



THE

IRANIAN

SPEECH

WE ASKED IRANIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD TO WRITE PART OF A SPEECH THAT THEY WOULD LIKE PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA TO DELIVER. WE THEN ASSEMBLED ALL THE SUBMISSIONS INTO THIS PUBLICATION AND HAD THE COMPILED SPEECH PERFORMED PUBLICLY ON MULTIPLE OCCASIONS BY A BARACK OBAMA LOOK-A-LIKE IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH, USA.

GOOD AFTERNOON.

I WOULD LIKE TO DIRECTLY SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAN. [PAUSE] AS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, I AM WELL AWARE OF THE MISTAKES WE HAVE MADE IN REGARDS TO YOUR COUNTRY. YOU STRUGGLED FOR YOUR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY FOR DECADES AND WHEN IT WAS FINALLY BEING ACHIEVED IN THE EARLY 1950s, WE ORCHESTRATED, ORGANIZED AND FINANCED A MILITARY COUP TO OVERTHROW YOUR ELECTED GOVERNMENT AND BRING BACK THE SHAH WHO RULED THE COUNTRY WITH AN IRON FIST FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY MORE. [PAUSE] INTELLECTUALS WERE ROUTINELY ARRESTED, IMPRISONED AND TORTURED. HIS REGIME EXECUTED MANY—SOME EVEN IN THEIR TEENAGE YEARS—WITH THE GENERAL LABEL OF “TERRORISTS.” WE COULD HAVE AND SHOULD HAVE SUPPORTED YOUR STRUGGLE, INSTEAD OF CRUSHING IT. BUT MY PREDECESSORS CHOSE TO FOCUS ON THE OPPORTUNITY TO BUY YOUR RESOURCES AT A DISCOUNT AND SELL YOU MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR CONTRACTS ON ITEMS YOU MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE NEEDED. [PAUSE] THAT IS THE LEGACY OF THE UNITED STATES IN IRAN, AND THE MAIN FACTOR THAT LED TO YOUR UPRISING IN 1979 TO THROW OUT OUR PUPPET ONCE AGAIN, AND EVENTUALLY LED TO THE TRAGEDY THAT WE NOW KNOW AS THE HOSTAGE CRISIS. [PAUSE] TO BE FRANK, I DO NOT KNOW IF WE WOULD HAVE DONE THINGS DIFFERENTLY IF IT WAS YOUR COUNTRY THAT HAD INTERFERED IN THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF OUR COUNTRY FOR SO LONG. [PAUSE] LET ME SAY IT ONCE AND FOR ALL, WE ARE HUMBLED BY YOUR RESOLVE AND APOLOGIZE FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS FOR THE PREVIOUS WRONGS AGAINST YOUR COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE. WE KNOW YOU MAY NEVER FORGET OUR WRONGDOINGS, BUT I AM ASKING FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS AS THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THIS COUNTRY.

WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OUR MISTAKES, AND I AM HERE TO PROMISE AND COMMIT TO NEVER INTERFERING WITH THE NATURAL COURSE OF EVENTS IN YOUR COUNTRY. THAT MEANS NO MILITARY THREATS, NO SANCTIONS, AND NO LONGER ORCHESTRATING PRESSURE AGAINST YOU AND YOUR CHOSEN GOVERNMENTS. [PAUSE] IF IT BECOMES NECESSARY FOR YOU TO CHANGE YOUR GOVERNMENT, THAT IS SOLELY YOUR DECISION AND WE WILL HONOR WHAT YOUR DECISIONS ARE. [PAUSE] WE NOW EXTEND OUR HAND IN FRIENDSHIP AND ASK THAT YOU ALLOW US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REBUILDING OF YOUR COUNTRY. IT’S THE LEAST WE CAN DO TO PAY FOR OUR PREVIOUS DEEDS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP, YOUR KINDNESS TOWARDS AMERICANS, AND FOR TEACHING HUMANITY A LESSON IN YOUR NON-STOP ADVANCES TOWARDS GAINING YOUR RIGHTS. [PAUSE] WE ALL OWE YOU OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE. [PAUSE] THANK YOU AND OUR BEST WISHES FOR A FRIENDSHIP OF EQUALS, BASED ON RESPECT AND COOPERATION FOR YEARS TO COME.

