



Iran Uprising:

The Nation Rises
for Freedom

Persian New
Year



Human Rights &
Democracy in
Iran



March 12, 2020



216 Hart Senate Office Building

Senator Ben Cardin, Member Senate Foreign Relations;

Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Member Foreign Relations, Armed Services Committee;

Senator Gary Peters, Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security, Armed Services Committee;

Message by Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), Member Senate Foreign Relations and Judiciary Committee;

Honorable Joseph Lieberman, former Senator from Connecticut;

Honorable Kelly Ayotte, former Senator from New Hampshire;

Ambassador Mitchell Reiss, former Director of Policy Planning at the US Department of State





Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD)

Senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations
Committee

I want to start by acknowledging Joe Lieberman, who's here...We're just very proud of Joe Lieberman's contribution. I'm proud to call him a friend and advisor and it's just good to be here with Joe.

Let me just say thank you for what you've done. The Iranian American community has helped strengthen the United States of America. We recognize that. The Persian people are so committed to the right values universally. And that's why the current regime in Iran is so tragic. It does not represent the people of Iran.

We saw an attempt at elections in February that were neither free nor fair. It was an attempt to try to give some legitimacy to this regime that doesn't deserve any legitimacy. We saw legitimate protests in November of last year on the policies of the government. And we saw the brutal repression by the government in preventing those individuals from exercising their God-given rights. It's nothing new, it's been going on for over 40 years.

It is well past time for this regime to end. And we recognize that that is our objective. Our objective is to keep hope alive and for the people of Iran it's our voices here in America that keep that hope alive.

We need to stand united and strong on behalf of the people of Iran. Make no mistake about it, our policies to isolate this regime, our policies to penalize this regime, is on behalf of the Iranian people. It is not against the Iranian people.

And our support here on Capitol Hill is not only bipartisan, it's nonpartisan, because we know what is right is right. One of those great champions, I know she'll be introduced shortly, is Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire. She does an incredible job every day on behalf of the voices of those who otherwise would not have their voices heard to protect the rights of a people around the world.



Ben Cardin, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, attended the event and said, we recognize that the Persian people are so committed to the right values universally. And that's why the current regime in Iran is so tragic. It does not represent the people of Iran... It is well past time for this regime to end.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran



You know, and Joe understands this very well, Jeanne understands it, when I go back to Maryland—which is not a very far drive for me, just right next door—I'm rarely asked about what's going on as far as the human rights in Iran. In fact, I'm hardly asked about human rights globally. And yet, I recognize that I can make a difference, Jeanne Shaheen can make a difference, Joe Lieberman can make a difference, and you could make a difference on dealing with the life of people in other parts of the world. When we can help someone that is what we need to do. It was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said each one of us is here for a reason, to help someone else. And when we join together, we can bring about change. We are united on behalf of the people of Iran. God bless and thank you all very much and happy new year.





Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Member Foreign Relations, Armed Services
Committee

It's really nice to be here with all of you to wish you all happy new year. Happy Nowruz. I want to just say thank you to Senator Cardin for his nice words, even though he's already left. As you heard him, so eloquently, he is a real champion for human rights in Iran and around the world, and we need more champions for human rights, and thank you for what you all are doing on that score. I also want to thank my former colleagues, Senator Kelly Ayotte from New Hampshire and Senator Joe Lieberman from Connecticut.

You know, this year we are once again reminded that the tensions between the United States and the government of Iran are not a conflict between the people of the United States and the people of Iran. In fact, as everyone here knows, four more far more unites us as Americans and Iranians than divides us, and that includes a commitment and a respect for human rights. The human rights struggle in Iran are immense, but the Iranian people have not been deterred. They continue to fight for a better future for their country. And now the people of Iran have taken to the streets to demonstrate in large numbers that they believe in freedom, in human rights for all, and in a government that answers to the people.

Now, we all know this is a harrowing fight. It's one that's made easier because of the support from all of you and the Iranian community in the United States, but it's one that we need in America to stand up and be heard on. That's why I'm joining my colleague, Senator Cardin, who was just here, on his resolution supporting the Iranian people as they take to the streets.

We want them to know, as they demand a better government that is responsive to the will of the people, that we in the United States support those demands, and we are going to stand up for the Iranian people. That's what the United States



Jeanne Shaheen, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, told the audience, the people of Iran have taken to the streets to demonstrate in large numbers that they believe in freedom and human rights for all... The Iranian people have not been deterred. They continue to fight for a better future for their country.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

must do. We must stand with people around the world when they demand human rights, freedom, and representation. Now, yesterday we had a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the horrible situation in Syria. And we had Caesar, you remember the man who goes by Caesar who took all of the photographs of the human rights torture and violation by Assad, President Assad in Syria and smuggled those out, 55,000 photographs so that there would be a record of what had happened, so we can hold human rights abusers accountable for what they've done. We heard from a young man who was imprisoned at 15, because he went to one demonstration against Assad. We heard from the man who was the head of the White Helmets in Syria. All stories that I'm sure Iranians could replicate as you think about the challenges that the Iranian people have dealt with in terms of the repressive



regime there. But one of the things they all said to us was that the United States needed to speak up, needed to take a stand, and that's what we've got to do, whether it's Syria or Iran or human rights violations around the world, as [applause] we need to take a stand.

And this Nowruz, I join you in celebrating human rights and Iran's rich cultural heritage. I thank you for demonstrating that the future of Iran must belong to the people of Iran, and I look forward to being here someday when that will be true for all of the Iranian people.





Message by Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX)

Member Senate Foreign Relations and Judiciary
Committee;

Thank you very much for the invitation to join y'all in this wonderful celebration of the Persian New Year. I deeply regret not being able to deliver this message to you in person, however I am grateful for the opportunity to express my support for the Iranian-American community of Texas.

As Iranian-Americans in Texas and across the country unite to celebrate the Persian New Year, I'd like to send a message of hope. Hope for a "new day" for Iran. For decades, the men and women of Iran have suffered from brutal repression under the Ayatollah Khamenei and the Mullahs. But, I believe one day Iran will be free, without the Ayatollah in power.

I can proudly say that America stands with the men and women of Iran in their fight against these cruel, oppressive, murderous tyrants. In the Senate, I have been a strong advocate for applying a maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, to hold them accountable for their human rights abuses and once and for all end their reign of terror.

I believe the threat of a nuclear Iran is the single greatest national security threat facing the United States and we must do everything possible to eliminate that threat.

To date, the single most important foreign policy decision that this administration has had to face in the past three years has been the decision to pull out of the disastrous Obama-Iran nuclear deal. I have expressed my support for President Trump and his administration for beginning the process to end the disastrous Obama-Iran nuclear deal.



Ted Cruz, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. In a statement, Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said, for decades, the men and women of Iran have suffered from brutal repression under Ayatollah Khamenei and the Mullahs. I believe one day Iran will be free, without the Ayatollah in power... I have been a strong advocate for applying a maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, to hold them accountable for their human rights abuses and once and for all end their reign of terror.



