Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear politicians and journalists

My name is Saleh Kamrani. I am a lawyer and the leader of the center party of Azerbaijanis in Iran. I am delighted that you gave me a chance to speak at this stage and talk on behalf of my people.

I am here today to address one of the main obstacles to peace and stability in the middle east and its threat to Europe.

**Iran**

Is Iran in its current shape beneficial for the European Union and the free world?

My answer is NO

Iran is one of the key destabilizing actors in the middle east. You can find its footprint in all terrorist organizations, in all wars in the middle east, and even in Europe, like Ukraine. It causes pain for the people of that region and creates a refugee crisis originating in one of the countries in that region, which you have to deal with it. Iran threatens Israel, and the range of its missiles can reach all over the EU. It's making atomic bombs and It threatens the security of transportation in waterways from the strait of Hormoz to the Red and Mediterranean seas. Iran is threatening the republic of Azerbaijan as one of the energy sources of Europe and an ally of the West and Israel.

Whatever I say about the harmful effect of the current system of Iran on the free world and people of the middle east and the Caucasus, It is not enough!

It's time to change the system to end the suffering of people inside Iran and in neighboring countries and stop the refugee crisis. It's time to end these threats and make a safer world!

But HOW?

How can we make Iran a better actor?

The answer is with the direct support of democratic groups among Iranian opposition and using every single tool in your toolbox(sanction, direct meddling) to bring democratic regime change!

But what is Iran?

Iran is a multi-nation country, and we have 9 distinct societies with unique cultures within Iran.

The answer to the puzzle of the democratization of Iran lays in listening to the voices of these ethnonational groups, including Azerbaijani Turks, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmens, Gileks, Mazanis, Lurs, and Kurds in Iran.

    I am here on behalf of Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. We speak the Turkic language, and we are located in the NorthWest to the Center of Iran. Azerbaijani Turks make up 25 to 40% of Iran’s population. My people have been fighting for their ethnonational rights, democratic values, and human rights for over a hundred years, and yet we do not have a single school in our mother language. Our language is banned in courts, offices, and schools, and we are subjected to brutal systemic Persian racism.

The Azerbaijani population of Iran was actively involved in the current anti-government demonstrations. During the current IranProtests , Thousands of Azerbaijani youth got detained, and tens of them just got killed.

Protesters in the Azerbaijani region of Iran in their slogans were emphasizing on 2 things:

-          Opposition to dictatorship and demand for a democracy

-          Having a national government and parliament for Azerbaijanis in Iran and self-rule and sovereignty for this region

I was a lawyer in Iran, and I can tell you that Iran’s nation-state is funded based on the hegemony of Persian ethnicity, which includes 30 to 40 percent of the population. In the Islamic republic’s constitution, they acknowledge the existence of ethnic minorities. However, the definition of citizenship and nationality is considered the same, which gives the Persian ethnic group the power and excludes approximately 70% of Iran’s citizens, including Azerbaijani Turks, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmens, Gileks, Mazanis, Lurs, and Kurds from participation in the political process with their own identity.

Azerbaijanis are a suppressed society in Iran. We subjected to linguicide and ethnocide, and we did not have the right to self-determinate. I am calling on all politicians who respect human rights to support ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran to gain their fundamental rights.

In the last 150 years, our Azerbaijani ancestors inside Iran made 2 revolutions to bring the rule of law and democracy to Iran and unfortunately, they failed. Although they failed, they left us the historical memories and experiences of fighting for rights and freedoms. Now we are trying to use those historical memories to bring real democratic change in Iran.

The current Islamic republic of Iran and the previous administration of king Mohammadreza and Reza Pahlavi killed many of Azerbaijani elites. Only in 1946  the Persian army of Pahlavi attacked the Azerbaijani region of Iran and killed thousands of brilliant Azerbaijani elites, and commit genocide.

 Azerbaijani society of Iran suffered this trauma for years, but despite this oppression, Azerbaijanis could organize themselves in the last 30 years outside and inside Iran. We have our human rights Organizations, our political parties, and our satellite TV channels. In the last series of these events in March 25 we had a demonstration in Brussels to show solidarity with protesters in the Azerbaijani region of Iran.

What you can do?

We need your support to gain our freedom.

We need a voice!

Regardless of these progresses we have made, we need more educational support from the free world to help us organize our people. We need support to make a well-established human rights documentation center. We need support to create high-quality TV contents which can take the attention of the viewer to convey our message better in the Turkic language for Azerbaijani Iranians. We need support to help our political prisoners. We ask for a chance to have hearings in Western Parliaments and have more international English, and French media coverage. We do need your parliamentarian and governmental statements about the rights of Azerbaijanis in Iran and condemning the Islamic republic for violating Azerbaijani's fundamental rights. We need your support in pressing Iran’s mainstream opposition to respect the diversity of Iran and accept solutions like federalism that can bring unity among most of Iranians.

I can assure you that none of the Iranian groups can do regime change alone, and the unity and collaboration of all democratic opposition forces pass through mutual respect for different identities in Iran and funding a democratic system that works for all and each one of us.

Thank you very much for your time.