



UNITED STATES SENATE

PERSIAN NEW YEAR NOWRUZ

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN IRAN

Senator John Boozman, Chairman, Subcommittee Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriation Committee

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Foreign Relations, and Armed Services Committee

Senator Joseph Lieberman, former Senator from Connecticut

General James Jones, former Commandant of the Marines First National Security Advisor to President Obama

Governor Tom Ridge, first United States Homeland Security Secretary

Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr., former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs



KENNEDY CAUCUS ROOM

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Senator John Boozman

Chairman, Subcommittee Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriation Committee

Thank you all for being here. I just wanted to stop by and tell you how much I appreciate you being here.

We have a great example in Arkansas—He's a guy that came to this country and got involved, got involved in politics. He was a member of the Justice Commission court, and pretty soon, before I knew it, as a young Congressman, not being around very long, I had not only him in my office telling me about the importance of what you're trying to get accomplished, but six or seven guys (others) that he had educated as to the importance of moving forward, and so, you know, you have others advocating for the cause also. That's really what it's all about. That's what America's all about.

So, thank you all. We're committed to helping you any way that we can. I used to have an old football coach that said that past performance was indicative of future performance. And we've been pretty helpful in the past and will continue to be so, so thank you for being here. There's no substitute for you all being up here talking about how important the issue is and how we need to move forward, and it's a real honor. ...but it's certainly, you know, great to be with my colleagues here, that you've got a who's who of people that have contributed so much to our country, and it's great to have people like that onboard, so thank you very much, and again, we appreciate you being here, appreciate all you represent.





Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Foreign Relations, and Armed Services Committee

Thank you for that very generous introduction and thank you all for such a warm welcome. It's nice to be here with my colleagues and former officials. Senator Lieberman, always good to be here with you, and Tom Ridge who Tom and I served—before he was the...Secretary of Homeland Security, he was the governor of Pennsylvania, and we served together, and of course, General, always nice to be here with you as well.

So, happy new year or happy Nowruz. It's wonderful to be able to join you in this celebration. I said I really need another new year in this year. No, what this new year reminds us though is that the conflict between the international community and the government of Iran is not a conflict between our people. Nowruz is a celebration of what the Iranian and the American people have in common, and I think it's important to remember that on the most fundamental level we all believe in freedom, we believe in human rights for all, including women and girls, and we believe in a government that answers to its people and that is responsive. And stronger people to people ties, I think, will be helpful as we look at the future, because that ultimately leads to closer, more productive ties between our societies.

Nowruz, as it's celebrated around the world, demonstrates Iran's rich cultural roots and shows us that the future of Iran always belongs to its people. That future, I hope, will someday very soon include an Iran that respects the rights of its people and contributes positively to the stability of the region. As we know right now, that is not the case. But when we get to that point, future celebrations of Nowruz will no longer have the draw the distinction between the disagreements of our governments and the kinship of our people. And I know that's what everyone here is working towards, and I think there is an appreciation in this Congress that that's where we need to get, and the best way we can get there is to support so many of the efforts that you all are engaged in. So, thank you for this opportunity to say hello, to wish everyone happy Nowruz, and I hope you continue successfully with all of your efforts. I will be there behind you.





General James Jones

former Commandant of the Marines; First National Security Advisor to President Obama

Today, as was the case in 2010 when I left my post as National Security Advisor, the Iranian regime remains, in my view, mankind's most menacing threat to peace and stability. You all know the roll call of infamy very well. It's a regime that serially violates human rights, U.N. Security Council resolutions, and international law. It's a regime that dodges its commitments while generating international friction to tighten its grip on its people and encourage lawlessness throughout as much of the world as they can reach. And Tehran remains the chief antagonist of democracy and liberalization across the Middle East where a better future for millions of people struggles to emerge.

We see the regime's aspirations of regional hegemony graphically on display in Syria and Yemen.

In Yemen, the regime hopes to keep the gulf community embroiled in the Shia—Sunni conflict and in Syria to preserve its proxy state as a permanent base for regional troublemaking and international terror.

