a conduit for substantive change. And the election of 2021, truly the selection of Raisi as the Ayatollah's president proved this out.

The program that we implemented also served to lay bare the regime's economic incompetence, systemic corruption, and frankly outright plunder of the country's wealth. They pushed 80% of the population below the poverty line.

They see the corrupt ruling theocracy as their true enemy and the first and foremost cause of the economic crises. One of the most dominant slogans in the recent uprisings has been, “Our enemy is right here; they lie when they say it is America.” The Iranian people must know, it is not America; it is the regime. As with all protest movements, flags were burned, but now, the most common flag being burned was not the Israeli or the American, but the flag of the regime.

So, what is ahead? What is the path forward?

Like I said, the regime is at its weakest point in its now 40 years of existence. Iranians from every corner of the nation can see the failure of the regime to deliver on the very promises that it made. It's epic incompetence in handling COVID-19 is on-going -- vaccination in Iran is at among the lowest levels in the world, not because the vaccine is not available, but because the regime refuses to accept vaccines from those prepared to give them precisely what the Iranian people need. The regime's epic incompetence

and quest for nuclear power has made it a pariah even among its fellow Muslim countries in the region.

Its incompetence in simply ruining the nation. That has resulted in the shortage of food and gas and basic staples making them unaffordable and the nation's ability to respond to natural disasters like floods and earthquakes virtually non-existent. In short, Iran is not working. And the Iranian people know it.

As for this Raisi fellow, he is not the President of the people of Iran. He is the President of the Ayatollah. His mission is clear. Inflict pain. Frighten, continue to loot, and to plunder.

Protect the clerics and protect the Republican Guards. He was chosen by the Ayatollah because he is just about 60 years old and thus could lead for the next two to three decades. This will give him the time he needs to get his own people into place and demonstrates that the Supreme Leader wants him to have some time to prepare for the next phase of the revolution with the system in place. He will use the IRGC and its Qods force to generate conflict externally to deflect attention and to maintain the narrative of the oppressed. This is how he will behave.

This calls for a clear response -- the United States should take the lead to hold him accountable for crimes against humanity. Any dealings with Raisi, would be tantamount to dealing with a mass murderer. This is not only immoral but also counterproductive. We should make clear to our allies in Europe and Asia as well to make sure that they hold him accountable, and that if they deal with this man who sent thousands of his countrymen to execution in a massacre in 1988, the United States would hold them accountable as well.

It is worth taking just a moment to note that apologists for the regime suggest that Raisi's election and the power now in the hands of "hardliners" is a result of the American pressure on the regime. This is nonsense. It is obvious that Iran's leadership has been static or trending right for two decades now.

Raisi demonstrates that the IRGC generation is replacing the Revolutionary generation. Moreover, while Raisi and others have criticized the JCPOA, it doesn't impact them, it doesn't touch any of their equities. Thus, they get to do the deal politically and reap the economic benefits from reentering the JCPOA and get the resources that come from it at no cost to the revolutionary leadership. So, Raisi is likely to complain about the deal, use that to gain even more concessions from a deal-hungry U.S., but won't, in the end, block it, creating a clear pathway to a nuclear weapon.

Actions supporting our love of the Iranian people must begin by holding Ebrahim Raisi accountable for his crimes against humanity back in 1988. I know there are those in the audience who have had family that were killed in Raisi's massacre.

Too, some of you have loved one and friends currently imprisoned, in Evin and elsewhere in Iran, and, some, who have had loved ones disappeared or worse.

We will never forget any of them and will pray for all of them.

As was the case with the Trump Administration, human rights and counter terrorism must be at the very center of our Iran policy. We must support the Iranian people. If we want to keep Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, we have to apply pressure until they change their behavior, or until reforms which move Iran toward a democratic form of government take place. We cannot shower the Ayatollah with money and economic benefits in the hopes that he won't use it to inflict terror. This thinking is foolish, dangerous, and backwards.

The program of sanctions and pressure employed by the Trump Administration needs to remain the model for engagement with Iran if we want to ensure the security of the American people and better lives for the Iranian people.

I pray that the United States does not increase the resources he has at his disposal to empower the theocracy. Engagement with the regime will make lengthen the time that the regime has to behave as it has for these past decades denying basic human dignity and opportunity to the Iranian people.

I am hopeful. The world has learned much about the theocracy in Iran these past few years. It's not that we didn't know it before, but we were afraid to confront it squarely. In Washington, D.C. there is much consensus as evidenced by the overwhelming support for the sanctions regime that we put into place. And, around the world, you can see that even in Europe the tide of tolerance for the regime is turning against the regime.

We must continue to support the Iranian people as they fight for a freer and more democratic Iran in any way that we can. There is so much good work that American civil society can do to further this goal. It is work that your organization is actively engaged in – keep up the fight.

In the end the Iranian people will have a secular, democratic, non-nuclear Republic, I pray that this day will come soon and with the support of Iranians living all around the world – and those who resist from within -- that day will come sooner. I am committed to this cause; I know you all are too. May your mission be blessed and protected. May the Iranian people be blessed. It is a hopeful time and a time to redouble all of our efforts.

Thank you for having me here today. God bless you, and may God bless the Iranian people.