

Iran: The Last Executioner of Children and Women in the Modern World

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California. June 28, 2008. The Iranian Islamic authorities, soon after they tightened their grip on the country in 1979, following the overthrow of the Shah's tyrannical establishment, have been suppressing every basic human, religious, and ethnic right in Iran. This, in essence, is a grave violation of every democratic principle. Months after they established their religious sectarian rule, and on an order from Khomeini, the Iranian authorities sent their forces to Kurdistan-Iran in order, as they put it, to wipe out the "foreign agents." They declared a so-called "Jihad" against the Kurdish people. Their jihad did not even spare pregnant women and children sleeping in their cradles.

After regaining control over Kurdistan, instead of working to bring tranquility to the people and show concern for their welfare, the Iranian regime continued the same policies of its predecessor, the Shah's despotic regime. The Iranian regime maintained the policy of persecuting Kurdish human rights advocates and freedom seekers. In 1989, Iranian regime used the negotiation tactics to trap the Secretary General of Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Dr. Abdurrahman Qasmlu along with two of KDPI leadership members in Vienne, and murdered them while they were negotiating terms to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish national demands within a democratic Iran. They were slain while sitting at the negotiation table. This pattern of suppression and murder was repeated in 1992 in Berlin when Qasmlu's successor, Abdurrahman Sharafkandi along with several of his supporters were murdered after returning from a peace conference. Dozens of other Iranian Kurdish democratic and human rights activists who had fled to Kurdistan-Iraq to escape a certain death were murdered by Iranian co-conspirators and agents who followed them to Iraq and executed them.

According to the Amnesty International's recent report (2008), Iran is the only country in the world that still executes children and child offenders (those accused of committing an offense when they were under 18 years of age). In the past decade, the Iranian regime sentenced 177 child offenders to death, of which 34 executions have already taken place. Their ages ranged from 12 to 17 years. The remaining 114 await execution. Today, Iran accounts for 73% of all juvenile executions worldwide.

The theocratic state has also launched a campaign of suppression against women and women's organizations who are advocating for human rights for women. Iranian women's groups have been peaceably assembling and using democratic means to try to make the regime to

grant them more freedom. Their civic movement has proved to be effective to promote the idea of social justice where all citizens are considered equal before the law regardless of their gender, religion/sect, or ethnicity. As a result, these organizations and their leaders have met with harsh repression in a recent crackdown.

Amongst these women's rights activists are two Kurdish women's rights advocates, Ms. Hana Abdi and Ronak Safarzadeh, both age 21. They had been in prison in the Kurdish city of Sina (Sanadaj), since their arrest on September 25 and October 23, 2007 respectively. The crimes, of which they are charged include being active in the Azarmehr Association of the Women of Kurdistan, a group that promotes women's status through capacity-building workshops and sports activities for women in Sina and elsewhere in Kurdistan-Iran; and volunteering with the One Million Signatures Campaign for Equality.

Iran has used propaganda to stigmatize advocates of human rights and democratic principles as enemies of Islam and nation, and labels them as "munafiqeen," or "foreign agents," By characterizing those who disagree with their political and religious agendas as munafiqeen's or enemies of Islam, the Iranian theocracy have created a climate in which they believe it is righteous for them to murder those whom they suspect of being in violation with their way of thinking. By using the epithet of 'anti-Islam' against innocent people or accusing people of "endangering the national security" without providing undeniable proof of such claims, the Iranian regime has itself become "extremist" through acts such as murdering children and public "stoning" of women.

The irresponsible behavior of the Iranian Mullahs has begun to destabilize the entire Middle East. By justifying their intolerance under the banner of "Islam" they have been promoting terrorist groups affiliated with its ideology and succeeded in demonizing the image of Islam to the larger world community. Further, their ambitions to help bring about the downfall of a sovereign nation and their ambition to obtain nuclear weapons have brought Iran into serious confrontations with the world. This sort of brinksmanship can only bring calamity to Iranian people.

We call upon the leaders of Iran to stop promoting terrorist groups , relinquish its extremist rhetoric and actions and rejoin the world community as a modern functioning state. Internally, we hope it will continue to provide better economic opportunities for its citizens to achieve a decent living standard, and to protect its citizens' human, democratic, and cultural rights. Political prisoners, including Ms. Abdi and Ms. Safarzadeh must be released or given a fair trial according to the rule of law and not narrow religious interpretations. Iran must treat all ethnic groups equally and allow them to exercise their indigenous culture. At the external level, it must work diligently to regain its international reputation as a functioning member of the world community by stop supporting terrorists. It needs to respect the international norms and protect human rights. It needs to work genuinely to normalize its relationships with the world in order to

be allowed to take its place back in the family of nations. Iran cannot have a healthy relationship with the world if it continues to adhere to its current policies. It can no longer justify its cruelty toward women and children by using its narrow religious interpretations. These policies would only guarantee its eventual downfall.

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