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Mehr Vision | No.2 | January 2016

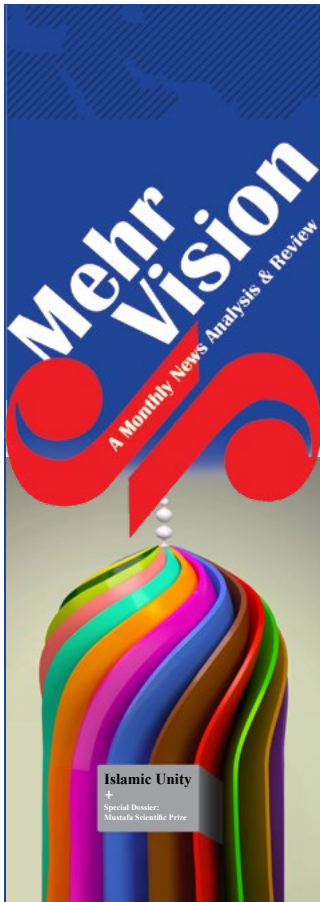
**Mehr
Vision**

A Monthly News Analysis & Review

Islamic Unity

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Special Dossier:
Mustafa Scientific Prize



Contents

Cover Story	29 th Intl. Islamic Unity Conference held in Tehran	3
	US destroyed some Muslim countries by sowing discord	4
	Beginning of violence, deviation from moderation	8
	29 th International Islamic Unity Conference final statement	9
	Syria a swamp where west stuck	11

Politics	Saudis playing with fire by killing Nimr	13
	The New Saudi-Iranian standoff	14
	People’s Mobilization backbone of Iraqi forces	16
	Russia serious in Syria; America schizophrenic	18
	US-led coalition pretends fight against ISIL	20
	EU crucial in deescalating Turkey-Russia tension	21
	Turkish economy to bear Russian jet downing costs	22
	Turkey acting as hired gun for US, Israel	23
	‘Truth, reason constituting our weapons’	25
	Muslim lives don’t matter	27
	Censorship vs. Letter4U: NYTimes, WP censor Leader’s letter	28
	IAEA report on Iran’s PMD ‘commendable’	29
Fascism in Donald Trump’s America: Dirty secret of American politics	30	

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by readers which can be sent via email.*

Economy	Investing in post-sanction Iran	34
	Global market in oil at point of ‘Peak Demand’	35
	Iran, France to build 1st FLNG unit in Persian Gulf	37
	Iran’s ISOICO, Russia’s Barrikady ink shipbuilding MoU	38
	Iran, Russia sign 2 economic MoUs	39
	Worth of Iranian oil reserves to rise by \$30bn	40
	Germany to build 4 solar power plants in Kerman	41

Culture	Iran’s Cinéma Vérité: Pulsing heart of ‘truth’ among the debris	43
	Iranian filmmaker ‘Alone among the Taliban’	45
	Shariati’s ‘return to self’ rejection of sectarianism, ethnocentrism	46
	Asiatic cheetah extinction trend reversed	48
MNA throws birthday bash for kids in need	49	

Dossier	Mustafa Scientific Prize	51
	Laureates of First Mustafa Scientific Prize	52
	Mustafa Prize, a global cooperation to eliminate poverty of mind	53
	Mustafa Scientific Prize to present Islamic values	54
	Mustafa Prize to act as beacon to Islamic researchers	55

News in vision	56
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Tehran held the 29th International Islamic Unity Conference on 27-29 Dec., with extensive discussions on the 'Present Crises of Muslim World and Ways to End Them.'

The 29th Islamic Unity Conference with the theme of "Present Crises of Muslim World and Ways to End Them" was held on December 27-29 December, 2015, concurrent with the birthday anniversary of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), dubbed as Islamic Unity Week.

The event with more than 600 scholars from Iran and across the world of Islam in attendance, began its three-day work with the opening speech delivered by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and continued with other speeches delivered by participants from other Islamic states and also 14 sideline committees discussing the current issues of Muslim World.

Participants in the 29th Islamic Unity Conference also met with the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei listening to his thoughtful remarks on the main theme of the conference.

During the meeting which was held on Dec. 29, Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the West's exploitation of Islamic knowledge and philosophy to establish their own civilization adding "even though the Western civilization offers shades of technological beauty, speed, ease as well as life facilities, it would never lead to happiness, prosperity and justice due to suffering from internal contradictions."

"It's high time for the Islamic world to take steps towards establishing the modern Islamic civilization,"



29th Intl. Islamic Unity Conference held in Tehran

noted the Leader asserting "to that end, scholars and intellectuals of the Islamic world rather than politicians need to take enlightening measures among Islamic nations having faith that the establishment of the new civilization is feasible."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the enemies cause discord among Muslims as a tool to prevent the formation of the modern Islamic civilization as it became clear after the dangerous plot of highlighting the distinctions between Shias and Sunnis.