Among Tehran's most coveted objectives is establishing a long-desired land bridge from Tehran to Beirut via Iraq and Syria as a platform for spreading radical ideology by force and intimidation, including through the regime's military and financial support of Hezbollah and other terrorist enterprises.

Witness Mr. Rouhani's visit to Iraq earlier this month in Iran's ongoing effort to assert itself further in Iraqi politics and government.

The United States, in concert with our friends and allies in the regions, must, absolutely must do everything necessary to prevent these territorial ambitions from being realized.

If they succeed, the strategic implications will be profound. The Middle East will surely remain a hotspot of instability and conflict.

And this will beget only more death and more destruction that the regime and its proxies have been inflicted across the region in the fight against Sunnis and Shiites who don't support it, the West, the ideals of freedom, and the Iranian people themselves.....This situation we cannot accept, we must not accept.

....The international community is deeply grateful to Albania for opening its arms to resettlement, but the Iranian regime has stepped up its presence and plots in Albania hoping to harm these dissidents who wish to see a free Iran.

Almost a year ago today, Albanian authorities foiled a plot to detonate a car bomb outside the New Year gathering of Iranian dissidents near Tirana. Albanian authorities arrested two suspects. In December 2018, Albania expelled the Iranian regime ambassadors to that country and another so-called "diplomat" for their involvement in terror plots in Albania.



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Last June, French authorities foiled a terror plot against the annual gathering of the Iranian opposition in Paris. A couple of months later, US law enforcement took into custody two Iranian spies surveilling and gathering intelligence on members of the pro-democracy opposition in this country.

Moreover, diplomats and agency of the regime have been implicated, then terrorist plots against Iranian dissidents in France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. So, these are just some of the actions of a regime that knows it is out of step with modernity and fearful of those with a vision and a plan for a better future.

As you know, I have been privileged to be part of a large group of former and current senior U.S. civilian and military leaders advocating for their rights and welfare, and we will continue to be advocates for just that.

And this includes the President's National Security Advisor, John Bolton, who has remained steadfast in his support for our objectives.

Each of us has been inspired by the plight of the dissidents not only as a matter of basic human rights, but because their story drives home in a very stark way the darkness and danger posed by the Iranian regime itself to a freedom loving people in the region and beyond.

Fed up, the people of Iran have taken to the streets in what Secretary of State Pompeo describes as the most "enduring and forceful protests since 1979."

The regime has imprisoned thousands. Several dozen have died.

To those who live in freedom, it seems an absurdity. To the people in Iran, it is a grim and insidious reality.

In the most recent affront to human rights and rule of law, a few days ago, Khamenei appointed a member of the "death of commission," the "death commission," which sentenced 30,000 political prisoners to death in 1988 as the new head of the nation's judiciary. Among his first declarations, Ebrahim Raisi announced that security takes precedent over all else, promising to deal with any form of dissidence decisively.

The security Raisi refers to, of course, is not Iran's security, but the regime's security....

In framing US policy ahead, including the sanctions—measures that I would add are working—Secretary Pompeo articulated a simple but compelling goal:

"Our efforts," he said, "is to one day see Iranians in Iran enjoying the same quality of life that Iranians in America enjoy."

It couldn't be simpler, and it couldn't be more profound. Of course, achieving that vision is deeply rooted in Mrs. Maryam Rajavi's vision and aspirations. It's at the core of her ten-point plan for Iran's future. They are truly Jeffersonian principles that every freedom-loving member of the human race can embrace and that every form of tyranny fears.

So, just to remind ourselves, what does the plan call for, and why does the regime fear it so much?

I'll just briefly enumerate them, because they're worththinking about.



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One, free and honest elections.

Two, pluralism.

Three, abolition of the death penalty.

Four, separation of church and state.

Five, gender equality.

Six, rule of law.

Seven, the protection of human rights.

Eight, free markets and protection of property.

Nine, peaceful coexistence with other countries.

