

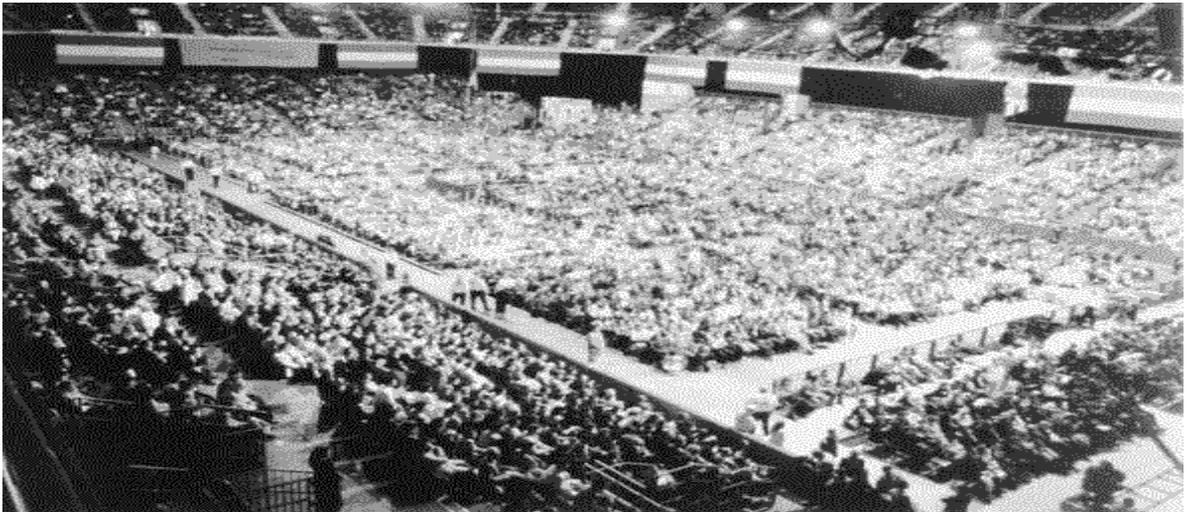
Women, Voice of the Oppressed

Maryam Rajavi Calls for United Front Against Fundamentalism



On Friday, 21 June 1996, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, President-elect of the Iranian Resistance, delivered a speech to a huge audience of Iranians abroad in London. In her speech, entitled, "Women, Voice of the Oppressed," Mrs. Rajavi spoke of struggle with gender based oppression, the necessity of forming a united anti-fundamentalist front, and the rights of women in future democratic Iran.

Reuters news agency reported on 21 June that: Maryam Rajavi, a leading opponent of Iran's Moslem rulers, called on the international community on Friday to take a decisive stand against what she called Tehran's "export of fundamentalism and terrorism." Rajavi, named by the Iranian resistance as president-elect of Iran, was speaking at a rally and concert in London attended by about 25,000 people in defence of persecuted women and intellectuals.





Maryam Rajavi addresses crowd of 25 thousand in London, calls for the formation of united anti-fundamentalist front



Massoud Rajavi: 25,000-strong gathering in London shows Resistance's President-elect enjoys majority support among Iranian people



Text of speech by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, June 21, 1996

Women, Voice of the Oppressed

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Maryam Rajavi addresses crowd of 25 thousand in London, calls for the formation of united anti-fundamentalist front

This evening, the Iranian Resistance's President-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, addressed a gathering of 25 thousand people at London's Earls Court Exhibition Centre. To the tremendous welcome of the audience, Mrs. Rajavi delivered her remarks at the program entitled Women, Voice of the Oppressed.

The meeting was sponsored by the Women's Human Rights International Association and the Association for the Liberty of Culture. A large number of British parliamentarians and dignitaries had endorsed the event. In addition to Iranians, various groups of British and Arab intellectuals, politicians, writers, artists, and women's rights activists were also present.

Exposing the misogynous character of the mullahs and their inhuman pressures on Iranian women, Mrs. Rajavi said: From Tehran, the octopus of fundamentalism has extended its blood-drenched tentacles into Islamic states and Muslim societies around the world. Their foreign policy consists of meddling in the affairs of Islamic countries, issuing fatwas to murder

foreign nationals and launching terrorist operations abroad.

I emphasize that these reactionaries who suppress the Iranian people and particularly Iranian women under the cloak of religion have nothing to do with Islam. They are the peddlers of religion and exploit the name of Islam to enhance their sinister and inhuman objectives, Mrs. Rajavi declared.

She also emphasized that the mullahs' ongoing suppression in Iran and export of terrorism and fundamentalism abroad make it essential for the international community to adopt a decisive approach. She called on women to take the initiative in forming a united front against fundamentalism.

Marzieh, the grande dame of Persian music, performed the Operetta in Solidarity accompanied by London's Festival Orchestra and an ensemble of traditional Iranian musicians.