He stressed the Americans are against the principle of Islam and one should not be fooled by their statements in support of some cults; "previous statements made by the former US president after the September 11th incident were indicators of the arrogant world's war against Islam."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution evaluated the US officials' claims on being in

favor of Islam as sheer lies and hypocrisy adding "they are merely trying to create discord among Muslim sects one example being the formation of ISIL and other terrorist groups financial and political support causing the current disasters."

"We should not remain silent or surrender to the plot; rather, we need to confront their plans with insight and strength," Iran's Leader asserted.

Ayatollah Khamenei further pointed out capacities and capabilities of the Islamic world including good lands, excellent geographical location, abundant natural resources as well as talented manpower; "a mixture of these capacities and the teachings of Islam would lead to artistic creations in all scientific, technological, political and social areas."

The opening ceremony was addressed by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

who expressed hope the International Islamic Unity Conference would pave the way for further consolidation and unity among Muslims.

"Takfiri thoughts are definitively rooted in the lack of moderation and are led by dogmatic minds," Rouhani had underlined, adding that if people failed to follow a fair, moderate tone of discourse, the real result would only be violence.

Rouhani said enemies and big powers are doing their best to portray Islam as a religion of violence, urging Muslims to take necessary steps to thwart all efforts aimed at depicting Islam as the religion of violence.

Over 300 Muslim figures and scholars from 70 countries attended the three-day event. The conference is annually held by the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought with the aim of promoting and strengthening unity among all Muslims in the world |



Leader:
US destroyed some Muslim countries by sowing discord

Today, the enemy seeks to set off an internal war among Muslims and, unfortunately, to a certain extent, they have succeeded in doing so. We can see their evil work as they destroy one country after another -- look at the situations in Syria, Yemen and Libya.

The following is the full text of the speech delivered on December 29, 2015 by Ayatollah Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, in a meeting with government officials, ambassadors of Islamic countries in Iran and participants of the 29th Conference on Islamic Unity. The meeting was held on the occasion of the birthday anniversaries of the Holy Prophet and Imam Sadiq.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and greetings be upon our Master Muhammad and upon his immaculate household

I would like to congratulate you honorable and dear participants, the officials of the country, the guests of conference on Islamic unity and the honorable ambassadors of Islamic countries who are present in the meeting on the occasion of the auspicious birthday anniversary of the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.w.a.) and his great son, Imam Sadiq (a.s.). I also extend my congratulations to all the people of Iran, the entire Islamic Ummah, all the liberated people in the world, those who place great value on virtue, morality, diligence and jihad in the way of righteousness and ethics.

The Holy Prophet's (God's greetings be upon him and his household) birth-

day and be'that was a spirit that was breathed into the body of the dead world of those days. That world was apparently alive. Governments, monarchies, efforts and activities existed, but that world was the death of humanity and the death of virtue. What existed was cruelty, oppression, discrimination and brutality. Virtues were dead and the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) and his invitation breathed a spirit into that world. When I say the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) himself and his invitation, the reason is that the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) was the embodiment of Islam. The Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) wife has been quoted as saying, "His behavior was the embodiment of the Holy Quran" [Commentary on Nahjul Balaghah, Volume 6, page 340]. He was the embodiment of the Holy Quran. The Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) and his religion breathed a spirit into that dead world: "Give your response to Allah and His Messenger, when He calls you to that which will give you life" [The Holy Quran, 8: 24]. What he brought to those people and to that dark, dead and pest-stricken world was life.

You and I are commemorating this occasion today. Well, commemorating something in words and by gathering together is a good deed, but this is not what we who claim to be following Islam and the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) are expected to do. This is not enough. We too should try to breathe a spirit into today's dead and pest-stricken world. Today too, the world is suffering from oppression, cruelty and discrimination. Today too, the death of virtue is the big problem of humanity. Virtues are being suppressed by the instruments of materialistic powers. Justice, human values and morality

are being suppressed, human blood is constantly being shed at the hands of unscrupulous powers and some nations die of hunger because of being looted by powers. This is the condition of the world in the present time. This era is like the Jahiliyya era which existed before the emergence of Islam. This is a kind of Jahiliyya as well.

Today, the responsibility of the Islamic Ummah is not only to hold a celebration in memory of the Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) birthday and be'that. This is a small and minor task compared to its duty. Today, the world of Islam has a responsibility to breathe a spirit into this world – just like Islam and the Holy Prophet (s.w.a.) himself – to create a new environment and to open a new path. We refer to this phenomenon, which we are looking forward to, as "the new Islamic civilization". We should be striving for the new Islamic civilization- for the sake of humanity. This is dramatically different from what powers think about humanity and from how they act.

