

USADI Dispatch

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USADI Commentary

Mullahs Commit another Heinous Crime

The Iranian theocracy has been in power for more than two decades. Yet, there seems to be a dangerous misunderstanding as to how this brutal regime has survived so far. The on-again off-again loosening of some social restrictions notwithstanding, the mullahs have used sheer brutality to suppress political dissent. Sponsorship of terror and export of fundamentalism have complemented the domestic crackdown in keeping the mullahs in power.

The vast majority of the Iranian people despise the clerical regime, which explains why the clerics' resort to repression cloaked under religion will not keep the regime viable in the long run. Nevertheless, Tehran's barbaric justice helps it cling on to power on a day-to-day basis.

To be sure, this reign of terror is spread by a multitude of agencies and security forces to all aspects of life in Iran. These agencies include the Judiciary, the Revolutionary Guards Corps, State Security Forces, the Ministry of Intelligence and the paramilitary Bassij Force.

The Judiciary plays a crucial role in legitimizing this reign of terror. Notorious for its brutal torture of political prisoners and often lethal interrogation, such as in the case of the Canadian photojournalist, Zahra Kazemi, the Judiciary is as barbaric in its treatment of ordinary "offenders," carrying out hanging, flogging, limb amputation, eye gouging and stoning in public.

The state-controlled dailies in Iran reported that three prisoners were hanged in public in the southern city of Kerman last Saturday. These executions brought to more than 100, the number of people executed since March 2004. But the execution last week of an under-aged Iranian girl stunned the world.

Iran Focus web site reported that on August 16, Ateqeh Sahaleh, a 16-year-old girl in the town of Neka, northern Iran, was hanged in public. Judiciary Chief Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi approved the hanging. The religious judge, who personally put the noose around Ateqeh's neck, said brazenly that her punishment was not execution but he had her executed for her "sharp tongue."

This inhuman killing is not only a testament to the misogynous nature of the regime in Iran, but reflects the immorality of the Europeans in promoting dialogue with the clerics and putting business before principles.

As shocking as this crime was, no one in Europe or in the United States even bothered to offer an expression of grief over, let alone condemnation of, the mullahs' barbarity. When we turn a blind eye on this sort of savagery, we are seen as approving of such heinous atrocities and assure the turbaned tyrants in Iran that they can go about their ruthless practices with impunity.

"Direct dialogue" or striking a "grand bargain" with Tehran - the derivatives of the failed policy of engagement - only serve to perpetuate the Iranian tyranny. To end this sort of medieval brutality, Washington should take the lead in lending support to the millions in Iran who are demanding regime change. Practically speaking, it ought to reach out to the anti-fundamentalist opposition forces it has so far shunned in an attempt to accommodate Tehran.

Iran Focus

August 25, 2004

Iranian official confirms hanging of girl in northern Iran

Tehran, Aug 25 - After initially denying that a 16-year-old girl had been hanged in public in the northern town of Neka on Monday, August 16, the Iranian government has admitted for the first time that the hanging took place.

The Tehran-based daily *Etemad* quoted today an official of the judiciary involved in the case, who confirmed that Ateqeh Sahaleh was hanged in Neka last Monday.

But he claimed that she was 22 years old, and not 16. Several residents of Neka, including one of Sahaleh's close relatives, have emphasized that she was 16 years old.

"My own daughter was in the same class," a pharmacist in the town said. "The poor soul did not deserve to be treated like that."

"The judge claimed that she had sold her body to men. But even if that were true, would it justify this horrible punishment?" a woman told Radio Farda, a U.S.-funded Persian-language radio based in Prague.

News of the hanging of this girl, first reported by Iran Focus, was met with outrage from the international community. In a press statement on Monday, Amnesty International expressed its 'outrage' at the execution of this minor.

