



Iranian Americans Outline A Comprehensive, Bi-partisan Iran Policy for 2021

DECEMBER 15, 2020





On December 15, 2020, the Organization of Iranian American Communities (OIAC) hosted a virtual event on US policy toward Iran. The virtual event was titled “Iranian Americans Call for a Comprehensive US-Iran Policy” and featured several members of OIAC’s Advisory Board, members of OIAC’s Young Professionals and Students Chapter, and a panel of Iranian American community leaders. The focus was on countering the escalating human rights violations in Iran as well as the regional and terror threats posed by the Islamic Republic.

Professor Kazem Kazerounian:

“Our mission is to advocate for a democratic, secular and non-nuclear government in Iran. What we want is an Iran that is founded on the respect for human rights, gender equality, religious and ethnic tolerance, social & economic justice and peaceful coexistence with the world. As Iranian-Americans this is what we are advocating for. We believe democracy for Iran aligns with security for America. It is with that lens that we look at the US Policy on Iran.”

OIAC Advisory Board Members



Dr. Ramesh Sepehrrad, OIAC Advisory Board Member, moderated the first panel outlining how the Iranian American communities view discussing the issue of US-Iran policy and more importantly a comprehensive policy that focuses on the issues of human rights, terrorism, and the regional threat by the regime in Tehran as a priority in 2021. Dr. Sepehrrad said, “Over the last several weeks we have witnessed a range of debates on Iran policy and what to expect as we prepare for 2021. Needless to say, these debates continue to be exploited by the pressure groups advocating on behalf of the Iranian regime which makes it even more timely and crucial to address what is the message of the people of Iran and not the regime in Tehran.”

OIAC Advisory board members concluded that the 2021 US policy to include the following elements:

- 1. Recognizing the voice of the Iranian people and their desire for freedom and democracy.**
- 2. Disabling Tehran’s terror and hostage taking diplomacy in 2021.**
- 3. Promoting and encouraging a path to justice and accountability on the ongoing crimes against humanity in Iran as called by Amnesty International and the UN experts.**
- 4. Leveraging the regional dynamics to counter the regime’s drive for regional hegemony.**

OIAC leadership called on the next U.S. administration to consider the following:

- The regime in Tehran lacks legitimacy, and the United States should stand with the people of Iran who hold the real leverage for change from within.
- A comprehensive US-Iran policy should be backed by the bipartisan voice of Congress as the struggle for a free and democratic Iran is not a republican nor a democrat issue: it is an issue of human rights, global peace, security, and stability.



Professor Kazem Kazerounian

Dean of School of Engineering
University of Connecticut

Professor Kazerounian outlined how that current socio-political dynamics can lead to the “final blow” to the regime. He noted that “this regime has failed the Iranian people,” with “80% of the population living below the poverty line and the economy in a free-fall.” Meanwhile, the regime has escalated arrests, torture, and public executions to control the restless population that has nothing to lose. Referring to the waves of massacres, including the 1988 Massacre, and the recent high-profile executions of Navid Afkari and Ruhollah Zam, Professor Kazerounian added that the regime continues to expose its “true face to the international community” as the Iranian people’s “resistance and defiance grow day by day.”



“We have to be vigilant about the escalated human rights violations in Iran. The question is how will the US policy respond to such violent and inhumane posture by the regime? I think the US and Europe’s reactions to the execution of Zam, the refugee journalists, is a right start and should continue. A comprehensive US policy on Iran must also include specific measures to address the elevated terrorist activities by the Iranian regime, especially it’s plots against opponents in Europe and the US. The key question is will the US policy along with Europe on Iran disable Tehran’s terror and hostage taking diplomacy in 2021.”

Professor Kazerounian added how “terror diplomacy is mullah’s modus operandi, if you look at the last 40 years, terror plots, kidnapping and culture of terrorism is something this regime has fostered, funded and has never really directly paid for it until the arrest of its diplomat, With Assadollah Assadi arrest in Germany, I believe there is ample empirical and legal evidence to formulate a policy to confront the regime’s strategy on conducting more terrorist activities around the world. And lastly, the regime’s desperate drive for more weapons and missiles to gain regional hegemony cannot be ignored in light of any future negotiations. If we ignore these realities the United States will have a dangerous foreign policy challenge, beyond the nuclear deal, JCPOA, with mullahs in 2021.”