This does not mean conquering lands. It does not mean violating the rights of nations. It does not mean imposing one's beliefs and culture on other nations. Rather, it means offering a divine gift to nations so that they choose the right path of their own volition and with their own choices and decisions. The path that global powers have dragged nations towards is a wrong and deviant path. Today, this is our responsibility.

One day, by using the knowledge and philosophy of Muslims, the people of Europe managed to build a civilization for themselves. Of course, this civilization was a material one. Since the 16th and →

17th centuries of the Christian calendar, the Europeans began to shape a new civilization. Because it was a material civilization, they used different instruments without any scruples. On the one hand, they moved towards colonialism and towards conquering nations and looting their wealth and on the other hand, they strengthened themselves from the inside by means of knowledge, technology and experience. This was how they helped this civilization dominate the human world. This was what the Europeans did in the course of four, five centuries.

The civilization that they presented to the world provided beautiful reflections of technology, speed, comfort and different amenities for the people, but it did not provide them with happiness and it did not administer justice. On the contrary, it struck justice on the head, it held some nations captive, it made some nations poor and it humiliated some other nations. Besides, it witnessed certain contradictions in itself. They became corrupt in terms of morality and they became hollow and empty-headed in terms of spirituality.

Today, westerners themselves are confirming this. An outstanding western politician said to me that their world is hollow and empty and that they are feeling this. He is right. This civilization had a flashy appearance, but its true nature was dangerous for humanity. Today, the contradictions of this western civilization are showing themselves. They are showing themselves in different ways in America, in Europe and in regions which are under their control throughout the world.

Today, it is our turn. Today, it is Islam's turn: "Such days of varying fortunes we give to men by turns" [The Holy Quran, 3: 140]. Today, it is the Muslims' turn to shape a new Islamic civilization with their own determination. As the Europeans used, in those days, Muslims' knowledge and benefitted from their experience and philosophy, we too are using the world's knowledge in the present time. We are using the current tools in the world to build a new Islamic civilization, but it is accompanied by an Islamic and divine spirit. Today, this is our responsibility.

This is primarily addressed to religious scholars and sincere intellectuals. I am not hopeful about politicians anymore. In the past, it was thought that the politicians of the world of Islam can help in

this regard, but unfortunately, this hope has diminished. Today, we have pinned our hopes on religious scholars throughout the world of Islam and on sincere intellectuals who do not consider the west as their qiblah. We have pinned our hopes on them and this is possible. They should not say that this is not possible. This is possible and this can be done.

The world of Islam has many tools at its disposal. We have a good population, we have good lands, we have an outstanding geographical location and we have many natural resources in the world of Islam. We have very talented and outstanding human resources in the world of Islam. If we educate them with the teachings of Islam, they can show



and present their artistic creations in the arena of science, politics and technology and in various social arenas.

The Islamic Republic is an example in this regard. It is a testing ground and a tried and trusted method for the world of Islam. Before the current rule of Islam over this country, we were a backward nation in the real sense of the word. We were dependent and scientifically, politically and socially backward and isolated in world politics. However today, the achievements of the Islamic Republic have even made our enemies acknowledge them. Today, after the passage of nearly 35 years from the victory of the Islamic Revolution, we are among advanced countries in the world in terms of science, technology and many new fields of knowledge.

The reports whose reliability and truth have been proved tell us that we are sev-

enth in one area, sixth in another area and five in another. Thanks to Islam, the people of Iran have managed to show their identity and character. This can be extended to other countries, the condition for this being that the heavy and sinister shadow of superpowers stops looming over the heads of countries. This is the first condition. Of course, there is a price to be paid, but there is no great feat without a price. In this weighty and important assembly – in which important and great personalities are present – I want to say that with a jihadi and serious effort, the Islamic Ummah can devise a new Islamic civilization which is suitable for our time. It can shape and attain it and it can present it to humanity.

We will not invite anyone to Islam by force. We will not force any country into accepting the domination of Islam. We will not act like the Europeans. We will not act like America. The Europeans moved from an island on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and they occupied and looted- by force- a great country like India and a number of countries surrounding that country. They themselves became wealthy and they dragged those countries towards a catastrophic condition. They moved forward like this. Today too, they are doing the same thing in the world with other methods and tactics. They work themselves towards progress with others' money, investments, wealth and products and they beautify their appearance.

Of course, their inner selves are being ruined and are decaying. As I said, they are becoming emptier on a daily →

basis. What you Muslims achieve will make your enemies displeased and the disasters that befall you will make them pleased and happy: "If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them, but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it" [The Holy Quran, 3: 120]. They are like this. These are the words of the Holy Quran. We should not look at them [westerners]. We should not look at their hands, their smiles and their frowns. Instead, we should find our own path and move forward. This is our responsibility and the responsibility of everyone in the world of Islam.

