

Thousands Rally in Washington, DC in Support of a Democratic Republic in Iran and Against Executions and Dictatorship

Organized by the National Council of Resistance of Iran–U.S. Representative Office

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, May 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- WASHINGTON, DC — On Saturday, May 16, 2026, thousands of Iranian Americans and supporters of Mrs. [Maryam Rajavi](#) and a free and democratic Iran gathered in the nation's capital for a major rally and march.



Thousands of supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and its President-elect, Maryam Rajavi, gathered in Washington, DC, on May 16, 2026, to support a democratic republic in Iran and condemn the rising wave of political executions

The National Council of Resistance of Iran–U.S. Representative Office ([NCRI-US](#)) was proud to play its role in ensuring this significant and timely event takes place. The demonstration brought together prominent American political figures, former senior officials, human rights advocates, youth leaders, and members of the Iranian American community in a united call to end executions in Iran, support the Iranian people's organized resistance movement, and reject all forms of dictatorship in Iran.

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A great transformation in Iran and the overthrow of the regime are inevitable, but they will be realized through the will of the Iranian people, their uprisings, and the National Liberation Army.”

NCRI President-elect Maryam Rajavi

Held amid an intensifying wave of executions and repression by the Iranian regime following the nationwide January 2026 uprising, the rally served as a forceful message of solidarity with political prisoners, Resistance Units operating inside Iran, and the families of those who have paid the ultimate price in the struggle for freedom.

Participants carried banners and placards condemning the regime's escalating use of executions as a tool of intimidation and repression. Demonstrators honored the memory of political prisoners and activists murdered by the regime, including

members of the PMOI/MEK and young protesters executed for their support of democratic change. The event emphasized that the Iranian people reject both the ruling clerical dictatorship and any return to monarchical rule.

Throughout the rally, speakers highlighted support for the provisional government framework announced by the National Council of Resistance of Iran and for the Ten-Point Plan of [NCRI](#) President-elect Mrs. Maryam Rajavi. The platform advocates universal suffrage, free elections, gender equality, separation of religion and state, abolition of the death penalty, judicial independence, autonomy for Iran's ethnic nationalities, a non-nuclear Iran, and a democratic republic based on the will of the Iranian people.

Speakers stressed that the regime's resort to mass executions reflects weakness and fear, not strength.

In a major keynote address transmitted to the rally, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi declared, "The people of Iran are marching toward a future defined by the ballot box—a future of pluralism, autonomy for our diverse ethnic nationalities, the equal participation of women in societal leadership, and the separation of religion and state."

She condemned the regime's escalating executions and emphasized that Tehran's strategy of repression has failed to extinguish the spirit of resistance among Iranian youth and organized opposition networks.

Referring to recently executed members of the main Iranian opposition movement, the MEK, and



Mrs. Maryam Rajavi was the keynote speaker at the rally by thousands of supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), in Washington, DC, on May 16, 20026, to support a democratic republic in Iran and condemn the rising wave of political



Former Congressman Patrick Kennedy addresses the rally by thousands of supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and Maryam Rajavi, in Washington, DC, on May 16, 20026, to support a democratic republic in Iran and condemn the wave of executions.

anti-regime protesters, Mrs. Rajavi honored their sacrifice and declared that every execution strengthens the determination of the Iranian people to bring about democratic change.

She highlighted the role of Resistance Units across Iran and said that their operations demonstrate that the regime is unable to stop the coming uprising.

Mrs. Rajavi also reiterated that the Iranian people reject both religious dictatorship and monarchical authoritarianism. She emphasized that the future of Iran must be based on democratic legitimacy, free elections, and popular sovereignty—not inherited rule or religious absolutism. She asserted that lasting peace and stability in the region require the overthrow of the clerical dictatorship by the Iranian people and their organized resistance.

A broad range of American dignitaries and Iranian-American community leaders addressed the gathering.

Among the speakers was retired General Wesley Clark, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, who warned that the regime is “crumbling under fear.”

General Clark told participants, “Iran is a great nation, it’s a great people, a historic civilization held captive by a small band of zealots.”

