

Kashmoula, who was tragically assassinated a month later. These Iraqis know what they are fighting for, and they understand the risks. Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers and police and national guardsmen have already given their lives in this cause. But as one young woman, whose sister had recently been murdered because she was working for a free Iraq said to us: “My father said, you must never back down in the face of evil.”

These people are not retreating in the face of evil, and they have the support of extraordinarily brave young Americans who are risking their lives so that other people can enjoy freedom and so that our own people can live in greater security.

American servicemen and women have fought bravely in battle to protect us, and in the process, they’ve liberated 50 million souls. They’ve labored with courage and decency and honor, helping Afghans and Iraqis heal the countries that were broken long before they arrived. We mourn each one of those Americans who have been lost for this cause. My friend Joe Lieberman put it eloquently when he said recently that “those who have given their lives have given them for a noble cause, a cause as critical to American security as most any I can think of that we fought over the centuries.”

A couple of months ago, I was privileged to be present when a group of wounded heroes from Iraq, men and women, met President Bush at the White House. There was also a delegation of Iraqi women who are active leaders in helping Iraq build a new free society. They’d come to Washington to learn more about elections and government in a democratic society. When they met the Americans who’d been their liberators, they embraced them, and they thanked them over and over, through tears of joy. And one Iraqi woman summed up the feeling of the group this way: There would have been no opportunity, she said, for Iraqi women to learn about democracy were it not for the sacrifice of American servicemen and women.

I recently got to know one American hero who helped give them that opportunity, an extraordinary young man, Army Sergeant Adam Replogle. He was fighting Sadr’s army with his unit in May near Karbala. An RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] slammed into him, and he lost his left arm and the sight in his left eye. Adam put his enormous sacrifice into perspective this way. He said, “We’re fighting for everything we believe in. We’ve freed Iraqis from a dictator who was killing Iraqis by the millions.”

Sergeant Replogle described how he’d personally changed so many lives in Iraq, how he’d helped destroy terrorist cells and get people back into their houses, how he and his fellow soldiers helped multiply the numbers of schools in his sector from two to 40 in just a year. He’d even bought bikes for Iraqi girls and boys. “After all,” he said, “they only cost five bucks, and these kids didn’t have anything.”

Sergeant Replogle summed up the situation like this: “Saddam affected everyone in that country.” And he added, “Something had to be done.”

Something had to be done, and Americans did it, just as Americans have always stood up to evil. There are others in the Muslim world who will one day join us as allies in this fight. That’s because history has shown that, in their hearts, most people are steadfastly unreconciled to tyranny. So hope remains. As the President reminded us: “As freedom advances, heart by heart,