One of the instruments that the enemies use is creating discord among us. I insist that we stress and place great emphasis on this matter. Brothers, sisters, Muslims in the world of Islam, if this call reaches your ears, you should know that the day when the words "Sunni" and "Shia" appeared in the American discourse, we became concerned. Every insightful person became concerned. What does America have to do with Sunni and Shia? What does such and such a Jewish Zionist politician in America – who has done nothing except for showing malevolence against Islam and Muslims – have

to do with making judgments about Sunni and Shia in the world of Islam? Why should he say something about Sunni and a completely different thing about Shia? Since the Shia and Sunni discourse showed itself in American words, those people who were perceptive and intelligent in the world of Islam became concerned. They understood that a new scheme was being devised, and it was finally put into practice.

There is a history behind waging a war between Shia and Sunni. The English are experts at this. We have many records and abundant information about the history of waging a war, creating discord and instigating grudges between Sunni and Shia. Such discord was created by English agents – whether in our country, in the former Ottoman government or in Arab countries – with the purpose of pitting these countries against one other. However, the plot that the Americans have hatched today is a more dangerous plot. Does supporting a denomination against another denomination in the world of Islam make us happy? If they advocate us, should we be happy then? No, we should become sad and see what week points they have found in us that they want to

use and that has made them advocate and support us.

They are opposed to the essence of Islam. This is the reality of the matter. In the event of the 11th of September that took place in New York, America and on the issue of the bombardment of the towers, the U.S. president of the time said that that [response] was a crusade. He was right. He was a bad person, but this statement of his was correct: the battle between Islam and arrogance. Of course, he said, "Christianity" and a crusade but he was lying. Christians are living with complete security inside the world of Islam and this is the case in our country today. This is also the case in some other countries. What he meant was the battle between arrogant and dominant powers in the world, and Islam. This was correct and it was a sincere statement. When the gentlemen who are ruling over America in the present time say that they have nothing against Islam, but that they are opposed to such and such an Islamic denomination, they are lying. They are acting in a hypocritical and dishonest manner because they are opposed to the essence of Islam and they have found the way in waging a war →





between Muslims.

One day, this battle was introduced as pan-Iranism, pan-Turkism, pan-Arabism and the like which was of no avail. Today, they want to create discord in the name of religion and they want to pit youth against one another. The result is that terrorist denominations – the likes of DAESH and others – are produced with the money of those who are dependent on America, with the help of America and with the collaboration of America's allies. This way, they have found the opportunity to be dynamic and to commit such crimes in the world of Islam. This is the result.

They are lying when they say that they are opposed to Shia and that they advocate Sunni. Are the Palestinians Shias or Sunnis? Why do they have such bad behavior with the Palestinians? Why do they not condemn crimes against the Palestinians in any way? How many times was Gaza struck? How many times were the lands in the West Bank placed under pressure? In the present time, they are under pressure as well. They are not Shias, rather they are Sunnis. For the Americans, the issue is not about Shia and Sunni. Any Muslim who wants to live with Islam and with Islamic laws and rules and any Muslim who fights for it and moves on that path is considered an enemy for them.

They interviewed an American politician. The interviewer asked him, "Who is America's enemy?" He replied, "America's enemy is not terrorism, nor is it Muslims. America's enemy is 'Islamism'." This means that as long as Muslims move forward in an indifferent way and without

any Islamic motivation, they do not show any feelings of enmity towards them, but when Islamism, commitment and loyalty to Islam and Islamic governance and the formation of the Islamic civilization step into the arena, then enmities begin. He was right. His enemy is Islamism. This is why you witness that they become very nervous and agitated whenever Islamic Awakening emerges in the world of Islam and they work to destroy and to eradicate it and in certain cases, they succeed. Of course, I will tell you that Islamic Awakening is indestructible. By Allah's favor and will, Islamic Awakening will achieve its goals.

Their goal is to wage a civil war among Muslims and unfortunately, they have succeeded to some extent. They are destroying Islamic countries one after another. They are destroying Syria, Yemen and Libya and they are destroying their infrastructure. Why? Why should we give in to this plot? Why should their goal remain unknown to us? We should find insight. If we want to succeed in this path, we should find insight. The Commander of the Faithful (peace and greetings be upon him) said, "And this banner will be borne only by him who is a man of insight, of endurance" [Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 173]. We should find insight and be patient on this path: "But if you are patient and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you" [The Holy Quran, 3: 120]. If we move forward with insight, show patience and be resistant, their cunning will be of no avail, but when we speak and act like them, then this will be the result.

