

Senator Kelly Ayotte 20 Sept 2021

I am so honored to be here, and it is so wonderful to see so many of my Iranian-American friends here in person. We come together today for the cause of freedom in Iran. And I want to speak also to the people who will hear this in Iran. And know that we are all here today for you. That we stand with you and that we will continue to fight for you. [applause]

As the United Nations meets this week in New York, it is important to remind President Biden and the European leaders that there is an alternative to the oppressive and bellicose leadership that we see in Iran right now. That alternative is the inspired and strong leadership of Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the National Council for Resistance of Iran, and the MEK. [applause]

We're grateful to have had the opportunity to kick this conference off today hearing from Mrs. Rajavi. She has stood courageously as a leader for the rights of people in Iran, despite the threats on her own life. She and the NCRI have a principal plan that envisions a peaceful, democratic future for Iran based on universal suffrage, gender equality, freedom of speech, separation of religion and state, and a non-nuclear Iran that is at peace with the world. The people of Iran deserve nothing less than peace and prosperity.

Mrs. Rajavi's leadership is in stark contrast to that of the mullahs and that of President Ebrahim Raisi, who will unfortunately be permitted to address the United Nations tomorrow. He does not deserve that privilege. [applause]

We have heard from the prior speakers. We just heard from the doctor up here what he went through, how he was tortured in the prison in Iran, and all the people that he served with and went to school with. So, that was a testament to what Ebrahim Raisi has done. But Raisi was a member of a death commission which ordered the extrajudicial killings of thousands of innocent political prisoners in Iran in 1988. He was one of only four individuals appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini to carry out the unprecedented fatwa, a religious decree that was targeting the MEK. This fatwa shows how the regime warps and uses religion to carry out atrocious acts. As deputy prosecutor of Iran, Raisi carried out this fatwa and should be held responsible for the murder of over 30,000 innocent political prisoners in Iran. [applause]

But we know that his violation of human rights and the atrocities that he's responsible for extended well beyond the 1988 massacre. As head of Iran's judiciary in 2019, Raisi also presided over hundreds of human rights violations. And in November of 2019, when we saw so many peaceful protestors take to the streets throughout Iran, throughout the country, all walks of life, what did he do? As head of the judiciary he condoned the shooting and killing of 1,500 of those innocent protestors by the regime's forces. And all they did was want their voices to be heard and to speak and to be able to speak freely like we are here today in the United States of America at this conference. Rather than being granted the opportunity to address the United Nations, Ebrahim Raisi should be investigated by the United Nations and held accountable for the genocide that he participated as a member of this death commission. [applause]

The convening of the United Nations General Assembly is an important opportunity for the Biden administration and world leaders to call for the accountability of Raisi and Khomeini for the crimes that they have committed against humanity. U.S. policy toward Iran should not only reimpose tougher sanctions to ensure that Iran does not continue to flout UN inspectors and develop nuclear weapons, but U.S. policy but also stand resolutely for the basic human rights of the Iranian people. The Iranian people's rights are being trampled on every day by this oppressive regime.

Despite the threats and the suffering and the sacrifices that the MEK and their families have suffered—we've heard about them. It was so moving to see the names and the people mourning and my heart goes out to the families of those who have lost loved ones and who have not been able to even have the

opportunity to pray at their remains. But if we think about the suffering here, you know I'm very proud that Mrs. Rajavi and the NCRI and all of you have not backed down. [applause]

In fact, we should be proud of the strong resilient leadership of Mrs. Rajavi and the survivors of the 1988 massacre who are now at Ashraf 3 in Albania, many of whom are women. The Iranian regime is anti-woman. We know how women are oppressed in Iran. We heard, we heard from that wonderful athlete, the Iranian athlete, she was so inspiring. But Iranian women inside and outside of the country have been bravely leading the resistance and movement for change in Iran. [applause]

We stand with the Iranian women and men. [applause] As mothers, sisters and daughters, the Iranian women know that the children of Iran cannot reach their God-given potential without freedom, peace and prosperity. That cannot be achieved without regime change and the right of the people of Iran to freely choose their own leaders and to have their rights protected by the law, not trampled by the law. [applause]

The UN General Assembly convenes at an important moment. We have heard that from every speaker who has stood here. We know from the many protests in Iran which have occurred over the last several years, and from the boycott of the sham presidential elections, that the regime is vulnerable. The people of Iran want democratic change. This is an opportune time for President Biden and the leaders of the free countries of the world to reintroduce a maximum pressure campaign against the regime with tougher sanctions [applause] to hold Ebrahim Raisi and the mullahs accountable for the 1988 massacres and all of the other human rights violations they have committed. [applause]

And for the leaders of the world to recognize that there is an alternative. The principled leadership of Mrs. Rajavi and the NCRI and that 10-point plan which supports the right of the Iranian people to decide who they want their leaders to be. The free nations of the world need to stand together against the current Iranian regime rather than legitimize its oppression. Now is the time to stand up for the rights of the Iranian people who deserve to live in peace and prosperity.

As we meet again today, let us resolve that we will not rest—and I know you all will not rest, we have seen how hard you are willing to fight, so please keep fighting. But let's all of us vow not to rest until the Iranian regime's warmongering ends, until their terrorism ends, until their atrocities are stopped, until they are held accountable for their crimes against humanity. [applause] We will not rest until the people of Iran are free from tyranny. Thank you for helping me today.