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Understanding the Iranian Green Movement: Regime Change From Within

When we talk about human rights in Iran, the first thing that comes to mind is the torture of political prisoners. I am one of the eye witnesses to torture in the Islamic Republic prisons. I spent over five years of my life in prison, under torture, and over 15 years in the corridors of the Revolutionary courts. This is a short clip from the day after I got out of solitary confinement in 2001.

Video of Amir Fakhrafar, after 222 days Solitary confinement, January 2001:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHc7nrxpRLw>

Today, I don't wish to speak about torture and prison in the Islamic Republic because I believe that there is no longer a need for that. In the last three decades, all the efforts of freedom fighters in Iran have been concentrated on showing the world that the Islamic republic is a deceitful and ruthless dictatorship.

The most difficult part of this struggle was to reveal the true face of the mullah's government to the people of Iran, who for years had been bombarded with their propaganda and their brainwashing techniques. The events following the elections, the courage of the Iranian youth and the shedding of their blood turned the world's eyes to Iran, took the mask off the face of the deceitful mullahs ruling Iran and revealed the bitter truth hidden in the Islamic Republic to the world and especially to the people of Iran. Now, all the governments of the free world except the new administration in the U.S., and ordinary citizens across the globe condemn the leaders of the Islamic Republic with anger and hatred.

Under these circumstances, President Obama writes letters to Khamenei and Ahmadinejad. Just last week, Khamenei announced that Obama has written to him and asked him to help him make the world a better place. But the rest of the world has heard the voice of the Green Revolution in Iran.

Today I don't want to talk about torture and political prisoners, but I do want to talk about the reason why they were taken to prison and were tortured. I want to be the clear voice of my friends who have endured many years of torture. I won't tell you about their sufferings, but I will tell you about their hopes and dreams. Let's look at my best friend's message from the notorious Evin prison, Arjhang davoodi. He has served 8 years of his sentence as a political prisoner and has another 7 years left.

Message from Arjang Davoodi in Evin Prison: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL_oBaBI4W4

Being able to speak out without risking being arrested is only a small part of human rights and that is not all that is being violated in Iran. All the basic rights of Iranians are being violated. We are talking about a country with a population of 72 million who have no choice but to live in fear of a very small group of the ruling class. Parents have to send their children to schools which only teach them religious superstitions. 22 million students in these schools undergo daily brainwashing. People have to dress, behave, talk and even get married the way the mullahs dictate. The mullahs' agents follow ordinary citizens, tap their phones, read their e-mails and letters, and even raid their homes without a warrant.

People don't even have a chance to escape this big prison because they cannot get a visa to go to any other country. Even the biggest trade partners of Iran won't give Iranians visas because of the behavior of this regime. Only a small fraction of the Iranians who have extraordinary circumstances can escape Iran. We are talking about a country whose people cannot go to the police when a theft or murder or rape occurs because the police themselves commit the worst crimes.

We are talking about a country where the lives of the citizens don't matter to its leaders. The only thing they care about is to pocket more money and to preserve their power. [Maybe you will find it interesting to know that 72 people die every day in Iran in traffic accidents according to official reports.](#) In the eight years of war with Iraq, the casualties were 68 people daily. 30 more die every day from health problems related to air pollution. In Sweden, where they have as many cars as Iran, only 25 people die annually in traffic accidents. In Iran this figure is about 30,000 people because the mullahs who own the biggest car company in Iran (Iran National) refuse to spend some of the incredible profit of this company to update these cars and they are still manufactured using a 30 year old technology.

Despite all this, the new generation of Iran found the best solution. With the help of modern technology and the internet, we could show the world the truth face of the mullahs and Islamic republic. When we were a forgotten people and all the channels of news were closed to us, in an incredible way, the number of Iranian bloggers grew until it ranked the third in the world. Let's see a short clip together now. (Iran: a nation of bloggers).

On April 8, 2009, at the request of the University of Pittsburg Law School, I wrote an article about Iranian bloggers and in conclusion, I wrote that we were very close to a revolution powered by the internet. Here is the link of this article:

<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/hotline/2009/04/iranian-bloggers-death-in-prison-shows.php>

While nobody believed me at the time, two months later this revolution happened under the guise of the Green Movement and stunned the world. This was not an accident. We had been planning it for years. Let's watch a small part of my testimony at the Senate on July 20, 2006 right after I escaped the Evin prison and managed to come to Washington to become the mouthpiece for my fellow students.

