

City of Coral Gables City Commission Meeting
Agenda Item F-1
February 10, 2026
City Commission Chambers
405 Biltmore Way, Coral Gables, FL

City Commission

Mayor Vince Lago
Vice Mayor Rhonda Anderson
Commissioner Melissa Castro
Commissioner Ariel Fernandez
Commissioner Richard D. Lara

City Staff

City Attorney, Cristina Suárez
City Manager, Peter Iglesias
City Clerk, Billy Urquia

Public Speaker(s)

Maria Cruz
Jackson Rip Holmes
Catherine Shahad (Letter)

Agenda Item F-1 [Start: 12:43 p.m.]

A Resolution of the City Commission expressing solidarity with the Iranian people in their pursuit for freedom, human rights, and economic justice. (Sponsored by Mayor Lago)

Mayor Lago: Moving on to item F-1.

City Attorney Suarez: F-1 is the resolution of the City Commission expressing solidarity with the Iranian people in their pursuit for freedom, human rights, and economic justice.

Mayor Lago: Thank you very much. I am the proud sponsor of this item, and I'll tell you why I put this on the agenda. Just as we have stood in solidarity with the people of Cuba and Venezuela in their pursuit of freedom, democracy, and economic stability, I believe that we must also stand with the people of Iran. We must support the fundamental right of the Iranian people to peacefully

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protest and to seek a government that respects human rights, democrat principles, and the legitimate role of political opposition. Latest reports have shown that tens of thousands of protesters have been killed in the street, mowed down by machine guns, and over 42,000 people have been arrested. Countless are missing, never to be found again. Oppression is not an option, and we must continue to stand with those who seek liberty and justice. If you hearken back to the days of Iran 30-plus years ago, 40-plus years ago, he reminded you of a city in Europe. What has it become now? So, I ask you to please support this in an effort to spread democracy around the hemisphere, around the country, around the world. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Castro: Through the mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes.

Commissioner Castro: I move to defer this item, and I ask the sponsor to please reconsider the language to be more inclusive and universally support all and avoid from taking sides. I say this respectfully after receiving various phone calls and emails and with the public comment that was here. I really appreciate if you would consider maybe changing some of the language here, and I would support it.

Mayor Lago: My language is completely inclusive. It's talking about democracy. It's talking about human rights. If you'd like to present your own legislation, you can. Mr. Clerk, I'd like to make a motion. I'll pass the gavel on to the Vice Mayor.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I'll second it.

Mayor Lago: Anything else?

Commissioner Lara: Through the Mayor.

Mayor Lago: Yes, sir. No, through the Vice Mayor.

Commissioner Lara: Through the Vice Mayor, that's right. You know, so typically, and I previously made this point when we were talking about an earlier resolution seeking to raise the state of Israel's flag, which I was against at the time, so we never really voted on that because it was deferred by the Mayor, and it came back in a different format.

Mayor Lago: If I may interrupt you, sir. I apologize. I didn't know that. I knew that I didn't have the votes. That's why I didn't want to push the envelope.

Commissioner Lara: But nevertheless, I think what you did was diplomatic, right? Because it was trying to seek inclusion. You didn't want to do something on a three-two. But my reasoning for that at that time, and it remains the same today, is I don't believe it's the business of the city to be

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involved in what could be seen as choosing sides in a political or a military conflict, which is how I perceived the issue with respect to the state of Israel flag being proposed as being flown outside of City Hall. However, in this instant, I think it would be virtually impossible to find anybody who would be in favor of the reprehensible, unethical, criminal behavior, acts being perpetrated by this regime on its own people. So, I don't see this as taking sides in a military conflict. I don't see this as taking sides in a political conflict. I see this as siding on the side of humanity, on the side of decency. And for that type of solidarity, that's the takeaway that I feel you get from the resolution as drafted in any event. So, while I repeat, I believe that the business of the city should typically be limited to local issues. I feel that there is something much bigger, broader, and one that won't be polarizing any reasonable interpretation of the resolution amongst the residents of the city, because no one could be in favor of the acts that are documented being taken against innocent people, expressing their views and expressing their thoughts. And that's what I have.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, may I say something in response?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: I think the Commissioner hit the nail on the head. But at the end of the day, whether it's one side or the other, when people are being innocently killed just for taking a political stand and asking for free elections, especially when many of them are women who are oppressed in a country, and as a father of two girls, I find it pretty shameful that opposition for this simple resolution, this gesture, just because I bring it forward. At the end of the day, we should stand with these people. We should support these people. I think it's the right thing to do. I think that more countries can be served well with democracy, human rights. You're talking about young children that are being married off into slavery at 14 years old, 10 years old. Read the information that's happening in this country. People that are being shot in the head in the street for having a different opinion, I will always stand in opposition of that type of behavior. So, at the end of the day, you can sit there and laugh and giggle and do the ridiculousness that you do. You're on TV. Everybody can see you, but I'm proud to bring this forward. And if I get criticized, it's perfectly fine, perfectly fine with me.