In Bahrain, why do they exert such pressures on Muslims? Why do they create such disasters for that peaceful, conciliatory and believing Sheikh [Ibrahim Zakzaky]? Why do they murder about 1,000 people who are close to him? Why do they martyr his six children in the course of two years? Why does the world of Islam remain silent in the face of such crimes? Why is the world of Islam tolerating the day-and-night bombardment of Yemen that has lasted about a year? It is about a year – 10-plus months – now that the houses, hospitals, schools, roads, innocent individuals, men and women of the people of Yemen have been under bombardment. Why? Is this to the interest of the world of Islam? And they are striking Syria and Iraq in different ways. Their goals are dangerous goals. They are devised in their – as they say – "think tanks". We should be awake.

As I said, our hopes have been pinned on the ulama of Islam and on sincere intellectuals in the world of Islam. This is their responsibility and duty. They should speak to their people and to their politicians. The conscience of some politicians in the world of Islam is awake and we have witnessed this up close. They too can play a role.

What I want to say in this meeting is that we should benefit from the commemoration of the Holy Prophet's (s.w.a.) birthday to make an effort to do what Islam did in the first day which was to revive the dead world of those days. And this requires wisdom, intelligence, thinking, insight and knowledge about the enemy. We should know the enemy and his plots and we should not be deceived by him. Allah the Exalted should help us take His straight path and become steadfast.

The Arab poet [Ahmed Shawqi] was right in saying:

"The world is alive and incidents have not drifted into slumber

So, what does your slumber mean, oh you best nations?"

When the world of power and the world of gold and bullying is paying attention to you with all its resources, you do not have the right to be dozing and to drift into sleep!

Dear God, place us on this straight path in a way that is liked by Islam and the world.

Greetings be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings |

President in the opening ceremony of Islamic Unity Conference:

Beginning of violence, deviation from moderation/ Terrorism disappears by conversation, not bomb



Islamic World should call out for putting an end to violation and beginning to cooperate and help each other, said President Rouhani while addressing the 29th International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran on Sunday.

“Today, responding to the great Prophet of Islam’s call depends on unity, abstinence from violence, and expansion of Islamic amity,” said the President.

He also congratulated the advent of the birthday of the great Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (PBUH) and continued, “if some day our concern was that foreign powers were killing and plundering Muslims and their lands, today we are facing a situation in which a country with an Islamic flag drops bombs and missiles over the heads of innocent Muslims or some groups tarnish the image of Islam under the disguise of religion and Ji-

had.”

“Maybe we would never think that one day in the Islamic World, the Zionist Regime would be forgotten as the main aggressor and even put aside from the news, and instead, the media focus on news about the killing of Muslims by pretenders to Islam who have the glorious name of Allah and the great Prophet of Islam (PBUH) on their flag” added Rouhani.

The President continued, “so far, the enemies have described Islam as the religion of violence and bloodshed, and currently, some inside the Muslim community are introducing Islam as the religion of carnage and tyranny in the name of Jihad.”

On the responsibility of all Islamic nations, he said, “two years ago the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed WAVE underlining extremism and violence as the biggest global threat. Although it was apparently approved by all Islamic and

non-Islamic countries, practically, nothing was seen out of good will in fulfilling the proposal.”

“Without a doubt, intellectual violence is the source of practical violence started with wrong understanding of the texts,” he added when speaking about the roots of violence.

“Beginning of violence is deviation from moderation in thought and speech. The real danger is when in a community violence turns into rhetoric and unless our rhetoric is based on moderation and away from extremism, it will result in intellectual and practical violence,” the President noted.

He also deplored running schools in the name of religion but teaching and promoting violence instead, saying “why shouldn’t our societies, schools, and lessons be based on monotheism and resurrection; isn’t Islam based on merits such as “There is No God but Allah” and “Mohammad is Allah’s

Messenger?”

“It is in human nature to interpret religion differently, but conflict is not acceptable at all,” said Rouhani, adding that nobody should forget unity as the foundation of the Islamic World.

“We all believe in God’s book and agree on many words and Prophet Mohammad’s lifestyle but the problem arises when other dogmatic texts become the base of defining identities and as a result, instead of the contrast between religion and blasphemy, it puts Islamic factions against each other,” added Rouhani.

Referring to claims of ‘Shia Crescent’ by some people as baseless, he said, “there is no Shia Crescent and no Sunni Crescent, rather it is an Islamic full moon.”

He further stressed the need for unity among the Muslims of the world and posed questions, “to whose benefit is the destruction in Syria and looting the Syrian →

nation's oil? To whose benefit is undermining a country which has resisted against the Zionist Regime for years?"

Saying that 84 percent of the ongoing violence, acts of terror and massacre are taking place in the Muslim World, North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia, he demanded an end to the "intellectual and discourse-based violence."

President also called for correction of the negative image of Islam in cyberspace.

"In the current situation there is no option other than Muslims joining hands in unity. I also call on those Islamic countries inside and outside the region, and even those who have so far dropped bombs and missiles over their neighbors' heads to

choose the right and correct path," he added.