As a part of the maximum pressure campaign, I have urged President Trump to revoke every single one of the civilian nuclear waivers. Iran is exploiting the civil-nuclear waivers from the catastrophic Obama-Iran deal to build up their nuclear program and buy time until the nuclear deal expires, leaving them with a full-blown unlimited civilian nuclear program.

Additionally, I have called upon President Trump to invoke snapback sanctions under the Iran Deal. What I've urged President Trump to do is order our diplomats to invoke the United Nations snapback to restore international sanctions and restrictions on Iran, as under the terms of the deal we have the authority to invoke those snapback sanctions.

Now, more than ever, I remain committed to working closely with President Trump and the administration to end these waivers, hold Iran accountable, and completely shred the Iran nuclear deal.

I'd like to conclude by saying thank you to the wonderful Iranian-American community of Texas. Thank you for standing up for freedom, for uniting as one voice and for taking the time to visit with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to speak out against the injustices occurring in Iran.

I believe the Iranian-American community is a community that truly understands the price of freedom, and I am proud to stand with the men and women of Iran fighting for freedom, and as a supporter of the Iranian-American community.





Senator Gary Peters

Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security, Armed Services Committee

...And it's a pleasure to be with all of you here today. And thank you for an opportunity to say a few words. I think they have actually called the votes, so Senator Lieberman and Senator Ayotte know exactly what—there it is. I just, I have that power. When I say it, the buzzer goes off. It's amazing. So the votes have been called, which I will have to run and turn it over to all of the wonderful, distinguished guests to talk more about this. But it's a pleasure to be here. It's a pleasure to celebrate the new year with you and to have an opportunity to do that. We've got some folks from Michigan, which is great. We have a very active chapter in Michigan.

Now, I enjoy to have this opportunity to be here, and I really appreciate this organization and really standing firm for the people of Iran, and to know that the people of Iran and the regime of Iran are two different entities. And they have to make sure that the people of Iran have the ability to be able to voice their opinion, to be able to have their votes count, to be able to enjoy the civil liberties that they deserve and want and that's very difficult under the current regime.

I deal with Iranian issues on a regular basis here as a member of the Senate and particularly as a member of the Armed Services Committee. In fact, just earlier today we had the commander of Central Command before us talking about issues in the Middle East. The Iranian regime is still engaged in nefarious activities throughout the Middle East, continue to engage in destabilizing efforts throughout that region, continue to engage in terrorist activities. And if anything, what we've seen in the last few months, they've actually accelerated those activities over time. The thing that is probably most troubling to me is that it appears, and we heard testimony today, that they continue to work towards a nuclear weapon. Now with the JCPOA, with the United States pulling out, they are now enriching uranium and continue to do that at a pace that simply is unacceptable. When you think about what Iran has been involved in throughout the Middle East and to think the unthinkable, which is to have them in the possession of a nuclear weapon, is truly unacceptable, simply that we can never stand for. And so, I appreciate this organization in making sure the American people understand that, making sure the story gets out as to what they're engaged in.

It's not just what this regime does around in the region, but for decades they have been directly responsible for mass executions of political prisoners, they violently suppressed peaceful protests, they have sham elections. All of the things that you tell us about and are very active in making sure the American people understand. Those clearly are not values that we share as Americans. As Americans, we believe that everybody should have the opportunity to stand up for liberty and to have those kind of basic freedoms.



Gary Peters, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), the Ranking Member of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, highlighted the many nefarious actions of the Iranian regime and said the people of Iran should have the opportunity to have their voice count. Mr. Peters said the regime has been directly responsible for the mass execution of political prisoners

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

And we also believe that a nation state should be part of the world community. Iran refuses to be part of the broader world community. And when you think about what's happening now with coronavirus, now more than ever we need to come together as a world community and grapple with what has been declared officially now as a pandemic. There are no borders when it comes to a pandemic. And when it comes to having solutions and dealing with this issue, we have to come together as a world community. But it's very difficult to do that with the current Iranian regime who is unwilling to sit down and work in a kind of cooperative way.

So, I have experience or have seen firsthand how they willingly fail to adhere to basic international obligations and basic human rights, things that we take for granted here in the United States but we .



know you can't, you have to constantly stand up to those who are the oppressors. The Iranian American Community organization has been on the forefront since the day I came into Congress. Senator Lieberman, you work with my predecessor a lot, and I know you had a very close relationship with him and you shared your passion for standing up for the people of Iran and letting them exercise their free rights.

Congratulations on celebrating another New Year, and just thank you for lighting the flame and making sure that we never forget that we need to stand with the people of Iran and understand that the regime does not represent the people of Iran.





Message of Mrs. Maryam Rajavi

President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of
Iran

Distinguished Senators,
Sen. Joe Lieberman, Sen. Kelly Ayotte, Ambassador Mitchell
Reiss,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to talk about the situation in my country,
Iran, at this very important moment of its history.

I extend my gratitude for your expression of concern about
the situation in Iran and your support for the Iranian people
and their democratic aspirations for a free and democratic
Iran.

At the outset, I want to draw your attention to an urgent
situation that is the ongoing tragedy in Iran.

Due to the regime's failure to inform the people about the
spread of coronavirus or to take the necessary preventive
measures, more than 3,000 people have died so far.

The regime officials concealed the presence of the virus in Iran for several weeks to ensure a turnout in the sham parliamentary election.

The consequences are not limited only to Iran. They have caused the spread of the virus to several countries.

Today, the people of Iran rightly blame the regime for the current situation. Therefore, the objective of the regime and its suppressive forces is to suppress people's discontent.

The regime's fear and its suppressive measures are due to the fact that Iran is on the verge of change.

The November 2019 uprising in Iran displayed the Iranian people's resolve for regime change.

People were chanting "down with the dictator," "Down with Khamenei and Rouhani."

Despite the brutal crackdown and killing more than 1,500 protesters,
the regime failed to extinguish the Iranian people's desire for freedom.

In January, after the IRGC's downing of the Ukrainian airliner, the people of Iran were once again in the streets demanding regime change. They chanted: "Down with the religious dictatorship" and they stressed their rejection of dictatorship under any banner and demanded a republic based on people's vote.



Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

Dear friends,

Change in Iran is within reach for a number of reasons:

The overwhelming majority of the Iranian people want fundamental change, and have demonstrated this desire repeatedly.

The regime fears its downfall because it is engulfed in crises with no way out.

The economic situation has worsened. Corruption is widespread. Popular discontent is on the rise. The regime cannot address the most basic needs of the people.

recent months, the regime has received several setbacks in its regional strategy, seriously undermining its survival. The elimination of terror master Qassem Soleimani was a crushing blow to the regime.



Maryam Rajavi, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. In a video message, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said, change in Iran is within reach for a number of reasons: The overwhelming majority of the Iranian people want fundamental change and have demonstrated this desire repeatedly. The regime fears its downfall because it is engulfed in crises with no way out.

