

## **Speech at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Remembrance Day for Danielle Mitterrand**

### **Dutch Group of Friends of a Free Iran**

**November 20, 2014**

Messieurs dames,

Pour commencer, un bienvenue au Pays Bas pour Gilbert Mitterrand, son épouse et son fils. Gilbert est le fils d'une femme très très forte et indépendante, comme nous verrons.

Ladies en gentlemen,

I am honoured to participate in this event to commemorate a great and sincere lady, and a tireless symbol of human rights who is known throughout the world for her relentless and uninterrupted advocacy for human rights and against injustice. I am also very pleased that Gilbert Mitterrand is present today.

Danielle Mitterrand was a unique First Lady. She once wrote that life had enabled her to meet the leaders of the world, but also to mix with ordinary people across the planet. In one of her known interviews she said: "I often found myself at odds with the diplomats". She played a decisive role in the 1981 presidential election, presenting herself as a woman of the people in sharp contrast to some other first ladies.

She was also known for her perseverance and continuing activities. Explaining why she kept on campaigning despite her years and fragile health, she said: "After a certain age, people go to sleep. As for me, I have no intention of dying by inches."

This is the lady we are here today to pay tribute to. No wonder why she became interested in the Iranian cause. On the one hand, she was extremely hurt by the savage crimes of Iran's rulers, and on the other hand she admired the perseverance of the Iranian opposition which has been struggling with hope and patience for more than three decades. These together made Danielle Mitterrand a strong advocate of the Iranian opposition which fights for freedom and human rights in Iran.

There is no doubt that if she were alive today, she would have been at the forefront to condemn the appalling human rights violations, like the splashing acid on the faces of women in Iran, and for the hanging of a 27 years old innocent Iranian woman whose only conviction was not to surrender to a savage act of sexual assault.

I was happy to know that four days ago the United Nations General Assembly Third Committee adopted the 61<sup>st</sup> resolution censuring the flagrant and systematic violation of human rights in Iran. This is good news, because it draws the attention of the world to the crimes being committed by the Iranian regime, and puts some pressure on the mullahs ruling Iran. At the same time it is bad news, since it raises the question why after 61 UN resolutions the cruel rulers of Iran have not been held accountable for their crimes against humanity. Therefore, I support the call by Mrs. Rajavi that Iran's appalling human rights record must be referred to the UN Security Council. Let us hope that one day in the near future Iran's tyrant will be brought before justice at the International Criminal Court in the city of The Hague.

Finally, as a member of the Dutch Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, I want to state that the current situation in the Middle-East cannot be resolved by military force alone. We need a viable and real solution. One can put an end to Islamic extremism only by supporting modern, democratic and tolerant Muslims like those in the National Council of Resistance of Iran. In this context it is my firm belief that secularism, a strict separation between state and religion, is a prerequisite, as fortunately recognized by NCRI. In order to make the link with the speech of Gilbert Mitterrand, just as *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* are important results of the French revolution, the same can be said of *laïcité* which is closely related to secularism and practised to the present day in France. Let us hope that we shall be able to make these democratic Muslims known to our government and present them as an important group of people who deserve to be heard in this era more than anyone else.