Vice Mayor Anderson: So, I'm going to add some additional comments as to why I seconded this motion. The United States, we do have a process. We do have due process. We do have investigations. And when law enforcement in our community does things incorrectly, they will face the consequences. This is never going to happen in Iran. This is never going to happen in Cuba. It is never going to happen in Venezuela. Where you have the spread of communism with no process and no recourse whatsoever. If this resolution was similarly placing it for reprehensible acts of the government of Cuba, this would not have been, in my opinion, something that you would hear this community saying, well, you didn't include everybody else in the world. This resolution focuses on one thing based upon recent acts outside of our country. But we do have

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individuals that live within our city that are from Iran. And with respect to that, we should honor that. By the same token, we respect every other group that lives within our city with events and recognition and interfaith events. And I think that's the appropriate thing to do is to foster peace, foster love, and recognize that humanity is an important thing in our community. And this is about humanity. So, with that, do we have any other public comments?

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, ma'am. First speaker, Maria Cruz.

Mrs. Cruz: Mrs. Maria Cruz, 1447 Miller Road, 305-323-2154. I was not going to speak on it. But then it got so deep that I have no choice. We are concerned about Iran. Let me tell you, I took the time to look at 13 years of minutes and videos. And you know, it's very interesting to me how 13 years ago, 12 years, every year from that point this way, there have been other places where there have been abuses, where there has been human trafficking, where everything that we're using today. And yet, not till recent time, not even in this Chamber, anybody thought of talking about the abuses in Cuba, in Venezuela, in Haiti, close to home, where we have people that came from there. But today, we're now in a different mode. Today, we have to defend the world because there's, yes, there are people that are from Iran in this city, but there are people from other countries, too. It's rare that weekend that I don't hear about Christians being killed in Africa. Okay. And guess what? We're not making it a big thing. You know, this is a political event. This is, I want votes, and this is the only time, that's why we're doing it. And I'm sorry, not all of you look for that. Not all of you are doing it for the same reason, but there's obviously some that do. And I'm going to tell you, if you're going to talk about freedoms and abuses, talk about a whole bunch of other forms of abuses, because let me tell you, over 30 years ago, when the Ayatollah went into Iran, I got in trouble because in my class, I talked about the abuse when they went into the embassy. So, I'm not a newcomer. I didn't just think about it because I'm running for office, because even though people have asked me, I'm not running for office. What's right is right. If you're going to do it, do it for all the places, not just for the people that, and there are people in this city that object to that because we're not talking about everybody, just what's convenient for us.

City Clerk Urquia: Jackson Holmes.

Mayor Lago: Madam Vice Mayor, may I respond, please?

Vice Mayor Anderson: Yes.

Mayor Lago: First and foremost, in typical fashion, it's the teardown mentality and the lack of real information. To mention all that that she's mentioned, it has nothing to do with what we're dealing with today, literally. Taking attacks at me and shots, it's just the amount of ridiculousness is absurd. To call into question and say that I'm a Johnny-come-lately in regard to Cuba. My grandfather was a political prisoner in Cuba. Okay. Number one, I've been a member of El Directorio Nerceri here,

and I've been a member of Cura Cide since inception, so I will always stand on my principles in regard to human rights and free elections in Cuba. Number two, read the legislation instead of just trying to find something to put on the blogs. The legislation is very clear. It says that the City Commission expresses solidarity and support for the pursuit of freedom, fundamental human rights, and economic justice for the Iranian people and throughout the world. It's very clear. Read the legislation. Stop looking for a reason to get on a blog, please. And by the way, remember, there's cameras looking at you, so all the laughing and giggling, it makes you look absurd. And 100 percent, I do stand with the Christians that are being killed in Africa. If you want to write a piece of legislation on that, a resolution, I'll support that too. But the idea is to say that now I'm interested in human trafficking. Let me educate you real quick, okay? Madam City Attorney, Mr. Clerk, when did I write the legislation stopping hourly motels and being the first in the state of Florida to do that? What is the reason why? Because of human trafficking.