Directing his speech addressed at certain countries who bombard their neighbors, Rouhani said, "if you had given the money you had used on purchasing bombs and missiles from the US to the hungry and impoverished, the Islamic World today would not be struggling with poverty."

President Rouhani emphasized: "If a small group like ISIL can recruit soldiers, that is chiefly because of financial and cultural poverty; so let's join hands and eradicate this kind of poverty."

"In an era of the Iranian history", he said, "Mongols dominated the country and killed scholars and destroyed the mosques but when Iran's

cultural discourse dominated by the scholars and sages of the time, the same Mongols turned into preachers for Islam and constructors of big Islamic mosques."

He then stressed the need to impress the youths of the Islamic World by the correct discourse, as well as the need to make the true Islam known to the public opinion.

"After 12 years of accusation and intimidation, we proved by reasoning that Iran does not lie to anyone and the IAEA also clearly stated that Iran has no secret place for enriching uranium," said Rouhani about the country's peaceful nuclear program.

Reiterating that terrorist groups cannot be beneficial to anyone, President Rouhani said: "It is a false belief that if

someone is against the leader of a country, they can resort to spreading violence and bomb and missiles to change it; the future of nations is at the hands of the people of that country and with bombs and missiles you cannot decide for a nation's future. Everyone should surrender to the power of nations."

It is not possible to undermine the government of a country and, at the same time, claim that you are fighting terrorism, said President.

"If we want to respond to the Prophet of Islam's call, we should all promote unity and introduce the beneficent Islam, as well as the Prophet's lifestyle to the world and unite for a bright future of Islam," the President concluded his speech |

29th International Islamic Unity Conference final statement

The 29th International Islamic Unity Conference on the 'Present Crises of Muslim World and Ways to End Them' released a final statement on December 29.

The final conclusions of the 29th International Islamic Unity Conference are as follows:

1. Participants believe that the major crises the World of Islam is suffering from include disintegration of Islamic countries and lack of trust amongst Islamic states. This has led to division which has paved the way for penetration of enemies into Islamic communities in a bid to fuel clashes between Muslims.

2. Present violence and terrorism faced by the World of Islam are within preplanned plots to tarnish the image of Islam and pave the way for intervention of the enemies in the domestic affairs of Muslims.



3. The wave of terrorism harassing Muslim countries is in line with Zionist terrorism and American plots whose final objective is to dominate Muslims following their redrawing the World of Islam and carry out the plot "managed

chaos" for shaping the so-called New Middle East. Certainly these destructive hands will not be confined to a single country since they intend to carry out their plots in all countries including supporters of terrorism. →

4. The Palestinian question is high on the agenda of Muslim Ummah and with respect to the crises faced by Muslim World; Palestine is on top of the agenda. In fact illegal regime of Israel is the major cause of Muslim World crises. Hence participants in this conference demand the nations and governments to maintain their utmost attention to Palestinian cause and do not let present fake crises distance them from the issue of Palestine. Participants also call Palestinian groups to resolve their disagreements replacing them with unity to confront their common enemy.

5. Participants also warn against devastation of some Muslim countries including Syria, Yemen and Iraq which is in line with interests of the Zionist regime and world arrogant powers, demanding mobilization of all capabilities and all out efforts for preventing the disintegration of regional countries in a bid to restore peace and security in the region.

6. Participants in this conference denounce worsening of the sectarian intrigues which have led to atrocities and insulting religious sanctities and Islamic rituals with recent suppression of Muslims in Nigeria and Azerbaijan. They demand Nigerian authorities to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the crime which has left hundreds of people dead or wounded and reveal the present condition of the prominent cleric Sheikh Ibrahim al Zakzaki, member of the Supreme Council at the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought and also bring him safely to his family to continue his Islamic activities. They also demand Azeri government to guarantee the rights of its nation and prevent any similar oppression like what has recently happened to the Muslim community in the country.

7. Participants to 29th Islamic Unity Conference demand for Muslim World decisions to be made away from dominance or pressure by arrogant powers and Zionist regime and that the potentials of the Muslim World are used for promotion and advancement of the Muslim World instead of infighting, destruction of Islamic countries, keeping Islamic countries backward. Participants express regret over wasting of petro-

dollars belonging to Muslim people and using that for massacre of Muslims, destruction of their countries and fueling the disagreements as well as hatching plot against resistance movement.

8. Scholars, elites and religious institutions in the world of Islam should avoid intrigues to buy off people and protect their character, status and identity. They also warn those Muftis who support violence, terrorism and Takfir calling them to maintain piety and prevent atrocities to lives, reputation and families of Muslims.

9. The only way to confront present crises requires resistance, ideological, cultural, economic, military and political views and that does not realize unless through cooperation among Islamic countries based on pervasive resistance.