Mmes. Affaf Radi, the famous classical singer from Egypt; Wilhelmenia Fernandez, an opera singer from the United States; Luzmila Carpio, the Queen of Bolivian singers; and two Palestinian bands, Aaras and Al bara'em, also performed at the event.

Mrs. Nawal El Saadawi, a famous writer in Egypt and the Arab world, and the Lord Avebury, chairman of the British parliamentary human rights group and chairman of the British Committee for Iran's Freedom, also addressed the gathering.

Held on the 15th anniversary of June 20, the beginning of the Iranian people's resistance against the mullahs' religious dictatorship and the Day of Martyrs and Political Prisoners of Iran, Women, Voice of the Oppressed, was broadcast live via satellite all over the world, including Iran. Thousands of Iranians in held meetings at 13 loctions in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark and the United States watched the event live.

Reporters, photographers and camera crews of the over 100 international news media covered the gathering.

Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran - Paris

June 21, 1996

Women, Voice of the Oppressed

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**Massoud Rajavi: 25,000-strong gathering in London shows
Resistance's President-elect enjoys majority support among Iranian people**

Following the magnificent rally at Earl's Court London where Mrs. Marya Rajavi, the Iranian Resistance's President-elect, addressed an audience of 25,000 people, Mr. Massoud Rajavi, President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, appeared in a gathering of thousands of combatants in an NLA base camp.

In a two-hour speech broadcast live via satellite for Europe and Iran, Mr. Rajavi said: Iran's ruling mullahs tried full-force and mobilized all of their embassies across Europe to resort to every conspiracy, blackmail and intimidation to prevent the Iranians' gathering yesterday in London or reduce the number of participants, and particularly prevent the attendance of the Iranian Resistance's President-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi. The firm determination of our compatriots, anxiously seeking Iran's liberation, however, surpassed every conspiracy and dumbfounded the mullahs and their agents, as the international news agencies reported on the largest-ever gathering of 25,000 Iranians abroad in the presence of the Resistance's President-elect.

Mr. Rajavi added:

1. This magnificent, unprecedented rally, beamed five hours live into Iran, Middle East, Europe and the United States, once again indicated that the absolute majority of Iranians, both inside Iran and abroad, support the President-elect Maryam Rajavi who heads the only democratic alternative for the illegitimate religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran.
2. The demonstrations, acts of protest, and publicity activities in 53 cities across Iran which were carried out under conditions of maximum repression, upon the call by the Mojahedin's Command Headquarters inside Iran on the occasion of June 20 and in support of the Iranian Resistance's President-elect, further testify this truth.



3. If Iran's ruling mullahs, their accomplices and those who have set sights on this illegitimate regime deny the truth, they can test their chances versus the Iranian Resistance in a free presidential election, based not on the Velayat-e Faqih but on the principle of national sovereignty, or in an election for the Constituent Assembly which should be carried out with sufficient guarantees, under the auspices of the United Nations.

4. The mullahs' illegitimate regime, however, has never and will never submit to a genuine election and the Iranian people's free choice. This is exactly why on the 15th anniversary of

June 20- the day when Khomeini's guards opened fire on the peaceful demonstration of half a million residents of Tehran- and while the people of Iran have offered at least 100,000 of their most valiant children to the cause of freedom and national sovereignty, I reiterate that this regime must be overthrown in its entirety at the hands of the National Liberation Army and with the nation's backing. The day of Iran's freedom is approaching.

5. By bringing pressure on European governments, brandishing terrorist threats, or offering economic concession, Khomeini's remnants have tried their utmost to prevent freedom of expression and activities for Iranians even in Europe, thousands of kilometers away from Iran. The United Nations and its member states, especially the European community members, must not allow such flagrant violations of human rights and the Charter of the United Nations.

6. The mullahs' regime is engulfed in numerous economic, social and political crises, isolated both in Iran and on the international level. An inflation rate of above 100%, heavy foreign debt, the participation of below 10% of the Iranian people in the recent elections farce, as the international news agencies reported and Tehran-based diplomats testified, have made the mullahs "short of breath," "divided" and "deeply hated." With a "disintegrated" system, it has "no way out of the impasse" due to political repression. Therefore, the final stage of this regime has come and it is taking rapid strides towards collapse and overthrow.

The regime invited two members of the European Parliament on a private three-day visit to Tehran so that upon return one of them would hastily describe the Mojahedin and the Iranian Resistance as lacking social base inside Iran. It was a futile attempt, however, and did not arouse but the Iranian people's contempt and political outrage of many members of the European Parliament. As Mr. McMillan Scott, the other MEP who went on this three-day visit, bravely announced upon return, "Iran's fundamentalist regime is broke and it needs better

relations with Europe. But its international actions are hostile to a more peaceful Middle East and international repression continues against religious and other minorities.”

