

**Video Message by**  
**Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ)**  
Chairman, Foreign Relations Committee

July 10, 2021

Hello everyone, it's my pleasure to speak with you and thank you all for your enduring commitment and advocacy on behalf of the Free and Democratic Iran that is prosperous at home and at peace with its neighbors.

Last weekend we celebrated in the United States the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, a joyous occasion to join with family and friends to rejoice the founding of this great nation and an opportunity to reflect upon and give thanks for the values and rights expressed so eloquently in the Declaration of Independence.

It says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the government".

These immortal words ring true today as they 245 years ago. And they apply not only to the people of the United States as we continually strive to achieve a more perfect union but to people around the world, including to the people of Iran.

Unfortunately, the people of Iran remain abided by a government that has repeatedly shown no interest in securing anything beyond its own self-preservation, sewing chaos abroad, and corruption and repression at home seeking a pathway towards a nuclear weapon. We need to look no further than Iran's recent presidential election, in which Ebrahim Raisi, a hardline crony of the supreme leader who is subject to US human rights sanctions was elected president. Mr. Raisi won a sham election after the regime cleared the field of any credible challenger in which a majority of eligible voters showed their disgust by refusing to participate, leading to the lowest voter turnout since 1979.

While it remains clear that the supreme leader Khamenei remains the ultimate ruler, it is a further indictment of his rule that he would not only endorse but tip the scales in favor of a man who like Raisi becoming president of Iran. A man who is actively involved in the forcible disappearance and extrajudicial killing of thousands of Iranians dissidents in 1988. A man who was involved in brutal crackdowns against peaceful protesters in both the green movement of 2009 and more recent protests of 2019. A man who Amnesty International's Secretary General Agnes Callamard, recently said must be investigated for crimes against humanity.

In the case of such callous disregard for the most fundamental rights and freedoms of the Iranian people and the risk that Iran under Khamenei and Raisi create in the entire region and the world, your continued advocacy remains absolutely vital.

It is a beacon of hope, that one day the people of Iran, the United States and indeed all the world will rejoice in an Iranian government that is at peace with the international community and works to secure a better future for its people. Thank you again for your hard work and we continue to stand with you until that day comes, of freedom, of respect for human rights and being part once again, of the international community that the Iranian people deserve.