General Clark delivered an expert military and strategic assessment of the Iranian crisis, stating that the organized political resistance led by the MEK and NCRI is the only force capable of averting a global catastrophe. He provided critical context regarding recent Western military engagements, explaining that while a bombing campaign was undertaken to degrade the



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regime's nuclear and military equipment, this defensive action was directed solely at the hostage-taking theocracy, not the civilian population.

General Clark noted that historical data from the January 26 protests showed that peaceful protest alone will not bring change, as evidenced by the fact that thousands of citizens were gunned down in the streets by state authorities. Clark asserted that airplanes flying at 35,000 feet, aircraft carriers, and bunker-busting bombs are merely peripheral; the root cause of regional instability rests inside the regime itself, which can only be dismantled through organized, internal armed resistance. He lauded the MEK's 47 years of discipline in the face of infiltration and false terror labels, concluding that the regime cannot hide from the sincere anger of the Iranian people.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Denmark Carla Sands delivered one of the rally's strongest denunciations of both the clerical regime and efforts to rehabilitate the former monarchy.

Ambassador Sands stated that the Iranian regime is "back on its heels" and warned against false narratives that portray the Iranian people as having to choose between the current dictatorship and a return to the Shah's rule: "The future of Iran must belong neither to the turban nor the crown," adding, "There is an organized democratic alternative, and it is standing before you today."

Ambassador Sands paid tribute to the sacrifices of executed MEK members and political prisoners, including Vahid Bani-Amerian and Abolhasan Montazer, who endured imprisonment under both the Shah and the current clerical dictatorship.



Youth Speaker Kimia Arya addresses rally in Washington, DC, on May 16, 2026, attended by thousands of supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and Maryam Rajavi's platform to support a democratic republic in Iran and to condemn the executions.



Ms. Anahita Sami emceed a rally in Washington, DC, on May 16, 2026, attended by thousands of supporters of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), to support a democratic republic in Iran and to condemn the rising wave of political executions.

She emphasized that the suppression of democratic opposition under the Shah helped create the conditions that enabled Khomeini to hijack the 1979 revolution.

Ambassador Sands strongly condemned monarchist factions that glorify the SAVAK era and seek to intimidate democratic activists and dissidents. She warned, "Supporters of Reza Pahlavi are glorifying the SAVAK dictatorship while engaging in harassment and intimidation against political dissidents. The Iranian people already rejected dictatorship once, and they will not accept another form of authoritarian rule."



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The former ambassador praised the NCRI as a democratic alternative capable of leading Iran toward a secular republic rooted in pluralism, gender equality, and democratic governance.

She emphasized that Mrs. Rajavi's Ten-Point Plan offers a credible roadmap for the transition to democracy and called on the United States and Western governments to recognize the organized resistance as a legitimate partner for democratic change.

Former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy also delivered a forceful address highlighting the bravery of Iran's Resistance Units and condemning the regime's escalating executions.

Kennedy declared that the executions of political prisoners reveal the regime's fear of another nationwide uprising, "A regime that feels secure does not rush political prisoners to the gallows. These executions reveal not strength, but a deep-seated, paralyzing fear."

The former congressman expressed profound gratitude for the masterful leadership of Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, who has successfully preserved the movement's focus on democracy, tolerance, and human dignity despite profound personal and organizational suffering. He lauded the organized network of internal Resistance Units, detailing how they successfully executed a series of coordinated, province-wide operations across 15 Iranian cities just last week, successfully hitting IRGC and Basij operational bases.

Turning his focus to history, Kennedy directly challenged Western policymakers who condemn the current theocracy but ignore the brutal legacy of the Shah's SAVAK secret police, arguing that the MEK maintains unmatched legitimacy because it has fought against both forms of tyranny

for nearly five decades.

Kennedy stated that the Ten-Point Plan offers a precise roadmap for free elections and an independent judiciary, concluding with an evocative reference to his uncle, President John F. Kennedy, asserting that the global struggle for Iranian freedom is a universal human

The rally also featured remarks from former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who emphasized that the Iranian regime is entering a period of irreversible decline. Sending a video message, Giuliani stated: "There is no doubt now that it's a matter of when, not if."