The regime’s mobilization of its embassies and Intelligence Ministry agents in various countries to mutually accuse the Mojahedin and the Iranian Resistance of violations of human rights - that is to change the places of the executioner and the victim- is a worn-out method which will arouse but contempt and despise.

Many political observers, media and researchers in various countries today describe the regime as being “on the verge of collapse,” with an economy “worse than bad,” at a stage similar to “the final years of the shah’s rule,” which has “lost its dynamism and is incapable of taking any steps forward.”

7. Viper never gives birth to a dove. The regime survives solely on stepped up terror, repression, and export of terrorism. As in the past, one cannot expect anything from this regime in future other than more repression, terrorism, export of fundamentalism, opposition to peace, and meddling in the affairs of neighboring and Islamic countries.

8. As in the past, appeasing policies such as the policy of critical dialogue will continue to render futile. The only way is to exercise decisiveness, and impose arms, economic and diplomatic embargo against this regime through binding decisions of the United Nations Security Council. Closure of the regime’s embassies and representations which are essentially involved in terrorism and espionage in other countries, is an indispensable step in curbing the mullahs’ unbridled terrorism on international level.

9. The Iranian Resistance’s President-elect who heads the democratic alternative of the National

Council of Resistance of Iran symbolizes the aspirations of the Iranian people in their quest for freedom, national and popular sovereignty, peace, co-existence, and economic and social development.

10. Iran's seats at the United Nations belong to the Iranian people and the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Its international recognition is the most effective, most necessary measure the world community can adopt against the illegitimate religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran which is the heart of tension, terror, and export of fundamentalism in today's world, and will be definitely defeated and overthrown by the Iranian people, Resistance and the National Liberation Army.

Secretariat of the National Council of Resistance of Iran - Paris
June 22, 1996

Women, Voice of the Oppressed

Maryam Rajavi Calls for United Front Against Fundamentalism

Text of speech by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi,
the Iranian Resistance's President-elect
June 21, 1996

I wish to thank you all for your generous sympathy and kind support. Greetings to my dear fellow-Iranians attending the meetings honoring June 20th in different countries who are listening now.

I am very happy to see you all and take part in this magnificent event. I had come to London on a private visit, and was invited to speak about the topic this gathering is addressing: Women, Voice of the Oppressed.

Each year, on this occasion, we speak of June 20th and of a cry for freedom that will reverberate forever in the history of Iran. It is only fitting for me to begin by honoring the 15th anniversary of this turning point.

June 20th for us, the people of Iran, was a day of destiny: the day the Iranian people arose against the suppression of freedoms. It is the day the pervasive and tortuous resistance against religious tyranny began. June 20th is rightly designated as the Day of Iranian Martyrs and

Political Prisoners, those shining stars who pierced the night of oppression with their enormous sacrifice to the cause of freedom and popular sovereignty.

I also wish to pay tribute to the women the world over who have striven for equality and emancipation, and to salute the oppressed women of my homeland, Iran, from whose ranks tens of thousands have fallen in the struggle for freedom.

Please allow me to pay my special respects to the memory of Ashraf Rajavi, a woman and a pioneer in our nation's Resistance, who endured much torture under the shah's regime and was martyred in February 1982 by Khomeini's henchmen. Before the eyes of other detainees in Evin prison, her murderers desecrated her lifeless body and then slapped around her infant son. Along with the other martyrs of this struggle, she has an immortal place in the history of our people. Hail to Ashraf and all standard-bearers and martyrs to the cause of freedom.

Indeed, suffering and sacrifice are the price we have to pay to attain our freedom. This is the essence of the relentless tug-of-war which gives meaning to humankind's "existence." This is why the song of freedom has never been silenced by the tyranny of despots, and why the flaming rage of the oppressed shall overturn the foundations of oppression.

Women are history's first victims of oppression. Besides having to endure political and socio-economic oppression, they must repent for the sin of being women.

Yet half of the human beings on this planet are women, and inevitably gender oppression and the culture inherent to it directly affect and enchain the other half of the human race, the men. Hence, genuine freedom for the individual and society is ultimately attainable solely through the emancipation of oppressed woman. In other words, discrimination against women

transcends and affects all other domains of human existence.

Sa'di, the great 12th century Iranian poet, has put it eloquently:

Of one body are the children of Adam
All created from a single gem
If fate afflicts one with great pain
How can others rest calm and sane.

History often tells us of slaves and celebrates their freedom, but so little is said about “the slaves of slaves,” the most tormented and oppressed members of human society. Today, we have assembled here so that their voice, lost in the chilling silence of centuries, may be heard: The voice of women, the voice of the oppressed.

The history of humankind is the history of human beings' glorious quest for freedom, and at the same time a wretched chronicle of oppression. While man gradually succeeded in freeing himself from the absolute dictates of nature, he soon found himself in the fetters of his fellow man. And thus history began with the oppression of man by man. Slavery, that great tragedy of human history, was directed by the likes of Nero and Pharaoh, and the voice of the oppressed was drowned out by the cracking whips of their masters. All that remained was the rattling of the shackles, and the dark age of slavery prevailed.