WE, POLITICIANS, TALK AMONG OURSELVES. WE TRY TO ADDRESS THE CONFLICTS. WE WORK ON THE ISSUES. THIS TIME, HOWEVER, I WANT TO TALK DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE OF IRAN. [PAUSE] I HAVE DONE THIS BEFORE, ON NOROUZ AND OTHER OCCASIONS. BUT THIS TIME, THIS TIME I WANT TO BE MORE FRANK. [PAUSE] I WILL STEP AWAY FROM MY POSITION AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, OR THE PRESIDENT OF ANY COUNTRY, FOR THAT MATTER. I WILL BE FRANK.

IRANIAN CITIZENS! WE DON’T CARE ABOUT YOU, UNTIL YOU CARE ABOUT YOURSELVES; UNTIL YOU DECIDE THAT YOUR WELL-BEING IS IMPORTANT. UNTIL THAT VERY MOMENT, YOU ARE THE OCCUPANTS OF A LAND WHICH HAS A GRIP ON THE PRICE OF OIL AND CAN THREATEN OUR ALLIES AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES WHICH END UP HURTING OUR TROOPS AND OUR NATION. [PAUSE] YOU DON’T EXIST AS LONG AS YOU WANT TO BE BYSTANDERS, ENJOYING YOUR CYNICAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICS, BOYCOTTING ELECTIONS, LIMITING YOUR INTERACTION WITH YOUR LEADERS TO NASTY JOKES. YOU MUST REALIZE THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO A GOOD LIFE—A LIFE WHICH IS NOT CRUSHED UNDERNEATH FINANCIAL HURDLES; A LIFE WHICH IS NOT TARNISHED BY THE DECENCY POLICE; A LIFE WHICH IS YOURS AND WHOSE TERMS ARE MANDATED BY YOU TO THE FULLEST EXTENT POSSIBLE.

YOU MUST KNOCK ON OUR DOORS AND INSIST THAT YOU EXIST; THAT YOU FUNCTION; THAT YOU GET INVOLVED IN THE GAME OF POLITICS, HOWEVER DIRTY AND FILTHY IT LOOKS, AND TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT IS DIRTY AND FILTHY, INDEPENDENT OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, WHETHER IT IS PLAYED OUT IN WASHINGTON OR IN TEHRAN. [PAUSE] AS LONG AS YOU ARE NOT A PLAYER IN THE GAME, YOU ARE A BYSTANDER. [PAUSE] AND

BYSTANDERS HAVE THE SECURITY OF NOT BEING HURT, NOT BEING PUSHED DOWN TO THE GROUND, NOT GETTING A BRUISED SHOULDER. BUT—AND THIS IS WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE—BYSTANDERS DON’T HAVE ANY RIGHT IN THE GAME. THEY ARE MERELY ASKED TO KEEP IT DOWN AND IF THEY ARE TOO MUCH OF A DISTURBANCE, WELL, THEY ARE KICKED OUT.

LET ME TELL YOU CITIZENS OF IRAN, THAT POLITICS ARE LIKE THE KOOBIDEH KABAB, THAT I KNOW MANY OF YOU LOVE. [PAUSE] WHAT MUST BE REALIZED HERE IS THAT NO ONE IS GOING TO GRILL SOME KABAB FOR YOU. THAT TIME IS OVER. [PAUSE] YOU HAVE TO GET YOUR HANDS INTO THE BOWL, YOU HAVE TO PRESS ON THE MEAT, MIX IT WITH ONIONS, AND TASTE IT. YOU MUST HAVE THE RAW TASTE OF MEAT IN YOUR MOUTHS, YOU MUST PUT IT ON BLADES, ENDURE THE SIGHT OF SOME OF THAT DELICIOUS FOOD DROPPING ONTO THE ASHES, YOU HAVE TO BLOW ON THE FIRE, AND WAIT BY IT, WAIT FOR THE MOMENT WHEN THE KABAB IS READY TO BE EATEN. THEN, YOU CAN ENJOY IT HOT AND JUICY. DO THAT, GET INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS, PROVE TO US, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO YOUR OWN FELLOW PEOPLE AND TO YOURSELVES, THAT YOU ARE WORTHY OF A HOT BLADE OF KABAB. [PAUSE] NO ONE ELSE WILL BOTHER TO DO THAT FOR YOU.