10. Present economic crises in the world of Islam are partly due to decisions made by the capitalists and arrogant powers; hence, it is necessary that Muslim countries cooperate with each other within the framework of a common market.

11. Muslims should adhere to top Islamic objectives and mobilize all their efforts for achieving this great objective avoiding trivial issues in ideological and practical views and maintain creation of a new Islamic civilization.

12. One of the crises challenging the world of Islam is misleading people through propaganda and media outlets and these crises have worsened due to expansion of communication and satellite means and in this line enemies of Islam make use of media propaganda in a bid to fuel sectarian conflict among Muslims; therefore, cooperation of all Islamic countries in a bid to launch satellite channels for broadcasting the discourse of proximity and unity as well as thwarting the intriguing lies seem to be quite necessary.

13. Participants also acknowledged the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei where His Eminency has addressed the public opinion of the west particularly those of the youths demanding them to

obtain the recommendations and values of Islam from its proper source and understand that the policy of hatred is in pursuit of distancing them from truth. Participants also join the voice of the Supreme Leader, where His Eminency stressed that the first steps in restoration of security and peace is rectify thoughts and policies which lead to violence and an example of this policy are dabble criteria imposed by the west and also diving terrorism to good and bad and also give priority to interests of the governments instead of those of the nations.

14. Need to cooperation among educational and research centers and also universities of the Muslim World in a bid to spread the culture of proximity and introduction of the true nature of Islam as a religion against violence and extremism. Here it is necessary that all groups and entities of the society including parties, unions and institutions of women and youths play an active role to spread this culture so that it is not limited to a certain group. Also proximity activists should not confined to the theoretical aspects rather they should be in serious pursuit of carrying out proximity through practicing proximity projects.

15. Participants congratulate achievement of the Islamic Republic of Iran in nuclear talks and great successes in the field of the technology demanding other countries to promote their capabilities in the field of technology and science.

16. Participants expressed their gratitude for Islamic Republic of Iran in proposing Islamic unity and proximity of Islamic denominations and also its efforts in that respect. They also extend thanks to the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought and efforts in line with improving the quality of the conference and hospitality. They pray that God Almighty bless the Islamic nation to follow the path of late Imam Khomeini (RA), and pioneer of unity and proximity among Muslims and his rightful successor grand Ayatollah Khamenei, founder of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought who have been in pursuit of realizing the plan of unity of the Islamic nation |

Naim Qassem:

Syria a swamp where west stuck

Interview by: Mohammad Ghaderi



Lebanese Hezbollah deputy-Secretary General has told Mehr News International Service the quadrilateral alliance of Russia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria is resolved to prevent a US-led coalition upper hand in Iraq and Syria.

Sheikh Naim Qassem who is in Tehran to participate Islamic Unity Conference underway in Tehran, gave an exclusive interview to Mehr News International Service, where he believed that Takfirist-Terrorist insurgency backed by the west had come to failure; “the national expediencies of all these four members of the quadrilateral requires them to prevent a US-led coalition gains upper hand in Iraq and Syria, effectively ruling out political changes in Baghdad and Damascus,” Sheikh Naim Qassem asserted.

“I believe that facing the US-led axis constitutes an inevitable expediency of all countries member to this four-sided alliance, since none of these countries would manage to defend themselves on their own alone; for the very reason, they should give hands to attempts to repel Takfirist groups which recruit fresh fighters from around the world and receive the direct support of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, and financial aid from Saudi Arabia and Qatar and weapons and logistics from the US and European countries,” he added.

“We now face a grave threat which is unsurmountable unless a coalition

such as this establishes itself; however, with blessings from Heaven, the information from the situation on the ground would clearly indicate the Takfirist project coming to its headlong debacle, and the path for advance of western-Zionist project of the imperialism has come to its grinding halt; they were seeking to down Assad and Syrian government within months of battle, however, Syria has been resisting for 5 years with success and it has now recovered, but the west, for sure, has been stuck in this swamp; so the four-member alliance should continue cooperation which will be to the interest of the group at large,” Sheikh Qassem emphasized.

