

HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN IRAN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

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CONTENTS

	Page
Apostolou, Andrew, senior program manager, Freedom House, Washington, DC	24
Prepared statement	26
Bakhtiar, Rudi, communications director, International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, New York, NY	20
Prepared statement	23
Casey, Hon. Robert P., Jr., U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, opening statement	1
Dibble, Philo L., Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC	8
Prepared statement	6
Hosseini, Kambiz, Voice of America, Washington, DC	31
Prepared statement	33
Posner, Hon. Michael H., Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC	4
Joint prepared statement of Michael H. Posner and Philo Dibble	6

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2011

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND
SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Robert P. Casey, Jr. (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Casey, Shaheen, Udall, and Risch.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., U.S. SENATOR FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Senator CASEY. This hearing of the subcommittee will come to order.

I want to thank everyone for being here. We're getting started almost exactly on time, which is a good thing for us to do once in a while around here.

I'm grateful for this opportunity to chair this hearing, and grateful to our witnesses for providing their time and their testimony and their work. I'm also grateful to those in the audience for joining us today.

I think it's an understatement to say that we're witnessing a historic time in the world, especially as it relates to the change in the Middle East. We know that, earlier this year, few could have predicted that the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt would soon spread to neighboring countries, such as Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and most recently to Syria. The so-called "Arab Spring" has inspired prodemocracy movements across the region and activists across the world. Given these momentous political changes, it's all the more important that we take a closer look at the status of democratic reform in Iran, where authoritarian regime forces continue to repress political opposition activists and commit deplorable—deplorable—human rights violations against their own citizens.

Iran's opposition movement poses perhaps the most significant challenge to the Islamic regime. And I think that it is the most significant challenge that we've seen since the regime was founded in 1979. The prodemocracy movement gained momentum in the wake of the 2009 disputed Presidential election, as protestors filled the streets of Tehran, demanding an end to government oppression and calling for democratic reforms such as freedom of speech and

assembly—the same freedoms being demanded by scores of protestors across the Middle East today.

While Iran’s deplorable human rights record predates the post-election crackdown, the human rights crisis has deepened significantly in recent years. Since the demonstrations in 2009, security forces have used live ammunition to suppress protestors, killing at least seven and arresting more than 600 individuals, according to Human Rights Watch.

Many of us recall with outrage the horrific death, in 2009, of Neda Soltan, a young protester shot to death in the streets of Tehran during the post-election crackdown. Neda is just one of many innocent victims of the Iranian Government’s relentless use of force and oppression against Iranian citizens. As we sit here today, scores of activists are imprisoned for their efforts to bring political change to Iran.

Let me describe just a few. As you can tell, we don’t have our posters, yet, with pictures. But, we will have them, momentarily, to help us to go through and to highlight not just facts and information about these individuals, but a little bit about what they actually look like. And I think that that is something we need to do more often.

The first person that I’ll highlight is Nasrin Sotoudeh, a lawyer and a women’s rights activist currently serving an 11-year sentence for her work defending juveniles and women in Iran. She is the mother of two and has been held in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison since September 2010. Nasrin has been on hunger strikes three times to protest her mistreatment, which has increasingly diminished her health. And her husband has been pressured, threatened, and detained for advocating for his wife.

Next, the second person that I’ll highlight this morning is Navid Khanjani, who is a 23-year-old student activist and defender of the rights of the Baha’i community, Iran’s largest non-Muslim religious minority, which has been the victim of state-sponsored persecution since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Navid faces a 12-year prison sentence, the longest that Iran has given to a human rights activist for speaking out against the government’s ban against members of the Baha’i community attending universities. Navid spent 65 days in Evin Prison, the first 25 of which were in solitary confinement. He was forced to record false confessions and experience brutal beatings and torture.

I should also mention that seven members of the Baha’i group, the Yaran-i-Iran, meaning “Friends in Iran,” were also arrested and imprisoned 3 years ago. They are currently serving a 20-year sentence in Evin Prison.

Third, I’ll highlight one more person this morning. And, of course, we could highlight many, but we don’t have time for hundreds here today. Mahdieh Golroo, a 25-year-old women’s rights activist, was imprisoned, along with her husband, in November 2009, after security forces raided their home. After being expelled from her university and denied her degree, Mahdieh received a 28-month prison sentence for “antistate propaganda” and “assembly and conspiracy to disturb public order.” Those are the charges that have been lodged against her, which she, of course, denies. She is currently being held in the women’s ward of Evin Prison and has

been repeatedly denied visitation rights and the right to medical treatment for medical problems, which her family says pose serious dangers to her health. She, too, has gone on multiple hunger strikes to protest her treatment.

So, these are just a few—very few—of those who are suffering in Iranian prisons as we speak, as we gather here today, with all the freedoms we enjoy in this country.

Now more than ever, the United States must stand in support of these brave activists, just as we supported the courageous political dissidents, like Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Andre Sakharov, who spoke out against the repressive Soviet regime. It is our duty to bear witness to the truth of the plight of the Iranian opposition, and signal our unwavering support for their ongoing struggles against this repressive regime.

The United States must also work with the international community to hold the Iranian regime accountable for human rights abuses. In 2010, I introduced a bipartisan resolution calling for a renewed focus on the Iranian regime's violations of internationally recognized human rights, as found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations establishment, in March, of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran is a welcome step, but more needs to be done to address these serious concerns that we all have. People from both political parties and from all walks of life have these very serious concerns.

In September 2010, the administration sanctioned eight Iranian officials determined to have committed serious human rights abuses in the post-2009 crackdown. And I was pleased to see the addition of the Tehran prosecutor, Abbas Dowlatabadi, and the commander, Reza Naqdi, in February of this year.

However, as I and Senator Menendez and Senator Cardin wrote in a letter to Secretary Clinton on April 20, we must enhance our efforts to prioritize the humane treatment of the Iranian people through the framework of existing United States sanctions on Iran. The European Union's recent sanctioning of 32 regime officials involved in human rights abuses, including asset freezes and travel bans, is a welcome development. And we should continue to work with our European partners to ratchet up the pressure on the regime.

The United States can assist the Iranian opposition movement by enacting measures to prevent the Iranian Government's suppression of electronic communication. International companies have reportedly provided goods and technologies, including cell phone monitoring equipment and Web-spying capabilities that help the regime suppress Iranian citizens. I firmly support current and future efforts to hold these companies accountable and to help prodemocracy forces in Iran circumvent the regime's efforts to disrupt and prevent their communications with activists in Iran and around the world.

Let me be unequivocally clear. The United States must continue to engage our international partners to find ways to support the democratic movement in Iran and to hold the Iranian regime accountable to its international human rights obligations. We must not be reluctant to support political activists who are courageous enough to demonstrate in the face of extreme government repres-

sion. The United States has a moral obligation—let me say that again—the United States has a moral obligation to stand in support of the Iranian people’s struggle for democracy.

Today’s first panel will include testimonies from two State Department officials who deal with these issues on a daily basis.

Michael Posner is the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. He leads the State Department’s comprehensive efforts to support Internet freedom around the world, an initiative that I strongly support. And, before joining the administration, he was the executive director, and then president, of Human Rights First.

Next we have, from the administration as well, Mr. Philo Dibble who is Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and a career member of the Foreign Service. He has served in the Near East Affairs Bureau since 2003.

I look forward to hearing both of their testimonies today about how we assess the political strength of the opposition movement in Iran, ways the administration is working to highlight human rights abuses there, and steps we can take to support democratic reform in the country.

Now, our second panel includes three individuals with intimate knowledge of the political environment inside of Iran.

Mr. Kambiz Hosseini is a cohost of “Parazit”, which is the popular Persian-language satirical television show broadcast on Voice of America’s Persian service. Launched prior to the 2009 election, it is a reference to the Iranian Government’s repeated attempts to jam foreign satellite programming.

Mr. Andrew Apostolou is a senior program manager at Freedom House, where he chairs the Iran Strategy Task Force, which serves to formulate new approaches to the United States foreign policy on Iran, with a focus on human rights.

And finally, Ms. Rudi Bakhtiar is communications director for the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, an organization that seeks to gather support for human rights activists and defenders in Iran. She is also an Iranian-American journalist who has over 10 years of experience working for international news networks.

I welcome all of our panelists today and look forward to hearing their assessment of how the U.S. Government can work to support democratic reform in Iran.

And now I will move to our first witness for an opening statement.

I know that, as members come in, we’ll have not only questions from members, but we may have some statements, as well.

But, let’s move, first, to Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Michael Posner.

STATEMENT OF HON. MICHAEL H. POSNER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. POSNER. Thank you. Thank you very much, Chairman Casey, and for holding this important hearing.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Dibble and I have a written statement that I'd ask be submitted to the record.

You said, in your—

Senator CASEY. Your statement will be submitted. As would be true of anyone submitting a statement today, your full statement will be made part of the record.

Mr. POSNER. Great, thank you.

As you said in your opening comments, now more than ever we need to be redoubling our efforts to both speak out about the systematic violations of human rights and democracy in Iran, but also to engage our allies and to amplify the voices of democratic activists inside of Iran.

This administration is firmly committed, deeply committed, to promoting democracy, promoting human rights everywhere in the world. And, as we see, and as you commented, all of the changes going on in the Middle East region, the repressive crackdown, continued crackdown in Iran is such a stark reminder of unfinished business that we need to be attentive to.

So, I want to say a few words about our speaking out, a few words about our efforts to engage multilaterally, and then what we're trying to do, via the Internet, to amplify the voices of Iranian dissidents and activists.

You've cited a number of cases in your opening statement. I could give you many more; they're in our testimony. But, just to give a flavor: In February, a number of protestors were killed in Tehran. In April, more killed in ethnic Arab areas. We've paid a lot of attention to the fate of the Baha'i community. And seven leaders of that community who had prison sentences reduced from 20 to 10 years, had those sentences reinstated, the reductions reversed. People in prison are given added sentences because they send letters to their family members. Political prisoners are held with common criminals and murderers in stockyards, in terrible conditions. The list goes on and on.

We've seen executions, this year, of 135 people, including many ethnic minority prisoners, their intense restrictions on free speech; teachers and other workers who seek to assert their rights are repressed for doing so. Universities that teach liberal arts are deemed un-Islamic and they've been forced to close their doors. It's really an appalling list of restrictions on everything contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I want to single out a couple of other particular cases, in addition to the ones you mentioned.

One is a distinguished labor leader, Monsour Osanloo, who was arrested in 2007. He suffers from a heart condition and they repeatedly deny him medical care. Student leader, Bahriya Hedayat, who was arrested in 2009, for the fifth time in 4 years, for being a member of the One Million Signatures campaign, a women's movement to changes laws that discriminate against women. She faces further charges for sending a public letter describing the conditions in prison.

And I want to also—you mentioned Nasrin Sotoudeh, who's also the lawyer for Shirin Ebadi. In addition to the harsh prison conditions she's suffering from, other members of Ebadi's Center for

Human Rights Defenders have been jailed or barred from practicing law.

The list goes on and on.

President Obama, Secretary Clinton, and other senior members of the administration are constantly speaking out about these abuses. And we will continue to do so.

We're also engaging, as you mentioned in your opening, in spotlighting Iran's gross violations of human rights at the U.N. and with our allies. We were successful, in March, in persuading the U.N. Human Rights Council to establish a Special Rapporteur on Iran. In June, that person will be selected and will begin monitoring and throwing more of a spotlight on what's going on.

The intensity of Iran's resistance to that speaks to the importance of our doing so. And I'm very proud of the effort of our team and our government to play a leading role in really getting that resolution to be passed. We will continue to use the U.N., both in Geneva and in New York, as a forum for raising these issues and for, as you say, accelerating the pressure on the regime.

We've also been involved and are very aware that change in Iran, and every country, starts from within. And Iran has a brave, courageous population, many young people who are determined to change their destiny and who are seeking to amplify their voices. We seek to help them.

As you know, through Congress' generosity, we have spent \$22 million, in the last 18 months, on Internet freedom programming. And just last week, we've notified Congress of our intent to spend another \$28 million more, this spring. We're going to do that quickly. And it's, in part, to counter Iran's increasingly active Internet surveillance and censorship. We're supporting grants that will counter censorship—countercensorship technologies, increase circumvention tools in Farsi, secure mobile communications, and protect online activists against cyber attacks, which you also mentioned.

We've now trained 5,000 activists worldwide, including Iranians, in cyber self-defense. And we plan to expand all of these efforts to teach democratic activists, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders, and others how to protect their online privacy and their data so that they, in turn, can train others.

We're also very determined and will continue to support their efforts to convey their own messages, to speak in a loud voice with each other and with the rest of the world. These are tools, but they're important tools, and they're an important part of our overall effort to try to keep pressure on the Iranian Government and to make sure that people in Iran know that we haven't forgotten about them.

Thank you very much.

[The joint prepared statement of Mr. Posner and Mr. Dibble follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL H. POSNER AND PHILO L. DIBBLE

Chairman Casey, Ranking Member Risch, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to discuss the Iranian Government's continuing and worsening abuses against its own people.