Was mankind to remain forever at the mercy of this blind destiny? One answer came on that fateful day near Nazareth, when Jesus Christ proclaimed: “He send me to cure the broken-hearted ... and to free the down-trodden.”

The message of Jesus was a clear statement on human destiny: “one can and must rebel against bondage and slavery.”

The revolt by Spartacus was doubtless rooted in the belief that slavery was not for ever and that freedom could ultimately be achieved. Spartacus and his fellows, however, knew that for them, at least, freedom was inconceivable, unless upon a cross. On the eve of the last battle, Spartacus cried: “My friends, we have come a long way together, longing to return to our land and live free. But tomorrow, we have to fight again. Perhaps there is no place for us in this world.”

The next day, 6,000 slaves were crucified along the road from Rome to Capua. That was the price of freedom. But the day came when the thunderous voice of the oppressed resonated everywhere and put an end to the age of slavery. Indeed, the pages of history may abound in oppression, pain and blood, but on the other side of every bitterness and humiliation is the sweetness and magnificence of liberation.

There was a time when such tyrants as Attila, Genghis Khan and Hitler roamed the earth, but now, in the new age of global communications and information, the interdependence of civilizations and the new relationships among nations inhibit such roguish aggression. History has never ceased to move on. By relentlessly challenging all obstacles to liberty, humanity has liberated itself from the fetters of antiquated social and political relationships, and charged forward.

But one cry, and one cry alone, has remained unanswered, stifled in the depths of history: It is the cry of “the slaves of slaves,” the cry of women, the voice of those enduring the ugliest of all oppressions. Gender-oppression ran so deep that no one believed it even existed. Gender

oppression was not considered as oppression at all, as only natural life form for women.

A woman I am

My bare feet

Pacing the parched Earth

Since the First Day

In search of a drop of water...

Women were doubly enslaved, once as all other slaves and all other oppressed people, who have been subjugated and exploited in every age of history, and once as women. Yes, the footprint of women can be seen in all shackles of bondage, and the voice of the oppressed can be heard in their smothered cries.

Extracting the history-long root of oppression from the dusty pages of oblivion, Simone de Beauvoir said: “All subjugated social classes did not exist at some point. They came to exist later. But women have always been there. They are women due to their physiological traits. But, spontaneously, the very word “woman” has an insulting ring to it in a man’s ears and produces in his mind a mixture of sexual exploitation and humiliation.”

The story of women is the tale of a latent oppression woven into the depths of their lives and their very existence. The bonds that tie women to their omnipresent oppressors are unique. Not even in their dreams do these first slaves on the face of the earth reject and annihilate their masters. When they themselves assume that their bondage is eternal, the tragedy is complete.

But there exists an even more painful story: The tragedy of women in my fettered homeland,

Iran, under the reign of the inhuman mullahs, who not only consider woman as eternally a slave, but also negate her humanity. Can one speak of women and the movement for equality without exposing the misogyny and barbarism of the fundamentalists who rule Iran?

About which aspect of this bitter, unbearable tragedy should I tell you? Should I speak of the hundreds of women who are assaulted in the streets everyday? Or of those arrested and lashed? Or of the respectable women forced to sign confessions that they are prostitutes, just because of the color of their dress or a lock of hair showing from beneath their scarves? Or of the women ruthlessly stoned to death?

Or should I tell you the tragic story of nine-year-old girls, who, according to the mullahs' laws, must be wed? Or about the 12 or 13-year-olds who are sold to 50 or 70-year-old men? Innocent children who wither away under physical and psychological stress. Or should I speak of the many victims of self-immolation and other forms of suicide?

In early 1992, the state-controlled media wrote that in the impoverished regions in northeastern Khorassan and southeastern Sistan and Baluchistan, small children are sold for \$60 to \$70. In north Khorassan alone, 1,700 such girls had been abandoned.

You have probably heard of the tragedy of millions of girl carpet weavers in Iran, who labor in damp, filthy workshops, where they contract paralysis, tuberculosis and scores of other diseases. These children irretrievably weave the prime of their youth into the fabric of the carpets they make.

Or should I tell of the multitude of women office employees, teachers and workers who were expelled from their jobs simply because they were women? According to official statistics by

the national census bureau in 1986, only nine percent of people with jobs were women. The situation has only deteriorated since.

Or should I recount the untold tales of suffering of the millions of homeless widows, women and children who fell victim to the unpatriotic war? The pain of homelessness, slander and humiliation; the pressures of destitution, rape and suppression?

Or should I tell you about the epic resistance of tens of thousands of women who were savagely tortured or executed for their defiance of the ruthless, despotic theocracy and for joining the ranks of the Resistance for freedom?

