

# PERSIAN NEW YEAR NOWRUZ

PERSIAN NEW YEAR NOWRUZ: HUMAN  
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN IRAN



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2017



📍 **KENNEDY CAUCUS ROOM**  
(325 RUSSELL SENATE  
OFFICE BUILDING)

- 👤 Senator John McCain, Chairman, Armed Services Committee;
- 👤 Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Foreign Relations, and Armed Services Committee;
- 👤 Senator Gary Peters, Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, and Armed Services Committee;
- 👤 Honorable Joseph Lieberman; former Senator from Connecticut;
- 👤 Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr.; former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs



# CHAIRMAN JOHN MCCAIN

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE



Thank you, thank you for that kind and warm and wonderful welcome. It's just so gratifying to me and a bit emotional to see so many friends of mine....

I note the presence, and I know he's going to speak to you later on, my beloved friend Joe Lieberman is here, a staunch friend of the Iranian people, a partner of mine in working so hard for so many years to get the folks at Camp Liberty out of there and into a safe environment. And I also think that Joe will assure you if it had not been for the effort of the people in this room, the constant, unrelenting effort, they would still be there in Iraq and in danger. So I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the effort you made on behalf of people who were far away and needed you very badly.



My friends, I just want to say just a couple more words. The Iranian behavior worsens. I believe that this regime will test the new administration. I think you will see missile tests. I think you will see further provocations such as over flights of our ships in the Strait of Hormuz and other places. I think it's clear that the Iranians have, if not violated the agreement, they have violated other agreements. They are testing weapons. They are playing a major role in Syria as we speak on behalf of Bashar Assad. I don't think there's any doubts about their intentions towards Israel. And now they have over \$100 billion to spend. And believe me, they're not spending it all on airliners. So, I think we need more sanctions on Iran. I think we need to have a military presence, particularly in international waters, that capture of American vessels is not unresponded to. And I think the only thing that the Iranian regime understands is, as Ronald Reagan called it, peace through strength.

But most of all, I hope that we can give the people who are now residing in that country the hope and belief and commitment to all of us that someday they will know freedom again. And I also believe, as I've said on many occasions, that someday all of us will gather in a square and dedicate a state of a young woman named Neda, a young woman that the world saw bleed to death in the square, which is the symbol of Iranian cruelty and oppression of the Iranian people. And you have been their steadfast friends. You are the ones who visit with me and keep me informed. You are the ones who keep the plight of the Iranian people uppermost in my mind and in my priorities.

We will be rebuilding our military thanks to President Trump and Secretary Mattis, our new Secretary of Defense. And we'll be working hard in the coming weeks and months to rebuild our military and our capability. We need to do that because the best way to avoid a conflict, as we all know, is to have a strong military. And make it clear to the Iranian government that if they violate international law, if they continue to provoke, if they continue to oppress, if they continue violating solemn agreements that they will pay a very heavy price for it. So I thank you my friends for everything you're doing for people who are far away, everything you're doing for those people that assure them that someday, someday sooner rather than later, they will enjoy freedom and we'll all gather in that square and dedicate the statue of Neda. Thank you and God bless.





## MESSAGE OF MARYAM RAJAVI

PRESIDENT – ELECT OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RESISTANCE

Honorable lawmakers and dear friends,

With the arrival of spring, Iranians are preparing to celebrate Nowruz, the Persian New Year, which marks the first day of the Iranian calendar year.

Nowruz has been celebrated for decades and symbolizes change; change from the gray, gloomy days of winter to the promising green days of spring. **For Iranians, Nowruz has a simple but significant message: The springtime of freedom is inevitable. It may be delayed, but it cannot be stopped. For the people of Iran, Nowruz brings a new hopeful prospect: The certain end of religious dictatorship and rule of freedom and democracy.**

Our suppressed people deserve to live in a free and democratic society, which is key to peace and stability in the region. It is the only way of uprooting Islamic fundamentalism as a global threat. Events in Iran over the past year are signs of critical developments in the coming year.

The death of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani seriously weakened the regime. For 38 years, Rafsanjani was the regime's number-two man and was critical to its internal balance. In addition, the windfall money from the lifting of sanctions did not relieve living conditions. This money was spent for the regime's warmongering in Syria, Iraq and other regional states. While Rouhani's promises of moving the wheels of the economy have proven empty

This regime is the main responsible for continuation of six years of war and killings in Syria and the crisis in Iraq as well as empowering ISIS and increasing sectarian conflicts in the region. Fueling conflicts, increase of suppression in Iran and expansion of warmongering and terrorism are the critical means used by the Mullahs to maintain their shameful rule and hold back the wave of anger, which will lead to a national uprising that will sweep them away. But the mullahs have reached the end of the line. They have used all of strategic resources and have no way forward and no way back. They face inevitable overthrow by the Iranian people and their organized resistance.