*Protest against the diplomat terrorist
Assadollah Assadi in Europe*

Professor Ali Parsa

Professor of History, Humanity, and Religion California State University, Fullerton & Los Angeles

Professor Parsa discussed the need to deter the Iranian regime's terrorism and added "Since 1984, the mullah's regime continues to be enlisted as the most active state sponsors of global terrorism by the U.S. State Department. This is not a regime that just terrorizes its own people, they kill opponents abroad, especially in Europe, and since day one, they use terrorism and hostage taking as a mean to communicate with the rest of the world." He added, "this regime has survived on these very pillars of suppression at home, terrorism abroad and regional meddling through proxy wars to retain and expand its influence."

"The culture of terror in the name of Islam was indoctrinated in Khomeini's vision and Khomeini and Rouhani are still operating on that vision. If you look at this regime's victims of human rights violations and terrorist activities in the region, the majority of the victims are Muslims. I raise this because we really have to be clear on the nature of this barbaric regime. Many of us refer to this regime as religious fascism that uses terrorism at home and abroad to stay in power. If we have a comprehensive US policy on Iran which calls the regime for what it is, it resonates with the Iranian people who are challenging this regime on every front and they are the key factor in the US policy on Iran."

Professor Parsa added, "The lifting of the sanctions will not solve this regime's problems. One thing we must remember is that the regime in Iran is under different types of sanctions by different administrations, both Republicans and Democrats. In fact, the first sanctions imposed on this regime dates back to November 1979. Even if some sanctions are lifted, the key question is, will the regime let go of its deeply rooted corruption and mismanagement that leads all the way up to Supreme Leader? People poured into the streets during the November uprising in 1979, and again in January 2009 and shouted, 'our enemy is here, the regime lies and says it's US."



This shows the people of Iran are not blaming sanctions. Instead, they know the real blame is with the mismanagement, corruption deeply rooted in this regime. You have to remember the economic hardship did not start with the tightening of the sanctions post JCPOA. There were already mounting protests and a massive nationwide uprising in December 2017 which carried well into January of 2018. All these protests denounced the regime's corruption at every level, and they were before the sanctions."



Dr. Majid Sadeghpour

Political Director of OIAC Healthcare Practitioner

Dr. Sadeghpour outlined the bipartisan congressional support for a free Iran over the years. He referred to Iranian terrorist activities over the last four decades and underscored that finally for the first time “an Iranian diplomat has been apprehended” to face criminal charges with “compelling evidence that demonstrates how far the regime is willing to go when it comes to eliminating opponents and conducting terrorism.”



“The Middle East that we have today is quite different than the Middle East of a decade ago, or even two years ago. The political shifts and alliances formed in the Middle East are no longer in favor of the regime, the situation is ripe for a major transformation not just in Iran but the entire region.”

Dr. Sadeghpour added, “This regime is now being challenged by the people of the region including Iraq and Lebanon. During 2019 October protests, people in the streets of Gaza, Baghdad chanted slogans rejecting Iranian influence and their proxies, I remember Qassim Soleimani traveled to Iraq during those protests according an AP report, he told the Iraqi officials, ‘We in Iran know how to deal with protests, this happened in Iran and we got it under control.’ The facts are: there is no Soleimani on the ground anymore, IRGC and Quds force are not able to fund their proxy groups they way they used to and governments in the region are forging alliances against the regime. If you factor all these, you can see how regime’s dream of regional hegemony is withering away, and as Professor Kazerounian said the situation is ripe for a major transformation not just in Iran but the entire region.”



Thousands of protesters hit streets condemning the regime over downed UA752 plane, January 11, 2020

OIAC Young Professionals and Students



Amir Emadi, member of OIAC's Young Professionals and Students, moderated a discussion with three other members of his chapter covering the status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran, the change in the political environment in the US and the need for a more concerted effort by the international community to support the call for change in Iran.

"All of us are inspired by the message of change that is coming from Iran's young population. Even though we haven't been to Iran, we very much see ourselves as part of a greater call for a free Iran. With that said, the voice of the young Iranian population is gaining momentum and we strive to echo their message."

