

Senator Joseph Lieberman (ID-CT)

Thank you. Thank you, dear friends. Well, it is great to be back. You know, the last speech I gave before my family told me, Daddy, Joey, no more travel, was March 12th in Washington to the Nowruz Celebration of the NCRIMEK. It's great to be back. What a great crowd and how thrilling it was to hear Vice President Pence. I turned to Bob Torricelli, and I said to him at one point in the vice president's remarks, "Birch, we've come a long way, baby." This movement has come a long way, and it was very clear that for the Vice President, he was not just reading a script that somebody wrote for him. He spoke from his heart and from his head. He believes in our cause and that kind of support brings us closer to the day when we will have a free Iran. Amen.

Like all of us who are in here, Attorney General McKissick, General [??] [00:01:42], Senator Torricelli and all the rest, we are here not only because we believe in your cause, our cause. We're here because we believe in you. We know you. You are our fellow Americans, patriotic, proud, loyal. You have contributed enormously to our country and yet, like so many other groups in America, you have a heritage, you have a country from which you and your families come. You grieve over the suffering of the people in Iran, and you will not rest – neither will we – until they are free.

And you in the NCRIMEK have formed and constitute clearly the most broad-based movement inside Iran and around the world of opposition to the regime that exists. I've been to meetings here across America. I've been to meetings in Europe. The support from the people is enormous and unprecedented. Incidentally, every event you do, you do with such excellence and organization and effect, it shows how effective this group's going to be when you're in charge of a free Iran.

I've spoken a few times at the event outside of Paris and well, I said, I don't know if you remember. I once ran for Vice President of the United States. Some people think I was elected vice president, but that's another story. But after I spoke at the event in Paris, where there were probably 100,000 people - people come out in those numbers cos they believe – I turned to my wife and I said, "You know, this is the largest crowd, including my vice-presidential campaign, I have ever spoken to in my life." And it's not just the numbers, which are important. You have a platform for the next great chapter of Iranian Persian history of values that are totally consistent with American values. You have a plan for the governance of Iran after this regime collapses, a plan which is practical, inclusive, comprehensive, and democratic, and you have, which every successful movement must, a leader who is inspirational, deeply religious, with extraordinary capabilities and great courage, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi. And if I may say so here in Washington, as another great American said long ago, Mrs. Rajavi has a dream. She has a dream of a better, freer life for the people of Iran and that dream drives her and drives each of us in this movement, which I, I state again as an American, am proud to stand with you today and will every day until the extremist, terrorist, totalitarian regime which controls your great country falls from power, as it surely will.

Thank you. Now dear friends, you and I both know that America faces many threats in the world today from strategic competitors, great powers, as they call them, Russia, China, rogue nations like North Korea and Venezuela, terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and Isis. But in my opinion, the greatest challenge, the greatest threat that the United States faces in the world today is from the regime in Tehran, Iran. I speak as an American. Your cause is an American cause. And why do I say that? You know as well as I do the Department of State continues to say that the regime in Tehran is the number one state sponsor of terrorism in the world. We know that Iran has enabled aggression and subversion throughout its region,

bringing untold suffering and death to people living in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and of course most immediately of all, in Iran. We know that the regime in Tehran is one of the most brutal dictatorships in the world, suppressing the human rights of its citizens, jailing journalists simply because of what they've written, and killing political opponents just because of what they believe and say in shocking numbers, including, as we know, as many as 30,000 of God's children in 1988, only because they were members of the regime's most significant opposition, the MEK, the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, the very organization we are proud to be standing with today. In their memory, in the memory of those 30,000, we will fight until we achieve our goal.

And as an American, as fellow Americans, we can see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears the viciously anti-American statements, threats coming from the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. History teaches us that we ignore those statements and take them lightly at our own peril. And now, if there was anyone left in the world who had hope for a change of direction of this regime, the one man who controls it most, the supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini has selected, as has been said, not elected, selected, and as President Ebrahim Raisi personally oversaw the murder of those 30,000 political opponents, has ejected from his administration anyone who could possibly be described as a moderate, my friends, instead of occupying the office of the president of a great country like Iran, Raisi should be arrested, taken to the Hague and put on trial for crimes against humanity and the crime of genocide.