To that end, the international community and the United States must hold this anti-human regime accountable for crimes against the Iranian people, meddling in the war in Syria, export of terrorism to regional states and its network of terrorist militias in neighboring states.

The Iranian regime's dossier of human rights abuses must be referred to the United Nations Security Council for the adoption of binding punishments.

The Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), as the primary tool of domestic repression and export of terrorism in the region, should be designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

A strong, bipartisan demand should be made for those responsible for the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988 in Iran to be identified and brought to justice. I welcome the bipartisan measure demanding pressure on the Iranian regime to stop its destabilizing actions in support of terrorist groups, and its continued test-firing of ballistic missiles.

I also welcome a legislative language, which calls for the application of UN Security Council resolution 2231 as well as a bill that calls for the designation of the IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. I deeply appreciate the friendship and bipartisan support of the U.S. lawmakers for the oppressed people of my homeland and I am grateful for their strong solidarity with the PMOI members in Albania. Your growing, bipartisan support for the Iranian people's efforts to obtain freedom are going to be more effective than ever before.

I wish you and the American people success in the Iranian New Year. Thank you, and happy Nowruz.





# SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN

FOREIGN RELATIONS, AND ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE



Thank you very much for that very nice introduction and for your warm welcome. My husband is a Lebanese-American and so I have learned to very much appreciate the hospitality of all of you who have your ancestors in the Mediterranean because you give us all a very warm welcome....But Happy Nowruz to all of you here today.

And to my former colleague, Senator Lieberman, it's so nice to join you here. I appreciate the opportunity to be with all of you and for all of the dignitaries who are here, the ambassador from Albania, thank you, and thank you to Albania for the very helpful and generous taking-in of all of those refugees who were at such great risk from Camp Ashraf and Camp Liberty. Your generosity and humanitarian contribution is very important to recognize. And I really want to thank all of you here, because that would not have happened without the work that everyone in this room and so many other people across the country did to raise awareness of what was happening to the folks who were stuck at Camp Ashraf and then moved to Camp Liberty. And for all of us who believe that the United States, when it makes a promise, should keep that promise, I appreciate your effort to help make sure that happened. So thank you very much.

I wanted to make one more point while I was here today, because one of the things that I'm very concerned about is the executive orders that have been issued by President Trump. I don't think we should keep refugees from coming to this country. I appreciate the need to make sure that folks who come in are going to be good citizens and contributors, and I think that applies to everybody in this room... And I think we need to recognize that everybody in American has come from someplace else, unless you're a Native American. And the contributions that so many different groups have brought in terms of culture, in terms of food, in terms of the values that you bring, the hard work that you bring, has made such a difference in America. It's what's made this country great. And to take a position that we are no longer going to welcome people into this country, as I said, I think undermines the values that have been so important to America.

So I will leave you again with the Happy Iranian New Year. Thank you for everything that you are doing, and know that there are many of us here who are working hard to make sure that we continue to support our democracy and uphold the values that have made this country great. Thank you all.





## SENATOR GARY PETERS

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, AND  
ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Thank you for that kind introduction. And I am a proud Michigander and wonderful Iranian-American community in the state of Michigan that is vibrant and brings strength to what is already a very diverse community that we have in Michigan. I'm sure many of you know we have probably the largest Arab-American, Muslim-American community anywhere in the United States, and it really enhances the vibrancy and the strength of our great community. And that goes to say with the Iranian community as a premier part of that and that's why it's really an honor to be here.

It's also an honor to be here and I got to say a few words to Senator Lieberman. Actually I got the opportunity to spend a little bit of time with him in Munich, about what was it? Two or three weeks ago at the security conference. It was my first time going. Senator Lieberman, I think, had been there a few times before, but it was a fascinating experience to see really our allies coming together, to understand that we do live in a very dangerous world, and we have to stand together and be strong, particularly the democracies around the world, to stand up against those who are in oppressive regimes who do not value basic human rights, basic issues that we have fought for as a country from the beginning and need to continue to do. And that's why I know the work of that all of you are engaged in to hold the Iranian regime accountable for the types of behaviors that they are

....I know the Albanian community has joined forces with folks that were at Camp Liberty and Ashraf and others, to bring that kind of sanctuary, to build together, to have a place in Albania. I'm hoping at some point to get to Albania to see folks there and look forward to having that trip soon. I know I spoke to Edi Rama, the Prime Minister, when he was here last year, I believe. And thanked him on behalf of your community for having a country that welcomes folks to bring that kind of sanctuary. It's really remarkable and certainly appreciates what the Albanian people are doing.