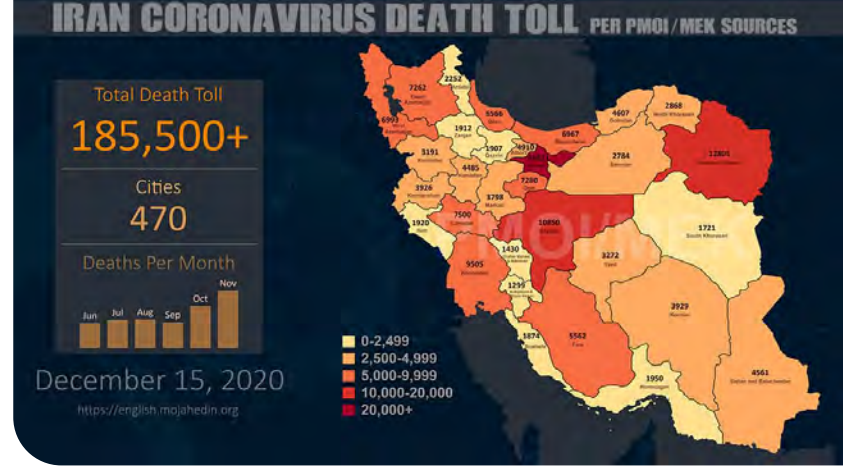


2020 Protests across Iran as the public confronts the regime's security forces

Dr. Azadeh Sami

Pediatrician in Virginia

Dr. Sami outlined how the “The mishandling of this pandemic is just one example that illustrates the regime’s corruption, among its other examples such as human rights violation, export of terrorism, nuclear threat. that previous panel have already discussed. There is utter lack of care or basic support for the medical staff, last week, we received news about Mohammad Rezaie, a medical assistant who worked with the COVID patients day in and day out since the outbreak. He truly provided a holistic support for his patients including emotional health support with music and dancing for them to lift up their moods. He died of COVID on December 8th. Why? Because the regime refuses to provide the most basic protective gears for the medical staff The very gears that IRGC is selling in the black markets and shipping to their proxies in the region.” Dr. Sami refuted regime’s claim on sanctions preventing medial aid or vaccine reaching Iran and said, “It’s absolutely a lie as the sanctions do not apply to any medical aid or support. Germany, France, India and many other countries send medicine and medical aid all the time.”



“I would say both Rouhani and Zarif are the chief officers of deception in this regime. The regime has perpetually played the victim and blamed maximum pressure policy or sanctions for its poor COVID response. The bogus claim about sanctions inhibiting production or access to vaccines is completely basesless. The regime never vested in protecting Iranian people to begin with, not during this pandemic and certainly not in the past 40 years.”

How is it that a country with a revenue of \$250 billion per year is leading the world in the covid death rates? With such a revenue, how can they possibly blame other countries for the people’s lack of access to health care or the covid vaccine? The reality is that the regime is in survival mode, especially now after the deaths of Oasem Soleimani and Mohsen Fakhrizadeh: they are pouring all of their economic resources (I should say, the Iranian people’s resources) into supporting their proxies in the Middle East. It is well known that the regime spends \$15 billion onthe Assad regime in Syria, \$800 million on Hezbollah in Lebanon, \$150 million on Shia militias in Iraq, and \$100 million on Hamas each year, while health and multiplying their nuclear stocpile. That means less resources for public and social wellbeing of Iranians. This should make it clear where their priorities lie.

Seena Saeidian

Student from UC Berkeley

Seena Saeidian analyzed how the change of policy environment in Washington should align with the desire of the Iranian people and said,

"The internal affairs of Iran has changed so radically in the past four years, even compared to the last 8 or 12 years. Today in Iran, people are chanting 'reformers, hardliners, the game is over'. This should tell the new administration that what the US has tried in the past is no longer aligned with the desire of the Iranian people."

Seena added, "The Iranian people's grievances run much deeper than the nuclear program. When we talk about things like terrorism, we need to recognize the primary victims are the people of Iran and the middle east. A regime that kills 1500 peaceful protesters, including pregnant women and children, and then shut off the internet to hide its crimes. is not a rational actor to be part of any negotiations or fruitful diplomatic efforts ... **It is for this reason that we say the bedrock of US policy must be human rights and aligning with the people of Iran.** It is in the best interests of the US to take advantage of the leverage offered by sanctions to support the Iranian people's demands for democratic change. The self-inflicted financial and political crises in the country have brought the mullahs to their knees. Momentum is quickly shifting in favor of the people, and its certainly not outside the realm of possibility that the next major uprising happens in the early months of the next administration. When that happens, the US must have its hands open to stand with the people instead of being entangled in negotiations with the regime. This support could very well help the people deal the final blow to the regime."