Almost 2 years after Iran's disputed Presidential election, Iranian authorities continue to harass, arbitrarily detain, torture, and imprison their citizens, as well as

some of ours. Their targets include those who demand accountability from their government and who stand up for the rights of their fellow citizens; ethnic and religious minorities; journalists, bloggers, and students. Unfortunately, the situation has only further deteriorated in the first months of 2011 as compared with last year: protestors were killed in Tehran in February and in ethnically Arab areas in April; the reduction of prison sentences for seven Baha'i leaders from 20 years to 10 was reversed; additional sentences were levied on those already in prison merely for sending letters to family members; political prisoners are held in deplorable conditions with convicted murderers in former stockyards; those released from prison are forced to pay exorbitant bail sums; a Jewish woman and her Armenian-Christian husband were reportedly executed based on undisclosed charges; mass executions of mainly ethnic minority prisoners have been carried out without their families' knowledge; Iran has executed at least 135 people this year, more than any other country in the world except China; restrictions on speech have intensified; journalists and bloggers continue to be targeted by the regime for daring to write the truth; teachers and other workers are harassed and incarcerated when they seek freedom of association and payment of wages owed; trade union leaders remain imprisoned on questionable charges; politically active students have been banned from universities; and entire university faculties deemed un-Islamic have been forced to close their doors.

Particularly troubling is the deepening persecution of religious minorities. On May 1, the Revolutionary Court in the northern city of Bandar Anzali tried 11 members of the Church of Iran, including Pastor Abdolreza Ali-Haghnejad and Zainab Bahremend, the 62-year-old grandmother of two other defendants, on charges of "acting against national security." On September 22, 2010, Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani was given a death sentence for apostasy although, according to human rights groups, this sentence is against Iranian law. Another pastor could be sentenced to death later this year. In March, over 200 Gonabadi Sufis were summoned to courts around the country based on allegations that they were insulting Iranian authorities. In April, eight other Sufis were rearrested on charges of disrupting public order—charges for which they had been punished with flogging and imprisonment.

Iran's leaders continue to signal to their citizens that criticism will not be tolerated, while selectively applauding protestors in other countries in the region. As the country's economic situation deteriorates, workers are arrested when they protest for back wages, only to have authorities deny that strikes are taking place. At the same time the Iranian Government was claiming influence in shaping popular unrest in the Arab world last month, its security forces arrested over 200 of its own people and three protestors died at the hands of authorities. While it decries crackdowns against protestors in Bahrain, it defends and assists the Syrian Government's repression of protestors in Syria. Though Iranian leaders continue trying to portray regional events as inspired by the 1979 Islamic revolution, we are confident that the people of the Arab world will recognize those statements for the opportunistic falsehoods they are.

As Iran's leaders have increased their repressive tactics, we have increased the scope of our efforts aimed at challenging the Iranian Government's deplorable human rights violations. President Obama and Secretary Clinton continue to speak out on behalf of the hundreds of victims in Iran who suffer at the hands of their government. Other world leaders have done the same. We have designated 10 Iranian officials for serious human rights abuses in accordance with the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act and, as the act requires, we are actively seeking more information on possible targets.

Following these designations, we engaged our European partners on ways to strengthen our collective voice, express solidarity with victims of torture, persecution, and arbitrary detention, and amplify the effect of our asset freezes and travel bans against Iranian officials. We welcomed the European Union's April 11 decision to sanction 32 Iranian officials, and have begun working with other partners to explore similar actions. We immediately imposed travel bans on the additional individuals not designated by the United States. While the U.S. and EU human rights sanctions regimes have different evidentiary standards, we are working closely together to share information on possible targets.

We continue to urge more nations to join our call to shine a spotlight on Iran's gross violations of human rights in bilateral and multilateral settings. We successfully kept Iran off of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) and helped win passage of a Canadian-led resolution condemning Iran's human rights abuses by the largest margin in 8 years. At the March session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, we led a successful effort to establish a Special Rapporteur on Iran—the first country-specific human rights rapporteur created since the Coun-

cil came into being. This historic action sent an unmistakable signal to Iran's leaders that the world will bear witness to their systematic abuse of their own citizens' human rights. More importantly, the Special Rapporteur will serve as a critical voice for those Iranians being persecuted for their political, religious, and ethnic affiliations. We have also urged other countries to press Iran on its abuses in their bilateral diplomacy.

Our efforts to address Iran's human rights abuses have been consistent and sustained. We often work behind the scenes in order to increase our effectiveness. We also continue to work quietly with civil society organizations in Iran to give them the tools they need to expand political space and hold their government accountable. Just as we do throughout the region, we provide training and tools to civil society activists to foster freedom of expression and the free flow of information on the Internet and via other communication technologies.

We believe that Internet Freedom is essential to 21st century democracy promotion. Our Internet freedom programming, which is a priority for Secretary Clinton, is aimed at making sure the voices for peaceful democratic reform—in Iran and around the region—can be heard. We have spent \$22 million on Internet freedom programming to date, and have notified Congress of our intent to spend \$28 million more this spring. Countering Iran's increasingly active Internet surveillance and censorship efforts requires a diverse portfolio of tools and training. State Department grants will support more advanced countercensorship technologies, including circumvention tools in Farsi, secure mobile communications, and technologies to enable activists to post their own content online and protect against cyber attacks. We also have trained 5,000 activists worldwide—including Iranians—in cyber self-defense. And we plan to expand these efforts to teach democratic activists, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders and others how to protect their online privacy and their data—so that they in turn can train others.

One of our grantees has just developed a mobile panic button that works on the kind of inexpensive cell phones used in much of the world. Pushing the button alerts others that an activist has been assaulted or arrested—a sad necessity in an era when official abductions and disappearances are all too common. Activists around the world have told us that when police come to break up prodemocracy protests, they often grab demonstrators' mobile phones in order to track down their contacts. Within a few months, we also expect to have software that will wipe the contact lists from mobile phones with the push of a button.

Countering Iran's increasingly active Internet surveillance and censorship efforts requires a diverse portfolio of tools and training. We are finalizing new global grants for projects that will support digital safety and capacity-building training, countercensorship technology, virtual communication, and peer-to-peer technologies. No single tool will overcome the Iranian Government's repressive Internet efforts, and that is why we have invested in incubating a diverse portfolio of technologies and digital safety training. This way, even if one particular tool is blocked, other tools will still be available. Likewise, we work to prevent the Iranian Government from acquiring sensitive technology to repress its citizens.

Despite growing international consensus and a resounding condemnation of the Iranian Government's actions, the regime continues to turn a deaf ear to the aspirations of its own citizens. But there is hope. Hundreds of brave Iranian citizens continue to engage in the most basic of human rights work, documenting and reporting on abuses, with the hope that one day Iranian Government officials will be held accountable for crimes they have committed against their fellow citizens. Along with our international partners, we will continue to draw attention to these and other abuses and call on the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran to respect the universal rights enshrined in Iran's constitution and enumerated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.
Mr. Dibble.

STATEMENT OF PHILO L. DIBBLE, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. DIBBLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'd like to add my thanks, to Assistant Secretary Posner, for allowing us to testify this morning.

As Assistant Secretary Posner has noted, the Iranian Government's repression of its citizens has intensified in recent months.

But, as Iran's leaders have increased their repression, we have intensified our diplomatic efforts to call attention to those abuses and to press the Iranian Government to end them.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have spoken out more than a dozen times, this year alone, on behalf of the hundreds of Iranians whom you have correctly identified as having suffered at the hands of their government. At our urging and on their own initiative other world leaders have done the same.

Secretary Clinton opened the March session of the Human Rights Council of the U.N. in Geneva. And her remarks helped us galvanize the cross-regional support we needed to create the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran. This is the first such action by the Human Rights Council under its new mandate. And that historic action sent an unmistakable signal to Iran's leaders that the international community will not ignore their systematic abuse of their citizens' human rights. But, more importantly, the Special Rapporteur will serve as an essential voice for those Iranians being persecuted in Iran for their political, religious, and ethnic affiliations.

The second stream of actions comes under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act, under which we designated and sanctioned, as you noted, 10 Iranian officials for serious abuse of human rights. We continue to investigate others for designation under the act, as information becomes available and as events unfold.

After that first set of designations under CISADA, I joined my counterpart in the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, leading a group of experts from our two Bureaus, the State Department's Legal Advisor's Office, and the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to Europe, and to the European Union headquarters in Brussels.

We discussed, with our counterparts there, ways to strengthen cooperation in combating the repression of human rights in Iran, including by speaking out together; by expressing solidarity with victims of torture, persecution, and arbitrary detention; and supporting one another's assets freezes and travel bans against Iranian officials. Partly a result of that engagement, the European Union, on April 11, sanctioned, as you noted, again, 32 Iranian officials for human rights abuses. We followed that action with our own travel ban on the officials the European Union has sanctioned. We are now considering how to expand the scope of our own human rights-related visa bans. And we have also begun working with other international partners to explore similar actions they might be able to undertake.

What I'm trying to underscore here is that we have a very fruitful and productive interaction with our European partners and beyond Europe on this question.

We will, of course, continue to work closely with the EU and other like-minded partners to ensure that the cause of human rights remains at the forefront of policies, with respect to Iran.

We are also, as Assistant Secretary Posner noted, again, looking for ways we can help Iranians more effectively act and speak on their own behalf, whether on the Internet, in journalism, or in the arts. As we do throughout the region, the State Department and

USAID provide members of Iran's civil society with capacity-building training and new media tools to help them hold their government accountable and to strengthen their call for greater freedoms, transparency, and the rule of law.

Despite growing international consensus and a resounding condemnation of their actions, the Iranian authorities continue to try to ignore the aspirations of their own citizens. But, we think there is hope. Hundreds of Iranians continue to engage in the most basic human rights work, holding their government accountable for acts of violence against its own citizens and for its stubborn unwillingness to permit the exercise of universally admitted human rights, including those enshrined in Iran's Constitution.

The efforts of this administration on the issue of human rights in Iran involve several different agencies and departments. Along with my counterpart in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, I cochair an interagency working group that directs and coordinates U.S. Government action on Iran human rights issues. And those include initiatives regarding Internet freedom, implementation of human rights sanctions, engaging with like-minded partners, and working through multilateral institutions. As cochair of this group, I look forward to continuing our dialogue with the Congress on the best means to effectively deal with these issues.

I cannot conclude a discussion of human rights without expressing our deep and continuing concern for the safety and well-being of all American citizens currently detained in Iran. In particular, we urge the Iranian Government to promptly release Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal so that they may return to their families. We note that, this morning, the trial that was scheduled to resume today did not resume. We're not quite sure what that means, but we hope it is a positive omen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much. And I appreciate both of your testimonies, as well as your expression of solidarity that you just outlined.

I want to make sure that we properly identify the pictures that were put up after my opening statement.

The first picture on the audience's left and my right, is the gentleman I spoke about before, Navid Khanjani. Again, he's a 23-year-old student activist and defender of the rights of the Baha'i community in Iran.

Next to him, closer, on my right, on your left, is the first individual I spoke of, Nasrin Sotoudeh, who is a lawyer and women's rights activist currently serving an 11-year sentence for her work defending juveniles and women in Iran. She's, of course, being held in Evin Prison, as I mentioned before.

And then, finally, on my left, your right, is the third individual I mentioned, Mandieh Golroo, a 25-year-old women's rights activist who was imprisoned, along with her husband, in November 2009, after security forces raided their home.

So, that's just a very limited spotlight on real people suffering the most brutal kind of repression that any of us could imagine. And that's one of the main reasons we're here this morning: those individuals, who have given, in some cases, some people in the streets gave their lives, but also those who have been imprisoned

and have given up their rights, have been forced to do things we can't even imagine in this country.

So, let me get to the questions for our panelists.

You both highlighted some of the actions the administration has taken in response to the Iranian regime's human rights violations. And I'm reading from the prepared statement that, as you said, is a fuller statement of your testimony. You assert here that the administration's efforts to address Iranian human rights abuses have been both consistent and sustained, that the administration has provided training and tools, and has trained 5,000 activists, and you also mention the help on technology. So, there is a lot happening.

But, here is one of the concerns that I have, and I think this is shared by a lot of people. We need to know who, in the U.S. Government, is taking the lead on this. I know the State Department plays a role, and I know the National Security Council plays a role, but who is the lead on this? Because like anything else in life, unless there is one person or one office charged with the overall responsibility, I think there will be some concerns that will continue.

Mr. POSNER. Thank you, Senator.

There are two different ways in which the administration is approaching particularly important sensitive issues. One is to appoint special envoys or experts. And the other is to make it part of the everyday business of the Department and the government.

And I don't know that I—you know, maybe some political scientists one day will evaluate which of those works well. We've opted for the second, here. And I would say, from my perspective, obviously this is an area where both Deputy Assistant Secretary Dibble and I are both very deeply involved. But, the main messengers here are the President and the Secretary of State. There is no issue, in my portfolio on human rights, where the President and the Secretary of State have been more outspoken more often. And I want to keep it that way, frankly. I want there to be a sense—we talk about a whole-of-government approach—I think if we send a signal that the most senior officials of our government are paying attention, as they are, I think that's actually the most powerful message we can send.

So, from my perspective there are many, many fronts around the world where I'm trying to get more attention from senior leaders. This is not a place where I have a problem doing that.

There is support throughout the Department. We work very closely with NEA, with the Middle East Bureau. And we work very closely with the White House. And I think we are all in alignment here. This is a priority for the United States. Human rights is a central part of our policy. We recognize the deplorable conditions in Iran. We know we need to keep the pressure up and even to extend it. And I think, as a practical bureaucratic matter, we're working, actually, very well together.

Senator CASEY. Well, I'd urge you to keep that up and to amplify it, because repetition is very, very important here in Washington, and, I think, around the world. And, if anything, we need to see more repetition, more emphasis.

I know that, on March 24, the U.N. Human Rights Council decided to take action against Iran, through the establishment of,

as you and I both highlighted, the Special Rapporteur to investigate and report on human rights abuses in the country. The resolution was the first new country-specific mandate for monitoring human rights since the Council was established, in 2006.