Change in Iran is within reach because there is an organized resistance movement with deep roots in Iranian society; a capable movement with a strong nationwide network whose members are prepared to pay the price to liberate Iran from the mullahs' rule.

Distinguished senators,

The policy of appeasement, which helped the regime to prolong its repressive rule, has failed. Let it be clear, the Iranian people and their organized resistance will overthrow the regime.

However, it is necessary to hold the regime's officials accountable for crimes against humanity, and to increase pressure on the regime to release the political prisoners and to ensure free access to internet for the Iranian people.

The international community must force the IRGC and its proxies to leave Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and other countries. Today, there is no doubt that the regime has not stopped its race towards a nuclear bomb.

The UN Security Council resolutions must be re-implemented, the nuclear sites must be shut down, and anytime, anyplace inspections must be carried out.

The UN Security Council and its member states must condemn the mullahs' regime for concealing the truth about the spread of coronavirus and putting the lives of the people of Iran and other countries in danger.

Urgent action must be taken to save the lives of prisoners in Iran, particularly political prisoners, in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

It is time for the international community to recognize the Iranian people's struggle to overthrow the clerical regime and support their aspirations for a free and democratic republic based on universal suffrage, gender equality, separation of religion and state, and a non-nuclear Iran.

Once again, I thank you for your support and solidarity.



Honorable Joseph Lieberman

former Senator from Connecticut

Thank you. Ah, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You're very kind. A matter of fact, you make me wonder why I ever left. It is a great pleasure to be here once again to celebrate Nowruz. Nowruz Mubarak. Happy Nowruz.

And in the midst of a very difficult time in everyone's lives, the world is unsettled, the virus is spreading, and here we are with all the hope of the Seven Ss, to remind us of the eternity of life on earth, and also remind us in a more direct way about why we're here that this is— Nowruz is a celebration that goes back millennial, thousands of years, and it reminds us that this extremist violent group that seized control of Iran in 1979 is really an aberration, a temporary aberration in the history, the great, proud, long civilized history of the Persian people. And with your help and our government's help, we will return to the right course of Persian history, which is expressed here in this room today. We can make it happen, and we will.



Joe Lieberman, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. Former Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT) said if we work together to finally bring about what we want, a new day in Iran, and not to listen to people who say, regime change will lead to chaos as it did in Syria or Libya or Yemen. There is an alternative in Iran that's ready to govern. And that is the National Council of Resistance in Iran, President-elect Mrs. Maryam Rajavi.

I want to say how wonderful it is to be back in Hart 216. Senator Ayotte, and I want to welcome Senator Ayotte. Thanks, Senator Shaheen, Senator Cardin, Senator Cruz in abstentia, we pray for his health, of course. But it's wonderful to have Senator Ayotte join us here. And it does prove what the speakers before me have said, that in a very partisan time in Washington, there is at least one issue that remains bipartisan or nonpartisan, and that is the American people standing with the people of Iran in behalf of their freedom and justice there. And we will continue to do that until they receive full justice and freedom.

I've been in this room in hearings that Senator McCain chaired, including hearings about Iran. Senator McCain and Senator Graham and I were called the Three Amigos. When I left the Senate, my replacement in the Three Amigos was Senator Ayotte. I can see John up there in heaven right now, saying how happy he is that Kelly Ayotte and I are here with you, the Iranian American communities who stood with him through thick and thin, and he never forgot it, and if he can pull some strings from heaven on behalf of the people of Iran, he will do it.

Nowruz means new day and if I can capture what has been said eloquently already, a new day is dawning in Iran today. And I want to recite some of the events that have come together to give me the hope, based on reality, that the regime in Tehran is rotting, literally. It's collapsing, and the people of Iran are rising with extraordinary courage to take back their freedom and their opportunity. Now why do I say that?

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

I'll just go back over the last six months since we gathered last year on the last Nowruz. Let's go back to November, been mentioned briefly, but the tripling of oil prices, and the courage of the people to come out into the streets and to protest, and the brutality of the regime, led by Soleimani, an international war criminal, really, who brought, because they were protesting, asserting their rights, took action to kill hundreds of them, as you know. That was November. Then we go to January, and Soleimani got what he deserved which was death at the hand of the United States military.

Soleimani had the blood of hundreds of Americans on his hands, more than 600 by calculation of our own Defense Department who were soldiers in Iraq, and thousands of Iranian citizens, and hundreds of thousands more where the IRGC has been bringing extremism, terrorism, and violence throughout the Middle East, particularly in places like Syria and Iraq and Yemen and Gaza and Libya.



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He went to a death that he deserved, that the reaction to that, of course, was the protests of people, and people in Iran, again, having the courage to come out in the streets and say that the country was better off without him. And then, of course, the shooting down of the Ukrainian airliner which again brought university students out to protest.

You had in the demonstrations in November as Ambassador Reese said, that basically the lower income workers protesting and then in January you had the middle class, including very active leadership from some of the same universities where students came out and brought about the collapse of the shah's regime in the 1970s.

We go to the elections in February, and there's been talk of this before, but quite startling really the regime as has been said pressured people saying almost that it was the religious duty of people in Iran to come out and vote. At one point, one of the leaders in the regime said if the turnout here is not good in this election it will make our enemies happy.

Who are the enemies they named? The United States of America, in very good company with the MEK, the PMOI, the National Council of Resistance in Iran, the affiliated group with the Organization of Iranian American communities that brings us together today.

I might echo the words of that leader in the radical regime in Tehran, we were happy by the results. That threat didn't work. The people of Iran really didn't want us to be unhappy, they wanted us to be happy. 42.5% turnout according to the official report, the estimates as you've heard are ultimately that 90% of the eligible voters in Iran didn't vote.

That really was the people speaking with their feet about what they hope for and pray for and are prepared to risk their lives for, which is the end of the Islamic Republic of Iran as we have known it for 40 years.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

And now the latest current Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, who spoke very clearly to the people of Iran, incidentally, in the campaign leading up to the elections, and pleaded with people not to vote because a vote would be a vote in favor of the Ayatollah, the Supreme Leader, of Rouhani and the clerical regime, and I think the people in Iran heard Mrs. Rajavi's voice, and that's one of the reasons they didn't come out to vote.

But let's talk about the coronavirus. And look at how this government in Tehran handled it. We know now that the government in Iran knew that there was an outbreak of this virus in the holy city of Qom but they did nothing about it because they wanted to wait until after the election to make sure that the turnout would not be affected. In other words, they risked the lives of the people of Iran for their own political benefit. How much more of an argument could you make for the end of regime? And throughout this entire period.

The Iranian airliner, Mahan Air, controlled by the IRGC, has continued to fly daily back and forth to China. There's some reason to believe that the disease may have broken out, the virus may have broken out in Iran because of the movement of Chinese students from China to Iran to study and back and forth.