But we do together, we have to, as I mentioned, stand strong against the Iranian regime and this should not be a partisan issue, as we were talking about earlier. This, there should be no daylight between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to standing up against the Iranian regime and demanding that there is accountability and demanding that that regime respect basic human rights and move to a democratic regime where the people of Iran actually have a say and actually have an opportunity to pursue their dreams and to live in the kind of freedom that every human being should. That has to be a Democratic and Republican issue. We have to be united. Thank you for bringing us all here to be united, because together we can make that happen. Thank you.



And the Iranian regime needs constant vigilance to watch them. I had the privilege of serving in the United States Navy and see the actions in the Gulf and the Iranians really engaging in simply irresponsible behavior when it comes to interactions with our fleet. Their continued testing of missiles and others activities of terrorist regimes across the Middle East and other places is simply unacceptable. I have supported in the past, and continue to support, very strong sanctions against Iran, that they need to be held accountable by the United States. And the way to do that is when they're engaged in these activities, you got have, you got to hit them in the pocketbook. You got to be able to bring strong sanctions against them, which is why I voted for the ten-year extension of the sanctions regime if we need it. I will be watching the Iranians very closely with the Nuclear Arms Agreement that was made. And the IEA, I had the opportunity to travel to the IEA and kind of see, hear firsthand their efforts to make sure that the Iranians never get to the point of building a nuclear weapon and violating the treaty as it stands right now, but I think we have to be keeping our eye on the fact, and one thing that I was very concerned about that agreement.

Although I supported the agreement because I thought in the short run it did make the world safer, but I'm very concerned about 10 years and 15 years out and now shorter than that as each year goes by. That's like the blink of an eye, as you know, can happen very quickly, and under that agreement they can start enriching uranium again, start being back on a path of having nuclear weapons. We have to be in a position to stop that from happening. We can never ever let that happen in the 10 to 15-year period. I think we've got to have a stronger regime and we'll talk to Ambassador and others about how we deal with nuclear proliferation broadly and how we try to stop other states from enriching uranium.

You know, we understand that under current agreements every country has the right to peaceful nuclear power. We get that, we understand it, but it has been long-standing United States policy which should continue to be U.S. policy—no state has the right to enrich uranium. That is not a right that you have because that opens up the path to weaponization, which is simply unacceptable.

So I think we have to come together in a bipartisan way and as a country and stand up to say that we've got to stop all other nations from having that kind of path. It just leads to unacceptable risk to proliferation. And when you think of that kind of proliferation in the hands of this regime that has one of the worst human rights records anywhere on the planet, who constantly is suppressing any kind of free press or demonstrations or any kinds of activities as a free society, we simply cannot let them have those weapons of mass destruction.