How will the establishment of this Rapporteur in Iran help pressure the regime to abide by its international obligations to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Mr. POSNER. As I said in my opening comment, the intensity of the Iranian Government's opposition to the establishment already sends a signal that this is an important undertaking.

It's important in three ways.

One, the Rapporteur will be seized, throughout the year, with gathering comprehensive information, shining a spotlight, making that information available, and leading the debate in the United Nations about what is going on and what should be done about Iran.

Second, that person will be the focal point for activists, both inside and outside of the country—outside of Iran—who are always eager to tell their stories and to have an official of the U.N. listen. So, that'll be the point-person, within the U.N. charged with gathering the information, dealing with the activists, and trying to address day-to-day concerns.

And I think the third piece, which is critically important, is that it will force every government, not just the United States or Western Europe, but every government that's part of the Human Rights Council and part of the U.N. system, to reflect on the fact that this is now an obligation that's been undertaken by the U.N., as an institution. So, it allows us to go in, in a different set of conversations, to say, "This is not the United States saying it, it's not Western Europe saying it, this is a United Nations expert who's come to these conclusions." I think it opens the door for a range of other conversations with other governments.

Mr. DIBBLE. Mr. Chairman, if I could add—

Senator CASEY. Sure.

Mr. DIBBLE [continuing]. One comment to that. I agree with everything Mr. Posner said, of course. But, I would point to the effort that was made to establish the Special Rapporteur and what that means, in terms of international support. We were able not only to get the votes of the European group, which we expected, having worked on them very heavily, but also votes from leading members of the nonaligned movement that Iran was counting on to support their position. And the signal to Iran of those votes going in our direction or in direction of supporting the Special Rapporteur, I think was a very, very strong one and that we should not undervalue.

Thank you.

Senator CASEY. Tell us more about how this individual will work. It is a significant achievement that this action was taken. But, tell us more about the how and the when. When will that person be operational in terms of what they'll be able to do on the ground? Can they get on the ground in Iran, itself? If we're saying that this person is the individual that's going to help pressure the regime to abide by its international obligations, what kind of tools and

support will this person have, and how will that authority be exercised?

Mr. POSNER. The person—the new Rapporteur will be selected at the June session of the Human Rights Council, next time they meet. They will undoubtedly seek permission to visit Iran. It won't shock me if the Government of Iran is not cooperative. And we're under no illusions, here. The government's going to be highly resistant to this exercise, from start to finish. But, that doesn't keep the Rapporteur from meeting with Iranian dissidents, democracy activists out of the country, to communicating in the ways that we now can communicate within—across borders, and getting information from other governments, including our own.

We will do everything we can to support this effort. I'm sure other governments will, as well as the NGOs who are so active in this field. So, I think there will be no problem getting the information. The information exists, as we all know. The next question is, How do you use this Rapporteur to ramp up the pressure, as you say, to make it clear that this represents an escalation of international diplomatic attention, to really put pressure on the regime?

Senator CASEY. I want to move to sanctions. But, I'm a little bit over time. I know that Senator Udall has joined us.

Senator Udall, do you want to use this time for your questions?

Senator UDALL. Sure. And I could actually—thank you, Senator Casey—actually follow up on a couple of things that you were inquiring on.

Have you seen any evidence at all that the Iranian regime, or anybody in Iran, is doing anything differently as a result of the Special Representative?

Mr. POSNER. I would say no. I mean, the Special Rapporteur was just designated. I mean, the position was just—

Senator UDALL. Right, right.

Mr. POSNER [continuing]. Created, and nobody's yet in that position. I—there's certainly—

Senator UDALL. But, all the development leading up to it—the letters that have been written, the action by the U.N., all of that—you haven't seen anything different?

Mr. POSNER. No. What is interesting, though, is, again, the extent to which the government is hypersensitive about the U.N. getting involved, here. They devoted huge resources, diplomatic resources, across the world to try to defeat this. And we've been at this, in a way, for a couple of years. But, it's really extraordinary for the government to put so much of its diplomatic capital behind defeating it. So, that, to me, says there's a sensitivity or a vulnerability to this kind of multilateral action that is much greater than just the United States or U.K. or others criticizing them.

But, I can't tell you that there has been a great improvement in human rights in Iran. We just don't see that right now.

Senator UDALL. Yes. Would you expect to see changes in the future? I mean, I think one of you said something, that they're pretty entrenched and they're going to fight this. What kind of positive approaches or outcomes would you expect to occur as a result of this? It's obviously, as you talked about, a very effective tool to pull all the human rights folks around the world, and the people that—

where there are violations—and have a focal point. But, what do you expect on that front?

Mr. POSNER. You know, I guess what I would say—I'm a chronic optimist. I've been in the human rights world for a long time, and I—

Senator UDALL. Even working in the human rights world, you're a chronic optimist.

Mr. POSNER. Yes. Because I—

Senator UDALL. Yes.

Mr. POSNER [continuing]. You can see that things do change. And they change because people hold their nerve and because, ultimately, governments, like the Iranian Government, that try to suppress their people, are fighting a losing battle. It's a young population, a population that sees what's going on in the rest of the world and in the region, and increasingly impatient with the kind of autocratic policies that this government employs.

So, I don't—I can't tell—I can't give you a timeline. I can't say, "In 6 months, X is going to happen."

Senator UDALL. Right.

Mr. POSNER. But, I think all of these efforts, collectively—our efforts, the multilateral efforts—empower and strengthen democracy human rights activists. And then you sort of wait. All of the sudden something happens and there's a moment. And that moment represents the beginning of real change. We're not there yet, but I think, if we hold our nerve and we maintain our principles and our commitment to universal human rights and democracy, in the longrun we're going to prevail.

Mr. DIBBLE. Senator, if I could add—

Senator UDALL. Please—

Mr. DIBBLE [continuing]. A couple of points.

Senator UDALL [continuing]. Please do, Mr. Dibble.

Mr. DIBBLE. I, on the other hand, am a chronic pessimist. But, even I will agree that, having now established this new tool, in the form of the Special Rapporteur, we have another mechanism which will force the Iranian Government to talk to the international community about these questions. We're not the—the Special Rapporteur is the beginning of yet another process that we are putting underway to not just offer encouragement to human rights and civil society activists within Iran, but to force the Iranian Government to account for itself to the international community. And we have that in the U.N.'s third committee in the General Assembly, and now in this, as well. So, at a minimum, we will have that. And, you know, if things work properly, then we may have the result that Mike Posner has described.

Senator UDALL. Yes, and Senator Casey may have covered this earlier, but you talked about the huge effort that Iran put out there around the world to defeat this from coming to fruition. Why was it that we were able to get it done? What happened this time that didn't happen in the past? What lessons are we to learn from this?

Mr. POSNER. I think there are three things that have changed. One is that our presence in the Human Rights Council since 2009 has begun to change what is a very terrible—a poor environment. The Human Rights Council is, in many respects, not a healthy institution. It's been very politicized and very weak. But, we've begun

to push on country-specific situations. This is one; Cote d'Ivoire is another; Syria, a couple of weeks ago; and Libya. And so, there's a sense that the institution itself is more open to change.

Second is the Arab Spring. There's no question that the world is changing and the dynamics of the global diplomatic community is changing with it.

And then, the third thing is that the events on the ground are so grim that I think people recognize this was long overdue.

Senator UDALL. Mr. Dibble, do you—

Mr. DIBBLE. Absolutely. And I would add that, watching the Arab Spring unfold and watching the Iranian Government's reaction to it, its efforts to, one, claim credit for it, but then, at home, of acting in ways that were entirely at odds with that position, certainly we can disclaim, in every forum.

Senator UDALL. Thank you.

Senator Casey, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

Senator CASEY. Senator Udall, thank you very much.

We are joined by Senator Risch, the ranking member of the subcommittee.

And next we'll go to Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you very much.

Thank you all for being here. And I apologize for missing the discussion, to this point. So, hopefully I won't repeat too much of what's already been said.

I know that Senator Udall was talking about the reaction, internally, to the Arab Spring. And I wonder if—I would like to go into that a little more, in terms of to what extent that might be influencing the internal dynamics between Ahmadinejad and the supreme religious leader. Do we think that that has contributed to what appears to be a rift there? And are there ways in which we should be responding to that to—in a way that might be helpful toward moving Iran?

Mr. DIBBLE. With respect to the connection between the Arab Spring and the current tensions between the Supreme Leader and the President, it's very hard to see a connection that's any kind of direct connection, because tension between the institutions of Government in Iran have been present for some time. I think we don't quite understand what the basis for the current disagreements might be. We obviously notice—we notice them. We observe them closely, but it seems to have as much to do with power as anything else.

I think none of the current institutions of Government in Iran would be particularly advantaged by the unfolding of an Arab Spring-like event in Iran right now. It would be to everybody's disadvantage who is currently in government. So, unfortunately, I think that the repression that we're seeing in Iran is repression that is undertaken by all the members of all branches of this government.

Senator SHAHEEN. But, do those internal divisions provide more of an opening now for elements from the Green Movement or others who might want to look at ways in which they can affect the government's reaction? Or are you saying that there's just—that the repression has just shut down everything?

Mr. DIBBLE. It hasn't shut down everything. We're seeing that civil society remains very active. The Green Movement has, in its own way, echoed the activities of the Arab Spring, with demonstrations that it called for in January and March. Now, none of those threaten the regime, but they are clear evidence that the Green Movement and other opposition groups, as well as civil society itself, remain active and vital in Iran. Whether they're a threat or not is something for, I think, a classified briefing, perhaps. But, I think we can certainly say that they're there, they're active, and they take inspiration where they can find it.

Senator SHAHEEN. Mr. Posner, are there lessons that we've learned, based on what's happened in Egypt and Tunisia, and now what's happening in Libya and Syria, that can help guide our policies with regards to Iran?

Mr. POSNER. Yes, I think there are. I mean, one of the lessons is that the desire for democratic participation, political participation, is very deep-seated. It's particularly deep-seated among young people, who are increasingly better educated and look around them and they say, "Why are we living like this?" The governments that are autocratic and brittle tend not to know how to deal with these things, and that, because of the Internet and because of television and because it's so easy to travel, people are making comparisons.

So, I think, you know, for a government like the Iranian Government, the lesson they're learning is, "Oh, my God," you know, "everybody here is looking around the neighborhood and saying, 'Why not us?'" And I think that does provide us an opportunity. Again, I don't want to be Pollyanna and say, "In 3 months or 6 months, there's going to be a dramatic change." But, I have no doubt that there are millions and millions of Iranians—young Iranians that are looking at Egypt, looking at Tunisia, and saying, you know, "We also aspire to freedom. We want a better life. We want a decent job. We want a stake in our society and our political future." And those are the people that I think are going to be in the vanguard of change when it occurs.

Senator SHAHEEN. And can you talk more about what we can do to help exploit those opportunities?

Mr. POSNER. Well, I think one of the things is—

Senator SHAHEEN. "Exploit" may not be the right word.

Mr. POSNER. Yes, well, I think—

Senator SHAHEEN. Encourage?

Mr. POSNER [continuing]. One things that we're doing here is to be public, in our own government, about expressing our concern, our solidarity with people who are on the receiving end of these terrible abuses, so they don't feel alone.

Second, I think there are ways, through the U.N.—and we've been talking about that—that we can, you know, build more momentum, globally, diplomatically. And then, I think some of the technical support and training and support for Internet expansion and so forth, all of that range of things that amplify the voices, that provide a safe space for people within Iran to communicate with each other, that's vital. People need the ability to talk with one another and compare notes and know what's going on. Inevitably, that will accelerate the pace of change.

Senator SHAHEEN. And to what extent do we think they will be responsive to the international community in some of these areas?

Mr. POSNER. Is the “they” the government or the people?

Senator SHAHEEN. You’re right. I’m sorry. Yes, the government.

Mr. POSNER. You know, this is a government that’s dug in. And certainly it’s not on a democratic trajectory. And so, you know, they view everything I just said as a threat. But, it is the reality in which they now live. And again, they can’t operate in isolation. They’re part of the global economy; they’re part of a global political system, where, increasingly, they’re isolated. And that, undoubtedly, provides us more opportunity. But, they’re not going to—this is not going to be an easy sell. We’re not going to find—

Senator SHAHEEN. Sure.

Mr. POSNER [continuing]. Willing partners who want to come and talk about how to democratize.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much.

Before I get to the issue of sanctions, I want to ask you a three-part question.

The first one would be to give us a report, in a sense—and I know it would be just by way of a summary—but a report on how you think the sanctions are impacting the regime’s behavior, if you could provide some sense of that.

And then, second, I wanted to ask you a followup question about areas that we can pursue, statutory change or otherwise, that would enhance and strengthen already existing or underway sanctions.

And I have a third question, as well.

But first, from either or from both of our witnesses, it would be helpful to have a sense of how you think the sanctions are impacting the regime.

Mr. DIBBLE. I will take the liberty of talking about sanctions broadly; not just the human rights sanctions, but also the economic sanctions that have been put in place, internationally as well as unilaterally, by the United States and other governments.

We haven’t yet seen a change in Iran’s strategic calculus as a result of the sanctions. Nevertheless, evidence that we are getting suggests that the Iranian Government has been forced to look for alternative ways both to procure, to sell, to engage in normal commerce in sensitive areas, that it did not require before. So, we do see the economic sanctions as having an impact; not the decisive impact that we’re looking for, yet, but we are looking at ways to intensify the pressure.

With respect to human rights, as I think we’ve detailed, this is not an easy sell. The government will resist, from the beginning. None of the governments that were subject to the Arab Spring were happy about what happened in their countries; they resisted. The Iranians have had practice; they will resist even harder.