One of the steps that President Trump took which was such a strong step was to stop travel right away between China and the United States. Iran has never done that with China. Mahan Air continues to fly every day back and forth between Iran and China. And again, this says that the IRGC puts its own business interests ahead of the human interests of the people of Iran. The people get this. And that's why they are demanding change....

Something different happened in 2016, a very unconventional man was elected President of the United States. I will tell you, when it comes to American policy towards Iran, he's made a world of difference for the better. He pulled us out of the JCPOA, which was a bad deal for America and a great deal for Iran, and did not really deprive them of their nuclear weapons program. He's enacted this campaign of maximum economic pressure, which really is having an effect on all those changes occurring in Iran, and encouraging the people of Iran to assert themselves courageously for their own freedom and their economic opportunity.

But what now? Some people say that this is all about bringing Iran, the government back to the table to negotiate a better nuclear deal. I wish that that were possible. I think that's about as possible as the proverbial leopard losing its spots. This animal is not going to change. And we have to acknowledge that. I'd be thrilled if it did. But is there anything that this government in Iran has done over 40 years to give us and the rest of the world reason to trust them? No. They haven't. And so, I think we have to say increasingly that really since this regime in Tehran will not change, we have to support a change of the regime in Iran to the people of Iran to finally exercise their own self-government. That is what we're about. And we don't, the United States can't do that and won't do that. But the people of Iran will do it. Now, the question is, how do we react? Do we stand by and muzzle ourselves, or do we speak out in support of the people of Iran and support of American values of universal human rights, as we have done consistently at our best certainly in history on behalf of the captive nations of the former Soviet Union. That is our mission today... I want to say to the Congressional staff members here, honestly you have it in your power to change history consistent with the best of American values. That is all that the Organization of Iranian American Communities and all of us who are here on their behalf today are asking you to do. And that may begin, as Senator Ayotte I hope will talk about, with the snap back provisions and what may happen otherwise in October.

Dr. King said famously that the moral arc of the universe bends slowly but it always bends towards justice. I believe that. And I'd add it always bends toward freedom. But we have the capacity to bend that arc more quickly.

And honestly, the people in this room can make it happen if we work together to finally bring about what we want, a new day in Iran, and not to listen to people who say oh, regime change will lead to chaos as it did in Syria or Libya or Yemen.

Part of why it will not lead to chaos is that Iran is the one who caused a lot of the chaos in those other countries. And part of the reason is that there is an alternative in Iran that's ready to govern, The National Council of Resistance in Iran, President Elect Mrs. Maryam Rajavi. Her support, I believe, in Iran grows every day. She is the alternative. We have an old phrase in American politics; you cannot beat somebody with nobody. In Iran, there is somebody and somebodies around that somebody who are prepared to govern this great country and return it to its traditions. So, let us hope and pray, but not just hope and pray and work that next Nowruz, 2021, we can say not that a new day is near but that a Nowruz, a new day has begun for the people of Iran and the proud people of Persia. Thank you very, very much.



Honorable Kelly Ayotte

former Senator from New Hampshire

I am so deeply honored to be here with all of you, and especially to see the bipartisan support that you rightly have. I mean, to be able to have Senator Peters and Senator Shaheen, Senator Cardin here, and Ambassador Reiss, senators who have such a distinguished history of public service, and who are very committed to human rights. Among those who I counted, probably the most committed to human rights, someone who actually was one of my assigned mentors in the U.S. Senate, Senator Lieberman, whom I can't tell you how much I admire his public service to our nation.

I want to wish all of you a happy new year as well. This really is a new day, as Senator Lieberman has said, with what is happening in Iran. I think all of us who come before you today to speak, we hope that the Iranian peoples wishes for this new day and this new year is that when we do come before you next year, that they will have their own right to self-determination, that they will rid themselves of this oppressive, evil regime that has really held them down from their freedom, from their human rights, from what we all want in this world. That is prosperity, that is freedom, that is to live our lives with our families and to be able to decide for ourselves who represents us and I wish that in the New Year for the Iranian people.

Having served on the Armed Services Committee, something that deeply troubled me, Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. The Iranian regime, not the Iranian people, have caused so much death and destruction. They have spent billions of dollars to fund terrorist groups that we know that cause unrest in the Middle East, whether it's Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic Jihad. They've backed militia forces in Syria, Iraq, and propped up the murderous Assad regime which we know has just murdered so many of his own people.



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Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

And he wouldn't have been able to do that without this horrible regime. The regime, as you know, has been present, unfortunately, in so many situations, terrorist situations, whether terrorist attacks in Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, even in our own country. Let us not forget they were part of a plot in our own soil here in Washington to assassinate the Saudi ambassador right under our noses. I mean think about the boldness of that.

The regime, led by the Supreme Leader, so-called Supreme Leader, Khomeini, has spent billions of dollars really just supporting evil and terrorism. And unfortunately, it has been the Iranian people who have paid the ultimate price for the money that this regime has spent causing all of this death and destruction around the world.

The Iranian economy struggles, average Iranians cannot afford basic goods: fuel, healthcare, things that we take for granted as Americans.



And they have been denied the prosperity that we know is really the history of Iran, a very productive and prosperous people and they're being denied that right now by the Iranian regime. The Iranian people, like all people, should have the freedom to choose how they live their lives. They want what we all want: basic human rights and to be treated with dignity and respect. And we stand with the Iranian people, Republicans, Democrats, independents, this is a truly bipartisan issue. We understand that the Iranian people do not want this terrorism, that they want peace and prosperity and we want peace and prosperity for the people of Iran.

We all know though, there is no peace or prosperity with the current regime in power. Fortunately, President Trump stood in solidarity with the Iranian people when they took to the streets after the Iranian regime

admitted, finally after being pushed to do so, that it shot down the Ukrainian-bound airliner and killed all 176 passengers on board. The president said then, "The world is watching." The world is watching, and the key is to make sure that we continue to watch, that we continue to hold the regime accountable.

And now with Iranians struggling with the dramatic coronavirus outbreak, too many have perished. We know that's because of the regime, because they hid the virus. They thought of their own political interest. They suppressed important health information. The mullahs have spent Iranian money that should have gone to a good healthcare system that could help in a situation like this and instead have spent it on terrorism. So, our hearts go out to the Iranians who are affected by this virus, and obviously all who are affected around the world by this virus.

In the last few months, we've seen the Iranian people stand up for their rights, and we stand with them. They've taken to the streets. We've heard their chants: "Death to Khomeini. Death to the murderer and his rule. His rule is null and void." And we agree. We know that people from all walks of life have participated in these protests and we stand with them. Iran will know that we continue to watch and the world continues to watch.

But I want to talk to you about what we need to do as Americans to continue to not only as we stand with the Iranians with their protests in the streets, and they should know that we have their backs, but also what can we do now?

We can continue, as the Trump administration has done, to impose tougher sanctions on the regime itself, continue to expand those sanctions and to keep the pressure up at a time when we know that oil prices are dropping.

When we know the economy is struggling, when we know that they are on the edge and we need to keep that pressure up, to help those who are protesting their own government.