I KNOW THE SANCTIONS HAVE AFFECTED MANY IRANIANS’ LIVES. THEY ARE IN DEEP TROUBLE. BUT TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, IT’S NOT THAT IMPORTANT. OUR POLICY IS MORE IMPORTANT!

EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT VIEW OF IRAN THESE DAYS. SOME WILL SAY IT IS THE LAND OF THE GREAT CYRUS, THE FOUNDER OF PERSIA. [PAUSE] OTHERS WILL POINT TO THE CURRENT DICTATORS AND CALL IT THE LAND OF TERRORISM. AN IRANIAN GIRL FROM THE GREEN GENERATION TOLD ME: “I’VE NEVER LIVED IN THE ERA OF THE GREAT CYRUS, SO I DON’T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT. AND I’VE NEVER TERRORIZED ANYBODY IN THE WORLD.” [PAUSE] MY THOUGHT—OR SHOULD I SAY, THE THOUGHTS OF THE NEW GENERATION THERE IN IRAN—IS FULL OF FREEDOM AND RESPECT, FULL OF DEMOCRACY FOR IRAN. [PAUSE] THEY ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE LEADERS ABOVE AND THEIR LIES. THEY LOVE US AND DON’T WANT TO BE BROUGHT INTO CONFLICT WITH ANY NATION.

THE LAST FEW YEARS IN OFFICE HAVE NOT BEEN EASY: THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF CONFLICT. BUT, [PAUSE & GESTURE] THERE IS HOPE.

I BELIEVE, THAT, WITH THE HELP OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE CONFLICT KITCHEN IN PITTSBURGH WE CAN SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. YES, WE CAN. [PAUSE]. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.

WHEN I GREW UP, THERE WAS THIS SAYING: “THE WAY TO A MAN’S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH.” WHILE THIS SAYING IS BOTH SEXIST AND ARCHAIC, IT DOES HOLD SOME TRUTH. [PAUSE] WE HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT AND FROM EACH OTHER—AND OTHER NATIONS. IN LIFE AND IN THE KITCHEN. WE HAVE TO MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE “RULER” AND THE “PEOPLE.” [PAUSE] WE CAN ONLY LEARN ABOUT A NATION, A PEOPLE, OR A COUNTRY BY OBSERVING THE THINGS THEY DO EVERY DAY—LIKE WHAT THEY EAT EVERY DAY.

WE MUST SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF IRAN, AS WE ALL BELIEVE: “THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, AND FOR THE PEOPLE, SHALL NOT PERISH FROM THE EARTH!”

ON JULY 3, 1988, THE UNITED STATES NAVY FIRED TWO SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES AT IRAN AIR 655, A CIVILIAN PASSENGER PLANE CARRYING 290 PEOPLE. [PAUSE] ALL ABOARD—including 66 CHILDREN—WERE INSTANTLY DESTROYED, OR DIED AS THEY FELL FROM THE AIR OR LANDED IN THE WATER THOUSANDS OF FEET BELOW. [PAUSE] IN REFERENCE TO THIS INCIDENT, ON AUGUST 2 OF THAT YEAR, VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH SAID, “I WILL NEVER APOLOGIZE FOR THE UNITED STATES—I DON’T CARE WHAT THE FACTS ARE.”