And ten, a nation devoid of nuclear weapons.

So, my friends, this is what the regime fears. We look forward with great anticipation to the day when these fears are realized...completely and fully.

The United States and its allies have a vital role to play in helping shape the kind of free and democratic future that Mrs. Rajavi's ten-point plan promises.

To that end, I believe we must focus on six strategic imperatives.

One, maintain a constant, vigilant eye on the regime's activities in the nuclear and missile domain.

Two, remain focused on a just outcome in Syria—a humanitarian tragedy which has so sadly fallen out of the news.

Nothing would strengthen Tehran more than to maintain Syria as a proxy than to strengthen its influence in Iraq.

Three, support the Gulf community in its aspirations to create a defense alliance to check the regime's power and counter the armed Islamic extremist group it supports.

Four, reinvigorate Middle East peace process.

Five, though not least, though not least, to support the Iranian people who hunger for democracy and a government worthy of their hopes and dreams.

And six, prepare the plan that will be implemented the day after the regime falls. And this is something I think that would be extremely positive, not only for the people of Iran to fully understand what will happen. When that day comes, what is the plan? What is the—what are the things that will be done the day after the regime falls? What can people look forward to? And it's also a good message for democratic capitals and friends of this movement all over the world under the leadership of Mrs. Rajavi and NCRI.....

That day will soon come when all Iranians know freedom, when all who were forced to flee their homeland to avoid persecution will parade with our countrymen and women in Tehran, celebrating the triumphant return of a great people to their rightful position in the family of nations.

That is a future worth creating.

I thank you for being here today and for devoting your voice and your passions to that cause.

MARYAM RAJAVI'S TEN-POINT PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAN

1. In our view, the ballot box is the only criterion for legitimacy. Accordingly, we seek a republic based on universal suffrage.

2. We want a pluralist system, freedom of parties and assembly. We respect all individual freedoms. We underscore complete freedom of expression and of the media and unconditional access by all to the internet.

3. We support and are committed to the abolition of death penalty.

4. We are committed to the separation of Religion and State. Any form of discrimination against the followers of any religion and denomination will be prohibited.

5. We believe in complete gender equality in political, social and economic arenas. We are also committed to equal participation of women in political leadership. Any form of discrimination against women will be abolished. They will enjoy the right to freely choose their clothing. They are free in marriage, divorce, education and employment.

6. We believe in the rule of law and justice. We want to set up a modern judicial system based on the principles of presumption of innocence, the right to defense, effective judicial protection and the right to be tried in a public court. We also seek the total independence of judges. The mullahs' Sharia law will be abolished.

7. We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international covenants and conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. We are committed to the equality of all ethnicities. We underscore the plan for the autonomy of Iranian Kurdistan, adopted by the National Council of Resistance of Iran. The language and culture of our compatriots from whatever ethnicity are among our nation's human resources and must be revived and enhanced in tomorrow's Iran.

8. We recognize private property, private investment and the market economy. All Iranian people must enjoy equal opportunity in employment and in business ventures. We will protect and revitalize the environment.

9. Our foreign policy will be based on peaceful coexistence, international and regional peace and cooperation, as well as respect for the United Nations Charter.

10. We want a non-nuclear Iran, free of weapons of mass destruction.

Maryam Rajavi is the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), a coalition of some 500 Iranian opposition groups and personalities, committed to a democratic, secular and non-nuclear republic in Iran. Half of NCRI's members are women. As a Parliament-in-exile, the Council's primary task is to hold free and fair elections for a Legislative and National Constituent Assembly in Iran no more than six months after the ouster of the ruling theocracy.





Senator Joseph Lieberman

Former Senator from Connecticut

Thanks for that tribute to my dear friend, John McCain. It was beautifully done, and you know, but I want to tell you, because I know how much the cause of a free Iran meant to John. And I want to put it in this context: you'd have a hard time finding a more patriotic American than John McCain, but his patriotism and his loyalty was not a blind patriotism and loyalty. John's loyalty was to the values that created this country and are in the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. And he saw those values—freedom, opportunity, rule of law—on the line in Iran today. And he felt that the cause of the Iranian people, the cause of the organization of Iranian-American communities, the cause of the NCRI and the MEK was an absolutely American cause. And that's why he was proud to fight for you.