Now these are just facts that I'm saying and in the context of this reality, I ask respectfully how can anyone in the leadership of our closest allies in Europe and in the Biden administration think that an effective agreement on nuclear weapons or anything else can be achieved with this regime with its brutal record that offends our American values with a criminal history and corrupt history of its leaders, with its violent anti-western policies and aims? I answer my question. It is not possible to achieve a reasonable agreement with these people. It is a delusion. It is a dangerous delusion and yet it lives on. Recently the United States government lifted sanctions against the Mahmoud Industrial Group in Iran and some of its executives, in spite of the fact that they have given substantial support to the regime's menacing ballistic missile development program.

A week ago, the P4+1, excluding the United States, met with an Iranian representative in Brussels to discuss restarting the deeply flawed JCPOA negotiations. And just yesterday, the chief Iranian negotiator on the JCPOA announced that the negotiations would begin again in November. My friends, instead of offering gestures and support like that to this Iranian regime, which will rescue it and revive it, we should be and our allies should be increasing the pressure on the regime, adopting and enforcing new sanctions, stopping China from secretly buying so much Iranian oil, urging the IAEA to send the Iranian file to the U.N. Security Council since it is clear that Iran is enriching uranium to 60 percent, way beyond the limit set in the JCPOA. We should listen to the Director General of the IAEA, who called for censure of Iran for blocking his agency inspectors.

I believe, as the vice president said, that the regime in Tehran is at its weakest point since the revolution that brought it to power. Its economy is in shambles. Its people are suffering in so many ways, including the fact that perhaps the worst of any government in the world except for North Korea, the regime in Tehran has not protected the people of Iran from the Covid 19 virus. That is not just incompetence. That is brutality. That is not caring for your fellow citizens. Now this is a moment, in my opinion, of historic opportunity that has not come before like this since the revolution of 1979 when we and our allies

around the world can bring about the end of the regime by supporting the people of Iran. And here in Washington, we can rebuild if the administration will take the lead, the historically bipartisan, nonpartisan American policy toward Iran which existed before the division over the JCPOA. And incidentally, in doing so, we will do something good for America. We will strengthen America's credibility in the world, particularly after the debacle of our retreat from Afghanistan, and we will thereby, by being tough on Iran, encourage our allies around the world, including in the Middle East, and weaken our enemies.

My friends, I want to thank you for coming from all across America to Washington today. Your presence in Washington is more important than you probably know. And here I'm speaking as a former member of the U.S. Senate. American foreign policy, foreign policy in our democracy is shaped by the will of the American people, just as domestic policy is, if they have the will and the energy and the strength to come and speak to power here in Washington. Today, you have done that. You have made clear that the American people must stand with the people of Iran against the government that has for too long held them hostage.

And so I end on a note of optimism because I am confident in this large crowd with this distinguished group of people and speakers that with your continued support and advocacy, with the support of the American government of both parties, with the support of the American people, and may I add, with God's help because we in supporting freedom are doing God's work, the work that the Declaration of Independence says was the gift of our Creator, the self-evident truth that we're all endowed by our Creator with the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That didn't just mean God gave those rights to Americans, right? He gave them to everybody in the world, including the people of Iran. So I am saying very clearly this is the moment to hang together and work hard, not to do anything stupid that will revive the faltering regime in Tehran. This is the moment to squeeze it and if I may say so, strangle it and push it out of power. The people can and will be liberated, and when they are, the world, including America will be infinitely more secure.

I end with a question that I have been proud to ask at the end of my remarks to this group in recent years, and I provide an answer, but I don't have to coach you. Are we ready to work for a free Iran? [Khazir], [Khazir], [Khazir]. Thank you. God bless you.