Senate video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFFASGPMjYA&feature=related> (8:30 to End)

As you saw in the video, we never asked for war or missiles. We had asked for cell phones, cameras and computers. In the last six months, it has been precisely the use of these instruments that has managed to create a perplexing problem for the Islamic Republic, who was until then was stood on firm ground and sneered at the world. The more people they arrest, the bolder people become. Big cities in Iran have not seen a day or night go by without unrest since the elections.

I said all this so that you would start believing in the power of this new generation. As much as the American government didn't take us seriously, the Islamic Republic did. They killed many young protesters.

The Islamic Republic's official news agency IRNA published an article a week after the elections and mentioned my name and part of my speech in the U.S. Senate. Here is the link of this article in Islamic Republic of Iran's Official news agency:

<http://www.iran-newspaper.com/1388/3/28/Iran/4239/Page/5/Index.htm>

In this article, they said that they found the leader of this uprising who is working in conjunction with the Obama administration.

"... The opposition is planning demonstrations in an organized and purposeful fashion so that it attracts worldwide attention. The media management of this scheme is outside of Iran and not inside Iran.

The main center for the downfall of Tehran is in Washington D.C., in two small rooms in an apartment behind Capitol Hill. It is here where Amir Abbas Fakhraei resides. He wants to organize the uprisings in Tehran and is requesting help: We need cameras, computers, phones...." (June 18, 2009 -IRNA)

Even though this is not true at all and, in fact, the leadership of this movement is not any one person but millions of smart and courageous young Iranians, this shows that the Islamic Republic has taken all this very seriously and is close to losing everything.

We expect for the free world to take us seriously too. We know the free world, specially the people of Israel, are worried about the Islamic Republic's nuclear program and rightfully so. I was myself a student who studied at the Islamic Republic schools. In all those years, I would hear from my teachers that Jewish people are not humans but pigs and monkeys and that they are dirty. They even told us that if you raped a Jewish woman, even if she was married, you would be doing a work worthy of religious rewards. I give you every right to be worried. I am personally sure that the Islamic Republic is pursuing nuclear weapons and it won't test it in its own deserts either. They intend to target Israel because in their superstitious and idiotic belief, with the shedding of the blood of millions of Jews at the foot of The Twelfth Imam's horse, they will expedite his arrival.

All this said, a military attack is not a good idea at all because it is like giving an aspirin to a patient with a brain tumor. We need to believe in the Iranian youth. We need to give them hope and encouragement. This is a generation that is vastly different than Iran's ruling class in every way a generation that even shields its enemy from harm when he has fallen.

Let's watch short clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPMiunEUC_g

Let's watch another video. This is an event that changes the course of Iranian history.

Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERizLyvNKfE>

Neda's warm blood, from the moment it shed, gave courage and hope to Iran. Dr. Arash Hejazi, a young doctor who happened to be there and the first person whose hand touched Neda's blood, was suddenly turned around after this event.

I have known him for 10 years. He was a pragmatic and risk-averse writer and publisher whose only concern was his work, himself and his family. After this event, he became a fearless freedom fighter and left his life and work in Iran and moved to Europe with his family so he could continue his fight. This has happened to millions of Iranians in the past five months. They have cast aside their fears and are going forward with great hope towards building a free, secular and democratic Iran.



Amir Fakhraivar and Arash Hejazi

What seemingly started as a protest to the election results has evolved into a movement opposing the entirety of the Islamic Republic. Slogans are meticulously conceived to counteract everything that this government stands for and in doing so they are getting bolder and more blatant. This struggle continues as the young generation plans the next steps everything in a brilliant way. Look at this picture. The presence of tens of thousands of Iranians on Qods day, a hallmark of this regime since the beginning, and changing the slogan of that day from death to Israel to death to Russia and death to dictator made a mockery of the regime's whole ideology. The same thing happened on the anniversary of the hostage taking at the American Embassy.



But it's not just street protests that they organize. They have planned ahead farther than anyone could imagine. I learned recently that a group of lawyers and judges called the "Lawyers of the green movement of Iran" have convened to draft a new constitution based on the universal declaration of human rights.

In order for this movement to succeed as soon as possible, the free world can help us a lot. First of all, they need to believe in this movement's power and secondly impose hard sanctions on the Islamic Republic- that means oils and gas- to cut the mullahs' lifeline. The Islamic Republic is the biggest financial supporter of terrorism in the world, like Hamas and Hezbollah. The money paid to them is through the sales of oil and gas and so is the money financing their nuclear ambitions. If these sanctions are imposed, this money won't be there. Most importantly, the media can play a big role. Media such as satellite television stations and accessible internet that can bypass government filters can help the flow of information tremendously and therefore speed up the process. I am sure that this will cost far less money than a military attack.