Or should I tell of the brutality and cruelty of the clerical regime's executioners, who sent elderly grandmothers, pregnant women and little girls before firing squads without even establishing their identities?

Or should I tell you the shocking stories of young women who were crushed under vicious tortures, raped and their blood drained on the eve of their execution, all in accordance with the mullahs' official decrees?

Let me stress that neither the people, nor history nor God will ignore these atrocities. These criminals will be held accountable for destroying so much talent and potential. As the Quran says in condemning the murder of girl children: "For what sin were you murdered?"

Hail to these martyred heroines in chains, who despite all the savagery, never surrendered, but continued to resist for freedom and liberation. They rushed headlong in search of freedom, guiding lights in the quest for liberty. Indeed, as Ashraf Rajavi said: The world has never

known what the Iranian people, and particularly the women of my homeland, have gone through in these years.

The head of the regime's Judiciary, Mullah Yazdi, has officially proclaimed: "A woman needs her husband's permission to leave her home, even to attend her father's funeral." (Friday prayers, Nov. 27, 1992).

Mullah Azari Qomi, one of the regime's ideologues, says: "The Vali-e Faqih (the regime's supreme leader) can forcibly marry girls against their own and their fathers' wishes."

Mullah Sadoughi, who was Khomeini's representative in central Iran, once said during a meeting of the Assembly of Experts: "It would be a shame and an utter disgrace for us to have a woman as President or Prime Minister."

In their theological teachings, in a bid to justify their astronomical lies, the mullahs stress that three groups of people must be lied to: "Women, infidels and hypocrites."

But what makes the inhuman mullahs so sinister is that they attribute their misogynous atrocities and reactionary stances to Islam. In truth, all these crimes and demagoguery are only to maintain power.

Thus, the Quran warns, "Woe to they who write up things and then attribute them to God in order to achieve their own ends." Iranian women have risen up against this monster, a monster which has emerged from the depths of the Dark Ages, whose very survival depends on misogyny and gender apartheid. This beast is not just the enemy of the Iranian people; it is at war with humanity .

This question, whether or not fundamentalism is a global danger and threat, is key. From Tehran, the beating heart of theocracy, the octopus of fundamentalism has extended its blood-drenched tentacles into Islamic states and Muslim societies around the world. Exploiting the religious beliefs of more than one billion Muslims, the mullahs ruling Iran promote expansionism, while exporting crisis and discord. Their foreign policy consists of meddling in the affairs of Islamic countries, issuing fatwas to murder foreign nationals and launching terrorist operations abroad. Other aspects of this policy include spending huge sums on procurement of armaments of all kinds, especially weapons of mass destruction such as biological, chemical and nuclear weapons.

Such a foreign policy is inherent to the fundamentalists' nature. The theocracy ruling Iran thrives on crises. It is hostile to the most important global peace initiative in the Middle East and its policies and actions only nourish warmongering extremists and fundamentalists, for the very survival of this regime depends on the continuation of crisis and conflict.

These realities demonstrate how the ominous specter of religious fascism haunts global peace. The world community, for its turn, has a moral duty to confront and overcome this phenomenon.

I again emphasize here that these reactionaries who suppress the Iranian people and particularly Iranian women under the cloak of religion have nothing to do with Islam. They are the peddlers of religion and exploit the name of Islam to enhance their sinister and inhuman objectives. Islam is the religion of peace, freedom, liberty, equality, love, mercy and liberation. The mullahs' fundamentalist mindset, however, rests upon vengeance, enmity and ignorance and is at war with human values and world peace.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, fundamentalism's brazen enmity toward human values and world peace has spilled onto issues of international concern. In 1993, during the International Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the Iranian regime opposed the principle of the universality of human rights. In 1994, during the World Conference on Population Control in Cairo, it opposed women's right to contraception. In 1995, during the World Conference on Women in Beijing, it opposed the principle of equality between women and men. And in 1996, adamant in its pursuit of terrorism and enmity toward peace, it rebuffed the Sharm al-Sheikh summit.

How should this common enemy be confronted? What is the solution, and who should mount the charge? The international community has so far failed to demonstrate enough sensitivity to the dangers of appeasing the religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran. Hence, the mullahs still find opportunities to take advantage of such conciliation. Through terrorist blackmail, they take the policies and even the moral principles of governments hostage.

Events in recent months confirm that the clerical regime always takes advantage of its diplomatic facilities to interfere in Middle Eastern countries and engage in assassinations in the West. Two months ago, the mullahs declared for the umpteenth time that the issue of the fatwa against British Novelist Salman Rushdie can only be settled by his murder. Faced with such a regime, decisiveness is the only policy option. It is not only a moral and humanitarian obligation, but a political and historical necessity as well. The future of democracy, development and peace on a global scale depends on such a policy.

Here, the issue of women and the movement for equality join with the fight against fundamentalism. Not only are women the standard-bearers of the movement for equality, but they are also the driving force behind development, peace and social justice. In this context, the

documents of the World Conference on Women in Beijing unequivocally underscore that “without active participation of women and without taking into account their views in all leadership levels, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be realized.”