The mullahs only understand and respond to strength. That is why it was important that President Trump took out Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. As has already been said by Senator Lieberman and others, he had the blood of so much blood on his hands. He had the blood of fellow Iranians. He had blood of those in the Middle East. He had the blood of Americans on his hands.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

And I am the wife of an Iraq war veteran, grateful that finally he, as Senator Lieberman said, got what he deserved.

Taking out Soleimani was certainly a blow to the regime and a setback. But we cannot be naïve about this. The Quds Force will nevertheless continue its reign of terror and oppression without him. That's why we must act. And the most important issue that is coming up as we think about it in October, and I want to commend Senator Cruz and also Senator Jim Risch who is the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, because they have called for what's called snap back of sanctions against Iran.

In October of this year, what will happen if we do not act, if we do not push for snap back, if the world does not push back, the arms embargo against Iran will be lifted. What does that mean? What that means is Iran will be allowed to buy and sell arms, purchase tanks, purchase fighter jets from China and Russia, and continue to pursue now almost legitimately advanced ballistic missile technology.



This is a huge danger as Iran continues to develop this technology to place a nuclear warhead on a missile. And to all of our European friends, this should be of deep concern to them. If Iran, with the lift in the arms embargo, is allowed to get more advanced technology that can harm our European friends, that can harm our friends in the Middle East, that can harm our friend Israel. And we also know, I know from having served on the Armed Services Committee, they continue to pursue the technology to develop an ICBM that could hit the United States of America. And so, we cannot legitimize their access to any type of missile technology, to arms, or to their ability to sell arms to bad actors.

And that's why snapping back sanctions under UN Resolution 2231, which some have said we do not have the authority to do so, I believe very firmly that the United States of America has the authority to do so, and that if we do not act, the world will be in danger.

And so I would say today, what can we work on as we think about what we need to accomplish before the fall, is to really focus on making sure that the arms embargo is not lifted on Iran, that the sanctions are snapped back.

Finally, that we continue to hold Iran accountable for all of its human rights violations, as every speaker up here has said today. This is a time where we have an opportunity to come together, to continue the maximum pressure campaign, to make sure that people have the right to regime change in Iran, and that they can live in freedom and prosperity. I want to thank you so much for having me here today. The work that you do, as Senator Lieberman said, is so critical. And the voice you have is so strong as Americans. And we very much our hearts go out to the Iranian people. But we know that they're strong and we know that at the end of the day that their voices will prevail and that they will determine their history, not this current regime.



Ambassador Mitchell Reiss

former Director of Policy Planning at the US Department of State

My name is Mitchell Reiss, and it is a great pleasure to be here among you again, among people who so clearly cherish the freedoms that we enjoy in the United States and who wish to see their compatriots in Iran enjoy as well.

I want to talk briefly this afternoon about the recent Parliamentary elections in Iran, what they mean for the people of Iran, and what they mean for us going forward.

As you all know, on February 21, Iran held the first round of Parliamentary elections. Almost 58M Iranians were eligible to vote. And the people were told repeatedly that it was their duty to vote. Not voting was the equivalent of treason. The regime stated: "All to whom Iran and its security are important must take part in the elections...The enemies who threaten our country are afraid of public support for the regime...Participating in the election is a stamp of support for the ways of the regime and will thus lead to security."

And yet, and yet only 25M Iranians actually took part and voted — far less than half, actually around 42% of those eligible. This was the lowest turnout in the history of the Islamic Republic.

How can we account for this dismal showing? Well, first of all, the Iranian people knew that the elections had been rigged -- not at the polling stations, but in the weeks and months before the voting.

The Guardian Council had disqualified more than 7,000 centrist and reformist candidates, including 80 sitting members of Parliament, under a variety of pretexts. Virtually all reformist politicians were eliminated from the election and from participating in political life. The State Department labeled the election "political theatre." The New York Times called the election "the least representative and least fair election in the Islamic Republic's history."

As we know, the election resulted in Conservatives winning 230 seats in parliament. It is not too much of an exaggeration to state that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei effectively appointed his preferences.

The nationwide boycott of the election was a rebuke to the regime and a signal that the Iranian people are no longer willing to tolerate this regime.

It was also a signal to the international community that the Iranian people are willing to defy the regime and take brave and courageous steps to build a real democracy, one that represents their interests and respects their dignity.



Mitchell Reiss, United States Senate, speaks on March 12, 2020 in Washington DC, US - On the eve of Nowruz, Iranian New Year, a briefing-luncheon was held in the Senate by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) on March 12, 2020. Ambassador Mitchell Reiss, former State Department Policy Planning Director, moderated the briefing and said the Iranian people are willing to defy the regime and take brave and courageous steps to build a real democracy.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

Khamenei could have chosen to run roughshod over Iran's democratic procedures and rig elections years ago. So the question we need to ask ourselves is "Why did he choose to do so NOW?"

The only conclusion I can draw is that this sham election, without even the pretense of fairness, is a sign of the regime's weakness, not its strength. It is clear that it no longer trusts the Iranian people or respects their views.

Over the past few months, the regime has been further weakened by a series of defeats and setbacks. Last November, fuel prices tripled, sparking protests and riots across Iran. On one day, protests were reported in 165 cities across the country. The people involved came not just from the middle classes, but also from the lower classes of Iranian society, including farmers and unemployed, people the regime could previously have counted on for support.

In order to suppress the voice of the people and restore order, the regime resorted to the tool it knows best - violence. Within a matter of days, the IRGC killed over 1,500 Iranians.

On January 3rd, a US air strike killed Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Qods Force and the right hand of Ayatollah Khomeini. Soleimani had been responsible for crimes against the Iranian people, for masterminding terrorist acts against Iran's neighbors, and for the deaths of hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq. His death sent a strong signal to the regime that the United States would not be intimidated by Tehran.



Days later, the IRGC shot down a Boeing 737 civilian airliner operated by Ukrainian International Airlines as it was taking off from Tehran Airport. All 176 people on board, including numerous Iranians, were killed. The regime did its best to cover up the atrocity, saying that the plane being shot down by an Iranian missile was "an American lie" fabricated by the Pentagon and CIA. But three days of persistent international pressure, a video capturing the missile attack, and domestic protests against the regime, including calls to remove Ayatollah Khamenei and the mullahs from power, forced the IRGC to finally admit that it had wrongfully shot down the airliner.

The February Parliamentary elections took place against this backdrop. Wounded by these events, the regime could not risk another setback. In other words, it could not risk having reform-minded officials elected to the Parliament who did not reflexively support the Ayatollah and the rule of the mullahs. The regime assessed it was better to risk the world's criticism and pack the legislature with its supporters rather than to run a fair and free election and risk being repudiated by the Iranian people.

When a government does not trust its own people, it is a sign of grave weakness, not strength. We have seen this again with respect to the Coronavirus outbreak, where Tehran ignored and covered up the problem rather than share information with the medical community and the public. They are afraid of their own people. And here, again, the results of their behavior have been tragic.