I think we’re always looking for ways in which we can intensify the pressure, specifically on the human rights field. We do have a very strong international sense of cooperation and solidarity on this question. And we should exploit it wherever we can.

I think one of the new phenomena that we need to look at more carefully is the interest among the nonaligned, especially leading

countries in the nonaligned—for example, Brazil—in joining with us on the question of human rights in Iran. They did so on the question of the Special Rapporteur. I think they would be sympathetic. And we will be looking at how to work with them and with others to advance this issue even further.

I hesitate to make any recommendations with regard to legislation or statutes. We think we have the authorities we require to mount a very aggressive and productive human rights campaign on Iran. I think we've outlined what we've been able to do and what we'll continue to do. But, we'll be happy to continue our conversation with the Senate and with the House to see what more can be accomplished. We don't think we have the final word, by any means.

Senator CASEY. Mr. Posner, anything you want to add to that?
Mr. POSNER. No, thank you.

Senator CASEY. I just want to highlight one letter. And I know that our government has already designated 10 individuals, and the Europeans have a list of some 32. But, I wanted to just highlight, for the record, a letter dated April 20, that Senator Menendez and Senator Cardin and I sent to the State Department; in particular, with a list of 12 individuals in Iran, in both the military and law enforcement area of their government. And I just want to provide a friendly reminder, that that letter is still in need of a response. I'm not quibbling about the timing. But, I think that we have to have a response to that, because a concern that I have is that there are things we can do, in addition to what's already been done. And I want to see those move forward.

Our ranking member, Senator Risch, has some questions.

Senator RISCH. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The question I have is on sanctions. And I'm just mystified why the administration won't enforce the sanctions. I mean, there's all kinds of cases out there, where entities could be sanctioned or action could be taken against them for violating the sanctions. And we can't seem to get an answer to that. Can you enlighten me at all?

Mr. DIBBLE. I hope so. I think we are enforcing the law. We have imposed sanctions. Some of the cases, that I'm sure you have in mind, are very difficult ones, from the perspective of the other issues that they bring in their train. And the decisions to sanction or to waive or to defer are way above my paygrade, at this point, because of the very nature of the relationships that are involved in that.

We have however, using CISADA, using ILSA, before that, basically dried up petroleum-sector investment by foreign companies in Iran. And, using the assurances that we have been able to provide, we have gotten major international oil companies out. So, in that sense, we have had an effective policy, based on ILSA and CISADA.

Senator RISCH. Well, Mr. Dibble, can you give me a specific—I understand we've placed sanctions. I'm not quarreling with that. I think everybody here supported that. And I understand that, when you're enforcing sanctions, there's a spectrum, all the way from a very robust enforcement to a very benign—or what have you. I feel ours is almost nonexistent. Can you give me specific

examples of actions that were taken against entities who continue to do business, be they banks or be they oil companies or refining companies—can you give me some specific examples of action that was taken against those entities for violating the sanctions that we've put in place?

Mr. DIBBLE. The Treasury Department has designated any number of—apologies.

The Treasury Department has designated any number of Iranian banks, and has taken to the road, if I can call it that, to warn international banks and banks in third countries about the penalties that they are looking at if they continue to do business with these designated banks. That has been an effective campaign.

Senator RISCH. Well, you say they've been warned, but what specific actions have been taken against banks, outside of Iran, who are doing business with banks in Iran, that we all know is an absolute, total violation of the sanctions that we have in place? Has any action been taken against any entity?

Mr. DIBBLE. I can't give you specifics, but I'm happy to come back to you with more information.

Senator RISCH. Please do that.

[The information referred to was not available at the time this hearing went to press.]

Senator RISCH. I'm not aware of any. And I think most of us would be aware of some. But nobody can seem to find any. So again, you know, I understand that there has to be discretion here, as far as whether it's a robust enforcement of the sanctions or a mild enforcement of the sanctions. But, it seems to me, unfortunately, the sanctions are nothing more than talk, which is aggravating, since at the time we put them in place, the Iranians told us, "So, what? We're going to continue to do business as usual." And, to be honest with you, it looks like they are continuing to do business as usual.

So, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Senator Risch.

Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. I have no more questions.

Senator CASEY. I just have one final question. I know we're going to be moving to our second panel. The question is on Camp Ashraf. According to the U.N., 34 residents at Camp Ashraf in Iraq, near the Iranian border, were killed in early April. I'll ask one or both of you to speak to that issue. What is the U.S.'s position on that issue?

Mr. DIBBLE. We were appalled by the attack on Camp Ashraf. We believe we had assurances, from the Iraqi Government, that they would treat the residents of Camp Ashraf in a manner that was humane. And they didn't. We have made our views very clear to the Iraqi Government. We have also, however, begun to develop, with them, some ideas on how to relocate the residents of Camp Ashraf somewhere where they can be more safe—more—better protected and less in harm's way. We are also starting to talk to the leadership of the camp, and seeking their cooperation in that effort; the idea being, eventually, to relocate the residents to third coun-

tries through some sort of resettlement program. That's the long-term objective.

Senator CASEY. Well, I thank you both for your presence here today, and for your testimony.

We'll have questions for the record, as well. And that record will be open for members of the committee.

I think we'll move to our second panel.

Thank you.

[Pause.]

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you very much. We have our second panel. And we're grateful for our witnesses.

Each of you, as you might have heard me say before, will have your full statements be made part of the record. If you can summarize, as best you can, your statement, that would be helpful.

[Pause.]

Senator CASEY. Ms. Bakhtiar, if we can start with you. And I appreciate your being here with us, and for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RUDI BAKHTIAR, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN, NEW YORK, NY

Ms. BAKHTIAR. I'd like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for providing this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. It is an independent NGO dedicated to research and advocacy regarding the human rights situation in Iran. We'd like to share our main concerns and offer you some recommendations.

Two years after the disputed Presidential election of 2009, the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to deteriorate and is in a state of unprecedented crisis. Under the Presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran has become one of the worst violators of human rights in the world, egregiously violating virtually every article of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of which Iran is a state party, and also ignoring the human rights protections in Iran's own constitution.

Since the start of 2011, Iran has been on an execution binge. In January alone, IRI officials executed 85 people, compared to 86 in all of 2005. That's the year President Ahmadinejad took power.

In all of 2010, Iran executed at least 542 people, 242 of them officially announced and over 300 reportedly put to death in secret executions inside of Vakilabad Prison in Mashad.

Reports of cruel and inhumane punishments, including stoning, limb amputations, and floggings, are also on the rise. The government falsely justifies these practices on the basis of Iran's religion and culture, while they are clearly part of a program to terrorize Iranian citizens.

Human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists, as well as minority, ethnic, and religious groups, all have been facing growing repression; the authorities continually silencing those who try to expose and criticize the government's violence or hold the government accountable.

The Iranian judiciary has become deeply politicized under the influence of the state security establishment. The judiciary and security forces regularly use coerced confessions, obtained under

torture or duress, to issue lengthy sentences on vaguely worded offences, including “acts against national security” and “enmity against God.”

Over the past 2 years, numerous detainees have risked their lives and come forward with personal accounts of rape, severe beatings, sleep deprivation, verbal threats, and other ill treatment by their interrogators. Right now, an estimated 500 people remain arbitrarily detained for peaceful activities or for exercising free expression. Another 500 prisoners of conscience have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms following unjust trials. In addition, authorities in Iran are effectively criminalizing human-rights-based legal representation by prosecuting a number of lawyers who represent political detainees, including the one you mentioned, Nasrin Sotoudeh, and Mohammad Seifzadeh, sentenced, in 2010, to 11 years and 9 years, respectively.

Even the creation of an independent human rights organization has become a crime in Iran. Mohammad Kaboudvand was sentenced to 10 years in prison for starting the first human rights organization in Kurdistan. Family members and colleagues of Shirin Ebadi, Iran’s 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, have been arrested, harassed, and intimidated in order to force them to disassociate themselves from Mrs. Ebadi, who has led the country’s most effective human rights organization, the Center for Human Rights Defenders.

Leading human rights advocate Emad Baghi, of the Association for Prisoner’s Rights, who has shown how Iran’s policy of executing juvenile delinquents is, in fact, not justified by shariah law, he is now serving 6 years in prison.

The government continues to impose increasingly severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly, including widespread censorship of newspapers and the Internet and imprisoning numerous Iranian journalists, including Bahman Ahmadi Amouee and Issa Saharkhiz.

Religious and ethnic minorities continue to face discrimination, as well. In December 2010, Iranian courts sentenced Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani to death for “apostasy,” an offense that has no basis in Iranian law.

The broadscale discrimination against members of the Baha’i faith, that you mentioned, has included the sentencing of seven Baha’i leaders to 20 years in prison each on baseless espionage charges in August 2010, and denying Baha’is access to higher education. Sufism followers have also been routinely persecuted and prosecuted solely because of their beliefs. Furthermore, violent suppression of the ethnic Arab population in Khuzestan continues. Dozens of protesters were killed, and many more were injured, during demonstrations on April 15, 2011. Many have since been arrested.

Now, despite unassailable evidence of widescale rights violations by the government, Iranian officials continue to misrepresent their human rights record, reject calls for reform, and block any attempts by the international human rights mechanisms to cooperatively address the crisis in Iran. In this connection, I wish to note the critical role of the administration for its leadership and support of the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution that estab-

lished a Special Rapporteur on Iran. It's something the Iranian people deeply appreciate.

Two years ago, millions of Iranians took to the streets, in an unprecedented fashion, demanding respect for fundamental freedoms, human rights, and democracy. Today, popular movements throughout the Middle East are making similar calls. Although Iranians are living under severe repression right now, there is no doubt their civil and human rights movement cannot be contained in the long term.

We believe the United States policy toward Iran must give priority to the dire human rights situation there. In particular, we recommend the following actions.

Access to information is of critical importance today. While the Iranian Government engages in broad censorship and implements severe restrictions on Internet access and broadcast media, the United States could help Iranian people to gain access to the Internet and satellite channels as a means to expand communications, access impartial news and information, and to challenge the government's narrative and expose truths.

The U.S. policy should also focus on ending the illegal jamming of satellite channels by the Iranian Government. Also, I'd like to give you an example, here. The United States should lift sanctions on hardware technology—specific hardware technology that would allow ordinary Iranians to download Internet content wirelessly through their TV satellite dishes, and should also facilitate providing such wireless access.

The administration and Congress should also continue to express clear moral support for the Iranian people, in responding to the unfolding human rights crisis there. The moral support should be articulated in a way that does not allow legitimate aspirations of the Iranians to be falsely portrayed by the government as foreign intervention. Upholding international legal commitments is not interfering in the internal affairs of another state.

As noted above, the administration's diplomacy at the Human Rights Council, leading to a multilateral consensus on appointing a Special Rapporteur for Iran, is welcomed and should be strongly supported. However, this mechanism should be strengthened to result in tangible improvements.

The United States should also target companies that sell surveillance technologies to the Iranian Government, which is empowering its repression. Several European companies are suspected of such business activities and should be denied access to American markets.

And finally, the United States should continue to expand its targeted sanctions against government officials implicated in gross human rights violations. It should also encourage countries, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan to adopt similar travel bans and financial freezes. The U.S. Treasury should put financial institutions in countries, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the UAE on notice that any financial services to sanctioned individuals will result in their losing the ability to engage in financial transactions through United States institutions.

Thank you all for your attention and concern. And thank you in advance for concrete steps that you can take to help the people of Iran realize their fundamental human rights.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bakhtiar follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RUDI BAKHTIAR

I would like to thank the Chairman for providing this opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, an independent NGO dedicated to research and advocacy regarding the human rights situation in Iran. We want to share our main concerns and offer some recommendations.

Two years after the disputed Presidential election of 2009, the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to deteriorate and is in a state of unprecedented crisis.

Under the Presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran has become one of the world's worst violators of human rights, egregiously violating virtually every article of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of which Iran is a state party, and ignoring the human rights protections in Iran's own Constitution.

Since the start of 2011 Iran has been on an execution binge. In January 2011 alone, Iran executed 85 persons, compared to 86 in all of 2005, the year President Ahmadinejad assumed power.

In all of 2010, Iran executed at least 542 people, 242 officially announced and over 300 reportedly put to death in secret executions inside Vakilabad Prison in Mashad.

Reports of cruel and inhumane punishments including stoning, limb amputations, and floggings are also on the rise. The government falsely justifies these practices on the basis of Iran's religion and culture, while they are clearly part of a program to terrorize the citizens.

Human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists, as well as, minority ethnic and religious groups, have been facing growing repression; the authorities silences those who try to expose and criticize its violence, or hold it accountable.

The Iranian Judiciary has become deeply politicized under the influence of the state security establishment. The Judiciary and security forces regularly use coerced confessions obtained under torture or duress to issue lengthy sentences on vaguely worded offences including "acts against national security," and "enmity against God."

Over the past 2 years, numerous detainees have risked their lives and come forward with personal accounts of rape, severe beatings, sleep deprivation, verbal threats, and other ill treatment by interrogators.

An estimated 500 persons remain arbitrarily detained for peaceful activities or the exercise of free expression. Another 500 prisoners of conscience have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms following unfair trials.

Authorities in Iran are effectively criminalizing human rights based legal representation by prosecuting a number of lawyers who represent political detainees including Nasrin Sotoudeh and Mohammad Seifzadeh, sentenced in 2010 to 11 years and 9 years respectively.

Even the creation of an independent human rights organization has become a crime in Iran. Mohammad Kaboudvand was sentenced to 10 years in prison for starting the first human rights organization in Kurdistan. Family members and colleagues of Shirin Ebadi, Iran's 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate, have been arrested, harassed, and intimidated in order to force them to disassociate themselves from Ms. Ebadi, who led the country's most effective human rights organization, the Center for Human Rights Defenders.