Referring to the prospect of democratic change in Iran, Giuliani praised Mrs. Rajavi's Ten-Point Plan as a comprehensive blueprint for a free and democratic republic.

He warned against appeasement policies toward Tehran and argued that the regime's record over the past four decades demonstrates it cannot be trusted. "This regime is insane. It's demonstrated that all throughout its 47 years," he said, arguing that the international community should support the Iranian people's right to resist tyranny and to recognize the legitimacy of organized opposition forces fighting for democracy.

Representing the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI/KDPI) to the United States, Hejar Berenji emphasized a future for Iran where there is no repression under any pretext, against all the Iranian people. Berenji condemned the clerical regime for utilizing drones and diplomacy to buy time while simultaneously executing citizens and bombing Kurdish regions. He stated unequivocally that the current regime cannot be moderated or reformed, meaning that its total toppling is the only viable path forward.

Berenji emphasized that real national unity cannot be built through forced silence or another dictatorship, declaring: "No dictatorship with turban, no dictatorship with crown".

Iranian-American youth leaders and community activists also delivered emotional remarks honoring executed prisoners and emphasizing the role of women and youth in the struggle for democratic change.

Ms. Anahita Sami, a prominent lawyer and MC of the event, spoke about the sacrifices of Resistance Units and the growing determination of young Iranians confronting repression.

She read the names of executed political prisoners and stressed that every martyr strengthens the movement for freedom.

Ms. Sami stated that Iran's younger generation rejects both the Shah and the mullahs and seeks a democratic republic founded on equality and secular governance.

She emphasized: "The younger generation of Iran has made its choice. They reject dictatorship in all its forms and demand a democratic republic rooted in freedom, equality, and justice."

Youth speaker Kimia Arya, a biology student at the University of Houston, spoke on behalf of a new generation of Iranian activists who are at the very forefront of tearing down the walls of tyranny. Arya expressed her deep solidarity with the courageous young women and girls who faced brutal IRGC massacres during the nationwide protests of January 2026.

She pointed out that women have fundamentally shattered the foundations of fear and obedience under the inspirational leadership of Maryam Rajavi, who has successfully trained thousands of women to view themselves as primary political leaders. Arya concluded by stating that the younger generation has permanently lost its fear and will accept nothing less than a forward-looking republic completely free of both the turban and the crown.

Ali Ziaie, a former Canadian Wushu champion and NYU political science graduate, shared a deeply personal perspective, describing how his father's past as a political prisoner taught him from childhood that simply uttering the name of the MEK carried the penalty of execution. Ziaie expressed immense admiration for the internal Resistance Units that catalyzed nationwide uprisings, paying the ultimate price with their lives.

Ziaie warned opportunists lurking in the shadows that the Iranian youth will never allow the blood of over 120,000 historic martyrs to be exploited to revive a past monarchical tyranny.

Bishop Dr. Angel L. Nuñez, Senior Pastor of the Bilingual Christian Church of Baltimore, spoke on behalf of Hispanic and Christian communities standing in absolute solidarity with the Iranian Resistance. Dr. Nuñez made a powerful call for an immediate end to all domestic executions, asserting that a democratic republic will inevitably rise from the ashes of the current theocracy through direct regime change enacted by the people of Iran themselves.

The rally also featured repeated calls for accountability regarding the regime's crimes against humanity, including the massacre of political prisoners, systematic torture, arbitrary detentions, and the recent surge in executions.

Speakers urged the United States government and the international community to:

- Recognize the Iranian people's right to overthrow the clerical dictatorship.
- Support the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people.
- Hold regime officials and the IRGC accountable for crimes against humanity.
- End policies of appeasement toward Tehran.
- Recognize the NCRI as a democratic alternative representing the aspirations of the Iranian people.

Participants marched through Washington, DC, carrying the Iranian Lion and Sun flags and banners reading "No to Executions," and "No to the Shah, no to the mullahs—yes to a democratic republic."

As speakers and participants departed the rally, one message remained central and unmistakable:

Regime change is a necessity and is attainable by the people of Iran and their organized force, led by the MEK's network in Iran. The world needs to stand on its side.

NCRI-US

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