THE INCIDENT ITSELF WAS NOT A WOUND TO AMERICA’S HONOR, BECAUSE—TRAGIC AND PERHAPS RECKLESS THOUGH IT WAS—IT WAS UNINTENTIONAL. HOWEVER, MR. BUSH’S REMARK EXPRESSES WITH UNDENIABLE CLARITY, THE VIEW THAT WE PREFER COMFORT AND DELUSIONAL PRIDE BEFORE TRUTH AND VIRTUE. [PAUSE] UNTIL WE CAN BEAR THE STING OF TRUTH, THE WOUND WILL GROW, AND PUTREFY, AND WILL FINALLY PROVE TO BE A MORTAL THREAT.

IS THE UNITED STATES A NATION THAT DOES NOT CARE FOR THE FACTS? [PAUSE] AND ARE WE A GREAT OR EVEN A GOOD NATION? AFTER ALL, A GREAT OR GOOD PERSON IS NOT AFRAID TO APOLOGIZE FOR AN

INADVERTENT MISTAKE. [PAUSE] THIS IS AN ENORMOUS QUESTION, FOR AS A GREAT NATION, WE NOT ONLY HAVE OUR FATE IN OUR HANDS, BUT THE FATES OF OTHER, SMALLER NATIONS.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ONCE ASKED: “FROM WHENCE SHALL WE EXPECT THE APPROACH OF DANGER? SHALL SOME TRANS-ATLANTIC MILITARY GIANT STEP THE EARTH AND CRUSH US AT A BLOW? NEVER. ALL THE ARMIES OF EUROPE AND ASIA... COULD NOT BY FORCE TAKE A DRINK FROM THE OHIO RIVER [PAUSE] OR MAKE A TRACK ON THE BLUE RIDGE IN THE TRIAL OF A THOUSAND YEARS. [PAUSE] NO, IF DESTRUCTION BE OUR LOT, WE MUST OURSELVES BE ITS AUTHOR AND FINISHER. [PAUSE] AS A NATION OF FREE MEN, WE WILL LIVE FOREVER OR DIE BY SUICIDE.”

I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT WE ARE NOW FACED WITH A MORTAL DANGER, [PAUSE] BY THE ONLY POWER THAT CAN CONVINCINGLY THREATEN US WHICH IS, OF COURSE, OURSELVES. [PAUSE] AS A STRONG NATION, WE CAN ONLY BE HARMED BY THE TRUTH IF WE HIDE FROM IT, IRRATIONALLY FEAR IT, AND STUBBORNLY REFUSE TO ADMIT THAT IT’S THERE. TO THAT END, I WISH TO STATE A FEW ORDINARY FACTS WHICH ARE WELL-KNOWN TO THE REST OF THE WORLD BUT WILL SEEM SHOCKING TO ANYONE WHO IS ACCUSTOMED TO TAKING WASHINGTON POLITICIANS SERIOUSLY.

AMERICA IS CAPABLE OF COMMITTING CRIMES, BETRAYING FRIENDS, SUPPORTING DICTATORS AND TORTURERS, AND EVEN TRAINING THEM OURSELVES.

AMERICA [PAUSE] HELPED TO OVERTHROW A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN IRAN IN 1953 BY HANDING OUT CASH TO RIOTERS AND ARMING A SMALL FORCE OF INSURGENTS UNDER THE COMMAND OF A TRAITOROUS ARMY OFFICER.