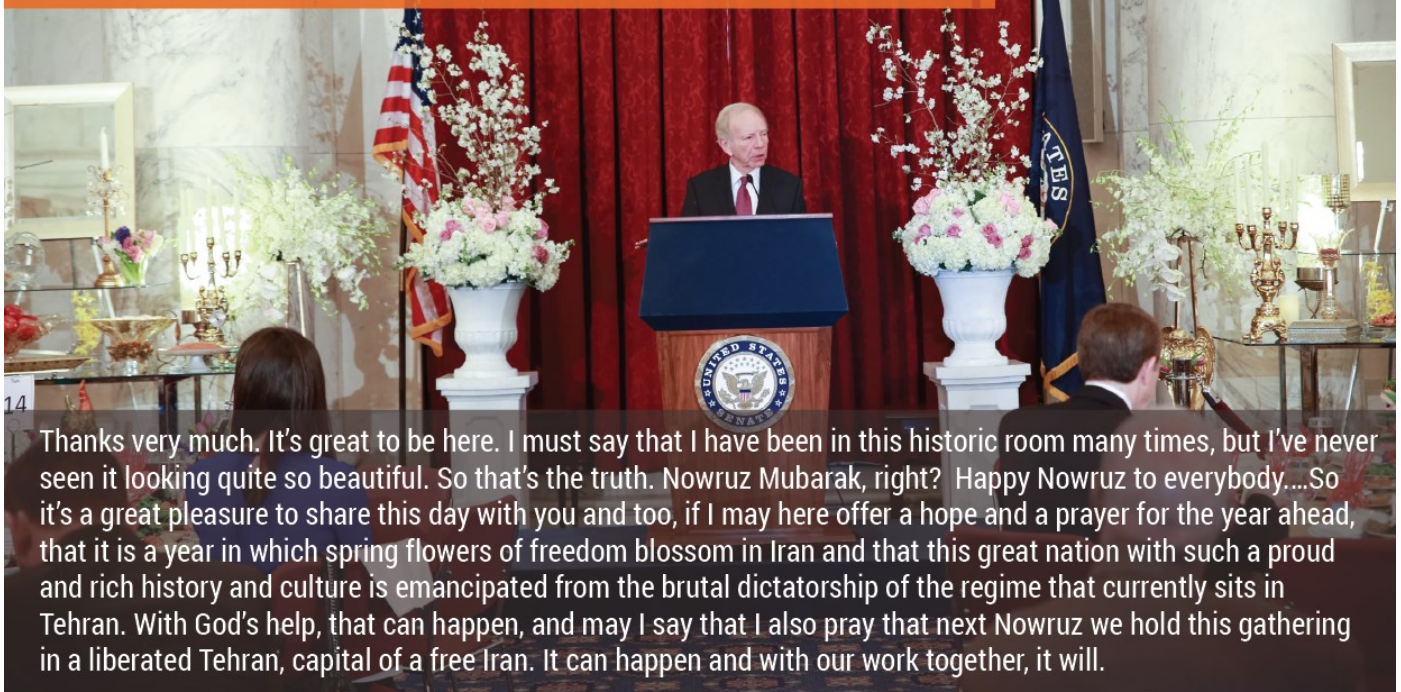
So thank you for being in Washington today. Thank you for advocating, for bringing this to the attention of my colleagues here in Congress. You know, we get pulled a lot of different ways on all sorts of issues, and in the last few weeks we've been pretty busy, as you can imagine, in watching the news of issues. And so the fact that you're here today, the fact that you're really making sure that your voice is being heard, is incredibly important. So thank you for including me in this luncheon, thank you for what you do for the Iranian people, and I look forward to working with you in the years ago. Thank you so much.





# SENATOR JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

FORMER SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT



Thanks very much. It's great to be here. I must say that I have been in this historic room many times, but I've never seen it looking quite so beautiful. So that's the truth. Nowruz Mubarak, right? Happy Nowruz to everybody....So it's a great pleasure to share this day with you and too, if I may here offer a hope and a prayer for the year ahead, that it is a year in which spring flowers of freedom blossom in Iran and that this great nation with such a proud and rich history and culture is emancipated from the brutal dictatorship of the regime that currently sits in Tehran. With God's help, that can happen, and may I say that I also pray that next Nowruz we hold this gathering in a liberated Tehran, capital of a free Iran. It can happen and with our work together, it will.

The New Year's is a time to look backward and forward. Some of the things we look backward on in this past year are riveting and not so encouraging, but one thing that we have to celebrate is that, and it should give us hope about the larger struggle against the Iranian regime, is that the people who were incarcerated—there's no other word for it—at Camp Liberty have been liberated. And people said it wouldn't happen. People said it couldn't happen and with a lot of effort by members of both parties, by leaders of the Iranian-American community, by our friends in Albania, it did. So thank God for that, and let's thank Albania as well. Thank you. You did the Lord's work in that. However, in other ways as we look back, this has been a year that reminds us of how much we yet have to do.

It was a full year in which the Iran Nuclear Agreement was in effect and what—it was a bad agreement. We all know that and I'm not going to belabor that, as Senator McCain said, but we saw what a lot of us expected, in addition to the \$100 million and the delay, but not end of the nuclear program of Iran. The International Atomic Energy Agency, not an agency of the United States government, but of the United Nations, in November found a second significant violation of the agreement by Iran which was in the heavy water that they exceeded a limit of 130 metric tons for heavy water... It is serious and consequential. It was in reference to the missile tests that have occurred, violating U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929, passed in 2010, and Resolution 2231, as Mrs. Rajavi said, passed in 2015 when the Security Council endorsed the nuclear deal. We don't have to go back to November even. In recent days the Iranian government's behavior in the Persian Gulf, harassing the U.S.S. *Invincible*—this is in the Straits of Hormuz on two occasions—is all part of the bad behavior of the Iranian regime.

