

Congressman Brad Sherman (D-CA)

Hello. I'm Brad Sherman from California's best-named city, Sherman Oaks. For 26 years I've served on the Foreign Affairs Committee and for 26 years I have focused on the evils of the regime in Tehran. My first year here I have put in a bill to put sanctions on this regime and focused some attention on the Shirah's 13 from 1998. So we've spent a long time looking at a regime that seems to come up with new ways to oppress its people every year.

As the Iranian people enter their ninth week of this uprising against the brutal and illegitimate regime responsible for the murder of Mahsa Amini, I have long stood with my friends who are here today and who I know are with us electronically to advocate for a free democratic nonnuclear Iran, where human rights and particularly women's rights are honored and respected. **And I stand today with the brave Iranian women and men risking their lives to fight for this future across Iran and I stand with so many advocates for women's rights including Madame Rajavi, who have risked their lives. And somehow I always knew that if we were going to bring democracy to Iran, it was going to be the women who would do it.**

The regime has continued its violent crackdown against protesters earlier this month. The United Nations verified that as many as 14,000 Iranians have been arrested since the protests began and arrests have only increased since then, with estimates as high as 16,000. The regime has also begun issuing these death sentences. Even if they're not carried out, the idea that someone bothered to raise their voice and is then told they are going to be killed is outrageous torture in and of itself. But sometimes when this government announces a death sentences, they do carry it out, as we saw in 1988.

The regime has convicted people with enmity against God, which basically means they don't like you. These sentences, of course, after the protesters are subjected to torture, after many die on the streets and others die secretly in the prisons or killed on the streets and killed in the prisons. The sham trials imposing a death sentence can last 15 minutes. Of course the killings secretly inside the prison involve less judicial involvement than that. At least 348 protesters have already been killed extrajudicially, including at least 23 children, according to Amnesty International. Some of these children are shot by security forces while others horrifically died after fatal beatings. And, of course, it was a fatal beating that started this with Mahsa Amini.

Last year Iran executed the second highest known number of prisoners, second only to China, of course, proportionally way beyond China. So make no mistake, the arrested protesters are in serious risk. These conditions should horrify anyone, and we must work to hold the Iranian leadership accountable for the horrific violence and for the denial of democracy and human rights since the 1970s. The regime's legacy of murdering dissidents is nothing new and has been used as a tactic for decades to stifle the Iranian people's fight for freedom. This of course includes the brutal murders that I alluded to again of thousands of dissidents during the 1980 massacres perpetrated by regime officials including Raisi. That interested what you get promoted for in this regime, the now president Raisi.

But the regime's violence will not undermine the resolve of the Iranian people to continue to demand their freedom and basic dignity. The Iranian people created the world's first human rights document, the Cyrus Cylinder. And they're determined to secure the same fundamental human rights for themselves as their ancestors first dreamed of thousands of years ago. **These brave activists have repeated the call daily in the streets. This is not a protest. This is a revolution.**

Congress stands with these protesters who are inspiring the world with their bravery. We have introduced numerous resolutions affirming the United States will always support the Iranian people in their fight for freedom. These resolutions include, of course, House Resolution 118, and I am proud to be the chief democratic sponsor of that bill. That resolution expresses support for the Iranian people's desire for a democratic secular and nonnuclear Republic of Iran and condemns violations of human rights and state-sponsored terrorism of the Iranian government. I am also proud to cosponsor H.Con.Res.110, which rightfully puts Congress on record commemorating the bravery, the courage, and the resolve of the women and men of Iran, demonstrating in more than 80 cities. And of course the regime tries to not let us know what's happening, but we know in at least 80 cities across Iran, people are risking their lives and now they're on notice and they're still protesting. They're on notice that they indeed are risking their lives to speak out against the Iranian regime's human rights abuses.

As the Iranian people continue to courageously fight for their freedom, we here in Congress must be unwavering in support of their fight. I will continue to stand with you. Many of us have worked together for almost 30 years and in your case, sometimes longer to fight for freedom and democracy in Iran.

I'm Brad Sherman. Thank you very much.