Leading human rights advocate Emad Baghi of the Association for Prisoner's Rights, who has shown how Iran's policy of executing juvenile offenders is not justified by Sharia law, is serving 6 years in prison.

The government continues to impose increasingly severe restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and assembly, including widespread censorship of newspapers and the Internet, imprisoning numerous Iranian journalists including Bahman Ahmadi Amouee and Issa Saharkhiz.

Religious and ethnic minorities continue to face discrimination. In December 2010, Iranian courts sentenced Christian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani to death for "apostasy," an offense that has no basis in Iranian law.

The broad scale discrimination against members of the Baha'i Faith has included the sentencing of seven Baha'i leaders to 20 years in prison each on baseless espionage charges in August 2010, and denying Baha'is access to higher education. Sufi followers have been routinely persecuted and prosecuted solely for their beliefs.

Furthermore, violent suppression of the ethnic Arab population in Khuzestan, continues. Dozens of protesters were killed and many were injured during demonstrations on April 15 2011, and many have since been arrested.

Despite unassailable evidence of wide-scale rights violations by the government, Iranian officials continue to misrepresent their human rights record, reject calls for reform, and block attempts by international human rights mechanisms to cooperatively address the crisis in Iran. In this connection I wish to note the critical role of the administration for its leadership and support of the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution that established a special rapporteur on Iran. It is something the Iranian people deeply appreciate.

Two years ago, millions of Iranians took to the streets demanding respect for fundamental freedoms, human rights, and democracy. Today popular movements throughout the Middle East are making similar calls.

Iranians are today living under severe repression, but there is no doubt their civil and human rights movement cannot be contained in the long term.

We believe United States policy toward Iran must give priority to the dire human rights situation. In particular we recommend the following actions:

- Access to information is of critical importance today. While the Iranian Government engages in broad censorship and implements severe restrictions on Internet access and broadcast media, the United States could help Iranian people to gain access to the Internet and satellite channels as a means to expand communications, access impartial news and information and to challenge the government's narrative and expose the truth. For example, the United States should lift sanctions on hardware technology that would allow ordinary Iranians to download Internet content wirelessly through their television satellite dishes and should facilitate providing such wireless access. U.S. policy should also focus on ending the illegal jamming of satellite channels by the Iranian Government.
- The administration and Congress should express clear moral support for the Iranian people in responding to the unfolding human rights crisis. This moral support should be articulated in a way that does not allow legitimate aspirations of Iranians to be falsely portrayed by the government as foreign intervention. Upholding international legal commitments is not interfering in the internal affairs of another state.
- As noted above, the administration's diplomacy at the Human Rights Council, leading to a multilateral consensus on appointing a special reporter for Iran is welcomed and should be strongly supported. This special mechanism should be strengthened to result in tangible improvements.
- The U.S. Government should target companies that sell surveillance technologies to the Iranian Government, empowering its repression. Several European companies are suspected of such business activity and should be denied access to American markets.
- The United States should continue to expand its targeted sanctions against government officials implicated in gross human rights violations. It should also encourage countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan to adopt similar travel bans and financial freezes. The U.S. Treasury should put financial institutions in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the UAE on notice that any financial services to sanctioned individual will result in their losing the ability to engage in financial transactions through U.S. institutions.

Thank you for your attention and concern. And thank you in advance for concrete steps that you can take to help the people of Iran realize their fundamental human rights.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.
Mr. Apostolou.

**STATEMENT OF ANDREW APOSTOLOU, SENIOR PROGRAM
MANAGER, FREEDOM HOUSE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. APOSTOLOU. Senator Casey, Senator Risch, members of your staff who have worked so hard in putting this together, thank you very much indeed for inviting me today. And also, thank you for putting me on a panel with Rudi Bakhtiar and Kambiz Hosseini. It's very flattering to be in such good company.

I'd like to talk about three aspects of the human rights issue in Iran. The first is the regional, the second is the repressive policies of the regime, and the third is how we can practically help Iranians.

In terms of the regional, the place where the Arab revolt meets Iran is in Syria. By sending tanks into his own cities, Bashar al-Assad has demonstrated that he is as much a reformer as Leonid Brezhnev was in 1968 when he sent tanks into Czechoslovakia. I think Shirin Ebadi has put it very well when she said that, "If there is democracy in Syria, it's as if an arm of Iranian regime was cut off." The Syrian regime, let's remember, is not only an ally of the Iranian regime, it's also a partner in many of its crimes. So, let's take the Syria test seriously, because I think it tests just how committed we are to helping our friends in Iran.

With regard to the regime's repressive policies, there are three main aspects here. The first is the isolation of the opposition leaders. Mr. Karroubi and Mr. Mousavi and their wives, who are, themselves, activists in their right, Fatemeh Karroubi and Zahra Rahnavard, have been in a form of incommunicado detention since mid-February. I'm sorry to say, I don't think we've said enough about this and made enough of a fuss. Let me remind you of the fuss that we did make in August 1991, when Mikhail Gorbachev was detained, when Margaret Thatcher stood up in public and said "we will hold you accountable for this person." We must do the same in Iran.

The second repressive policy of the Iranian regime is, as Rudi Bakhtiar mentioned, the horrendous increase in executions. Iran doesn't just use the death penalty against people who are murderers or drug traffickers, as they claim—and even those people don't have proper trials or proper legal process before they face the death penalty—Iran uses the death penalty for matters of sexual orientation and matters of opinion. This is clearly an attempt to intimidate the population. What was encouraging was that the United States, the European Parliament, and the U.N. made statements on the large increase in executions. We saw a decrease in the reported number of executions. But, we fear—and Rudi has pointed this out, as have many others—that they're actually doing executions now in private.

The third repressive measure being used—and you've highlighted it with these pictures—is to try and break political prisoners. Iran has implemented the most outrageous sentences on people who have done nothing more than Nasrin Sotoudeh, be a human rights activist and lawyer; or Navid Khanjani, be a human rights activist and a Baha'i; or Mahdieh Golroo, for being a human rights activist who stood up for Mansour Osanloo or the Alaei brothers. Another case I'd like to mention is Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki. He is currently serving a 15-year sentence for helping people with Internet freedom.

I'd also like to mention a very worrying development that occurred last week, which is, a number of prisoners, some of them political, were moved from Rajaei Shahr Prison, which is a pretty awful place, where Mansour Osanloo is currently held, to a place called Qarchak Varamin, a prison where the facilities are grossly inadequate to handle the number of women held there. The reports

we have is that something like two or three times the number of prisoners are being held in that prison, relative to its capacity. And that's precisely the sort of thing that a U.N. Rapporteur or a U.S. Special Representative could demand answers about.

So, how can we help people in Iran? Well, there are four ways.

The first is doing what you've just done here, which is adopt prisoners. It worked with the Refuseniks. It will work with Iran.

The second thing we can do is push human rights up the human rights agenda, in terms of U.S. policy. I have to say I was very pleased with President Obama's Nowruz address this year. He mentioned human rights defenders. He mentioned human rights. And it was a very welcome change from the message in 2009.

The third thing we can do is to sanction both the abusers and those who help those who do abuse. That can mean using existing legislation, having new legislation, or doing the sort of, frankly, guerrilla actions, if I can put it that way, that Stuart Levey did when he was at Treasury.

Fourth, and finally, we can actually practically help activists in Iran. That means helping them document abuses and report on abuses, helping them to communicate and to organize.

At Freedom House, we were helping people in Syria and Egypt for many years. And there were many years, frankly, where it looked pretty lean and fairly bleak. But, you never know when the opportunity will come. And I think we have to be ready, and we have to make certain the people of Iran are ready, for when their next opportunity of freedom emerges.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Apostolou follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANDREW APOSTOLOU

Chairman Casey, Ranking Member Risch, members of the subcommittee, it is an honour to be invited to address you and to represent Freedom House. Please allow me to thank you and your staff for all your efforts to advance the cause of human rights and democracy in Iran. It is also a great pleasure to be here with Rudi Bakhtiar and Kambiz Hosseini. They are leaders in how we communicate the human rights issue, both to Iran and to the rest of the world.

Freedom House is celebrating its 70th anniversary. We were founded on the eve of the United States entry into World War II by Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Wilkie to act as an ideological counterweight to the Nazi's antidemocratic ideology. The Nazi headquarters in Munich was known as the Braunes Haus, so Roosevelt and Wilkie founded Freedom House in response. The ruins of the Braunes Haus are now a memorial. Freedom House is actively promoting democracy and freedom around the world.

The Second World War context of our foundation is relevant to our Iran work. The Iranian state despises liberal democracy, routinely violates human rights norms through its domestic repression, mocks and denies the Holocaust. Given the threat that the Iranian state poses to its own population and to the Middle East, we regard Iran as an institutional priority.

In addition to Freedom House's well-known analyses on the state of freedom in the world and our advocacy for democracy, we support democratic activists in some of the world's most repressive societies, including Iran. I am very fortunate to work with highly talented and committed colleagues who have provided exemplary support to Iranian dissidents and democrats. This testimony represents their expertise and round the clock efforts to stand up for some of the Iranian regime's most isolated and repressed victims.

Freedom House conducts projects to defend human rights in Iran. We make representations in favour of human rights in Iran to the U.S. Congress, to the United Nations, to the European Parliament, and to responsible U.S. allies.

In this testimony, the focus will be how the regional context affects Iran, the key elements of Iranian regime repression, and how the United States and its allies can assist our Iranian friends.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

The regional context has already had an important impact inside Iran. The Iranian regime chose in June 2009 to discard the facade of so-called Islamic democracy and engage in crude electoral theft. Until that point the Islamic Republic of Iran could claim some degree of controlled electoral legitimation for aspects of the state, a process that was comfortably more open than most of its Persian Gulf neighbours. As of June 2009, the Islamic Republic of Iran placed itself in the then well-populated ranks of electoral frauds and dictators. This was a reasonable choice at the time. The prospects for political change across the Middle East were bleak in the summer of 2009. The signal from the United States was of engagement with the powers that be as opposed to seeking to promote new political arrangements.

The Iranian regime did not choose its political path wisely. The Arab uprisings against undemocratic regimes mean that the model of elections as rubber stamps for dictators is no longer in vogue. Similarly, the practice of “resistance” that Iran has supported is seen to have failed when compared to peaceful civic mobilization. The last 5 months of Arab activism have ousted two dictators, led to the fall of two governments, and forced others to make concessions. Not for the first time Middle Eastern dictatorships have been shown to be less stable than believed and to have rather less support than their apologists and lobbyists claimed.

Three regional factors are currently relevant to Iran. First, Arab activists such as Wael Ghonim have said that they were inspired by the Iranian demonstrations of 2009.¹ Other Arab activists have said they want to assist their Iranian comrades. That sense of solidarity and the inspiration of Arab successes have lifted the moral of Iranian activists.

Second, Iranians were encouraged to demonstrate to resist their own regime following the fall of President Mubarak in Egypt. Musavi and Karrubi called for demonstrations, which occurred in large numbers in seven towns and cities on February 14, 2011,² with further demonstrations in subsequent days. The slogans on both those days were against Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran’s so-called Supreme Leader. The protestors ignored President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. This indicates that some Iranian discontent is against the system and is no longer about the stolen election. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Iranians understand where power lies and who bears ultimate responsibility.

Similarly encouraging was that the U.S. Government promoted the notion that Iran would not escape the wave of Middle East protests. On the day of Mubarak’s departure the U.S. Government pointedly criticized the hypocrisy of the Iranian regime’s attempt to claim ownership of the Arab uprisings. Tom Donilon, the National Security Advisor Tom Donilon, said that “By announcing that they will not allow opposition protests, the Iranian Government has declared illegal for Iranians what it claimed was noble for Egyptians.”³

Third, and most importantly, the Arab uprising has now shaken Syria, the Iranian regime’s close ally and partner in crime. The strategic gains from genuine political change in Syria are considerable. The Syrian regime is a serial human rights abuser—in its own territory and in Lebanon. It is worth remembering that the Syrian regime has an even longer career in the terrorism business than the Iranian regime, a record that has cost hundreds of American lives. The strength of U.S. and allied policy toward Syria during the current crisis is a test of our seriousness about confronting Iran. Freedom House called for Bashar al-Assad to resign on April

¹ International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, “Egyptian Activist’s Message to Iranians: Learn From Egyptians, And We Learned From You,” February 10, 2011, available at <<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/02/wael-ghonim-on-iran/>>.

² Tehran; Rasht, northern Iran; Isfahan, central Iran; Mashhad, northwestern Iran; Shiraz, southern Iran; Kermanshah, Iranian Kurdistan; Ahwaz, southwest Arab inhabited area. Among the slogans were: “Mubarak, Ben Ali, your turn Seyyed Ali” (a reference to “Supreme Leader” Ali Khamenei); “Dictator, run away. Look at Mubarak!”; “Death to the Dictator!”; “Not Gaza! Not Lebanon! Tunisia and Egypt and Iran!”

³ Tahman Bradley, “White House Ups Pressure on Iran After Effort to Quash Anti-Government Protests,” ABC News, February 12, 2011, available at <<http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2011/02/white-house-ups-pressure-on-iran-after-effort-to-quash-anti-government-protests.html>>. For a useful compilation of statements see Robin Wright, “U.S. Gets Tougher on Iran,” The Iran Primer, The United States Institute of Peace, February 15, 2011, available at <<http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2011/feb/15/us-gets-tougher-iran>>.