City Attorney Suarez: I think it was Mayor, 2017?

Mayor Lago: 2017.

City Attorney Suarez: I'm going off memory.

Mayor Lago: There is no Johnny-come-lately. What's Johnny-come-lately is the conversation about running for public office. I pray on bended knee that you run for public office, please. I pray. I hope that's the case. So, when we talk about human trafficking, look at my record in regard to hourly motels, taking it to the city of Miami, then taking it to the State of Florida and getting it banned in the State of Florida. Going on night, overnight raids with the police, City of Gables, City of Miami, Kathy Fernandez Rundle's human trafficking division. So, before you come and say something, I don't see your resume, number one. It's so easy to stand from the grandstands and make comments like that, but it sure seems to be that it's easy to tear down, but it's very difficult to build things up. Sir, I apologize.

Mr. Holmes: So, I have a, I think that you are all going to agree with what I'm about to say. We have suffered in our hemisphere, the failures of so many administrations to liberate Cuba. We have suffered. Finally, we're getting some action on Venezuela. But as you may know, my wife's Peru has been communist for the past five years. And people don't even know that because Biden covered it up or whatever, you know, covered it up, right? But anyways, we got five communist countries. Here's my point. Here's my point. One of the things that I found is that somehow our country gets committed to fighting wars in the Middle East when what we really should do. I mean, do you know that the population of Cuba, I think, has tumbled from 11 million people to 10 million people. And who's the fault of that? It's the government. It's the communist system. And so, what I fear with the thing of falling into a trap of talking about the Middle East is we can't let them divert our attention. Like, how about sending the Marines to Cuba right now? Thank you.

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Mayor Lago: Thank you, sir.

City Clerk Urquia: Mr. Mayor, that's it for public comment. But I did receive an email during the meeting. It says, "Good morning, Mr. Clerk. I'm unfortunately unable to leave work and would like to, the following comments could be read into the record regarding the Mayor's resolution on Iran. I agree that all protesters deserve to have the same freedom both to speak out in advancement of their own freedoms and to be free from government action that encroaches upon their human rights. This is the same whether in Iran, Palestine, on college campuses across the United States or in Minneapolis. What we do not wish is to see our government make statements in our name that lend support to military action either directly by the United States or from this country's allies like Israel, whether we have seen unfettered military support be used to massacre civilian populations, journalists, and health care workers in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. This City Commission must consider its responsibility and role to the community, that it serves, and whether it will be similarly supporting protesters who have been brutalized and killed at the hands of our own government. Therefore, I would like to request the city add a provision to the proposed resolution, one, clarifying that the resolution does not support military action against Iran, and two, that in addition to Iranian protesters, the proclamation lend support for protesters across the world and in America who stand for freedom in the face of tyrannical and oppressive government action. Thank you. Catherine Shahad, 1133 North Greenway Drive."

Mayor Lago: Thank you.

Vice Mayor Anderson: I think I'll call for a vote.

City Clerk Urquia: Yes, ma'am.

Commissioner Castro: Before I take a vote, I want to go ahead and clarify that absolutely I stand with the people of Iran, but at the same time, I want to put on the record, I ask the Mayor to go ahead and amend the language, not to single out just Iran, to support all. That would make me more comfortable after hearing public comment and from having residents reach out to me that live in this city. So, I will not be supporting this. I don't know, as a local government, where we draw the line, and we're getting ourselves involved in aspects of the world that we really have no jurisdiction of. But I do support the people from Iran. I just don't support this exact legislation. We should be really supporting everybody universally. So, no.

Commissioner Lara: For the previous reasons that I stated, yes.

Mayor Lago: Very clearly, we'll read it again for the record, that the city expresses solidarity and support for the pursuit of freedom, fundamental human rights, and economic justice for the Iranian people and throughout the world. We cannot be afraid to stand up and voice our opinion for democracy, for free elections, and for the positive and correct treatment of human beings,

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especially women and young children. Turn the TV on, and you'll see very clearly what's going on all over the world, and we need to show support. And for the people who have contacted me, called me, in regard to who are residents here in support of this, I thank you very much. Thank you for always educating and thank you always for bringing a positive light to all causes. Yes.

Vice Mayor Anderson: And for those reasons as well, because it supports peace and freedoms throughout the world, yes.

Mayor Lago: Thank you. All right.