The regime in Tehran is weak. This &al week it has become weaker, with the unprecedented decline in world oil prices. Iran was already struggling under the sanction's regime that the US and others had imposed. Now, there is simply no way that the regime can balance its budget with oil prices at \$30-35 dollars per barrel.

Today, we see an authoritarian regime in Tehran that is in crisis. We see an authoritarian regime that is fundamentally illegitimate.

We see an authoritarian regime that is unwilling to tell the truth to its own people. We see an authoritarian regime that uses violence. And above all, we see Madam Rajavi and the National Council of Resistance in Iran a viable, democratic alternative that best expresses the hopes and aspirations of the Iranian people.

We see all that. And so we see a better future for Iran and the Iranian people. Someday soon.



Closing remarks by Ambassador Mitchell Reiss

I want to thank all of you for attending this event and ask you to join me in thanking all of those in the Iranian American Community who made this event and this beautiful lunch possible. And I just want to summarize some of the major themes that we've heard from our speakers this afternoon. I think they're really, four of them very briefly. First of all, is that there is severe weakness in this regime. But we've all heard about the setbacks that the regime has suffered in the last few weeks and months. Some of that is going to be longer lasting than others. But clearly, they are weaker today than they were six months ago.

I think second, the theme that we've heard from our speakers is that the regime in Tehran is fundamentally illegitimate. It doesn't trust its own people and it's clear that the people don't trust this regime.

Third, there is strong bipartisan or nonpartisan support on Capitol Hill and across America for what the Iranian American community is seeking, which is to allow the Iranian people to live freely with representatives that they can elect in a fair election. And as Senator Ayotte highlighted, your work here is going to be extremely important this fall when the issue of sanctions really rises to the top of the agenda, and hopefully we'll be able to address that in a bipartisan manner.

And the fourth theme is the one that Madame Rajavi spoke of so eloquently, and that's the theme of hope. Hope for the future. And our being here today is actually a manifestation of that hope for a better future for Iran. Everybody is busy, everybody has other things to do. In today's environment with the fears of the coronavirus, it would be very easy for you not to attend today. But you made a decision. You were going to come here because it was important that you be here. It was important that you show solidarity. It was important that you show solidarity with the people of Iran and what they're suffering. And again, that is testimony to hope. Hope for a better future.



And hope seems so appropriate on this day as we celebrate Nowruz, a new day. A new day in Iran, a new day especially for the people of Iran, a new day where people can live safely without fear, where they can send their children to school, where they can have jobs, where they can elect their own representatives and where they can live especially in dignity and safety. That's what we hope for on this new year. I wish all of you a very, very happy new year, and look forward to seeing you again sometime soon. Thank you very much.

And that's why snapping back sanctions under UN Resolution 2231, which some have said we do not have the authority to do so, I believe very firmly that the United States of America has the authority to do so, and that if we do not act, the world will be in danger.

And so I would say today, what can we work on as we think about what we need to accomplish before the fall, is to really focus on making sure that the arms embargo is not lifted on Iran, that the sanctions are snapped back.

Finally, that we continue to hold Iran accountable for all of its human rights violations, as every speaker up here has said today. This is a time where we have an opportunity to come together, to continue the maximum pressure campaign, to make sure that people have the right to regime change in Iran, and that they can live in freedom and prosperity. I want to thank you so much for having me here today. The work that you do, as Senator Lieberman said, is so critical. And the voice you have is so strong as Americans. And we very much our hearts go out to the Iranian people. But we know that they're strong and we know that at the end of the day that their voices will prevail and that they will determine their history, not this current regime.

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of organization of Iranian American communities, especially our community in Maryland, I welcome all of you.

Although this event coincides with the Iranian New Year, Nowruz, we are now witnessing in our homeland Iran a very unfortunate situation as coronavirus has engulfed all 31 provinces of Iran, thousands have died and the regime has shown no sign that it is willing or capable of resolving this catastrophe.

The flip side of this tragedy is that all of this is happening in the backdrop of a nationwide protest movement in November 2019 which involved nearly 200 cities, and another uprising took place in January 2020, followed by major boycott of the February 2020 parliamentary elections by more than 90 percent of the population. All of these developments show a clear need, and a strong determination by the Iranian people for the overthrow of this regime and establishing freedom and democracy in Iran.

We welcome a strong bipartisan congressional voice on the issue of Iran.

I want to thank members of the senate, the staff, and our distinguished guests and speakers for accepting our invitation to this event. We are delighted to have such an impressive lineup of speakers joining us today.





Senate policy briefing called for Iranian people's right to seek a free Iran

WASHINGTON, DC, USA, March 14, 2020 [/EinPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- Iranian American communities of [Maryland](#) and [Texas](#), members of the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC), held a policy briefing in the U.S. Senate.

In a message to the conference, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the president-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) said, "Change in Iran is within reach for a number of reasons: The overwhelming majority of the Iranian people want fundamental change, and have demonstrated this desire repeatedly. The regime fears its downfall because it is engulfed in crises with no way out. The economic situation has worsened. Corruption is widespread. Popular discontent is on the rise. The regime cannot address the most basic needs of the people."



In his remarks, Ben Cardin (D-MD), senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called human rights in Iran, a non-partisan issue on Capitol Hill. "We recognize that the Persian people are so committed to the right values universally. And that's why the current regime in Iran is so tragic. It does not represent the people of Iran...It is well past time for this regime to end." Senator Cardin added, "We saw an attempt at elections in February that were neither free nor fair. It was an attempt to try to give some legitimacy to this regime that doesn't deserve any legitimacy. We saw legitimate protests in November of last year ... And we saw the brutal repression by the government in preventing those individuals from exercising their God-given rights. It's been going on for over 40 years."

In a statement, Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Ted Cruz (R-TX), addressed the briefing, "For decades, the men and women of Iran have suffered from brutal repression under the Ayatollah Khamenei and the Mullahs. But I believe one day

Iran will be free, without the Ayatollah in power." He added, "I have been a strong advocate for applying a maximum pressure campaign against the Iranian regime, to hold them accountable for their human rights abuses and once and for all end their reign of terror."

Senator Cruz "called upon President Trump to invoke snapback sanctions under the Iran Deal and urged President Trump to order our diplomats to invoke the United Nations snapback to restore international sanctions and restrictions on Iran."

Senior Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) called on the international community to hold the regime accountable for its rights violations. The Senator praised the Iranian people for their heroic protests, and said, "Now the people of Iran have taken to the streets to demonstrate in large numbers that they believe in freedom, in human rights for all, and in a government that answers to the people.... That's why I'm joining my colleague, Senator Cardin, on his resolution ([S. Res. 539](#)) supporting the Iranian people as they take to the streets."