Yes, in my view, humanity will be rid of the foreboding specter of fundamentalism only when women take on their leading role in this global challenge, and use every democratic means to block appeasement of the misogynous, inhuman mullahs of Iran. This is particularly the case because the issue of fundamentalism is at one and the same time the key political problem confronting Islamic nations, and the most critical foreign policy problem facing many other countries.

Allow me, therefore, to call upon my sisters, women throughout the world, to arise and form a world coalition against fundamentalism. Such a coalition would comprise all humanitarian, progressive women and men, who will doubtless rush to the assistance of Iranian women, the prime victims of the mullahs’ oppression. A common front against fundamentalism serves the interests of global peace, and will preclude a repeat of the bitter experience of appeasing fascism on the eve of the Second World War.

What impact will a leading role by women in the struggle against fundamentalism have on the women’s movement for equality?

I wish to underscore here that women’s leading role in the fight against fundamentalism doubly serves the movement for equality and the effort to uproot sexual discrimination. The only way to propel that movement forward is to link it with a progressive political movement. If women have no share in political power; if they are not part of the leadership and the

decision-making processes on social issues; if they do not have a serious, equal role in economic management; and if they are not actively and visibly involved in international politics; all the talk about equality between women and men rings hollow. Real equality only comes about when women take on key roles in tackling the primary challenges of the day.

In order to overturn the system of gender discrimination and bring about fundamental change, women must predominate political leadership for a specific period of time. The objective of such a predominant role in leadership is to guarantee equality and uproot sexual oppression, not to replace patriarchy with matriarchy. Thus, all the prerequisites and consequences are liberating in their essence. Once the oppression has been eradicated, the energies thus set free will break through the impasses currently confronting human society and will help to establish a new system of human relations, both within a community and on a global scale.

Now, in the great era of women's emancipation, the victims of centuries of the most dreadful historical oppression will echo the voices of all oppressed peoples. Today, the voice of women is indeed the voice of the oppressed, those whose cries reach no one: the voice of the children denied all rights and means to grow; the voice of the poor and destitute, who moan not just for lack of bread, but for lack of compassion.

Now it is the turn of women to rebel against all forms of oppression, to rise and end gender-based oppression and inequality, to unite women and men in their true human identity. They must rebel and give a new lease of life to human society, rise and topple the pillars of all oppression, tear asunder the status quo and chart a new course.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to speak of the achievements of women in the Iranian

Resistance, achievements which in reality belong to all women in the movement for equality. To enhance our gains, we look to our sisters' ideas and experiences the world over.

After a century of active participation in the social struggle, Iranian women came face to face with the onslaught of religious, terrorist dictatorship, namely the fundamentalists ruling Iran. As the reactionary beast awakened, the mounting difficulties had only one message for our women: All-out resistance. Capitulation and submission were impossible.

Women took part in the political struggle and rose up to resist the reactionaries and defend democratic freedoms. Now, they convey the cries of an enchained and oppressed, yet proud and resistant, nation.

After 15 years of struggle against the reactionaries, these pioneering women occupy key positions as leaders of the Resistance movement. Fifty-two percent of the Resistance's Parliament are women. The General Command of the National Liberation Army of Iran is made up essentially of women, and the Leadership Council of the Mojahedin, the pivotal force within the Resistance, is comprised entirely of women. Women also command and manage at different levels in the combat, technical and specialized units of the army, in the movement's political structure and in organizational affairs. Under their directorship, the male-female division of labor has become a thing of the past.

But how did we manage such achievements?

Twelve years ago, locked in a life-or-death struggle against the rule of the mullahs, the Resistance movement realized that women must take on greater responsibilities. At that juncture, our women played a prominent role in the fight against the clerical regime, but one thing was blocking the gates to change: doubts about women's capabilities.

In the story of women's liberation, tragedy and heroism are often ironically entwined. This is my constant feeling in my dealings with the women's struggle. See for yourself how well-entrenched male-dominated thinking is, in the roots and veins of society and culture.

Within our organization, which was fighting against the mullahs, all the heroism of women and the sacrifice of tens of thousands of women martyrs were still not enough to make us believe in their equality, to break the barriers of sexual oppression and discrimination. I sometimes thought to myself, what else must women do to make others believe in them? How is it that these women defeat the executioners in prisons with their bare hands, but cannot come to grips with political concepts and lack the necessary resolve to manage our affairs? Had this will and these emotions been created for women only to offer comfort to their husbands at home? I found that hard to believe.

Most tragically, these same women did not see themselves as sources of admirable heroism and the will to change. After all, women had historically brought about many wondrous achievements; the crux of the matter was their lack of faith in themselves. Hence the need to rebel against such misgivings.