Protesters holding a sign "They slay us freely, The world witnesses!"



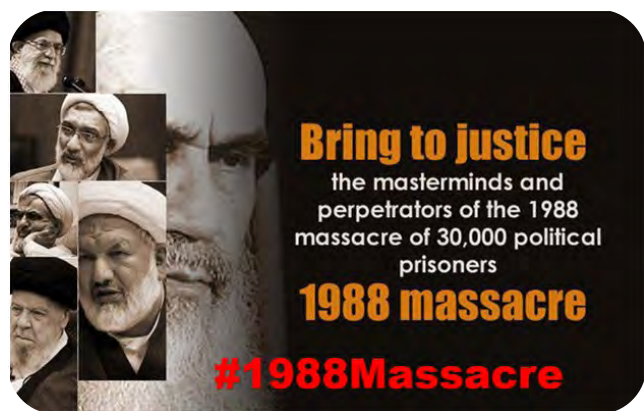
Behrang Borhani

Graduate Student, California

Behrang Borhani explained how the regime in Iran continue to export and conduct terrorism regionally and globally. He outline how the world should recognize and promote the desires and basic rights of the Iranian people.

"The new administration has an opportunity to work multilaterally on the issue of ending the impunity and support the efforts on the path to justice and accountability for the massacres that have taken place in Iran. "

Behrang cited Amnesty International report stating how the "Iranian were aware of the execution of dissidents between July 10 and August 16 in 1988, which set the scene for the mass execution of thousands of political prisoners later that year." Some of those officials, like Mohammad Jafar Mahallati currently in Ohio, are in the U.S. and Europe and must be held accountable for their crimes against humanity. There are many Iranian Americans whose family members and relatives were killed during the 1988 massacre of political prisoners and they support the call by Amnesty International for full investigation of those responsible for such crimes against humanity.



He added, "those involved directly or indirectly in the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners and the killing of the 1500 in November must held accountable as they are still in charge. Taking action is imperative to prevent future mass killings and will save the lives of those currently languishing in the Iranian prisons." Borhani added, "as called by the bi partisan U.S. Senate Resolution in 2018, the United States should "work with the international community to ensure that violations of human rights are part of all formal and informal multilateral or bilateral discussions with and regarding Iran."

Similarly, we need to address the rights of religious and ethnic minorities that severely violated."



Dialogue Among Community Leaders from California, Texas, Connecticut, New York, & New Jersey



Zahra Amanpour, representing the Iranian American Community of New Jersey and New York, facilitated a dialogue with her fellow community leaders from Texas, California and Connecticut. Amanpour recognized the need to “confronting the Iranian regime’s terrorist agenda, which comes in the form of physical and cyber-attacks, is a must.” She added how many members of the panel “were in Paris in 2018 and were directly a target of the terror plot” by the Iranian regime and how “the perpetrators were arrested including, Assadi, the regime’s diplomat who can potentially face 20 years in prison.” She quoted Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), saying “While in Congress we may have differing approaches about the best way to address the threat from Iran, rest assured that we remain united in opposition to the regime’s ongoing abuses against its own citizens ...” Amanpour mentioned how members of congress have been with “us every step of the way and we are very proud to continue to work in a bi partisan fashion on the issue of Iran.”



2019 Photo Exhibit by US Congress for the fallen victims of human rights violations in Iran

Homeira Hessami

Chairwoman of Iranian American Community of North Texas

Homeira Hessami shared, "Since November 27, a senior Iranian diplomat has been on trial and all the evidence point to how the order was issued at the highest level of the Iranian regime. I was there, so was my family, friends and community members from over Texas were there.

"I still shiver when I think of thousands of families and children who could have perished. It is astonishing to see some of our politicians talk about the idea of diplomacy with a regime whose main instruments of conducting diplomacy, its foreign ministry, and embassies, are all the service of terror operations, even against its own citizens."

