

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

Thank you very much for giving me the honor of testifying in the United States Senate, one of the world's oldest and most distinguished democratic institutions. I promise you that the very thought of being able to be with you fills me with awe. You are, as your ancestors promised, a beacon light to the nations.

I am a young Iranian man, a student, who has been in Iranian prisons many times for many years. I have frequently been tortured by the Iranian regime and held in solitary confinement. I am living evidence of Iranian government brutalities. You can see the impact of torture on my face, wrist and left knee.

With the help of friends I escaped from Iran. Four years of my eight year sentence remains. I spent 8 months in solitary confinement under torture.

I have come here, standing in front of you to tell the truth about the Iranian nation and students in particular. The youth of Iran constitute more than 70% of the Iranian society.

I have come here to ask, one of the greatest nations of the world, the people of the United States and everyone else on the face of our earth to help their Iranian brothers and sisters. I ask your help to free my homeland and the Iranian people from a small group of zealot Mullahs who have taken my country and people hostage.

For the past 27 years, we have heard plenty of rhetoric and pleas for help. But, what can you do to help and what can Iranian students do to help? What can we and the young generation of Iranians do to help?

First: We have to understand that negotiations with the Islamic regime, considering their idiotic, bizarre strategies and mesh of thinking, are a waste of time and a dangerous game. Dangerous, because, the Islamic regime will benefit from this political game to buy more time and use it to empower its position in Iran and its national and international image. Giving time to the Iranian regime is placing not just Iranians at risk but the entire world.

The danger that exists behind Shiite mentality is the fairy tale story, the mentality that believes in destruction and disappearance of people and international relations.

The story says that some day, after the entire world has been soaked in blood and war, the 12th Imam of Shiite, who is believed to have disappeared from the face of earth over 1300 years ago, will come back.

Ahmadinejad, Khameni and Mesbahaeh Yazdi consider themselves friends of the 12th Imam. They are waiting to see their Imam, and working hard to facilitate his arrival which means creating chaos and death in Iran and in the world.

We, the Iranian youth and students, have shown that we have great power. In particular, seven years ago on July 9th, 1999, the regime, found itself in the midst of a large mass of powerful and intelligent

students who wanted to uproot the government. The Mullahs found themselves under a surprise attack unlike anything they had experienced before.

But, we didn't have organization. We didn't have unity or facilities. If we had that, we would already have gotten rid of them. Today, we can use that experience. We can use the confidence the leaders of the free world have in us. We can use means of education and democracy to organize the youth, to educate students, women, and other groups who can take part in the future of Iran and have a social, political impact in our society.

This requires investing in the future generation by providing facilities, tools and, in particular, media. We need means of communication within Iran and with the free world. We need cell phones, cameras, printers to print our books, fliers, and magazines, we need web pages. Helping Iranians uproot this regime is a much cheaper and less bloody alternative to a military confrontation with Iran.

Most importantly, we need proper, effective radio and television communications to empower us, to help us to speak to the Iranian nation and the rest of the world.

Radio Farda and VOA can help but instead they are increasingly helping the Iranian regime more than the United States. I don't believe Americans want to support a radio with their tax payer's money that will cause more harm for the United States than good.

More and more, VOA and Radio Farda and some of the political groups in United States and Europe emphasize *reform* rather than *regime change*. The reform theory is nothing but a dead end for the Iranian nation. The reform theory is suspicious and unacceptable. It allows the Iranian regime to hide behind a mask, buying more time, and thereby growing stronger every day.

To help us, the VOA and Radio Farda programming must support *regime change*. The people of Iran were very confused by the reform project. Their confusion became stronger as a result of the analysis presented by these two official, authoritative media, which still give the preponderance of their air time to reformists, and very little to those who see the need for regime change.

The Iranian people have been in isolation for many years and they only rarely receive correct information. In Iran, there is no such thing as Free Press. If the regime doesn't like it, it is closed. Even web pages are censored and no accurate news of any significance makes it into people's hands. Unfortunately, neither VOA nor Farda has taken up this challenge, and demonstrated to the Iranian people that America fully supports their freedom, and not just phony reforms.

We need to explain the basis of changes we intend to make. Also, our efforts must be directed toward creating a vast "**Confederation of Iranian Students**" to use the youth, their strength and aggressive existing forces inside and outside Iran to push for a regime change. We have recently taken the first steps to create this organization, and we are hard at work to make it effective.

The people of Iran need to know that the world supports them and their plight for freedom. I support very tough sanctions, because that will prove to the Iranians that the United States wants to punish this evil regime. At the same time, we need to reassure the Iranian people that sanctions are designed to hurt the regime, and the regime alone. Once Iran is free, there will be a flood of investments, and the Iranians need to hear this as well.

Currently, the Iranian nation's wealth does not reach the people. It is stolen before it ever reaches them. All the vast resources flow to the pockets of the Mullahs. Everything has been stolen by the Mullahs, their children and other cohorts. Despite the enormous wealth coming from the sale of oil, most Iranians live and exist under the worst type of economic conditions, and they know why: the regime is not only oppressive, it is also incompetent. They know well that economic sanctions may pressure them in the short term but, in the end, only freedom offers them hope for real improvement.

About Military efforts: *No one wants war, neither we nor you.* Our greatest efforts have been focused on using our own people and forces within our boundaries, without war, to uproot the zealot Mullahs governing our country and replace them with a secular, democratic government which respects human rights and freedom. We all know that if we don't succeed, the Iranian regime will lead our world toward another World War. We have seen their lust for war in recent days in Lebanon and Gaza. Will the United States wait until the next Iranian attack? My instincts and my sincere beliefs tell me that such a war would be very damaging to everyone, and many people would lose their lives. Please give us a chance to free Iran without waging war.

I have just two further comments:

1- Twenty six years ago, a few Iranian students climbed the walls of the US embassy in Tehran and for 444 days held hostage American sons and daughters, and thereby destroyed the reputation of Iranian students in the world.

On behalf of all my friends in the Confederation of Independent Iranian Students, I formally apologize to the United States nation for this massive insult and crime. I stand before you to let you know that today's Iranian students are not terrorists. They love the people of our world and in particular they love Americans and love freedom.

2. We all know the Iranian Nuclear program has been keeping the world preoccupied. But the real problem with the Iranian regime is not about its nuclear program. The real problem is the Iranian regime itself, which, with primitive and violent methods, has been trying for years to brainwash Iranian children and make them ready to sacrifice themselves for the regime and turn them into martyrs.

The real problem with Iran is the Iranian prisons, which are overflowing with political prisoners, destroying Iranian lives, torturing and killing democratic people, and making a mockery of freedom.

We all know that a secure Middle East is necessary for the security of United States of America. This can not be achieved without a secular democratic government in Tehran. Every major terrorist group is linked to the government of Iran. Some, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, don't even deny their close relationship as an ally of the Iranian regime. And today everyone sees, and finally understands, the chaotic state created by Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Help us to uproot the Iranian regime. Believe in us. Believe that a secular democratic government in Iran will be the United States' best ally and friend and a great and good neighbor in the global village.