It was then that we reached the conclusion that gradual change would prove useless, that the missing element and the real solution to break this mindset was women's participation in leadership.

Indeed, in our confrontation with the ruling reactionaries, we needed to rid ourselves of the residue of their thinking and values. Inevitably, we had to crush the heart of the reactionary misogyny which negates women's human identity and ability to lead the society. In this way women could break through the barriers of historical degradation and oppression embedded

within their own thinking, and believe in themselves. It was also necessary to convince the men that they need no longer question the capabilities of the women who had fought alongside them on all the battlefields of the struggle for freedom. Once these changes had overturned the mindset of all the Mojahedin in the form of an internal revolution, our women broke the spell of self-doubt. Not merely as isolated examples, but as a generation of emancipated women, they ably assumed key leadership responsibilities.

What new values did this transformation bring about?

What stood out the most among these women, was their sense of responsibility, their willingness to learn, their commitment to discipline, their impressive decisiveness, and most important of all, the selfless devotion which emanated from their human qualities. These traits also had a constructive impact on the work place. These were women who, in total selflessness and devotion, sacrificed everything; women who forsook their homes, family and beloved children in order to restore hundreds of thousands of devastated households and rescue millions of children being sucked down in the whirlpool of poverty and addiction. As the generation leading the movement for emancipation, they unilaterally devoted themselves to their ideals and responsibilities, so as to prevent the mullahs from condemning Iranian women to eternal slavery.

Before all else, they believed in themselves; that they were free and equal human beings; that they were not created for men and not identified with them; that they were no one's possession; that they owned their own body, life and emotions. They overcame the world of "the weaker sex," a world of subordination and irresponsibility, and were reborn in their true human image.

The first signs of this birth were the newly created relationships among women. They realized that they first had to like the women around them, if they were to act in solidarity with one another and accept each other's command.

It is perhaps appropriate for me to speak, beyond the many new values that blossomed in the revolution in our thinking, about the role of these women in maintaining a healthy relationship between women and men. It was only in this way that a mixed army of pure human relationships and enormous combat capability took shape, arousing the admiration of many observers.

And finally, one of our greatest achievements was that our women's emancipation immediately affected the liberation of our men, and improved their capabilities. Those men who rushed to welcome this change, despite its hardships, were proud to forge ahead in the path to equality.

Needless to say, in the world of discrimination, men, too, are enchained and enslaved by a domineering and authoritarian attitude. Truly, to deny the humanity of those human beings closest to him - his mother, sister and wife, must not a man first negate his own humanity? How else can a human being accept such oppression with a clear conscience? We have seen a generation of men regain their lost human identity in the movement to reject gender oppression, men who displayed the ultimate form of freedom and emancipation by accepting the leadership of women.

Yes, we were witness to the birth of a generation of liberated women and men, shining beacons in an auspicious transformation of human relationships. This transformation came about through the leadership of Massoud Rajavi. Because of it, our generation and our Resistance movement were thrust forward on the road of human evolution and advancement. Of course,

this generation, under this leadership, was tempered in an all-out anti-fundamentalist resistance. Its most important trait has been that in the political arena, it submitted to no compromise with the fundamentalists. This was a generation that arose on June 20th, 1981, to protest the suppression of liberties and, by continuing its endeavor after offering 100,000 martyrs, it demonstrated that it will not relent until it achieves - at whatever cost - the Iranian people's fundamental rights, namely freedom and national and popular sovereignty.

This generation crushed the mullahs' demagoguery about the war and obstructed the export of fundamentalism by campaigning relentlessly for peace in and out of Iran.

This generation broke the spell of the inhuman mullahs' posturing about religion through sacrifice and selflessness. It charted a Resistance that has today emerged as the democratic, progressive and popular answer to fundamentalism, and is recognized as the antithesis of fundamentalism. Along this path, the Mojahedin and combatants of Iran's freedom had to forsake everything to guarantee the liberation of their beloved people and homeland. They had to cleanse themselves of all the pollutants of the ruling reactionaries' mindset. They had to arise and eradicate concepts based upon gender discrimination, and ensure women's emancipation and acceptance of responsibility.

Permit me in this brief opportunity to mention the most important points of our experience, as time limitations make it impossible to discuss our accomplishments in any depth.

First, to begin the process towards eradicating relationships based on gender oppression, women must enter the field of political and social activity.

Second, to this end, women must occupy positions of political and social leadership. Within

the movement for equality itself, at least 50% of key positions of responsibility must be held by women. Through a policy of positive discrimination for a certain period of time, women's historical deprivation must be compensated for. Accordingly, a system of quotas is needed, that favors ever greater assumption by women of social responsibilities. The spirit, essence and hallmark of such privileges are a greater sense of responsibility by women and men and an end to exploitation and sexual oppression.