I actually—you may think I'm losing it a little bit. I thought I could hear him this morning as I was on the plane, saying, "I'm glad you're going to this one, Joey." You know, so thank you.

Happy Nowruz to everyone who's here. It's a beautiful holiday, and I would just link it to what we're doing here today in these two ways. One is, as I'm sure the Iranian-Americans know, the history of Nowruz goes way back more than 3,000 years in Persian history, and that reminds us and gives us context that the extremists, terrorists, repressive regime that captured Iran in 1979, 40 years ago, is truly a brief and passing moment in the proud more than 3,000-year history of the Persian people. It's been brief, but it has been a nightmare for the people of Iran and for those who care about them, and I believe that nightmare is ending now as sure as day follows night..... So that Nowruz, new day, I believe will come before next Nowruz. During the next 12 months think we can work together to bring about the fall of this regime.

Now, why do I believe that? I build on what Ambassador and General Jones have said, because the regime is really rotting. And the people of Iran, courageously, are rising up against the regime. And I must say, in the spirit of nonpartisanship, there happens to be a new sheriff in town. He's a controversial sheriff. Some like him, some don't like him. His name is Donald J. Trump. But when it comes to Iran, President Trump has changed the whole game and the whole reality by breaking us out of the Iran nuclear agreement, which was a bad deal for the U.S. and a good deal for Iran, and continuing through his administration to intensify the political and economic pressure of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is one of the reasons why the regime is rotting internally.

I think you've heard the previous speakers give you some of the indications of why it's rotting. I would just add a few facts, and this is not just rhetoric. This is happening on the ground. Iran's currency, the rial, has lost 70 percent, 7-0 percent of its value just in the last year. Inflation in Iran on key consumer items has reached above 100 percent. Unemployment in many of Iran's cities is above 50 percent.....

When it comes to human rights, you've also heard some of the sad facts there. Since the uprisings began—the latest round in December of 2017, they've kept going, notwithstanding the fact that there have been more than 8,000 arrests, notwithstanding the fact that Iran has the highest number of executions per capita of any country in the world. 3,600 have been executed just during the regime of the so-called "moderate" Rouhani.



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In December of 2018, Amnesty International published a 200-page report documenting the details of that 1988 massacre that were referred to before. In December of this past year, 2018, just a few months ago, the Iranian regime was condemned by the United Nations for the 65th time—65th time for its ongoing violations of human rights. So, this is not just a small group of Americans, a small group of Iranian-Americans. This is the United Nations condemning them. And in January of 2019 this year, Amnesty International 2018 the year of shame for the mullahs' regime....

And one of the most, to me, encouraging things is that from the very top of this regime, the Supreme Leader and the President say increasingly that the protests that continue to go on are the work of the NCRI and the MEK.

There is an alternative. And General Jones mentioned—I just want to say it. This is not going to be another situation where a totalitarian government forms and there's chaos. The National Council of Resistance of Iran is a broad coalition group. It's broad in all segments of the opposition to the regime, all the different ethnic groups and working groups in the regime. It has this platform that General Jones referred to. Yeah, as I heard it, I was thinking, Jim, Mrs. Rajavi's platform, "I hope one of the candidates for President here in the United States adopts a platform like that. They would probably make a lot more sense than they've been making [laughs] so far."

The reality is that the NCRI also has a plan for transition and it's a democratic plan with a small d. It involves elections, as soon as possible, to allow the Iranian people who are—who remain gifted, notwithstanding the torture that they've lived under. They have a history of self-governance, and they are ready to make the transition to the next much better phase of their history.