Those who were most vigorously urging us to endorse the P5+1 Agreement, the so-called JCPOA with Iran, said that even though it wasn't a perfect agreement on its own terms, it held the hope of transforming Iran, of making it into a moderate, civilized regime. But honestly, what's happened in the last year? The reality is not only has that not happened, but things have gotten worse. Human rights, according to the United Nations human rights monitor, Iran is number one in the world when it comes to executions of its own people per capita. Human Rights Watch, which is a very much respected human rights non-governmental organization, said that Tehran's mass execution of Sunni's in 2016 was quote "a shameful low point in its human rights record." What about terrorism? Iran's terrorism at home is matched by its terror abroad in its expansionist efforts in the region. And that has led to the unnecessary deaths of a growing number of Iranian soldiers, IRGC fighters and commanders killed, not defending Iran, but fighting foreign wars in Syria and Iraq because of the extra territorial ambitions of their leaders.



According to the United States intelligence, the number of active Quds Force troops in Iraq and Syria goes to the tens of thousands. Supporting Assad's army against the Syrian opposition is in fact in line with Iran's expansionist, extremist vision for the region. In the summer of last year, in the last, during this last year that is ending soon, in Syria alone, there were almost 70,000 Iranian proxy forces. Incidentally, when Senator Shaheen sat down next to me for a moment, I asked her how she was doing. She said, "Right now I feel terrible. I've just come from a Foreign Relations Committee hearing about Syria and three doctors testified to the horrific suffering of the Syrian people—men, but really also children, and women. And this blame can be laid directly on the doorstep of the mullahs in Tehran.

The Supreme Leader and the IRGC are not only aggressors, they are plunderers of the national wealth. They control at least 50 percent of Iran's GDP, its national economy. A very impressive document recently issued by the National Council of Resistance of Iran highlights this. Fourteen economic powerhouses directly or indirectly controlled by the Supreme Leader, the IRGC, or their affiliates with worth in the tens and tens of billions of dollars. And what's happening to a lot of that money? It's being spent to realize the extremist domestic and foreign policies of the regime in Tehran. Tehran is spending between \$15 and 20 billion annually—money really that belongs to the people of Iran—in Syria to fund the war in Syria to protect Assad. The IRGC Quds Force Commander Soleimani spends billions of dollars in Iraq to fund the Shia militias and instigates sectarian violence. The same Shia militias who were responsible for the death of hundreds of American soldiers who served in Iraq.

And what are the words that come out of the mouths of the most influential leaders in Tehran? Not moderation, not respect for the United States. "Death to America. Death to America." And we may put our hands over our ears, those who support the agreement, and not want to hear that, not want to believe it, but trust me. History is cluttered with the bodies of people who didn't—dead bodies—who didn't believe extreme things being said by tyrants in the world.



So the bottom line is this—the regime in Tehran has not only not changed as a result of the Iran Nuclear Agreement, it's gotten, if anything, worse. And I think the rational conclusion from this record of facts—I'm not making any of this up—is that the regime will not change on its own. And in my opinion therefore the ultimate solution to this most serious threat is that we and our allies, working with the people of Iran, working with the National Council of Resistance and opposition groups in Iran, we must change the regime in Iran. That must be our goal. And why do I say that? Because look—we have an unusual challenge now, you might say technically. There's so much instability in the world, and frankly with this new administration there is so much swirling around Washington that there's a danger that we will be distracted from what is and remains the most significant threat to the security of the Middle East, of the United States, and the world, and that is the current regime in Tehran.

So Nowruz is a time of hope. It's a new beginning. Nowruz literally means, I am informed and taught, a new day. And in some ways it is a new day here in Washington, and though I will say that I was a proud supporter of Secretary Clinton in the election last year, when it comes to the question of Iran, the change from President Obama to President Trump is an enormously significant and hopeful change. The Obama administration supported the bad agreement, didn't want to see violations of it. Sent Secretary Kerry to encourage European bankers to go back and do business in Iran where they themselves didn't want to do it, because they were burned by the sanctions before. The change in the White House attitude gives us an important opportunity.

But I will tell people gathered here, many of whom are staff members for members of Congress, that the initiative in many, the most important things that can do to change the status quo in Iran must come from Capitol Hill. On this question, there has been a traditional, fortunately, of real bipartisanship. Now that stopped for a moment in Congress's consideration of the Iran Nuclear Agreement and where the divide was almost totally Republicans against the agreement, Democrats for it. And I think that was for one reason only. That was that President Obama was so personally involved in it and made such personal appeals to Democratic members of the Senate.

But I think you'll find and already have found that the bipartisan consensus about the threat that Iran represents has returned, and there's a real interest in focusing in on a regime in Iran and changing what exists now. So what is our goal? I don't think it's been phrased any better than the program, the ten-point program that Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, on behalf of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, and on behalf of the people of Iran, has issued. Our goal, your goal, is not punitive. It's affirmative.

