

2021 Iran Human Rights and Democracy Remarks

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Thank you for that kind introduction Kyra.

To the participants of the Free Iran World Summit 2021, to President elect of the National Council of Resistance, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, and to the millions more who are listening in Iran and around the world, including the mostly female led resistance units, I want to begin by thanking all of you for your dedication, your devotion and your commitment to the cause of a secular, democratic and non-nuclear Iran. I also want you to know that the government of the United States stands with you, the people of the United States stand with you, and—as a former Secretary of the US Air Force, a mother, a daughter and a sister— I also stand with you.

My friends, I hope you are feeling tremendous pride at this point in your history. Working courageously and together, you today form the backbone of a growing and powerful resistance to the corrupt regime in Tehran—a resistance that-- with your perseverance-- will never be silenced. I urge you to take heart and be encouraged for you have accomplished a great deal in a very short period of time. Most recently, thanks to your collective efforts and the leadership of Mrs. Rajavi, you sent a powerful message to Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei and his cronies. That message quite simply was: WE SHALL NOT TAKE PART IN YOUR SHAM ELECTION!

Your successful boycott of the June 18, 2021 election, coming on the heels of four years of popular protests, show the world and the regime in power that the Iranian people are fed up with the economic incompetence, the broken promises, the systemic corruption, the disrespect for human rights and the misogynistic treatment of women in Iran.

If I may, let me reflect for a moment on that last point. How ironic that the leaders of Iran treat women as less than equals-- when this resistance movement, led by a woman and comprised of 50 percent women-- will ultimately bring them down!

My friends, it is precisely due to your success that the regime in Iran feels increasingly threatened. That's in part why the June 18 vote was manipulated to elect Ebrahim Raisi—a man who is more than willing to oppress the Iranian people in an even more harsh manner. When you lose all popular support, when you ruin an otherwise productive economy, when you allow COVID 19 to ravage your people and refuse lifesaving vaccine from the West, the only tool left in your toolbox to maintain power and keep control of the country is to crack down more severely on those who protest and offer an alternative vision for the future. I believe this is what Ebrahim Raisi may do when he takes office in August.

Ebrahim Raisi has the blood of many on his hands—and the whole world knows it. As head of Iran’s judiciary, and earlier in his career as a member of the 1988 Death Commission, he is and was responsible for overseeing unspeakable actions, including the forced disappearance and execution of thousands of political prisoners-- mostly members of MEK-- and the targeting of Iranian dissidents abroad. According to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, he should be investigated and tried for crimes against humanity, not installed as the President of Iran. And I wholeheartedly agree.

Although this state of affairs may sound bleak, I say to you again—take heart. The challenge certainly remains difficult but your unity, sacrifice and persistence will surely deliver results. And I am certain that the United States wants to help.

Specifically, there is overwhelming bipartisan support in the US House of Representatives for H.Res. 118—a Resolution expressing support for the Iranian people’s desire for a democratic, secular and non-nuclear Republic of Iran. H.Res. 118 also condemns Tehran’s violations of human rights and state sponsored terrorism. As you know, Mrs. Rajavi’s 10-point plan was the model used to craft this resolution so I want to thank her and the Iranian diaspora, including Organization of Iranian American Communities, in particular, for educating many in the United States about what’s really happening in today’s Iran. Its extremely important that you keep bringing to the attention of the American people and to the world the conditions the people of Iran face.

I call on our Congress, including the US Senate, to finalize H.Res 118 as soon as possible. In addition, I hope the Congress and other nations will support the Biden Administration’s efforts to seek a “longer and stronger” agreement as a follow on to the reentry into the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and that any lifting of sanctions would occur only after Tehran agrees and demonstrates that it has altered its behavior on terrorism, human rights, and regional destabilizations. As a former Secretary of the US Air Force, I am particularly knowledgeable about Iran’s support for terror in Yemen, Lebanon, Gaza and against US forces in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. These actions must come to an end!

My friends, please allow me to sum up. YOU—not them—represent the future of Iran. YOU—not them—are committed to equality for all nationalities and genders. YOU—not them—believe in peaceful coexistence and respect for the United Nations charter. And if you continue to fight, to challenge, to speak out and to resist, YOU—not them—will one day deliver the right of self-determination and freedom to the people of Iran.

Change is hard, change takes time, change requires enormous sacrifice—Keep the faith, keep up the resistance, keep telling the story—and YOU—not them-- will ultimately prevail.

Thank you again for your participation in this important conference and for your commitment to a free Iran.