IN THE 1980s, WE DID NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE REGIME OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN IRAQ WHEN IT INVADDED ITS NEIGHBOR, IRAN. [PAUSE] IN 1983, AFTER THE FIRST CREDIBLE REPORTS OF HIS USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS HAD EMERGED, WE SENT DONALD RUMSFELD [PAUSE] TO SHAKE SADDAM’S HAND AND PLEDGE OUR SUPPORT TO HIM. [PAUSE] WE REFUSED TO ALLOW THE UNITED NATIONS TO CONDEMN SADDAM’S USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND DELIBERATELY CONFUSED THE INVESTIGATIONS BY REPEATING ALLEGATIONS THAT IRAN HAD USED THEM AS WELL, [PAUSE] ALLEGATIONS WHICH WERE BASELESS. [PAUSE] WE GAVE SADDAM LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND DETAILED SATELLITE MAPS, EVEN AS OUR ALLIES IN FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY WERE SENDING IRAQ CHEMICALS THAT WOULD BE MADE INTO POISON AND DROPPED ON IRANIANS, AND EVENTUALLY IRAQIS. [PAUSE] NEVERTHELESS, [PAUSE]) WE ALSO SAW FIT TO SELL WEAPONS TO IRAN AT THE SAME TIME. WE, THE UNITED STATES, WERE ARMING BOTH SIDES OF A BLOODY WAR BETWEEN TO SMALL COUNTRIES HALF A WORLD AWAY.

I WOULD LIKE TO FINISH BY QUOTING DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER, AS I FEEL HIS THOUGHTS APTLY CLARIFY OUR SITUATION NOW: “HERE IN AMERICA [PAUSE] WE ARE DESCENDED IN BLOOD AND IN SPIRIT FROM REVOLUTIONISTS AND REBELS—MEN AND WOMEN WHO DARE TO DISSENT FROM ACCEPTED DOCTRINE. AS THEIR HEIRS, MAY WE NEVER CONFUSE HONEST DISSSENT WITH DISLOYAL SUBVERSION. WE LOOK UPON THIS SHAKEN EARTH, AND WE DECLARE OUR FIRM AND FIXED PURPOSE—THE BUILDING OF A PEACE WITH JUSTICE IN A WORLD WHERE MORAL LAW PREVAILS. [PAUSE] THE BUILDING OF SUCH A PEACE IS A BOLD AND SOLEMN PURPOSE. TO PROCLAIM IT IS EASY; TO SERVE IT WILL BE HARD. AND TO ATTAIN IT, WE MUST BE AWARE OF ITS FULL MEANING—AND READY TO PAY ITS FULL PRICE. [PAUSE] WE KNOW CLEARLY WHAT WE SEEK, AND WHY. WE SEEK PEACE, KNOWING THAT PEACE IS THE CLIMATE OF FREEDOM. [PAUSE] AND NOW—AS IN NO OTHER AGE— WE SEEK IT BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN WARNED, BY THE POWER OF MODERN WEAPONS, THAT PEACE MAY BE THE ONLY CLIMATE POSSIBLE FOR HUMAN LIFE ITSELF. [PAUSE] YET THIS PEACE WE SEEK CANNOT BE BORN OF FEAR ALONE: IT MUST BE ROOTED IN THE LIVES OF NATIONS. THERE MUST BE JUSTICE, SENSED AND SHARED BY ALL PEOPLES FOR, WITHOUT JUSTICE, THE WORLD CAN KNOW ONLY A TENSE AND UNSTABLE TRUCE. THERE MUST BE LAW, STEADILY INVOKED AND RESPECTED BY ALL NATIONS, FOR WITHOUT LAW, THE WORLD PROMISES ONLY SUCH MEAGER JUSTICE AS THE PITY OF THE STRONG UPON THE WEAK. [PAUSE] BUT THE LAW OF WHICH WE SPEAK—COMPREHENDING THE VALUES OF FREEDOM—AFFIRMS THE EQUALITY OF ALL NATIONS, GREAT AND SMALL. SPLENDID AS CAN BE THE BLESSINGS OF SUCH A PEACE, HIGH WILL BE ITS COST: IN TOIL PATIENTLY SUSTAINED, IN HELP HONORABLY GIVEN, IN SACRIFICE CALMLY BORNE.”

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS.

Conflict Kitchen is a take-out restaurant that only serves cuisine from countries with which the United States government is in conflict. Each Conflict Kitchen iteration is augmented by events, performances, and discussions about the culture, politics, and issues within each country upon which we focus. The restaurant rotates identities in response to current geopolitical events. www.conflictkitchen.org

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