We should not allow Iran's terrorist diplomats hide behind the so-called diplomatic immunity! What the regime is asking for is impunity and we must be firm and up to their terror plots and plans." On the issue of lifting of the negotiations, she added "I think even if the US ends up going back to the nuclear negotiation table, any new agreements must take into account the full spectrum of mullah's threat to the people of Iran, the region and the entire world...When people of Iran chant "reformers, hardliners, the game is over", it means there is no difference between the terrorist IRGC and Zarif or Rouhani vs. Khamenei... When people of Iran chant "no to turban no to crown", it means the people of Iran denounce both the monarchy and theocracy. Iran will not go backward, Iranians are moving forward toward a democracy and that should be the compass in a new US Iran policy."

CHAIN OF
COMMAND
FOR IRAN
REGIME'S
TERROR
PLOT
AGAINST
THE FREE
IRAN
GATHERING
IN PARIS



Javad Zarif
Foreign Minister



Ali Khamenei - Supreme Leader



Hassan Rouhani - President



Mahmoud Alavi - Minister of Intelligence



Reza Amiri Moghaddam - Head of MOIS
Foreign Intelligence & Movements Org.



Assadollah Assadi - MOIS station chief in
Austria & coordinator of MOIS Intelligence
stations in Europe

Nasser Sharif

President of California Society for Democracy in Iran

Mr. Sharif explained how California is immensely proud of the U.S. House Resolution 374, cosponsored by a strong bipartisan support, including the main two sponsors who were from California. On the issue of Iran policy, Sharif said “I think it is important to not repeat the past mistakes and ignore the message of the Iranian people.”

“Washington must recognize the change in Iran will come from within and no matter how much the Iranian regime tries to lobby to lock the policy discussion in endless negotiations OR hint on another endless war, there is a third option on the table and that is the people of Iran are risking their lives on daily basis to set themselves free of this regime.”

Mr. Sharif added, “This regime is incapable and unwilling to shift its focus on the issue of terrorism, human rights violations, and drive for more weapons in their way is the only way they can survive. With that said, I think US policy must demonstrate zero tolerance on the issue of Iran’s missiles program.”



The target of Iranian regime's terror plot: The 2018 Free Iran Gathering event in Paris

Jila Andalib

Director of Iranian American Community of Connecticut

Jila Andalib highlighted the issue of Iranian women's empowerment in 2021 and referred to Congresswoman Judy Chu brought up House Resolution 1147 that points to "the importance of taking a feminist approach to all aspects of foreign policy, including foreign assistance and humanitarian response, trade, diplomacy, and accountability mechanisms."



"The way to empower Iranian women is to recognize their voice for change in the US policy. More specifically, recognize women who are leading change in Iran, like Maryam Rajavi whose 10-point plan calls for gender equality, free market economy, legitimacy of the ballot box and a secular non-nuclear republic of Iran. I think a new policy on Iran must rise above the noise that is generated by mullah's disinformation campaign that is circulating online and in the media."

She added how the Iranian American communities "will continue to advocate the voice of women and the people of Iran until a free Iran becomes a reality." In response to specific steps to take for US Iran policy in 2021, Ms. Andalib suggested, "align the policy with the voice of women, students, labor movement, union workers, environmentalists as the entire Iranian nation who are calling for change from within. I would say to all the policy makers that when in doubt, look at the realities on the ground in Iran. We have a regime is corrupt, stands on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, which side of the history do you want to stand on? I would choose the side of the Iranian people."



DC rally on International Women's Day, March 8, 2019 in support of a Free Iran & Maryam Rajavi's 10-point Plan



The community leaders highlighted several areas for a comprehensive U.S. policy toward Iran:

1. Focus on the voice of Iranian people and their struggle for democracy and freedom. More specifically, recognize the activism of students, women, the labor movement, union workers, retired workers, environmentalists, and social justice activists.
2. Place Iran's human rights record at the bedrock of US policy on Iran in 2021.
3. Hold to account the regime's political, judicial and security officials who are directly involved in the arrests, undue and prolong detentions, torture, and executions of nonviolent protesters. Use sanctions as a tool to name and shame those responsible for oppression and to prevent further violence and killings.
4. Adopt zero tolerance for attacks on Iran's ethnic and religious minorities, who are suffering even more from state-sponsored appalling discrimination on social, economic, and political basis.



**OIAC virtual event was
broadcasted on its website and
on multiple social media platform
reaching over 20,000 viewers
around the world.**

The Organization of Iranian-American communities (OIAC),
all-volunteers non profit organization, believes democracy and
human rights in Iran are imperative to the national security of
America and peace in the Middle East and beyond.

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