After seeing that its initial denial of the hanging backfired, the Iranian government is now trying to evade international outrage and condemnation by claiming, falsely, that Ateqeh was 22.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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Forbes Magazine
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Grim News from Iran

The news from Iran is grim. This Islamic dictatorship--the biggest source of terrorist training and financing in the world and the nation that's doing all it can to stir up trouble in already combustible Iraq--is clearly on the cusp of becoming a nuclear power. The clerical fascists running the country have dropped just about all pretenses of their atomic programs being energy-related only. Tehran announced in July that it had resumed making the centrifuges needed to produce highly enriched uranium, a key ingredient for nuclear bombs. It is, in essence, tearing up last fall's agreement with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency to keep its nuclear program transparent and to do nothing that could be construed as developing nuclear weapons.

Iran, more than Iraq or the reorganization of our intelligence agencies, is the crisis flashpoint in our war against Islamic fanaticism. What to do? John Kerry's advisers and many Bush Administration officials think we should deal directly with Iran. The Europeans would support us. The goal: to persuade Iran--through cash, trade agreements (its economy is a mess) and pats on the back--to halt its nuclear arms program. These so-called realists in this instance are the dreamers, the fantasizers.

Why wouldn't Iran go nuclear? Our ten-year dawdle over North Korea's nuclear adventurism hammers home to Tehran's corrupt, totalitarian-minded thugs this inescapable conclusion: Nukes mean respect, mean security--and they grant blackmail power to shake down billions in booty from the U.S. and other Western moneybags...

Bottom line: Through every avenue possible, we should make clear to Tehran that continued nuclearization will mean the U.S. will... will strike, perhaps even before the Israelis do. For starters, we will embargo Iranian oil exports, crippling Iran's economy and its source of military funding. We should also forthrightly support Iranian democrats and opposition groups, which have a considerable following, especially among the young. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty-like broadcasts should bombard Iran 24 hours a day... Our European "allies" will blanch at such realistic responses. We must be prepared to go it alone...

The situation is extremely dangerous, and both presidential candidates should be questioned persistently and hard over how we should deal with it. To let Iran go nuclear would have profoundly unpleasant consequences for our safety and that of the rest of the civilized world.

Excerpts from an article by Steve Forbes

The Washington Times
Aug 26, 2004
The Najaf showdown

Media coverage of Iraqi politics paints a warped picture of the reality inside the country. A serious misunderstanding of Iraq is developing in the West. Muqtada al-Sadr is not a populist; the Najaf standoff has little to do with Iraqi popular will and everything to do with Iranian political muscle flexing. ...

In Iraq, people constantly ask themselves one simple question: What if al-Sadr wins? The answer, they know, is that Iraq will end up with a radical Islamist dictatorship devoid of individual liberties and marked by intimidation, arbitrary imprisonment and extra-judicial execution -- as al-Sadr has already shown he is capable of in areas under his control....

Many Iraqis see Iranian mullahs rattling chains in Najaf. It is Iran's way of saying to the interim government that they can create chaos in the country if and when they wish to do so.

Al-Sadr's endless flip-flopping on his demands and conditions indicate that his decision making is not entirely his own. At times, he has changed his position more than three times in one day.

Iran's agitation of the situation comes as a response to various statements by Iraqi officials about Iran's involvement in acts of sabotage in Iraq. Initiating the al-Sadr showdown can be seen as an attempt by Iran to put an Iraqi face on the foreign forces trying to undermine a new system in Iraq.

It is not in Iran's interest, nor in the interest of the autocratic countries of the region, to have a functioning democracy in Iraq. A stable, democratic Iraq will become a haven for the democratic opposition movements in neighboring countries.

Today, democratically minded opposition figures of the Middle East's dictatorships are either silenced by imprisonment, or are in the West, where they can be pointed to as part of the "Western conspiracy" to undermine the development of the Middle East (usually in cahoots with Israel).

Local and international calls for a peaceful resolution of the al-Sadr standoff are supported by most Iraqis. But peace should not be at the expense of undermining the new Iraqi government by turning al-Sadr into a victor. ...

An al-Sadr victory will be a catastrophe for Iraq and the region.

Excerpts from an article by Hiwa Osman, a Baghdad-based journalist.