... So, General Jones said some of this, but support the administration on more sanctions, stick with the people of Iran, stick with the opposition that is ready to provide a strong alternative—the NCRI, led by Ms. Rajavi and this extraordinary ten-point plan. And be ready when that moment comes, not to bite our tongues, as happened in June of 2009 when the people of Iran went to the streets and Neda was martyred. This time be ready to get our government to support the people of Iran. Each of you, members of staffs of Congress, citizens of the United States of America can make this happen. And I believe it could happen this year.

Is that just a dream? Well, it won't be a dream if we together will it and work for it. It will be no dream. It will be a Nowruz, a new day for the people of Iran, the people of America, and the people of the world. So, let's share a dream together. Next year we're going to celebrate Nowruz in a free Tehran. Thank you very much.





Governor Tom Ridge

first United States Homeland Security Secretary

Ladies and gentlemen, happy new year.

This is a unique opportunity, excuse me, to share a couple of very personal thoughts after the three really eloquent statements of purpose and morality and support of the gentlemen that preceded me at this podium. In our embrace of a free Iran, our embrace of the NCRI, our embrace of the values system they propose in the ten-point plan, that it's just so consistent with the core values of this great country—the freedoms and opportunities that all of us enjoy. This is a rather unique gathering, and I know there are individuals in this room who know the history of the NCRI who've been very supportive of the organization, very supportive of the 2,600 men and women who've moved around after the past couple of years and finally ended up in Albania.

To a certain extent, I might be preaching to the choir, but I really want to focus my remarks on toward the end of his remarks, Senator Lieberman talked a little bit to the men and women that are here who have the opportunity and responsibility to serve this country in very unique capacity as members of the staff, either the House or the Senate. And there's no reason in the world, just a look around the room, that you would be as familiar with the background of NCRI as some of the others, older members of the group, of the audience.

I want to take you down a brief personal trail. When I left the Department of Homeland Security, I was approached to support the NCRI. At the time it was called the MEK, well, it still—the MEK does exist. And at the time, as Ambassador Bloomfield mentioned, it was listed as an FTO, a Foreign Terrorist Organization. And what you don't know, during my tenure at- in the White House, I met just about every morning bright and early with a group of people in the Oval Office to review a series of terrorist threats directed at Americans, American interest, both home and abroad. In the time that I was in Washington, D.C. from October of 2001 until I left in 2005—that's quite a long time—I must have been part of over 1,000 briefings and God only knows how many thousands of pages of terrorist threats. And the intelligence community would identify from the various sources where they thought those threats were coming from.

I will tell you one of the reasons I decided to support the cause of the Iranian people. It was because the MEK was never—never appeared—not one day on one memo on one page on one allegation that they were a terrorist organization. And since that time, this group, this supportive group, and it's really reflected to the individuals who are present here today.

We've got the diplomatic core, military, (political). You should also know in the group of several hundred men and women, there are religious leaders and business leaders who all have embraced the cause of a free Iran, who've all embraced public supported the NCRI. Many of us have been privileged to meet with Madame Rajavi. And I have been privileged to meet with family members whose spouses, children, friends are among the 120,000 Iranian citizens who've been executed since the mullahs took over the culture and extraordinary country of extraordinary people, the extraordinary history, a culture today is one of the most sophisticated in the world with the great most literate populations in the world, one of the youngest populations in the world, and they're still under the thumb of what some people in this town refer to periodically as a moderate regime....

So, this incredible cadre of men and women from across every spectrum of life in America decided to make it our cause to do everything we can to embrace publicly in support Madame Rajavi and the NCRI. There will come a change. There will come a change. And it's not about going to the past with a monarchy which wasn't exactly—no one could refer to it as a democracy in any manner, shape, or form. And it's certainly not the status quo. It's about liberty, equality, and I think the Ambassador said, it's the primacy of the vote by those who choose to run and who can be elected by the free unimpaired vote of the men and women, the citizens of Iran.