7, 2011, before he intensified his crackdown.⁴ By sending in the tanks, Bashar al-Assad has proven conclusively that he is as much a reformer as former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev was when he invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Iranians understand the political importance of Syria to developments inside Iran. Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, has connected the two, telling *The Wall Street Journal* on April 23, 2011 that: "People are very happy about the uprising of the people of Syria. . . . If there is democracy in Syria it's like the arms of Iran are cut off," she says. "The people of Iran would be very happy if Bashar Assad is toppled because that's the beginning of the toppling of the Iranian Government."⁵

The demonstrations of February 14 and 21 have not been repeated on a large scale because the Islamic Republic is becoming an increasingly efficient and systematic surveillance state. Iran has always been a police state of one kind or another. What the Islamic Republic is implementing is an Soviet-style approach that relies upon a professional approach to surveillance that takes full advantage of modern interception capabilities for mobile telephony and the Internet.

The Iranian regime is pursuing three major policies to repress its critics and prevent its opposition from organizing. First, the Iranian regime has isolated Mir Hussein Mtisavi and Mehdi Karrubi, the nominal leaders of the opposition Green Movement, and their wives, distinguished activists in their own right, Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karrubi. They are being held in their homes, which are located in a regime sector of Tehran, and are barred from using communications. Family visits occur under regime control.

There are legitimate concerns about the sincerity of their commitment to democratic norms and human rights. Both men have waxed lyrical about the glories of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Musavi's human rights record in government was appalling. There are serious questions to be asked about his knowledge or involvement in Khomeini-era crimes.⁶ Karrubi recently made the fanciful claim that the abuse of prisoners at the Kahrizak detention centre in the summer of 2009 would not have occurred had Ayatollah Khomeini remained in power.⁷

The isolation of Messrs. Musavi and Karrubi, along with Mrs. Karrubi and Ms. Rahnavard, is a clear violation of human rights and act of repression. The United States and its allies have been insufficiently vocal about the de facto detention and isolation of these four leading Iranian political figures. A good example of how to respond occurred in August 1991 when Mikhail Gorbachev was held in isolation during the brief Soviet coup. Margaret Thatcher publicly called the putschists to account for Gorbachev. We should be asking the same tough questions of the Iranian regime.

Second, the Iranian regime has increased its already high rate of executions. The Iranian regime claims that the death penalty in Iran is required to maintain order. It does not take much imagination to understand that the noose also sends a political message given the execution of political dissidents. During 2010 Iran executed between 312 and 546 persons.⁸ In January 2011 alone, however, 95 persons were executed, of whom 6 were identifiably political prisoners.⁹

The use of the death penalty in Iran is highly abusive. There is no credible criminal process, no transparency in sentencing, and no legal protections worthy of the name. Iran imposes capital punishment for ill-defined offences such as "rebellion

⁴ Press Release, "Freedom House Calls on Syria's al-Assad to Resign, Condemns Indefensible Attacks on Civilians," Freedom House, April 7, 2011, available at <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=1387>>.

⁵ David Feith, "The Weekend Interview With Shirin Ebadi: The Education of an Iranian Revolutionary," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 23, 2011, available at <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703983704576277373280750408.html>>.

⁶ Geoffrey Robertson, "The U.N. must try Iran's 1988 murderers: The mass murderers of 1988 now hold power in Tehran. The world must make them face justice," *The Guardian*, June 7, 2010, available at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2010/jun/07/iran-1988-prisoners-murder-international-court>>. See also, Geoffrey Robertson, "The Massacre of Political Prisoners in Iran, 1988, Report Of An Inquiry," Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation, April 18, 2011, available at <<http://www.iranrights.org/english/document1380.php>>.

⁷ The Green Voice of Freedom, "Karrubi: Why do these 'generals without army' make you shiver and panic?" January 4, 2011, available at <<http://en.irangreenvoice.com/article/2011/jan/04/2635>>.

⁸ Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, "Annual Report of the Death Penalty in Iran in 2010," *Iran Human Rights*, February 11, 2011, available at <<http://iranhr.net/spip.php?article1984>>.

⁹ Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation "Iran: In Support of the International Campaign Against the Death Penalty," February 22, 2011, available at <<http://www.iranrights.org/english/newsletter-18.php>>.

against God” (article 190 of the penal code) and for sexual behaviour, such as adultery, “sodomy,” and foreplay between men.¹⁰

The growing number of executions prompted an international campaign by Iranian activists calling for a moratorium on executions.¹¹ The United States condemned the execution of the Dutch-Iranian national Zahra Bahrami and called for a halt to executions.¹² Navi Pillay, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, also called for Iran to halt executions, as did Christof Heyns, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and Gabriela Knaul, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.¹³ The European Parliament also called for a moratorium on the death penalty.¹⁴

These statements clearly had some effect, despite the usual regime response of public defiance. The publicly recorded rate of executions has certainly declined. However, along with our colleagues at the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, we are concerned executions are being conducted in secret.¹⁵

Third, the Iranian regime is engaged in a Soviet style attempt to break its political prisoners. Human rights activists have received lengthy prison sentences simply for advocating for fundamental freedoms. Their treatment in prison has been harsh. Some activists have been sent to prisons far from their homes, making it difficult for their family members to visit them. On some occasions family members are not allowed to visit or have their prison visits curtailed. The Iranian regime has locked away many hundreds of peaceful dissidents.

An example of the use of prison as a form of psychological and physical pressure was the transfer of female political prisoners and 200 other inmates from Rajaei Shahr Prison in Karaj province, to Qarchak Varamin Prison in Qom province on May 3, 2011. Rajaei Shahr has a reputation for being a harsh place, a prison used to break the recalcitrant and the defiant. It currently holds such prominent political prisoners as the student leader Majid Tavakkoli and the trades union leader Mansour Osanloo.

By all accounts, Qarchak Varamin is worse. Many of its 2,000 prisoners are hardened criminals. Each of the seven wards at Qarchak Varamin has a capacity for 100 prisoners, but currently holds around 300. Each ward has just two bathrooms and two toilets. Prisoners are allowed outside for fresh air and exercise for no more than 2 hours a day. There is no prison shop, as exists in Evin Prison in Tehran and Rajaei Shahr, for prisoners to buy food and medical supplies.

Among the political prisoners at Qarchak Varamin that we know of are: Shabnam Madadzadeh, Maryam Hajiloei, Maryam Akbari Monfared, Masomeh Yavari, Kobra Banazadeh, Motahareh Bahrami, Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi the last two are Baha’is imprisoned for trying to help others practice their religion.

It is invidious to choose among these many cases, but three in particular illustrate the nature of repression in Iran:

Nasrin Sotoudeh—in Iran it is a crime to be a lawyer.

Nasrin has represented juveniles facing the death penalty, abused children, and has defended the civil rights of human rights activists in Iran. Her crime appears to have been that she was the lawyer representing human rights activists, including Shirin Ebadi. Nasrin is currently serving an 11-year sentence. She also faces a 20-year ban from practicing law and from leaving Iran after the end of sentence. Nasrin’s own lawyer, Nasim Ghanavi, has also been summoned and interrogated before by Iran’s Revolutionary Court. Put otherwise, the Iranian regime has harassed the lawyer

¹⁰Human Rights Watch, “We Are a Buried Generation: Discrimination and Violence Against Sexual Minorities in Iran,” December 15, 2010, pages 19–20, available at <<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/12/15/we-are-buried-generation>>.

¹¹Statement by the International Campaign for Abolishing the Death Penalty in Iran, January 29, 2011: “In the past 36 days (December 20 to January 27) alone, 117 individuals were hanged and many more are awaiting to face the gallows,” available at <<http://stopexecution.info/en/137>>.

¹²Philip J. Crowley, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Public Affairs, “Concern for the Denial of Human Rights in Iran,” State Department, January 31, 2011, available at <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/01/155719.htm>>.

¹³U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Alarmed at rise in killings, U.N. rights chief urges Iran to halt executions,” U.N. News Centre, February 2, 2011, available at <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37443&Cr=Iran&Cr1=>

¹⁴“European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2011 on the EU’s approach towards Iran,” (2010/2050(INI), P7-TA-PROV(2011)0096, available at <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201103/20110322ATT16074/20110322ATT16074EN.pdf>>.

¹⁵International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, “Ten More Secret Executions at Mashad’s Vakilabad Prison,” February 9, 2011, available at <<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/02/ten-more-secret-executions-at-mashads-vakilabad-prison/>>.

of the lawyer of the lawyer. The Iranian regime has also arrested and threatened Nasrin's husband, Reza Khandan, for speaking to the media about his imprisoned wife.

Navid Khanjani in Iran it is a crime to be a human rights activist.

Navid Khanjani is a student rights activist currently on probation but facing a 12-year sentence. He has also been banned from attending university and from leaving the country. Navid was physically abused during his interrogations. A Baha'i who helped to found the Baha'i Education Rights Committee, Navid also worked with two human rights organizations. The Iranian regime refuses to recognize the Baha'i religion, persecutes its followers, and uses a variety of administrative measures to keep Baha'is out of universities.

Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki in Iran it is a crime to promote Internet freedom.

Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki is a student of computer programming serving a 15-year sentence. Hossein helped create Iran's largest domestic anticensorship group "Iran Proxy." He spent close to 10 months in solitary confinement in Evin Prison in Tehran. The authorities have harassed his family after they talked to the media about their fears for Hossein's health.

FOUR WAYS TO HELP IRANIAN DISSIDENTS AND DEMOCRATS

There are four approaches that can be taken in response to the widespread violation of human rights in Iran, measures that will also assist Iranians as they seek to unite and organize against this evil regime.

First, we can break the isolation of the political prisoners by supporting them. Members of the U.S. Congress, such as Senators Casey and Kirk to give two examples, have already started to "adopt" Iranian political prisoners, a tactic that proved highly effective when used to support the Soviet dissident and refusenik movements.

Campaigns for prisoners work. According to Roxana Saberi, an American journalist held in prison in Iran for 100 days in early 2009:

When I was incarcerated in Iran's Evin Prison last year on a trumped-up charge of espionage, I was fortunate that my case received a great deal of international attention. I was not aware of the extent of this attention until the day my interrogator allowed me to lift my blindfold to see a pile of news articles on a desk in front of me. As he read aloud the names of journalism and human rights organizations, Iranian-American groups and others that had been calling for my freedom, I realized he was trying to scare me into thinking that this outcry was bad for me. But suddenly I no longer felt so alone. Friends and strangers were standing with me, and I didn't have to face my captors by myself anymore.¹⁶

Second, we can increase the prominence of the human rights issue in U.S. and allied policy toward Iran. This process has already started, but it can be intensified.

President Obama's Nowruz (Iranian New Year) message on March 21, 2011, was an important change. The President mentioned Nasrin Sotoudeh; the filmmaker, Jafar Panahi; the journalist Abdolreza Tajik; the Baha'is and Sufi Muslims; Mohammad Valian a student on death row; and the poet, Simin Behbahani.¹⁷ The contrast with President Obama's 2009 Nowruz message, which mentioned the Islamic Republic of Iran and "its rightful place in the community of nations" was striking and welcome.¹⁸

In a similar fashion, EU countries have become far more vociferous on human rights issues in Iran. My own country, the United Kingdom, has taken the lead on this issue in the EU.

Diplomacy can enhance the effect of symbolically standing with the protestors rather than seeking to sit and talk to the regime. The U.S. and its allies can continually raise the issue of Iranian human rights violations, and the continued illegal detention of two American citizens Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal,¹⁹ in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. The U.S. and its allies can ask the Iranian regime to imple-

¹⁶Roxana Saberi, "A Chance To Stand Tall Against Iran on Human Rights," The Washington Post, May 13, 2010, available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/12/AR2010051204297.html>>.

¹⁷"Remarks of President Obama Marking Nowruz," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 20, 2011, available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/20/remarks-president-obama-marking-nowruz>>.

¹⁸"Videotaped Remarks by the President in Celebration of Nowruz," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, March 20, 2009, available at <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/videotaped-remarks-president-celebration-nowruz>>.

¹⁹More details on their case are available at <<http://freethinkers.org/>>.

ment a moratorium on executions to demonstrate that it take international norms, whether on human rights or nuclear proliferation, seriously.

Third, we should push ahead with sanctioning the abusers and those who assist abuse. The United States has already listed 10 Iranian human rights abusers, the EU a total of 32.²⁰ The U.S. sanctioning of Iranian human rights abusers results from the provisions of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (2010).

Human rights sanctions are a useful and effective way of targeting abusers and communicating international concerns to the Iranian people. They complement the existing economic and financial sanctions because they act in a different manner. Economic and financial sanctions are important. The difficulty with such sanctions can be that their enforcement requires cooperation from third parties such as foreign countries and companies. In addition, the regime portrays can easily portray such economic and financial measures as indiscriminate attacks on Iran as a country.

By contrast, human rights sanctions are easier to initiate and have tremendous symbolic effect. The more abusers we sanction, and the lower level regime thugs whose names appear on U.S. and EU lists, the more we illuminate the mechanism of repression. Such sanctions can be unilateral and require nobody else's cooperation. They often have little practical effect as abusers do not travel to the United States, or the EU, nor do they have assets here. However, what such sanctions communicate unequivocally is that the Iranian regime is the problem, not the people of Iran.

In addition, denying visas to the family members of regime abusers is also a useful measure that does not require additional legislation. The ability of family members of regime officials to globe trot using their ill gotten gains is greatly resented in Iran. We should encourage these people to take their holidays at home.