Senate Homeland Security Committee Ranking Member Gary Peters (D-MI), said the regime has been directly responsible for mass execution of political prisoners, "It's not just what this regime does around in the region, but for decades they have been directly responsible for mass executions of political prisoners, they violently suppressed peaceful protests, they have sham elections ... everybody should have the opportunity to stand up for liberty and to have those kinds of basic freedoms."

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

Former Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT) said: "Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, who spoke very clearly to the people of Iran, incidentally, in the campaign leading up to the elections, and pleaded with people not to vote because a vote would be a vote in favor of the Supreme Leader and Rouhani and the clerical regime, and I think the people in Iran heard Mrs. Rajavi's voice, and that's one of the reasons they didn't come out to vote."

Senator Lieberman added, "You can love President Trump for some things ... He pulled us out of the JCPOA, which was a bad deal for America and a great deal for Iran, and didn't really deprive them of their nuclear weapons program. He's enacted this campaign of maximum economic pressure. Since this regime in Tehran will not change, we have to support a change of the regime by the people of Iran to finally exercise their own self-government... and not to listen to people who say, regime change will lead to chaos as it did in Syria or Libya or Yemen. Part of why it won't lead to chaos is that Iran is the one who caused a lot of the chaos in those other countries. And part of the reason is that there is an alternative in Iran that's ready to govern. And that is the National Council of Resistance in Iran, and its President-Elect Mrs. Maryam Rajavi."



Former Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) reiterated the need for the U.S. to push for reinstatement of U.N. snapback sanctions on the Iranian regime under U.N. Resolution 2231. She warned, "If the world does not push back...the arms embargo on Iran will be lifted and that means Iran can purchase tanks, missiles from China and Russia."

Senator Ayotte added, "In the last few months, we've seen the Iranian people stand up for their rights, and we stand with them. They've taken to the streets. We've heard their chants: Death to Khomeini. Death to the murderer and his rule. His rule is null and void...This is a time where we have an opportunity to come together, to continue the maximum pressure campaign, to make sure that people have the right to regime change in Iran, and that they can live in freedom and prosperity."

Former Policy Planning Director of the State Department, Ambassador Mitch Reiss highlighted three points. First, Iranian people have unequivocally rejected the clerical regime. Second, there is a credible and capable alternative led by the NCRI which best describes the hopes and aspirations of the Iranian people. Lastly, the U.S. should maintain comprehensive pressure on the regime.





MARCH 12, 2020

Cardin Resolution Condemns Iran's Violent Crackdown on Protestors, Supports Rights of the People of Iran to Determine Their Future

Senators Call on Global Community to Hold Human Rights Abusers Accountable

<https://www.cardin.senate.gov/newsroom/press/release/cardin-resolution-condemns-irans-violent-crackdown-on-protestors-supports-rights-of-the-people-of-iran-to-determine-their-future>

WASHINGTON – **U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md.), a senior member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**, today introduced a resolution, S. Res. 539, that decries the Iranian government's recent violent crackdown on protestors in which hundreds were killed and thousands arrested and supports the rights of the people of Iran to determine their own future. Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) are original co-sponsors of the measure.

The new legislation recounts Iran's repeated instances of gross violations of human rights, from using live ammunition on unarmed civilians to planning assassinations on dissidents abroad, and also details the Iranian government's efforts to shut down internet access and the ability of its citizens to freely and peacefully assemble.

Senator Cardin's resolution "stands with the people of Iran that are engaged in legitimate protests against an oppressive, corrupt regime [and] supports the right of Iranians to peacefully assemble, without fear of persecution and violence, whether in Iran or internationally."

The resolution also "supports efforts by the people of Iran to promote the establishment of basic freedoms that build the foundation for the emergence of a freely elected and transparent republic."

"This resolution is intended to issue a clear show of support for the people of Iran who are peacefully trying to improve their country," **said Senator Cardin**. "They need to know that we stand with them and believe that they deserve to live in a free society where they can exercise their fundamental freedoms."

"This resolution also calls upon U.S. and world leaders to send a clear signal through future multilateral and bilateral discussion that the Iranian government's human rights violations are unacceptable," said Senator Cardin. "Standing with the people of Iran as they engage in peaceful protests is not part of a partisan platform. It is simply the right thing to do."



Senator Ben Cardin introduced S. RES. 539

Supporting the rights of the people of Iran to determine their future, condemning the Iranian regime for its crackdown on legitimate protests, and for other purposes.

III

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 539

Supporting the rights of the people of Iran to determine their future, condemning the Iranian regime for its crackdown on legitimate protests, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 11, 2020

Mr. CARDIN (for himself, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. KAINE, and Ms. ROSEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Supporting the rights of the people of Iran to determine their future, condemning the Iranian regime for its crackdown on legitimate protests, and for other purposes.

Whereas, on January 8, 2020, the Government of Iran shot down Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, lied about its culpability, and then admitted to downing the plane on January 11 after evidence was made public by other sources;

Whereas all 167 passengers and 9 crewmembers aboard Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 died in the resulting crash;

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

2

Whereas passengers were mostly citizens of Iran, but also included citizens of Canada, Ukraine, Great Britain, Afghanistan, and Sweden;

Whereas, during January 11 through 13, 2020, protesters gathered across Iran to denounce lying and incompetence by regime leadership with respect to the airline shootdown;

Whereas video clips of protests from January 11 through 13, 2020, showed protesters chanting against Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamene'i and the IRGC;

Whereas video clips suggest Iranian authorities deployed tear gas and live ammunition against protestors in January 2020;

Whereas earlier antigovernment protests in Iran began on November 15, 2019, and rapidly spread to dozens of Iranian cities in 29 of Iran's 31 provinces, in the most significant antigovernment protests in Iran since the Green Movement demonstrations in 2009 and 2010;

Whereas the protests began in response to an announced increase on the price of fuel, and protesters expressed numerous economic grievances, while also calling for the structural reform of the political system and condemning current and former Iranian leaders;

Whereas reports indicate that Iranian security forces responded to protests with lethal force, killing hundreds of demonstrators and arresting thousands more;

Whereas reports indicate that the Government of Iran authorities have, in many instances, refused to return victims' bodies to their families and that security forces have removed bodies from morgues and transferred them to unknown locations;

SHRES 539 IS

4

(4) the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (subtitle F of title XII of Public Law 114-328; 22 U.S.C. 2656 note);

Whereas the Iranian regime was implicated in a terrorist plot targeting gatherings of Iranian dissidents in Paris in June 2018 and in Albania in March 2018;

Whereas, in August 2018, the United States Government arrested 2 Iranian nationals who later pleaded guilty for acting on behalf of the Iranian regime to conduct covert surveillance in the United States against officials of the Iranian opposition for a target package which, according to the Department of Justice complaint, may have included "apprehension, recruitment, cyber exploitation, or capture/kill operations";

Whereas the Iranian regime has routinely violated the human rights of Iranian citizens, including by implementing ongoing, systematic, and serious restrictions of freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of opinion and expression, including the continuing closures of media outlets, arrests of journalists, and the censorship of expression in online forums such as blogs and websites;