Third, women's emancipation is a prerequisite to the liberation of men, and must lead to it. Solutions which aim only to swap the places of women and men will only result in the latter's destruction, aggravating the alienation of the sexes and the conflicts between them. Obviously, that will not bring about women's emancipation either. On the other hand, there is nothing unrealistic about creating a new set of human relationships and equality between the two sexes, given their monistic human essence.

Fourth, contrary to the misogynous reactionaries, we must underscore the principle that women's rights are human rights. These encompass all individual and social rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On this basis, a woman's body and emotions are her own, and she has the right to contraception.

Fifth, the conflicts between the family and social and political responsibilities are common, erosive problems for all women. We believe that it is the right of all women, particularly combatant women and those who struggle in the movement for equality, to choose freely. This right must be fully recognized, so that they can, whenever necessary, choose to give priority and precedence to political and social responsibilities.

Beyond basic policies, to eliminate sexual oppression, it is essential that the rights and

freedoms of women be unequivocally recognized in the laws. In contrast to Khomeini, who never recognized women's minimum rights, Iranian women's the rights and freedoms are unequivocally and specifically recognized in the platform of the National Council of Resistance and the provisional government, as well as in a specific declaration ratified by the NCR on the freedoms and rights of women.

Accordingly, I reaffirm the recognized rights of women in the Iran of tomorrow:

1. Women's social, political and economic rights will be completely equal with men's;
2. Women will enjoy the right to free political and social activity, social intercourse and travel without the permission of another person;
3. Women's associations will be recognized and their voluntary organizations supported nationwide;
4. In order to eradicate inequality and dual oppression, special privileges in various social, administrative and cultural arenas will be considered;
5. Women will have the right to elect and be elected in all elections, and the right to suffrage in all referendums;
6. Women will have the right to employment and freedom of choice of profession, the right to hold any public or government position, and the right to serve as judges in all judicial bodies;
7. Discrimination between women and men in hiring and during employment is banned.

Women and men will receive equal pay for equal work. They will receive identical retirement pensions, disability payments, children support and alimony and unemployment insurance;

8. Women will have the right to use, without discrimination, all instructional, educational, athletic and artistic resources, and will have the right to participate in all competitions and artistic activities;

9. Women will be completely free to choose their clothing and covering;

10. Women will be completely free to choose their spouses, to marry and divorce, and will enjoy the same rights as men.

11. Legal inequalities regarding testimony, inheritance, and guardianship of children will be eliminated. During pregnancy, child birth and child rearing, women will enjoy special rights and accommodations. Widowed or divorced women and the children under their care will be supported by the country's social welfare system;

12. Any sexual exploitation of women, under whatever pretext, is banned. Any coercion or imposition on women in family life, as well as marriage before legal age, is forbidden;

13. Polygamy is banned;

14. Employment of minor girl children is banned, and they will enjoy special educational privileges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear compatriots,

What I have enumerated are the natural expectations of women. They are rights that for centuries have been ignored and denied. And the women trying to attain these very minimums have been suppressed. They are the common demands of our sisters around the world.

My homeland, however, tells a different story, because:

- The mighty resistance of Iranian women and the pain and blood of tens of thousands of martyred and tortured women have given new meaning to these words, and have colored them with a brilliant courage, seriousness, love of life and hope of construction.
- The women of Iran have defied the mullahs' humiliation and proudly challenged the guardians of inequality.
- Women and mothers forsook their marriages for the freedom of their people and country, and bid farewell for an indefinite period to their beloved children.
- Women undertook the heaviest and most complex responsibilities in the battle against the misogynous and inhuman fundamentalists.

My sisters, you women who have rebelled against inequality,

My brothers, you men who chose to follow your conscience rather than opt for the special privileges of male domination,

I call upon you to come to the aid of our Resistance movement against the most evil religious tyranny in history. I ask you to rise up and join hands to form a global coalition and a front against fundamentalism.

The misogynous, inhuman mullahs are intent on destroying the rights and freedoms of women and trampling upon their human dignity in order to bolster the pillars of their regime.

But to the mullahs I say, if you think that you can get what you want because the yearning to live freely and think freely has died in the world, you are gravely mistaken. You have done your utmost to humiliate, suppress, torture and slaughter Iranian women, but rest assured that you will receive the blow from the very force you discounted, the very force whom your reactionary mindset cannot allow you to take into consideration.

On the eve of the 21st century, the enlightened people the world over, proud Resistance of Iranian people and the combatants of freedom will not allow you to abuse religion.

In closing, and in again calling upon all my sisters - here, across Iran and gathered in other countries- I wish to stress:

The women of the past, who endured a history of torment and oppression, and the women, children and men of the future today turn their eyes to you. They ask you to rise to the occasion and assume your historic role. It is you who will propel human history into the golden age of equality, peace, democracy and development.

Hail to all free-thinking women and men everywhere, who are paying the high price of liberty. Victory lies before you, belongs to you and awaits you. Indeed, the oppressed of today are the victors of tomorrow. Their voice will resonate throughout eternity.