

Message on the Observance of Nowruz
March 19, 2008

I send greetings to those celebrating Nowruz.

For the millions of people who trace their heritage to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, India, and Central Asia, Nowruz is a time to celebrate the New Year with the arrival of spring. This cherished and ancient festival brings together family and friends to reflect on what has come before and celebrate a season of new beginnings.

Our country is proud to be a land where individuals from many different cultures can pass their traditions on to future gen-

erations. The diversity of America brings joy to our citizens and strengthens our Nation during Nowruz and throughout the year.

Laura and I send our best wishes to all those celebrating Nowruz, both here in the United States and abroad. May the year ahead be filled with peace and many blessings.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Interview With Setareh Derakhshesh of VOA Persian News Network
March 19, 2008

Ms. Derakhshesh. Mr. President, let me thank you first on behalf of the Voice of America, on behalf of the Persian News Network for giving us your time. We really appreciate that, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Iran

Ms. Derakhshesh. As you know, Mr. President, this is the eve of Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. What is your message to the Iranian people as they face tough economic circumstances and infringement on their freedoms?

The President. Well, first, *Nowruz a tan Mubarak*. Secondly, that the people of the United States respects the people of Iran, that we respect the traditions of Iran, the great history of Iran. We have differences with the Government, but we honor the people. And we want the people to live in a free society. We believe freedom is a right for all people and that the freer the world is, the more peaceful the world is. And so my message is: Please don't be

discouraged by, you know, the slogans that say America doesn't like you, because we do, and we respect you.

Ms. Derakhshesh. What do you say to the regime, sir? What would you say to the regime?

The President. I'd say to the regime that they've made decisions that have made it very difficult for the people of Iran. In other words, the Iranian leaders, in their desire to, you know, enrich uranium, in spite of the fact that the international community has asked them not to, has isolated a great country. And that if—there's a way forward. I mean, the Iranian leaders know there's a way forward. And that is, verifiably suspend your enrichment, and you can have new relationships with people in the U.N. Security Council, for example.

And it's just sad that the leadership is in many ways very stubborn because the Iraqi—the Iranian people are not realizing their true rights. And they're confusing people in Iraq, as well, about their desires.