

**2021 Convention for a Free Iran**  
**Donna Brazile**  
**July 10, 2021**

Thank you, Kyra for a spirited and warm introduction.

Your invitation to speak here is an honor that I treasure.

It is a delight to be with you today - or any day.

Today, I join you in solidarity – in this, the [fortieth anniversary](#) of the founding of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Let's give a solid round of applause for forty years of survival, thriving, and for the leadership of President-elect Mrs. Maryam Rajavi.

You know, this gathering is more than a Band of Brothers or a Stronghold of Sisters. It's a Fellowship of Family. Of a ppl who believe in human rights and freedom for all.

I am here not just in gratitude for sharing this occasion. I am here in humility.

- The humility that comes from observing your remarkable courage and leadership.
- Humility in watching you stand up to religious tyranny.
- Humility for your firm resoluteness in seeking a secular state.
- Humility for your advancement of human rights.
- Humility in measuring your passion for freedom
- Humility for your quiet embrace of humanity's equality.
- Humility for your forthright defense of the rights of women and girls.
- Humility for your persistence in seeking a nuclear-free Iran and world.

Indeed, you are an example for the world – including the United States – to emulate.

Indeed, you have so many friends here in America and allow me to mention two great patriots who believed in your cause. They were outstanding public servants, a Democrat and a Republican who have supported NCRI.

We should mention these men because – despite their different upbringings, and the current difficulties to bridge political differences in working together – they represented the bipartisan spirit in United States Congress and public life for your efforts.

I knew late John Lewis, the Congressman from Atlanta, Georgia. [He was active in the Civil Rights Movement at the age of seventeen.](#)

He was one of ten who spoke at the 1963 March on Washington where the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr delivered his “I Have a Dream” address. Lewis was the last of the ten to leave us in 2020. We miss him and continue to mourn his passing.

I want to quote to you from an address John Lewis made at the U.S. Capitol Building to Iranian activists in 2010.

His words are as relevant now as then because his struggle for Civil Rights and human rights was life-long, as it may be for those here present today.

He said this to the gathered Iranian activists:

“I come here to say to you, never-ever to give up, never-ever to give in, and never-ever to lose faith.

I got arrested 40 times, went to jail, beaten, left bloody and unconscious on the Freedom Rides.

“I had a concussion of the brain during the march from Selma to Montgomery on March 7, 1965. But we didn’t give up.

“And people who support the people in Iran and those of you who live and reside here in America and around the world must, never-ever, give up.

“Continue to press forward for your brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts, for your mothers and fathers and grandparents and great grandparents.

“As long as the people of Iran are denied their basic rights as human beings – people all over the world are denied their rights.

When I saw the recent uprising in Iran, it reminded me of some of the non-violent struggle[s] that we had in America for the right to vote and for the right to participate in the democratic process.

So, hang in there.”

[Pause]

Let me also share the sentiments of the late Senator John McCain of Arizona — the 2008 Republican presidential nominee and Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

As many of you know, Senator John McCain suffered for five years at the hands of war enemies when he was a prisoner in Hanoi, North Vietnam. He was a young Lieutenant Commander.

Hanoi [offered him an early release from prison, but he refused](#) it. He refused because the release was based on the privilege of his being the son of a four-star Admiral. Instead, McCain stayed with his men until they were all freed.

[President-elect Rajavi, I know you knew John McCain personally too. You had a meeting with him in Albania in 2017.](#) Both of you caught some flak for it.

Proof that no good deed goes unpunished.

McCain undertook that arduous trip in mid-April of 2017. He underwent brain surgery in early July, a mere two months later.

McCain addressed the NRCI who were meeting in Albania. He said, in part,

“You have stood up and fought and sacrificed for freedom, for the right to live free, for the right to determine your own future, for the rights that are God-given.

“I thank you for being an example, an example to the whole world, that those people who are willing to fight and sacrifice for freedom will achieve it, and you are an example to everyone in the world that is struggling for (freedom).”

McCain added, “Someday, Iran will be free. Someday, we will all gather in that square.”

This is a good place to conclude my greeting. The struggle for self-determination, equality, and Human Rights is often hard, and always long.

You should never forget that when you are on the side of universal equality, that you are on the side of truth. As Dr King taught us — the arc of the moral universe always bend toward justice.

Freedom must be won by the ppl you yearn to live in a society where everyone is treated with decency and respect.

I want you to know that the Spirit of Bipartisanship in the current 117th Congress of the United States in support of you will continue. And the American people will always stand by those who believe in the universal truth of equality and justice for all.

I want you to know personally that I am with you – that millions of Americans are with you – that we draw inspiration from your courage and persistence and will stay with you until “Someday, we all gather in that square.”

God Bless you and your work.

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