The recently announced Iran Human Rights and Democracy Promotion Act addresses the issues above. The Iran Human Rights and Democracy Promotion Act is being sponsored by Senators Kirk and Gillibrand from this Chamber by Representatives Dold and Deutch in the other place. The act proposes a U.S. Special Representative on Human Rights and Democracy in Iran. The U.S. Special Representative can work in tandem with the U.N. special rapporteur for human rights in Iran that the U.N. Human Rights Council voted for on March 24, 2011.

Fourth, we can redouble our efforts to assist Iranian human rights and civil society activists. In practical terms that means funding programmes that enable Iranian dissidents and democrats to communicate with each other safely and to organize, to document regime abuses and to report them.

We do not know when Iranian activists will be able to fully use such training and education. Our experience in Egypt and Syria was that there were lean years in which it seemed as if we were assisting a small number of people with limited chances to use their skills to defend human rights and advocate for freedom. Then to everybody's surprise opportunity knocked and suddenly those activists had valuable skills to share with others. The people of Iran deserve to be better prepared for their next chance of freedom.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much.
Mr. Hosseini.

**STATEMENT OF KAMBIZ HOSSEINI, VOICE OF AMERICA,
WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. HOSSEINI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Casey and distinguished members of the subcommittee, and honored panelists and guests, my name is Kambiz Hosseini. I'm the host and writer of the program called "Parazit" on the Voice of America Persian News Network.

This subcommittee has heard from distinguished policymakers and human rights activists. I respectfully point out to the honorable chairman of the subcommittee that I am a journalist, satirist,

²⁰The Council of the European Union, "Council Regulation (EU) No. 359/2011 of 12 April 2011 concerning restrictive measures directed against certain persons, entities and bodies in view of the situation in Iran," Official Journal of the European Union, April 14, 2011, available at <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:100:0001:0011:EN:PDF>>.

comedian, a bad boyfriend, and just a plain old Iranian who wants to help his country.

My testimony today reflects my personal perspective. It does not represent the view of the U.S. Government. I hope it will be of value to the subcommittee in considering the critical issues of human rights and democratic reform in Iran.

I and a talented team of producers began our program in 2009, with the goal of bringing a fresh and entertaining perspective on events inside Iran to our audience. Our goal remains the same as it was since the beginning: being the voice of voiceless youth inside Iran, and projecting and amplifying what they are whispering on the streets.

Despite all governmental pressure to limit basic freedom in Iran, my generation is sending—I was born in 1975, by the way—sending a clear message to the Islamic Republic. We want our basic rights as human beings. We criticize the Iranian Government with respect, and we make fun of hypocrisy of political figures in a civilized manner. We try to be civilized with them, even though they're not civilized with us. We offer dialogue, and we defend universal human rights and values for all Iranian, including those authorities inside Iran who dislike the show because of its anticensorship spirit.

And how we do it? We do it Persian-style, with humor—dark humor. Dark, because nothing bright is coming out of today's Iran, where women are forced to obey laws that are discriminatory, children are being executed, information is censored, prisoners don't have basic rights, lawyers are in jail simply because they wanted to defend human rights, and artists and filmmakers, like Jafar Panahi, who is an internationally acclaimed director, is prohibited from pursuing his art for next 20 years. Imagine, 20 years. If that happens to me, I'll commit suicide today.

I believe that currently in Iran the human rights situation is absurd, and that's exactly what our program is doing, showing the absurdity of the system to the audience. Believe me, watching irrational—if you knew Persian and you watched the irrational and illogical speeches made by the officials in Iran, they're as funny as watching "Waiting for Godot" live for 3 hours. You would laugh. That's what we are doing right now.

And it's working. Our show is working. And we have over 428,000 fans, just on Facebook, where they leave comments proactively and communicate with us in a manner that sometimes make us think that they are producing this show and we are their audience. Our broadcasts reach Persian-speaking audience in Iran and the entire Persian-speaking world, including the large Iranian diaspora outside Iran.

As the Iranian Presidential election of summer 2009, and their aftermath, unfolded, our show became an important rallying point for many Iranians, particularly young Iranians, to stay connected and continue their quest for democratic change in Iran. We have continued this dialogue with our audience ever since. We use all available communications means to stay connected, and our audience in Iran remains in touch, despite the Iranian Government's severe limitations on electronic communications and free access to information.

It's important to note that many people in Iran struggle to view our program, as the Iranian Government has aggressively jammed our satellite broadcasts. In fact, our program name, "Parazit," means "static" in Persian, which is what many Iranians' viewers see when they try to view or listen to international satellite broadcasts their government has jammed.

But, we will continue to reach out, you know. We're sending the message of hope for our audience. Our audience is why we do "Parazit." I believe our program speaks to, and for, the many people inside Iran who lack the freedom to express themselves.

We remain in constant contact with our viewers and fans. And they help shape the direction of our show. When we announce a guest for our program, for instance, thousands of suggestions and questions flood in from our viewers and help to inform the questions we ask our guest. In addition, we welcome and respond to viewer feedback on who deserves mention for positive and negative actions within Iran. Through this and other means, we give our audience a chance to speak out about conditions and events in Iran they might not otherwise have.

Perhaps someday the Iranian Government will lift the electronic curtain it has built around its people. Unless and until that day comes, our show and VOA Persian, in general, will work to keep the lines of communication between the Iranian people and the United States open.

I thank the chairman and the distinguished subcommittee for the opportunity to offer my comments, and would be pleased to respond to any easy question. [Laughter.]

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hosseini follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAMBIZ HOSSEINI

Chairman Casey and distinguished members of the subcommittee and honored panelists and guests, my name is Kambiz Hosseini, and I am the host of the program "Parazit" on the Voice of America's Persian News Network. This subcommittee has heard from distinguished policymaker and human rights activists. I respectfully point out to the honorable chairman and the subcommittee that I am a journalist, satirist, and program host. My testimony today reflects my personal perspective; it does not represent the views of the U.S. Government. I hope it will be of value to the subcommittee in considering the critical issues of Human Rights and Democratic Reform in Iran.

I and a talented team of producers began our Program in 2009, with the goal of bringing a fresh and entertaining perspective on events inside Iran to our audience. Our goal remains the same as it was since the beginning: being the voice of voiceless youth inside Iran and projecting what they are whispering on the streets. Despite all governmental pressure to limit basic freedom in Iran, my generation is sending a clear message to the Islamic republic: we want our basic rights as human beings. We criticize the Iranian Government with respect, and make fun of political figures in a civilized manner. We offer dialogue and we defend universal human rights and values for all Iranians including those authorities inside Iran who dislike the show because of its anticensorship spirit. And how we do it?

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Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

We're so grateful to each of you for your appearance today and for your testimony. We are reminded that, when we confront a challenge this difficult, in terms both what the Iranian people are up against and the international response, government alone, and governments alone, cannot solve this problem or provide the kind of help that we need. So, those who are outside of government and are providing the kind of testimony and advocacy that you've already demonstrated, whether your expertise is in communications or in public policy or in the arts or other ways to communicate, it's critically important.

And, for each of you, whoever would want to respond to this—I don't necessarily direct it at any one person—but, how would you assess, right now, the strength, or the status, maybe is a better word, of the Green Movement today? And just give us kind of your sense of where things are. Because, of course, for many Americans, the coverage, in June 2009, was significant. There are some other events that played out in that same time period that, at least in my judgment, watching it and remembering it, started to push the story off the television, I think, unfortunately, at the time. But, I wanted to get your sense of where things are today.

Ms. BAKHTIAR. I'd like to say that the civil and human rights movement inside of Iran is alive and well, as you saw in the broad massive demonstrations, a couple of years ago and subsequently. However, the reason why you're not seeing that same outpouring of popular discontent is because Iran has had, now, 2 years to basically hone its repression skills, its repression machinery, if you will. And it has nearly a complete monopoly over mass communications. And it is basically using the high price of oil to bankroll this kind of repression on the Iranian people.

And you also have to understand the psyche of the Iranian people. We're coming out of 30 years of a recent history of mass violence, starting with the 1979 Revolution, then, subsequently, the 8-year Iran/Iraq war, leaving hundreds of thousands dead, and then the mass executions that followed afterward, and the extreme repressions. These have left the Iranian people deeply scarred and wishing to see their aspirations for democracy in Iran to come to fruition in a bloodless way.

They've also witnessed what's going on around them, 800-plus killed in Syria, thousands killed in Libya, massive repression in Bahrain. And they have no doubt that their own government is willing to use the same repression and kill thousands to stay in power.

And they're actually showing a sign of political maturity to not want to start this violence and bloodshed. They basically believe that any form of transformation that comes with heavy violence also has the danger of bringing forward another violent and repressive regime. At the same time, they also understand that the popular aspirations of the people of Iran, for democracy and human rights, can't be stifled forever.

Now, what can we do to help them? We need to try to create an environment where they can have access to information. We need to expose these massive human rights violations and also empower their communications means, which I have several concrete ideas, if you'd like, I can later address. And we believe that, when this environment is created, where Iranian people can communicate, where they have access to information, that environment will again allow them to collectively raise their voices. But, unfortunately, no one can predict when. There's always a chance that an unpredictable event can spark protests and mass demonstrations again.

Senator CASEY. Thank you, Ms. Bakhtiar.

Would either of our two other witnesses like to comment on this?

Mr. APOSTOLOU. Got it, thank you very much.

Well, first of all, as I mentioned, the leaders have been isolated. So, that's obviously had an effect. But, what was interesting was the demonstrations in mid-February that followed the fall of Mubarak, which showed, you know, people Iran are watching what's happening elsewhere.

In terms of the horizontal connections among the movement, many of these have now been broken. Many of the organizers have been arrested or they've been forced to flee the country. But, at the street level, there's clearly a lot of discontent. What we've seen is that there are people organizing autonomously. Clearly, helping them with organizational techniques is very important. I've spoken to Arab activists who have said to me—and actually, Wael Ghonim, the Google executive, said this publicly—that they were inspired by what the Iranians did in 2009. They were amazed. They said, "Wow, the Iranians stood up to that regime? Well, I can do that in my own country." And what's interesting is to hear from those Arab activists, who now say, "Well, I'd like to help the Iranians, in turn, because they inspired me."

So, I think there is great potential there. But, you know, I think Rudi's absolutely right, we shouldn't expect people to stick their necks needlessly on the line, but I think the occasion will come.

Mr. HOSSEINI. I just want to add something really quick, that you don't see clear evidence of protests, on physical evidence. But, online this movement does exist, where people can go without, you know, getting identified, and all that.

And it's so interesting that now, when, for instance, a football player—a soccer player says something about government, he becomes the icon, and he becomes the talk of the town. And people go after him and try to support him on live show, keeping—keep calling the sports shows, because—not because of he's a good soccer player, because he made that comment about government. So, it's just—like they said, it's fire under ashes. And any opportunity that that movement that has changed, shifted from, "Where is my boat?" to, "Death to the dictator," and broad prodemocracy movement will explode.

Senator CASEY. By way of followup, before I move to Senator Risch, that last point you made, I think is very important. I said, at the time, and I think I've said it a number of times since then, that even though we didn't see people on the streets, month after month, and we didn't have a lot of coverage of it, that I've always believed that, once something stirs in someone's heart and they want to take action, just because they're not on the streets every day, doesn't mean that there isn't a movement. It might be quieter, it might be more repressed, but it's still there. And I think there's plenty of evidence to show that.

And I think we also, here in the United States, tend to underestimate how difficult it is to start and to take action and to sustain what we've seen both in Iran, as well as in Tunisia and Egypt and Syria, among other places that we could mention.

I have a few other questions, but we'll move to Senator Risch.

Senator RISCH. Let me ask you this. What was the pool of people—how many people were in the pool who were looked at as the leaders of the movement in 2009? Was it "an" individual, two individuals, three individuals? What was the pool of these people? Whoever wants to take that on.

Ms. BAKHTIAR. The pool of the individuals that they were—I'm sorry, can you ask the question again?

Senator RISCH. Well, how many leaders were there of the protests, in 2009?

Ms. BAKHTIAR. Well, I think the natural leader came out to be President Mousavi, as you saw. He was the natural leader. But, also you saw various voices. You saw President Khatami, the former President, also speaking out. You saw Karroubi, another opposition leader, speaking out. So, there are various leaders, but obviously all of them have been silenced right now.

Senator RISCH. And that's the followup I have. I—you know, I—the individuals you've identified, of course, we all saw. But, I mean, the way these things work, generally, somebody else is in charge of the mechanics, as opposed to these people who are speaking out. Is it the same thing there? They've been silenced? They've been—

Ms. BAKHTIAR. One of the first things you saw, right after the elections that same day, was the raiding of Mousavi's headquarters and the arrest of several of his key men. And that's what's basically been happening. There's been a lot of arrests of the top opposition, right under the top echelon; even their sons, their

daughters have been arrested. And also the key players in the Green Movement have been arrested, so that the movement was brought, basically, to a virtual standstill for a while, it seemed.

But, again, this movement has no natural leaders anymore. It's become a movement of everybody who opposes this government, everybody who wants freedoms, and everybody who wants human rights respected in this country. So, it has become a very undefined movement, basically almost a civil rights movement for human and civil rights.

Senator RISCH. And is there someone who—my impression is that movements always do better if they've got a strong leader. Is there a person like that, that people look to as—that they may rise, at some point in time, to lead this?

Ms. BAKHTIAR. When you look at the youth of Iran that are in the prisons right now—the Navid Khanjanis, the Emid Baghis, the Nasrin Sotoudehs, the Seifzadehs, the Mohammad Koboudvands—these are all potential leaders in Iran's future. But, I can't think of anybody who has risen right now, other than the leaders that we've mentioned, as a particular figure to be leading the movement.

Senator RISCH. And all these people that you have indicated have been—that were arrested shortly after the elections—do you track those people, as far as where they are or what's happening to them, or what have you?

