

**PREPARED TESTIMONY OF MR. AMIRABBAS FAKHRAVAR TO THE
SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION, AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY**

Esteemed Senators, I would like to commence this presentation with my most profound and immeasurable gratitude to each and everyone of you for allowing me the opportunity to be here today. It is an unsurpassed honor to be here among you and the magnitude and the uniqueness of this day is not lost upon me.

By way of introduction and background, I am an Iranian dissident who has served four years of his eight year sentence in the most infamous prison in Iran called Evin. I have endured solitary confinement, torture and unimaginable cruelty that has left its physical scars on the contours of my body. It is only through the kind assistance of my dear friend, Manda Shahbazi that I am able to experience freedom and set foot on the hallowed grounds of the United States.

My purpose and singular aim today is to speak to you about the state of the Iranian nation and how its population, the vast majority of whom are under the age of 30, long for freedom and a close and amicable relationship with the United States. My plea is simple and succinct. I am asking you to assist my Iranian brothers and sisters in their efforts to gain their freedom from the tentacles of this blood thirsty and terrorist regime. A regime that has hijacked the hopes of the Iranian people who long for freedom and a stable relationship with their once good friend and ally, the United States.

Should you be willing to consider this request, I have a road map for such assistance and it is as follow:

-negotiating with this brutal regime is futile and counterproductive to the aims of the united states. All it accomplishes is a purchase of more time for the Iranian mullahs to build and develop their nuclear arsenal. This poses the gravest of dangers not only for the region, but for the entire world.

The shiite mentality is one of horror and bloodshed. The current regime deems itself the carrier and harbinger of the violent ideology of 12th

century shiite doctrine. Ahmadinejad with his bizarre commentary on the political current events in the world, has only shown his ignorance and I assure you, he does not speak for the vast majority of the Iranians who are baffled by his leadership skills or lack thereof.

The students and Iranian youth in 1999, expressed their distaste for theocracy and took to the streets in numbers that were vast and considerable. The response of the regime comprised of a brutal suppression that resulted in the deaths and disappearance of thousands of students. The effort failed largely due to the lack of organization and unity among the students and dissidents. Today, should there be a repeat of the 1999 movement, things can be different. We will be able to utilize different modes of communication and organization, both inside and outside the borders of Iran, to launch a democratic movement that will be seismic in measure and shake the regime to its very roots. The modes of communication needed to bring the desired result includes but is not limited to cell phones, cameras, printers, fliers, magazines and web pages. The investment in creating such an infrastructure is far less costlier and less harmful than the awful alternative of a military confrontation with Iran.

Reaching the masses via radio and television will be an integral part of sending our message of hope and democracy out to the people of Iran and the world community at large. Unfortunately, Radio Farda and VOA are presently giving more assistance to the regime than to the dissident movement. Moreover, any talk of reform within the regime remains a fallacy. Reform equates with status quo under the theocratic rule and leaves no room for the voices of democratic reform to be heard.

To accomplish our aim, Radio Farda must begin sending out the message of regime change rather than reform. As noted, the voice of reform is only a time purchasing mechanism for the regime and leaves the regime in a stronger position since the law of inertia works in favor of the mullahs. The suppression of the free press by the regime mutes the cries of freedom. Long have the Iranian people been deprived of correct and accurate information and Radio Farda and VOA only perpetuate this unfortunate reality and denial of freedom of press.

Simultaneous with the organization of an effective plan for mass communication, the creation of a vast "Confederation of Iranian Students" must occur. The resources of our youth and their intelligence, zealotness, drive and hope must be streamlined to effectuate regime change. This

confederation is in its nascent stage and we hope to expand its size and presence.

The Iranian people need to know and be reassured that the world shares in their deprivation of freedom. Sanctions will send a strong message and the Iranians will interpret the measure as one that is vectored towards inflicting harm on the regime rather than its populace. A free Iran will create immeasurable economic opportunity for foreign and domestic investment. This needs to be encouraged by the United States and world community. The vast majority of the wealth generated in Iran is kept in the coffers of the mullahs and despite being a nation with ostensibly endless natural resources, its population remains in poverty for the mullahs are running with the loot.

I want to make it abundantly clear that war is not the answer to the situation in Iran. Iranians detest their government and there is plenty of impetus to effect regime change if the right balance of outside and inside coordination of material and financial support is given. War is horrible, costly in every sense, and most importantly unnecessary. Unfortunately, if there is not regime change, Iran might lead the world towards a doomsday scenario with its lust for nuclear arms and backing of the zealots in Lebanon and Gaza.

In closing, I want to remind the respected members of the senate that 26 years ago the Iranian students climbed the walls of the US embassy and took as hostages for 444 days our American brothers and sisters. In the process, they destroyed and I emphasize, destroyed the reputation of the Iranian people in the world. On behalf of the entire Iranian nation who abhors their government, I offer my deepest and sincerest apologies. We are not a nation of terrorists. We are a nation of freedom loving people who want to enjoy a peaceful relationship with our American brothers and sisters. Don't allow the face of this regime to rob you from what is in the hearts of the Iranians. A heart full of hope for freedom and free of violent ambitions. This regime is keeping the world preoccupied by its promotion of its nuclear ambitions, while it continues to jail scores and scores of dissidents and students.

The entire region is in peril and in grave danger as long as this regime remains in power. Regime change is the only solution for a peaceful region.

As long as the mullahs remain in power, that region entire will be a web of terrorism and fanaticism with no respect for human life and dignity. I humbly request on behalf of all Iranian people to assist us in uprooting this brutal regime. Please believe in us and believe in the nobleness of our efforts and goals. Know from the depths of your being, that a secular government in Iran will be the United States' best ally and friend in the region. A much needed friend in these turbulent times!!

***With humble gratitude
Amir Abbas Fakhravar
Washington DC July 2006***