Whereas, on November 22, 2019, the United States imposed sanctions on Iran's Minister of Information and Communications Technology for his role in shutting down internet access in Iran;

Whereas the Department of State's most current Human Rights Report noted that the Government of Iran levied "severe restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship, site blocking, and criminalization of libel; substantial interference with the

SHRES 539 IS

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Whereas, on November 16, 2019, Iranian authorities began implementing a near-total shutdown of internet services, stopping nearly all means of online communications for people inside Iran to prevent the sharing of images and videos of deadly violence being used by security forces;

Whereas, on November 16, 2019, Iran's Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazi suggested that the Iranian regime would no longer show "tolerance" toward the protesters;

Whereas, on November 17, 2019, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i called the demonstrators "villains", suggested that protests were incited by foreign enemies and domestic insurgents, and ordered Iranian security services to "implement their duties" to end the protests;

Whereas, on November 18, 2019, the IRGC deployed to the southwestern city of Mahshahr, which had been taken over by demonstrators, and engaged in mass repression over a period of 4 days, reportedly killing as many as 100 people;

Whereas multiple United States laws provide authorities to designate and sanction elements of the Iranian regime for its repressive conduct, including those involved in significant corruption or serious human rights abuses, including—

- (1) the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8501 et seq.);
- (2) the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8701 et seq.);
- (3) the Countering Iran's Destabilizing Activities Act of 2017 (22 U.S.C. 9401 et seq.); and

SHRES 539 IS

5

rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, such as overly restrictive nongovernmental organization (NGO) laws; egregious restrictions of religious freedom; restrictions on political participation;" and that there is "widespread corruption at all levels of government";

Whereas, on November 18, 2019, the Office of the German Chancellor stated, "It is legitimate and deserving of our respect when people courageously air their economic and political grievances, as is currently happening in Iran . . . We urge the government in Tehran to respect freedom of assembly and expression.";

Whereas, on November 20, 2019, the French Foreign Ministry stated, "France is following the demonstrations taking place in Iran with concern. It expresses its deep concern at reports that a large respect its international human rights obligations.";

Whereas, on December 2, 2019, a statement from Amnesty International confirmed that "extensive video footage verified and analyzed by Amnesty International's Digital Verification Corps shows security forces shooting at unarmed protesters who did not pose any imminent risk";

Whereas, on December 6, 2019, United Nation's High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said, "Verified video footage indicates severe violence was used against protesters, including armed members of security forces shooting from the roof of a justice department building in one city, and from helicopters in another," and added that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also received footage showing security forces "shooting to kill";

Iran Uprising: The Nation Rises for Freedom



Persian New Year, Human Rights & Democracy in Iran

6

Whereas, on December 8, 2019, a Declaration by the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles stated, “A growing body of evidence indicates that despite repeated calls for restraint, the Iranian security forces’ disproportionate response to recent demonstrations has led to high numbers of deaths and injuries. For the European Union and its Member States, the widespread and disproportionate use of force against nonviolent protestors is unacceptable.”;

Whereas, on December 16, 2019, Amnesty International further reported that “[eyewitness testimony] suggests that, almost immediately after the Iranian authorities massacred hundreds . . . participating in nationwide protests, [the authorities] went on to orchestrate a wide-scale clampdown designed to instill fear and prevent anyone from speaking out about what happened”;

Whereas, on January 17, 2020, the United States designated IRGC General Hassan Shahvarpour, Khuzestan Province’s Vali Asr Commander, for his involvement in gross violations of human rights against protestors during the November 15 through 18, 2019, protests in Mahshahr, Iran;

Whereas Iran is a member of the United Nations, voted for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, done at New York December 19, 1966;

Whereas, during February 2020 parliamentary elections, against the backdrop of regime interference, disqualification of reformist and moderate candidates, and anger over crackdowns on protesters, the majority of the Ira-

8

1 (3) respects the proud history and rich culture
2 of the Iranian nation and fully supports efforts by
3 the people of Iran to promote the establishment of
4 basic freedoms that build the foundation for the
5 emergence of a freely elected and transparent republic;
6

7 (4) condemns the Iranian regime’s downing of
8 Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 and its
9 repeated lying to the people of Iran and around the
10 world about its responsibility for the disaster;

11 (5) condemns the Iranian regime for its record
12 of brutal repression against peaceful protests;

13 (6) condemns the Iranian regime’s serious
14 human rights abuses against Iranians, significant
15 corruption, and destabilizing activities abroad;

16 (7) commends the statements of support for
17 protesters from the United States and key United
18 States allies;

19 (8) calls on all democratic governments and in-
20 stitutions to support the ability of the people of Iran
21 to live in a free society such that they can exercise
22 their human rights and fundamental freedoms;

23 (9) demands that the Iranian regime abide by
24 its international obligations with respect to human
25 rights and civil liberties, including freedoms of

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nian people chose not to vote, making turnout the lowest in Iran’s post-1979 history; and

Whereas the Iranian regime has a long history of violent repression of dissent, including—

(1) in 1988, carrying out the barbaric mass executions of thousands of political prisoners—including teenagers and pregnant women—by hanging and firing squad for refusing to renounce their political affiliations and, in some cases, for possessing or distributing political reading material;

(2) in 1999, brutally suppressing a student revolt that was one of the largest mass uprisings up until that point in the country since 1979, in a crackdown since referred to as “Iran’s Tiananmen Square”;

(3) following voting irregularities that resulted in the 2009 re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, cracking down on peaceful political dissent from wide segments of civil society in a cynical attempt to retain its undemocratic grip on power; and

(4) beginning in December 2017, and continuing for several months after protests erupted over economic conditions in more than 80 cities, confronting protestors with excessive force that resulted in at least 25 deaths and 4,000 arrests. Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) stands with the people of Iran that are en-
3 gaged in legitimate protests against an oppressive,
4 corrupt regime;

5 (2) supports the right of Iranians to peacefully
6 assemble, without fear of persecution and violence,
7 whether in Iran or internationally;

SENES 539 IS

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1 peaceful assembly and speech, including for mem-
2 bers of the press;

3 (10) urges the President to work to convene
4 emergency sessions of the United Nations Security
5 Council and the United Nations Human Rights
6 Council to condemn the ongoing human rights viola-
7 tions perpetrated by the Iranian regime and estab-
8 lish a mechanism by which the Security Council can
9 monitor such violations;

10 (11) encourages the United States Government
11 to do everything in its power to ensure the Iranian
12 people have free and uninterrupted access to the
13 internet;

14 (12) calls on telecommunications companies to
15 reject requests by the regime to cut off the Iranian
16 people from social media and other communications
17 platforms; and

18 (13) urges the President and the Secretary of
19 State to work with the international community to
20 signal through future multilateral and bilateral dis-
21 cussions that the Government of Iran’s human
22 rights violations are unacceptable.

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Iran Uprising:
The Nation Rises
for Freedom



Persian New Year,
Human Rights &
Democracy in Iran

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