

Remarks by Senator (former) Joe Donnelly

July 10, 2021

Thank you for the honor to speak to the 2021 Iran Human Rights and Democracy Summit for a Free and Democratic Iran. Every citizen of Iran has the right to freedom, democracy, and the chance to see their hopes and dreams come true. My name is Joe Donnelly. I am the former United States Senator from the great state of Indiana – a state that has great affection for our Iranian brothers and sisters and is so supportive of your campaign for freedom and democracy and human rights in Iran. My country, the United States, stands with the people of Iran and the goals of your conference to see a free Iran that respects the human rights and religious beliefs of all its people.

I want to thank the Iranian diaspora for the chance to be with you. The power of your organization and all of you is amazing – you come from over 100 countries and five continents with a common goal of a democratic Iran for you, your children, and all future generations.

Just last week, the United States celebrated on July 4th, the celebration day of independence for our nation. In early 1776, we did not know if our efforts for independence would be successful – there were hardships, lost military battles, and days and months and years where our freedom never seemed possible. The people of the United States never gave up. And I know you will never give up, and the people of Iran will never give up your quest for a free, democratic, safe Iran that welcomes all religions, welcomes all ethnic groups, and re-establishes its place as a friend to other countries and becomes part of those nations that help bring peace to the world.

The government that is in place in Iran today has instead a long history of human rights violations and spreads terrorist activities around the world. That's not who the people of Iran are or want to be. Instead, Iran's citizens have peacefully and heroically demonstrated throughout their country in recent years for change and a better life – and they were attacked, beaten, jailed, and killed by this government because they stood up for a better future. I stand with you, the United States stands with you, and the world stands with you. It is time to stop the terror tactics and the human rights abuses and to restore Iran to a place where they can be seen as a beacon for hope and peace and freedom. The [recent sham election](#) that was boycotted by most of Iranians, is a prove of the people's choice for a Free Iran.

As reported in the media, Ebrahim Raisi, a member of 1988 “Death Commission” was SELECTED by Iran's Supreme leader Ali Khamenei to be the next President of Iran. According to Amnesty International, and as addressed in the House Resolution (H.Res. 118), cosponsored by 250 Members of Congress, thousands of Iranian political prisoners were executed in 1988.

The rights of women – our sisters, mothers, wives, daughters, and friends – are under constant attack in Iran. It has been stated that women's equality in Iran is not acceptable to today's Islamic Republic. The damage being done to Iran because of the dictators' attitudes towards women is terrible. There are so many lost ideas, so much lost talent, so many incredible women leaders, who have never had their voice heard. Iran's women deserve to share an equal part in their nation's life. Anything short of that is unacceptable.

On June 30, 2018, thousands of people gathered in Paris at the Free Iran gathering where they supported advocates for a democratic, secular, and non-nuclear Republic of Iran, and showed support for the opposition leader Mrs. Maryam Rajavi's 10-point plan for the future of Iran, which calls for the universal right to vote, free elections, and a market economy, and advocates gender, religious, and ethnic equality, a foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence, and a nonnuclear Iran.

Imagine an Iran that exported peace, and knowledge, and friendship, and help to other peoples and places. That is the Iran you are working so hard to create. That is the Iran your efforts can make possible. That is the Iran which its citizens dream of creating and living in. Your hard work and sacrifice and efforts make the reality of that dream come closer every day. You have seen the light of freedom growing brighter every day in Iran, and your continued dedication to the cause of Iranian freedom insures that will continue.

We can see an Iran that helps end hunger instead of exporting terror in places like Yemen. We can see an Iran that helps lead the way in solving climate change in the Middle East and elsewhere. And we can see an Iran that is a reliable partner in making our world a better, safer place – for all its citizens and everyone else. That is your dream and the dream of those who live in Iran today.

You work every day to make the dream of a free and democratic Iran come true. That is not easy work, but it is noble work. It is very, very important to the whole world, and we are grateful for your dedication and devotion. May your success grow ever stronger, and please know the prayers and hope and dreams of the people of Iran and the world are with you. Thank you so much for the chance to be together with you at this very important conference.