Ms. BAKHTIAR. Yes, we do. There were numerous people arrested. And, of course, that's part of our organization's job, to track them, to see who's been released, what sentencing they're receiving. And you have to understand, you saw the show trials. Many of these protestors have been arrested, they've been tortured, they've been forced into giving false confessions, they've been tried, and they've been sentenced unjustly. In some cases, people have been executed. And this is basically what's unfolding inside the prisons of Iran.

Senator RISCH. Is there a standard for the execution, or it subjective? That is, they just choose people that they think are going to be—

Ms. BAKHTIAR. There is a judge that we have targeted as part of the 15 men of violence our organization is targeting as Iranian officials that are responsible, directly, for the human rights violations that are going on inside the country. Judge Salavati, we're trying to figure actually what his credentials are to be a judge. But, he is also one of the judges who's doling out very harsh sentencing—10 years, 9 years—for protestors. And he is also sentencing young men to death for protesting, saying that they were protesting, when they weren't protesting, in the case of Arash Rahmanipour, a young 19-year-old who was executed last year, on claims of enmity with God.

So, there are judges, yes, doling out unfair sentences based on—for example, another young man, Mohamad Valian was a 20-year-old who was arrested. And they had taken his picture throwing three stones at a protest. And they arrested him, and his trial lasted 7 minutes. And, in 7 minutes, he was convicted, to death. Now, we were able to launch a video campaign and get that death sentence overturned to 3 years. But, again, this is what we're deal-

ing with, a very haphazard, unjust way of sentencing the Iranian people.

Senator RISCH. Is there any sense that any of these individuals understand that, when and if the regime crumbles, that they're going to be held accountable, either by the Iranian people or by World Court or something like that? Is there any sense of that at all?

Ms. BAKHTIAR. Well, I'm sure there is. I'm sure that speaks to the level of repression we're seeing there. It seems like they are looking around the region and what's going on in the region, and upping the ante on the repression in their own country. So, I believe that, yes, they do understand that they will be subject to international law, and, eventually, the law of their own country.

Senator RISCH. Finally, you made reference, on page 4 of your remarks; you said several European companies are suspected of selling surveillance technologies to Iran. Can you identify those companies for me?

Ms. BAKHTIAR. Yes. I'd like to speak to the issue of access to information and safe communications, which are two areas which the United States must be proactive in and should be focusing on.

With regards to the Internet, we're strongly recommending investing in wireless, satellite-based technology. There's technology right now inside of Iran which actually would allow the Iranian people to download the Internet through their television via their satellite dishes. We need to provide the service for that.

Now, as long as the Internet is carried through fiber optics, we have to find a way to counter that, because fiber optics will always allow a government to block it, and always has the ability to be controlled by the government. So, the sooner that we invest in the wireless technology, the better.

Now, with regards to satellite television, Iran consistently is jamming television broadcasts, as well, which is very illegal. It's against international law. And, by all means, we should stop it. And we can stop it, because, ironically, the same satellite company which is beaming in the programming from outside of the country—which we were talking about, like "Parazit", which is being blocked by the Iranian Government—that same satellite company, which is called Eutelsat, is also the same company that is also providing, inside of Iran, the state-controlled television and radio information.

So, the way we need to operate here is, force Eutelsat to basically hold Iran accountable and hold Iran to international standards. This is easily doable. What you tell them is, is, "Either you get Iran to stop jamming programming from outside the country, or they lose the opportunity to channel their own programming into the country, because you can stop—Eutelsat can stop sending programming into the country." And the U.N. agency, the International Telecommunications Union, should strongly pressure Iran to stop its illegal jamming activity, as well.

Senator RISCH. Ms. Bakhtiar, you still didn't name the several European companies that are suspected of selling surveillance equipment to—

Ms. BAKHTIAR. Yes. I'm sorry, I don't have that information right now.

Senator RISCH. OK.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator CASEY. Thanks very much.

I wanted to ask a question in reference to testimony provided to us this morning by Mr. Hosseini. On page 2 of your testimony—and you highlighted part of this in your summary of the testimony—you say, and I’m quoting, “We have over 428,000 fans, just on Facebook where they leave comments proactively and communicate with us in a manner that sometimes makes us think that they are producing the show and we are their audience. Our broadcasts reach Persian-speaking audiences in Iran, in the entire Persian-speaking world, including the large Iranian diaspora outside of Iran.” That’s from your statement.

And I’d ask you, based upon all of that interaction that you have, what advice do you have for us to be able to keep making the case, not just against the regime, but about the moral gravity of this challenge that we face? Because sometimes bills and legislation and action here doesn’t translate very well, and we often don’t communicate very well. And I just want to get your sense of how you see this challenge, from your vantage point.

Mr. HOSSEINI. I want to refer to what you mentioned earlier, about—that the human rights issue in Iran is a moral issue for United States, a moral obligation, moral duty. I think you should communicate with people, via media, and translate this for them, and try to let them know that, “Hey, this is how we think, here, United States, and this is a moral value for us.”

And also, don’t underestimate the power of media. I believe we can do a lot with what we have in Persian Service, if we had just a little bit more money. You know, we could pump it up to something very more interesting than what we have right now. And this is the only channel of communication that we have with Iranian people. And supporting them with this only channel of communication, I think, to me, we can proceed a lot with all we want to do, as a human being, and help them.

This is the only thing I can recommend. Support media and don’t underestimate the power of media.

Senator CASEY. And you purposefully named the show “Parazit”, which means “static.” Tell me about that, in terms of the thematic underpinning of that name, why you chose it, and how it’s so relevant.

Mr. HOSSEINI. Look, I basically made the show for myself. When I was a young—younger man in Iran, I used to go through those channels and I—you know, I was thirsty to get some sort of information. You know, please, give me some sort of truth. Because you can’t—you know, any normal man in the world who watches the state media in Iran, you can say they’re lying. You—that’s—you use your common sense. This is what we do on our show, too; we use common sense a lot. You use your common sense, as a viewer, you sit down and you watch the state media; you know they’re lying. You know you can’t trust these people.

I make the show for myself, a young man who was thirsty to get information. When I sit in front of camera, I’m like—I see myself in my little room, in the small town in Iran. And I used to—this is my experience—I used to surf through the channels, and I’d see

a lot of static, because of the jamming, you know. And it's frustrating that you see all the static. And through all the noises, you want to hear something, you know, a sentence from a newscaster or something. So, I thought, why not we call our self "Static"? That's who we are. And we're going to be static in Iranian government's face.

Senator CASEY. You're obviously reaching a lot of people in a very direct way, and especially young people. What do you see as the main impediment that you confront to making your audience even bigger? Is there a mechanical impediment, or is it more complicated than that?

Mr. HOSSEINI. Yes, we have—like Rudi said, we have this Green Movement that is alive, and we have all those people that—who oppose the government—are with us; they agree with whatever we say, and we all have that base of audience that we have had.

We are trying to reach out to those lower-class people, who voted for Mr. Ahmadinejad and who are supporting the government, despite the fact that this government is brutally violating human rights in Iran every—everyday basis. So, what we are trying to do is win the heart and mind of those lower-class people, who are getting paid by government to survive, and they have no choice—morally, sometimes they know that this is wrong, what they're doing. But, they're getting paid, they have to survive. We're trying to reach out to them. Like those Basijis and plain-clothed people that you see on the streets, we're trying to communicate with them. Like, we had a show, a couple of months ago, that we communicated directly with Basijis, and we talked to them, and we said—and we got some responses, too, from them.

We get e-mails from people who support Ahmadinejad and who support Abdul Khomeini. And it's very interesting to—I can forward some of them to you, if you're interested to read those. They're very interesting to see that people are frustrated. The economy is not that good in Iran, and people are struggling to survive. And that's their main—this is the main concern right now: economy. They want to feed their family, and they can't do it. So, those people, they're communicate with us. They send us e-mail, they send us comments, and all that. And it's heartbreaking, but those are the people we're aiming for: lower class, people who live in small cities and villages, and they vote for certain candidate without knowing who that person is.

Senator CASEY. And you obviously think some of them are persuadable, to use a word in our lexicon. Yes?

Mr. HOSSEINI. Yes.

Senator CASEY. And even some—a good number who may have been supporters of Ahmadinejad in the past?

Mr. HOSSEINI. Yes. We, as our audience is growing, we suspect that we're getting some of those, you know? Because how many people can—how do you call a show popular? How many people in a 70 million population country can watch a show that you call that show popular? And I think we have the base of all oppositions on our show, but we're getting bigger every day. The number I told you, 428,000, a week ago—10 days ago, we had 4—we just reached 400,000; so, 28,000 in 10 days. To me, it's skyrocketing, these num-

bers, and I'm sure that we're tapping into the lower class, because now they're interested in our common sense.

Senator CASEY. I'd ask the same question to the other two witnesses. Is there anything you can tell us about this communications challenge, and what is the best strategy?

Mr. APOSTOLOU. Well, thank you very much.

I think what Kambiz has done is very important. Because, if you think about it, in any dictatorship, to be a subject of that dictatorship is to be a target of broadcast; that's all they're doing to you all day: broadcasting, broadcasting, broadcasting. In his case, though, they're broadcasting to him. So, that interaction and giving people that ability to speak is very, very important.

I think the second thing is, he's right, that there is a base of support of the regime. This is not a hollow regime. This is not the meaningless NDP regime in Egypt, where nobody even knew what the ruling party stood for in the last few years. There are people who really do believe in this regime. And the government in Tehran is very good at feeding that base and mobilizing it. So, if you can find the correct message to undermine that, that's absolutely critical.

The other point is, you have to make people understand that—again, Rudi made this point—we're not asking for excessive risk. But, at a certain point, you've got to take your frustration and activism offline. I mean, political power does not grow out of a Facebook account. And so, there has to be a certain movement at a certain point. But, if you can undermine the base of the regime and teach people, themselves, how to do that—this has been done elsewhere; there are other places where people have gone to people in their area and said, "Look, I know your husband, your uncle, your brother, your cousin is in the police, in the Basij. You know, I want you to know there's a future for them in a new democratic Iran. We're not after you; we're not after the little guys. We're after the big ones." And eroding the base that way is a very useful technique.

Ms. BAKHTIAR. First, if you don't mind, I'd like to address Senator Risch's question. We are, in fact doing research on the companies. And we don't want to name them publicly, just yet. But, aside from Nokia Siemens, which was the German company which was mentioned 2 years ago, Ericsson, the Swedish company, and Huawei, the Chinese company, which have been released, we are doing a comprehensive report.

Senator RISCH. Thank you.

Ms. BAKHTIAR. And we can forward you that information when it's done.

Senator CASEY. OK.

Ms. BAKHTIAR. And, as far as what to do, I think I mentioned it. Again, I can't stress how important it is to help Iranians be able to access information and have safe communications. Again, there's concrete ways that we can actually help Iranians be able to access the Internet using these wireless satellite-based Internet-access technologies. And there's also the ability to lift sanctions on the hardware that's needed to use this technology. But, we need to be providing the proper service for them. And, as long as the Internet, like I said, is carried in fiber optics, it's a losing battle for us. The

sooner we can get on the wireless technology and the sooner we can provide it for the Iranian people, the better.

And again, I can't stress the fact that there is a company called Eutelsat, which is the satellite company which is responsible for feeding Iran all of its own programming and also bringing in programming from abroad. We must be applying pressure to Eutelsat, to put pressure on Iran to stop jamming the satellite and the programming.

But, as far as international institutions, I have to say, we've had the—we very much welcome the administration's engagement recently with the Human Rights Council and the assignment of the Special Rapporteur. That was a very significant achievement, and we believe it will have significant ramifications and be able to expose great injustices that are happening inside of the prisons of Iran. And I think that's the most important thing, is to be able to get information out of the country and give information back into the hands of the Iranian people, empowering them to create the environment that they need to have their voices heard.

Senator CASEY. Well, thank you all for your testimony.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say before we conclude? We're just about ready to wrap up, and I want to give you that opportunity—I know that there are a number of things we did not cover. But, is there anything you wanted to say before we go?

Mr. APOSTOLOU. Can I just quickly say with regard to Rudi's point about Nokia Siemens networks. I think it's extremely important that this be pursued. They provided a monitoring center for mobile telephony. That's standard when you provide this sort of equipment, but it's standard when you provide it to a country that has law enforcement agencies, as opposed to people who impose human rights abuses. What they have done is that they claim to have sold that business to other companies—and quite who those new companies are and who's doing that is important—because you cannot operate this sort of equipment without ongoing updates of both software and hardware. It's a very sophisticated kit. That needs to be fully investigated. Nokia Siemens does a tremendous amount of business in the United States. And, you know, many of us carry their telephones. They do an awful lot of U.S. Government work. And the potential to expose that, I think, is very important. And that needs to be very, very fully investigated. The two companies that have been named as being involved here, Trovicor and Perusa, and we don't really know who owns them.

Senator CASEY. Thank you very much.

And I know that the Congress has more work to do, and the administration has more work to do, even though you could point to progress in both branches of government. But, we have more to do. And this hearing today, and your testimonies, will give us, not just inspiration, but also the information that we need to move forward. And we look forward to working with you as we move into a new chapter.

And we have to do everything we can to meet the moral obligation we have, and also to recognize that, what happened in June 2009, and leading up to June 2009, has changed that country forever, even though we may not see daily manifestations of it on our television sets. But, I think what's stirred in the hearts of people

in that country have changed it forever. And we've got to make sure that we're providing even more tools and more strategies to allow what is in the hearts of the people to be able to be fully realized. And I look forward to working with you on that.

Thank you very much, and we're adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:55 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