We want, as Mrs. Rajavi has brilliantly portrayed in her ten-point plan, a better life for the people of Iran. I'm going to go over it very briefly. First, free and fair elections where the ballot box is the only criterion for legitimacy of those elected. Second, a pluralistic political system with freedom of parties and assembly. Respect for individual freedoms, freedom of expression, unconditional access to the internet. I tried at one time to deny my children unconditional access to the internet. Wasn't easy. And Iran, by the government, a lot of people are denied that right. Fourth, separation of religion and state. The end of killing really of Sunnis, Christians, and Baha'i in Iran. Fifth, gender equality in political, social, and economic areas. Sixth, a restoration of the rule of law and justice, which is a proud, a Persian tradition. Seventh, acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other similar international covenants and conventions. Eighth, the recognition of the importance of private property, private investment, and a market economy as an engine of growth in a free Iran. And ninth, the support of a foreign policy of peaceful coexistence, international and regional cooperation and respect for the United Nations Charter. And lastly, Mrs. Rajavi has said on behalf of the Iranian people, a non-nuclear Iran, free of weapons of mass destruction.

Now, that's a great program, and I myself think it bears a striking resemblance to the program of the American Revolution in the 18th century, of the French Revolution of the 19th century, of the wars against Nazism and fascism in the 20th century, followed by the long struggle against the Soviet Union and communism. So those were each fights that a lot of wise people, conventional thinkers thought could never be won for the cause of freedom, but every one of them was won.

And so at the dawn of Nowruz, a new day, I want to say to you here today that history stands not with the regime in Tehran, but with the people of Iran. And I want to say also, we must stand with them as Americans. It's our responsibility as Americans, because we are a nation founded on a creed, on a belief—the self-evident truth that every person is endowed, not by the government, but by our creator, by God, with the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The extremist regime in Tehran, every day brutally denies that truth, and horrifically keeps those rights from the people of Iran. That is, after all is said and done, the ultimate reason why the regime in Iran is America's enemy and why we as Americans must help the people of Iran rid themselves of the tyrants that now rule them. Together the people of American and the people of Iran, with the help of God, will restore freedom and true greatness to Iran, and may it happen in this year. Thank you very, very muc



# AMBASSADOR LINCOLN BLOOMFIELD

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STATE POLITICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS



I just want to start by wishing every happy Nowruz to my Persian friends, Persian-American friends, the originators of Iranian-American Communities, who do such a great job letting us into their hearts and letting us know how proud they are of their cultural traditions, but also, being the best kinds of Americans who stand for the same principles that have made our country unique and special since its founding.

I want to wish a Happy Nowruz to our exiled Iranian friends in France, all over Europe, in Australia, and in Albania in particular, it was great to see Ambassador Faber here. We salute the Albanian government. I had the privilege of visiting Albania for the first time last fall and meeting with the Iranian exiles who are out of Camp Liberty at last, safely. So there's a lot to celebrate.

I also finally want to wish a Happy Persian New Year to all Congressional staff who are here today. I've never worked for a member of Congress. I started as an intern at the Congressional Research Service, and I know what a great organization that is. But I'm not going to disappoint you. As a policy practitioner of longstanding, I'm going to give you some things we can do. You heard Senator McCain talk about sanctions, and you heard the other speakers speak about military responses, but there's more than that and I will get to a list, so I hope you're still here and paying attention when I get to the list.

You know, we come here repeatedly at the Persian New Year to mark what has happened and what might happen. In fact, so much has changed since just a year ago, and you've heard this already from our previous distinguished speakers, but a year ago the worry was that the next administration is going to tear up the JCPOA, that by the time of the inaugural ball, the night of the inauguration, it would be in tatters. And that the alternative, as our former President said, would be war. It was either embrace this agreement and all that the diplomacy implied or war, nothing else. Well, as you'll hear from me at least, there's a lot more that we can do other than war, and I don't advocate war with Iran.

And finally, a year ago our analysts in Washington said, "Pay attention to the reformers." Some said, "moderates," that Rouhani and Foreign Minister Zarif and Rafsanjani, their major leader. The reform group in Iran was the horse that we would bet on to change and improve Iran. That was a year ago.

Look what's changed a year later. So many things have changed. The JCPOA has not been torn up. It's being rigorously monitored and enforced and there have been some violations. We've not gone to war with Iran. We have instead seen Iran threaten our interests and take very destabilizing and illegal and aggressive and even criminal activity against its neighbors. It's gotten worse from Yemen to Iraq to Syria and elsewhere. Camp Liberty residents, as has been said, are now safe in Europe. Although, the Iranians are probably still chasing them and we need to be extremely vigilant and stand with our dear friends in Albania who have been so gracious and hospitable to allow them to come to freedom.