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So, I like the notion of the new year and a new day. There will be a new day, but frankly, the broader, global community I think has to do more. I—we applaud—I'm glad you mention President Trump. I mean it's pretty clear where he and Secretary Bolton and others feel about the Iranian regime. But frankly, from my point of view, I'd like to see zero exports of energy. I think it'd be a great idea. You want to put pressure on a regime? And again, unfortunately, that means the Iranian people are going to suffer, but they're suffering right now. And you say, "Well, how do you know that?" Well, I think inflation's at 40 percent, unemployment's 50 percent. The rial has lost 70 percent of its value. So, you got to keep—put that pressure on, continue to encourage both the President and the administration and the Congress to continue to sustain their public embrace.

I also think it'd be a good idea—there are a couple organizations within the fabric of that government over there. The Republican Guard should be listed as a foreign terrorist organization. As my colleagues pointed out previously, you can find not only individuals from the Republican Guard, but money and weapons. You can find them in Yemen, and you can find them in South Sudan. You can probably find them hidden in Lebanon. They're certainly supporting Hezbollah, creating all that instability in that particular region, and by the way, it impacts us as country as well. And if you had occasion to talk, as I'm sure General Jones has and I have, with men and women who've worn the uniform of our country and served in Iraq and Afghanistan, you'll find that weapons and munitions and others provided by the Iranian government and responsible for the deaths of American soldiers. It's not a moderate regime. It's a ruthless, violent, totalitarian regime.

And a new day will come, but will only come, not just we continue gather like we have today and talk about it, but Congress and this administration need to continue to put on the pressure. General Jones call on the broader international community to tighten the screws.

Can you imagine—can you imagine 65 times in the United Nations, the Iranian government has been condemned? And they're still in charge. But there's an alternative. There's a better way. There's a new way. That's the NCRI. That's Madame Rajavi, where press, assembly, speech, dissent, tolerance, and a nonnuclear Iran can join the community of nations and blend its incredible culture and history and its literate and dynamic population into the broader community, global community, and give back. So, much of our history in the Western history, you can refer back to the Persian world, return to the community of freedom-loving nations. So, again, to the men and women here from the Congressional staff, one, I tip my—that's a tough job. Senator Lieberman and I have talked about that before. You're only as good as the men and women around you, so I'm sure your Senators and Congressmen appreciate what you do, but those of us who've had the privilege to be here and see what you do and benefit from what you do, I'm grateful for your presence. And I want you, when you leave this room, when this issue comes up, and it may come up before you, before it becomes, before your Representative, your Senator, hope you remember this day. I hope you remember the words of these...patriots. The men that preceded me are great patriots. It's their credibility's on the line. They did the same due diligence as I did before they embraced this incredible group of pro-democracy Iranian dissidents. And when we leave this room today, I hope you remember that. And if there's a slightest doubt in your mind, and I don't think there should be, you resolve that doubt in favor of sustained pressure, in favor of regime change, in favor of a free Iran.

And I sure hope that next year—I'm not sure if we're going to be able to take all staffers to Tehran, but we'd be happy to celebrate your presence, if you could join us. I'd like to join Senator Lieberman—thank you for being here. Thank you for listening to this story. When you leave, please remember what we shared this with you today—a free Iran is an American's best interest. We put our values together, be a great ally in that part of the world. Thank you very much.





Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield

Assistant Secretary of Defense for State Political and Military Affairs

What a beautiful tribute to the late Senator McCain, who touched the lives of everyone in this town, everyone in this Senate, everyone in America and around the world. And his—the power of his memory will last a long time and inspire many, many good things. A very touching salute and so well deserved. It's up to the rest of us to carry on Senator

McCain's commitment to American values as it relates to events that shape the future of the world....

