

Senator Robert Torricelli 20 Sept 2021

Thank you all very much for that warm welcome. It is an honor to be with you again. To Mrs. Rajavi, from all of us, our most profound respect. Many of us take up the cause of the Iranian resistance every week or every month. Some of us come to Washington every year. There is one woman who gets up every day, every hour, every minute to fight for the freedom of the Iranian people, and that is Maryam Rajavi. To the residents of Camp Ashraf, you are our inspiration. You are the point of the spear. You are the freest Iranians of all the land. You have our respect, and our honor, and we will never ever let you down. [applause]

I know that an act of courage listening to radio, passing transcripts person-to-person across Iran, there are people who will receive these words. We know your desperation, the courage that it has taken to write a placard, appear in a demonstration, speak to a neighbor, speak your mind. We understand your courage. Believe me when we tell you, we know that it has been long, we know the price has been great. There is only one thing certain in all this world—true of the Ayatollahs and the religious dictatorship and this has been true of every dictator, every despot all through history—they will fail, you will rise, and Iran will be free. It is as certain as the sun rising in the morning. [applause]

We gather here today in the year 2021, incredibly a fifth of this century having already passed. Somebody once wrote that no generation can either write nor understand its own history. It takes a perspective of time. I am old enough to have lived through half of the 20th century, a remarkable time. The greatest advances in science and medicine and culture in all of human history. But there was a dark side to that history. The greatest evil, carnage, and suffering in two millennium. The genocide of the Armenian people to the Ottomans. The near destruction of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis. The ethnic cleansing of Bosnia and Rwanda. The murder of nearly 2 million Cambodians by Pol Pot. Extraordinary to think that in our own lives and in our own time that there could be such suffering.

And now to this list of horrors we know that in 1988, Khomeini signed a fatwa calling for the death and destruction of not thousands but tens of thousands, perhaps not tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands, of people who were sent to their death for no crime but that they spoke their minds. They had a vision for the future of their country and under threat of death and under pain of torture, refused to denounce the very organization that we gather here today, we members of. For this they died.

And in an extraordinary irony of history, one of the four men who sent your families, your countrymen, brave Iranians all, to their deaths, sat on that death commission and he now serves as the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a disgrace to history but it is not forgotten. And history, my friends, has not yet run its course.

What happened in 1988, was not unknown at the time. Much like those few reports that came out of Germany about the Holocaust, what we were reading during their seizure of Cambodia, the nightly footage of Rwanda. People knew what was happening in 1988. Massoud Rajavi wrote the Secretary General of the United Nations after the first thousand died. Again later. Putting the world on notice that there was a government, a member of the organization that was dedicated to peace and human reconciliation, that was systematically murdering its own people. To Massoud Rajavi's letter he received silence. Indeed, some of the most respected democratic nations on earth not only remained silent but maintained diplomatic relations in Berlin, in Rome, in Paris, in London.

But now we have a chance to visit history again. Because neither history nor we forget. Raisi will seek in the months and the years to come to travel this world. He'll attempt to go to Paris and London and Rome and New York. He'll seek to be entertained and greeted by other heads of state. And then my friends, we will see what these nations are made of and who they really are.

I know that it is frustrating to have justice so far removed. It is so many years since the genocide in Tehran. But none of you joined the fight for Iranian freedom believing you would succeed in a year or two or ten. None of us you can believe are going to tire after five or ten. Justice takes time. The Serbian leaders who murdered the people in Bosnia walked the streets of Belgrade for 30 years. Now they're dead or jailed. The murderers in Rwanda for more than a decade walked the streets of its capital. Now they're in jail in The Hague. Pol Pot and his compatriots in Cambodia for 20, 30 years remained in power or free. Now they are dead or jailed. I cannot tell you that it is fair that Raisi is president. It is not. I cannot tell you that it is just that he is not jailed. It is not. I can only tell you this, every despot that I have seen, every mass murderer of that 20th century, every one to the man or woman has met his fate in jail or in death and so will Raisi. [applause]

In the coming weeks and months, in addition to traveling to Europe or North America or Japan or China, Raisi will seek trade deals, a renewal perhaps of the nuclear arms treaty. It will be a decisive moment for the leadership of the Western alliance. What price justice? Do we forget genocide for a trade deal, for an investment, even for a treaty? Indeed, do we make treaties that rely upon trust with people who have killed hundreds of thousands of their own citizens? These will be interesting years. Who are we? What are we made of? Do we have the same resolve our parents had at Nuremberg or at The Hague or in Phnom Penh, when genocidal leaders were brought to justice? Are we as good as our parents were in those days? We are about to find out.

For all of you who have suffered so much, to the families whose pain I cannot begin to understand and will not attempt to express, there is a wonderful line that was always Bill Clinton's favorite of Martin Luther King and he quoted it so many times. "The arc of history bends slowly, but it bends to justice." Justice found Milosevic, it found the Nazis, it found Pol Pot. It will find Raisi. [applause]

It has been my honor to be with you. It is been my honor to be a simple soldier in this fight for so many years. And to say to you one more time—knowing that in one day when you least expect it, when you never saw it coming, like the fall of every dictator before, there will be no exception—see you next year in Tehran. God bless you, thank you. [applause]