The resistance group, the Mujahedin-e Khalq and the National Council of Resistance of Iran is now recognized to stand for everything that Senator Lieberman just told you, the ten-point plan, then any of these allegations that tried to portray their armed resistance over a number of years as something other than resistance against tyranny. Courts from France, to the E.U., to Europe, to the U.K., to the United States have all challenged that characterization and the terrorism listings have all disappeared for years now. And so what do we see from this alleged former terrorist movement? We see books. We see academic studies. And as I had the privilege of telling 3,000 MEK members in Albania when I spoke to them last fall, this continues the tradition that started this movement over 50 years ago....

So let's remember who these people really are. They are some of the smartest and most capable people Iran has ever produced in the modern age and now you can read their books. You can read a great essay by Mrs. Rajavi about the true meaning of Islam, drawing on the life of Mohammed, on the Koran, showing that it is not a violent religion and that these extremist fundamentalists, both in Tehran and in ISIS, are violating Islam. She's the one who has made the case better than any that I've seen. You've seen books about the presence in Syria, 19 bases, up to 70,000 people on this payroll. Now you know where the money from the JCPOA is going—to fund a defensive action, to keep the Arab Spring from sweeping further to the east where it would enter Persian. Now you've seen a new book about the economy of Iran. And I've, I was reading it last night and it dawned on me that not only are the people of Iran, 78 million people, denied political rights, but now they're denied an ability to move forward economically. They're absolutely having their property seized, their ability to make a profit and to grow and to live a prosperous life is being denied to them by the Supreme Leader's foundations and the IRGC. So this is really a situation ripe for change.

And then finally, what happened to the great reformists? Well, we now see that President Rouhani was always the handpicked choice of the Supreme Leader to do these negotiations. He bragged about his first tour as nuclear negotiator, that he'd deceived the West. In this case, what was his real goal for the Supreme Leader? It was to come up with an agreement where Iran didn't give up nuclear weapons. They blocked pathways to the weapon. They slowed the timeline to achieve a weapon, but when those timelines expire, Iran is a legal nuclear power. That's what they got at the table. Their nuclear rights are preserved for the future and there's nothing allegedly that the world can say about that unless there's a doctrine that says, "No nuclear weapons for Iran." Or a change in Iran with a new government speaking for the people of Iran that says, "We don't want to be a nuclear weapons" All of that has turned reality on its head in just one year and as Senator Lieberman said, even the seasons are confused around here, so this is a time of dramatic change. It's a dynamic time....

And finally, something that I have recalled for from the beginning of my research into this group, and have never stopped asking for it, and Congress can do this—I testified last week before the House on Russian disinformation, and the Russian secret services, what they're doing to our country to manipulate our thinking and our democracy. Yes, we should investigate that. But do you think that Iran is not doing the same thing? Do you think that they're just sitting back and letting the Americans figure this out? Don't you think that they have, if they control, I'd say closer to 90 percent of the economy, but somewhere in the range of 50 to 90 percent of the Iranian economy, don't you think they're spending some of that to support voices in the West, in the United States who are saying things which favor the regime. I do. And I hate to point fingers and I'm not Joseph McCarthy, and I don't want to see us go back into a period where we mistrust each other, but we need a counterintelligence investigation on Iran. So please add that to the list.



I think that things are changing very quickly. I think that our brave words in the past about celebrating a free Iran and a free Tehran are becoming a little bit more realistic now. I think that this 20 degree freezing weather is going to turn into a beautiful spring here in Washington very soon. And if I'm right, we may just see a Persian Spring very soon in Iran. Thank you.



# DR. RAMESH SEPEHRRAD

REPRESENTATIVE OF ORGANIZATION OF  
IRANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



On behalf of the organization of Iranian-American Communities, welcome to our Nowruz celebration of 2017. Marking the Iranian New Year of 1396, Nowruz is celebrated in 17 countries around the world. Nowruz falls on March 21, the first day of spring. It has been celebrated for over 3000 years and it has been celebrated in Western Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. Our message to all those nations and countries is to let us welcome Nowruz together in peace and harmony.

Of those nation who celebrate Nowruz to our particularly near and dear to our hearts as we gather here in the U.S. Senate, first is our beloved homeland, Iran. May the New Year bring an end to the tyrannical regime and bring freedom, democracy, and peace. Happy New Year and may your New Year and our New Year be victorious.