I also want to way a word about the National Council of Resistance of Iran, led by its President-elect, Maryam Rajavi.The first time I heard Mrs. Rajavi was in Paris in 2011, eight years ago, at a rally with tens of thousands, perhaps over 100,000 people in a massive hall north of Paris. And I thought, I was just examining, "Who is this person? What is this group... This is what she said. ... "Our goal is to establish a free and democratic republic, based on the separation of church and state, gender equality, and with emphasis on women's equal participation in political leadership. We want a nonnuclear Iran. Our platform could be summed up in three words—freedom, equality, and the supremacy of the people's vote. This has been our ideal from the outset. We are not fighting and making sacrifices to be able to grab onto power. We have not even set our sights on sharing power and the ability to govern. Our biggest mission is the establishment of the people's sovereignty and democracy. We would be content to remain in opposition and feel honored to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of giving the Iranian people the ability to choose freely." And how powerful those words are today when the Iranian people are rising up and asking for exactly that.



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And I'd like to direct my thoughts particularly to Senate staff, House staff, if any are here, and members of the media, because they are the ones who are always trying to say, "What is true? What can I tell my boss? What can I tell the public about the facts?" And my message to you is someone who has tried to research for the truth of this story is to be very careful, because in Washington today, I'm not sure—in fact, I am sure we're not getting the straight story. We are not getting the truth about our speakers, about the NCRI, about the MEK, and about the regime. We're not getting the right story....

I don't think it's happened yet, but let me just say a word about the distinguished speakers you heard General Jones, Senator Lieberman, Governor Ridge. Not only do they know what they're talking about, but all of them, and many other distinguished Americans have been accused of doing something very disrespectful. Oh, flying over to Europe, take a paycheck, read something off of a card, and fly home. That's what Washington establishment people want you to believe, because they're afraid of the truth. The truth is that these gentlemen and a number of other—the most distinguished senior leaders of this country have spent countless hours, days, travels on their own nickel talking to each other, emailing each other, studying these issues, talking with the resistance, learning about the stories of who died in the jails of Iran by standing up for their own inalienable right. Life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness—those aren't just American rights. Those were given to be from our creator as inalienable rights, and so every human being naturally thinks that they should be free to live, but they're not free to live in Iran, and thousands, as Governor Ridge pointed out, have been executed....





Tim Ghaemi

Representative of Organization of Iranian American Communities

Honorable Senators,
Distinguished Speakers,
Dear Friends,

Dear Iranians who watch us around the world particularly the heroes of the Iranian people who are now resettled in Ashraf 3, in Albania. It is a privilege to be here, celebrating Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. For millions of enchained Iranians in my beloved homeland, Iran, spring is a harbinger of hope for a new day, a better future. While, the darkness of a brutal theocracy has been cast over Iran, which we call the land of the Lion and Sun, over the past four decades, the Iranian people have not lost hope, nor have they surrendered to this fascist regime. In the past year, Iran was the scene of thousands of demonstrations, rallies, protests, sit-ins and strikes, large or small in the four corners of the country. As many as 160 cities were involved in the protests and truck-drivers strikes affected more than 300 cities around the country.

Indeed, the women of Iran have defied this regime and its medieval practices in every way possible, by leading protests and strikes, and with their chants of "The enemy is right here; they lie when they say it is America." Iranian people want fundamental change, they want a system of governance that is truly representative of the population. They want a government that respects their basic human rights, believe in gender parity, freedom of religion, equality of all ethnicities, rejects death penalty and nuclear weapons. A government that instead of inciting terror and violence in neighboring countries is interested in living in peace and harmony with its neighbor.

This is an Iran, which the principal Iranian opposition coalition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, has been working to bring about for four decades. These ideals and aspirations are underscored in the ten-point plan for the future of Iran articulated by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the NCRI.

In closing, as a representative of the Iranian American communities in the United States, I want to thank our senators for standing with the Iranian people as they stand for liberty. Without the bi-partisan initiatives undertaken by this institution, the voices of the Iranian people would not have been heard as loudly and hope for a better future would not resonate here.