Second, to our brothers and sisters in Albania and their host nation, Albania, who also celebrates Nowruz. At this point I would like to recognize her Excellency, Floreta Faber, Ambassador of Albania

May this New Year bring more joy and peace and prosperity to Albania and our beloved brother and sisters in Albania. To the nation of Albania, we are forever indebted to your hospitality and your kindness in hosting our loved ones and keeping them safe and secure. We are forever bonded in humanity and love as you host our precious gem, from our nation, our MEK brothers and sisters.





## SENIOR SENATORS, EX-US OFFICIALS URGE FIRM POLICY ON IRAN

YAHOO!  
NEWS



<https://www.yahoo.com/news/senior-senators-ex-us-officials-urge-firm-policy-174500075.html>

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ — Marking the Iranian New Year of 1396, bi-partisan senior members of the United States Senate joined the Nowruz gathering, sponsored by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC), calling for change in Iran. While criticizing the Iranian regime's malign behavior, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, John McCain (R-AZ) said, "I think the only thing that the Iranian regime understands is, as Ronald Reagan called it, peace through strength. But most of all, I hope that we can give the people who are now residing in that country the hope and belief and commitment to all of us that someday they will know freedom again." WASHINGTON, March 17, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ — Marking the Iranian New Year of 1396, bi-partisan senior members of the United States Senate joined the Nowruz gathering, sponsored by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC), calling for change in Iran.

Foreign Relations Committee member, Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) welcomed the resettlement of thousands of Iranian dissidents, the residents of Camp Liberty, Iraq, in Albania and thanked the Albanian Ambassador for her country's efforts to this end.

Homeland Security Committee member, Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) recognized the need for a bi-partisan effort in US Senate to prevent "proliferation in the hands of this regime that has one of the worst human rights records anywhere on the planet, which constantly is suppressing any kind of free press or demonstrations or any kinds of activities as a free society, we simply cannot let them have those weapons of mass destruction."

In a video message, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the President-elect of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, expressed her support for a "bipartisan measure demanding pressure on the Iranian regime to stop its destabilizing actions in support of terrorist groups, and its continued test-firing of ballistic missiles... a legislative language, which calls for the application of UN Security Council resolution 2231 as well as a bill that calls for the designation of the IRGC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization."

In his remarks, former Senator Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) said, "... the bipartisan consensus about the threat that Iran represents has returned, and there's a real interest in focusing in on a regime in Iran and changing what exists now... I don't think it's been phrased any better than the program, the ten-point program that Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, on behalf of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, and on behalf of the people of Iran, has issued."





## EX-SEN. LIEBERMAN WELCOMES 'CHANGE IN THE WHITE HOUSE ATTITUDE' ON IRAN

BY PATRICK GOODENOUGH |  
MARCH 16, 2017

(CNSNews.com) – Former Sen. Joe Lieberman supported Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, but on Wednesday, he called the shift from President Obama to President Trump "enormously significant and hopeful" when it comes to Iran.

"Though I will say that I was a proud supporter of Secretary Clinton in the election last year, when it comes to the question of Iran, the change from President Obama to President Trump is an enormously significant and hopeful change," he told a Nowruz (Persian New Year) gathering on Capitol Hill.

Lieberman, the former running mate of Democrat Al Gore, said the Obama administration had supported a "bad" nuclear deal with Iran, refused to see Iranian violations, and sent then-Secretary of State John Kerry to urge leery European bankers to resume business with Iran when sanctions were eased.

"The change in the White House attitude, it gives us an important opportunity," he said.

Lieberman told the event, sponsored by the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) and held in the Russell Senate Office Building, that he perceived a return in Congress to a bipartisan response to the Iranian threat. He said a long tradition of bipartisanship on the Iran question had "stopped for a moment" when Congress considered the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal...

"But I think you'll find and already have found that the bipartisan consensus about the threat that Iran represents has returned," he said, "and there's a real interest in focusing in on a regime in Iran and changing what exists now." ...

Another participant in the Nowruz event, Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) was not among those who voted against the JCPOA, although he said at the time he had "serious reservations" about the deal.

On Wednesday, Peters also stressed the importance of a bipartisan response to Tehran.

"There should be no daylight between Democrats and Republicans when it comes to standing up against the Iranian regime and demanding that there is accountability and demanding that that regime respect basic human rights and move to a democratic regime where the people of Iran actually have a say and actually have an opportunity to pursue their dreams and to live in the kind of freedom that every human being should," he said.

"That has to be a Democratic and Republican issue," Peters said. "We have to be united."





**COMPILED BY ORGANIZATION OF IRANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES – US**

**2020 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Suite 201 Washington, DC 20006**  
**202-403-0744 | WWW: OIACUS.ORG | INFO@OIACUS.ORG**  
**Twitter:@OrgIAC**