I would like to draw your attention to the video monitors for a brief tribute to someone well-known in the United States Senate for over three decades, the late Senator John McCain, a man of great moral fiber, and a man of principle, who stood by the oppressed no matter what the cost and no matter where they were, whether in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, or in Iran. His words at the height of the 2009 uprising, when Neda Agha Soltan was killed in broad daylight by the security forces in Tehran, will be registered in the annals of Iran history and future generations will remember it forever: "Neda died with open eyes, shame on us who live with closed eyes." Ladies and gentlemen, a tribute to a great friend of the Iranian Resistance.





Senate Briefing underscores need to bring change in Iran

<https://www.einpresswire.com/article/479660372/senate-briefing-underscores-need-to-bring-change-in-iran>



WASHINGTON, DC, USA, March 19, 2019 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Bipartisan senators and senior American officials joined senate staffers and members of the Iranian-American community at a Senate briefing to embrace the promise of a free Iran.

The event, which also included the celebration of the Persian New Year, Nowruz, hosted sitting senators and staff members from both sides of the aisle. Distinguished personalities delivered remarks, including former senator Joseph Lieberman, former National Security Advisor General James Jones, former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and former Assistant Secretary of State Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr.

The Senate event championed powerful backing for the uprising of the Iranian people against the clerical regime and expressed continued support for the organized democratic movement, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and the ten-point Plan of NCRI's president-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi. Senator John Boozman (R-AR), Chairman of the sub-committee of Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Appropriation Committee, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), a member of the Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees, were on hand to offer the Senate's bipartisan support for human rights and democracy in Iran.

Former Senator Joe Lieberman thanked the Iranian-American community for creating an emotional video "tribute to my dear friend, John McCain." He said Senator McCain "felt that the cause of the Iranian people, the cause of the organization of Iranian-American communities, the cause of the NCRI and the MEK was an absolutely American cause. And that's why he was proud to fight for you."

Former Homeland Security Secretary and Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge pointed to "our embrace of a free Iran, the NCRI and the values system they propose in the ten-point plan, that is just so consistent with the core values of this great country."

"I have been privileged to meet with family members whose spouses, children, friends are among the 120,000 Iranian citizens who've been executed since the mullahs took over," Secretary Ridge added. "There will come a change," said Governor Ridge. "There will come a change. And it's not about going to the past with a monarchy which... no one could refer to it as a democracy in any manner, shape, or form. It's about liberty, equality, ... the primacy of the vote by those who choose to run and who can be elected by the free unimpaired vote of the men and women, the citizens of Iran."



PERSIAN NEW YEAR NOWRUZ Human Rights and Democracy in Iran



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Former National Security Advisor General James Jones said: "Tehran remains the chief antagonist of democracy and liberalization across the Middle East where a better future for millions of people struggles to emerge."

"Among Tehran's most coveted objectives is establishing a long-desired land bridge from Tehran to Beirut via Iraq and Syria as a platform for spreading radical ideology by force and intimidation, including through the regime's military and financial support of Hezbollah and other terrorist enterprises."

The former commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps and the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe added: "The United States, in concert with our friends and allies in the regions, must absolutely do everything necessary to prevent these territorial ambitions from being realized."

Ambassador Bloomfield said: "The Organization of Iranian-American Communities, who have so many friends in the United States Senate and House, are the true Iranian-Americans."

"For over 50 years since the MEK was a secret student society, they have said "No" to tyranny, first under the Shah with his brutal SAVAK secret service, and then under the Ayatollahs," added Ambassador Bloomfield.

Senator Jeanne Shaheen said: "Nowruz, as it's celebrated around the world, demonstrates Iran's rich cultural roots and shows us that the future of Iran always belongs to its people. That future, I hope, will someday very soon include an Iran that respects the rights of its people and contributes positively to the stability of the region. ... And I know that's what everyone here is working towards." Senator John Boozman spoke to the Iranian-American community and said: "There's no substitute for you all being up here talking about how important the issue is and how we need to move forward, and it's a real honor."

Senator Lieberman added: "I believe with confidence that a new day is dawning for the people of Iran when it'll be liberated from the totalitarian, corrupt terrorist regime in Tehran. ... During the next 12 months I think we can work together to bring about the fall of this regime."



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