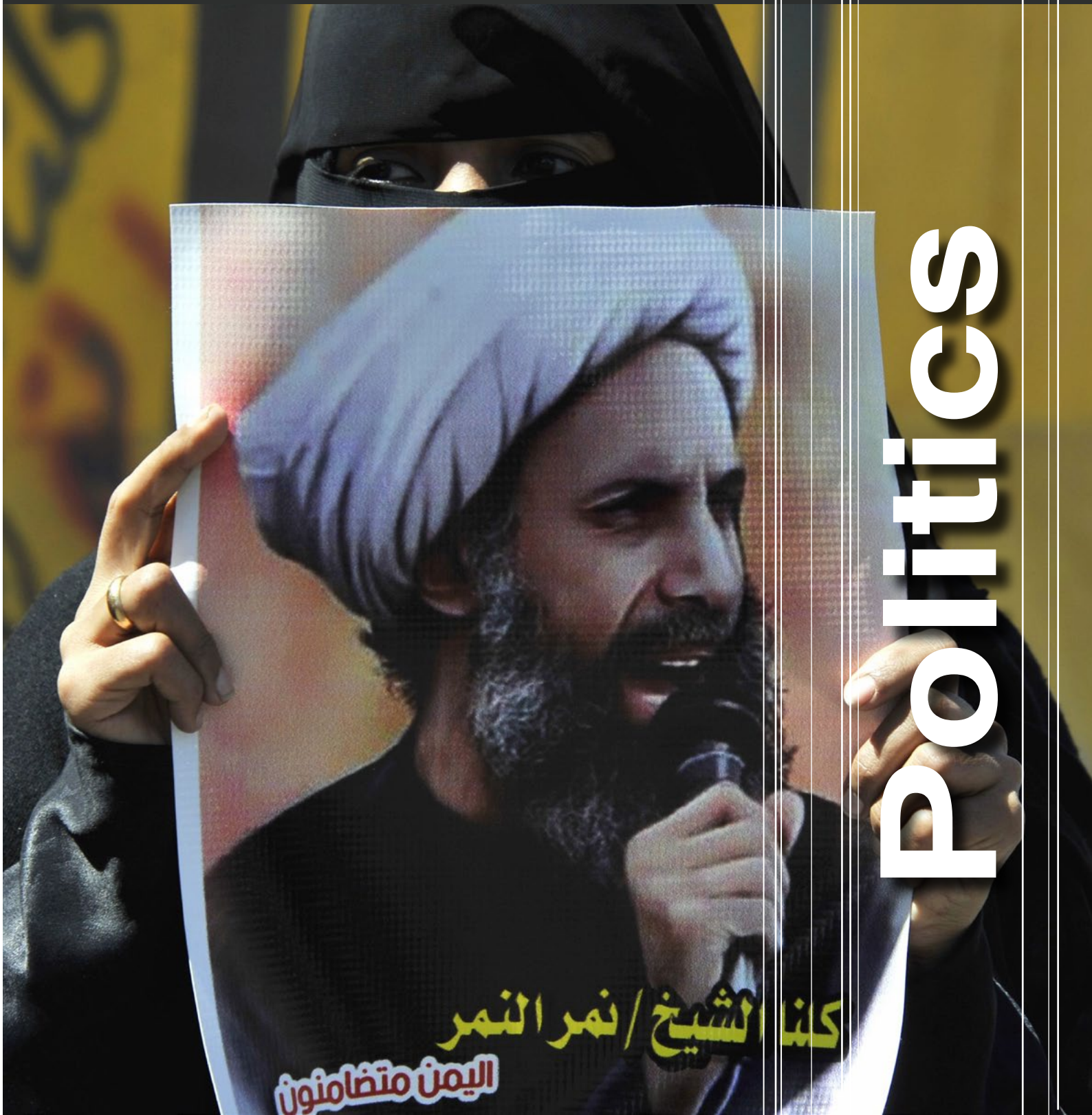
On a question of the most important factors of discord among Muslims and the role of terrorist groups and western propaganda machinery, Hezbollah senior official believed that the widening of the gap between Shias and Sunnis was the major factor to be blamed; “in the second level of importance is political vested interests which assumes a religious hue, since we have not had any direct confrontation based on historical religious questions between two major divisions of Islam,” he emphasized.

“The difference is simple enough to be put to words: Saudi Arabia seeks dominance over Iraq and Yemen. In this campaign, no Shia-Sunni duality and opposition have place and quota. This is a sort of political

supremacy which Saudi princes try to seek in the region. The US has always come to seek dominance as an imperialist power and colonialist power, and Israel as an occupying force; so, there is no such thing as Shia-Sunni sectarian strife dominant in the region, rather, the petty politics assumes a religious façade and finds the US and Zionism on its side,” said Hezbollah deputy-secretary general.

“A small minority of Muslims who believe in Wahhabist tenets, excommunicating all other Muslims, contributes directly to sectarianism; this is not merely sectarian, but is an issue within Sunni Islam itself as well, as majority Sunnis oppose their utterly fundamental reading of the book,” Sheikh Naim Qassem told Mehr News.

On the role of great hegemonic powers in their plans to disintegrate the whole region, Hezbollah official believed that the US was quintessence of the global imperialism, which seeks to dominate the region, viewing the discord among Muslims and destabilizing those countries via internecine strife and civil war as easy means to find and maintain dominance; “however, it is far from clear that they merely seek geographical disintegration or any other types of division of the region; perhaps this side would seem pointless as politically collapsed regimes which are in conflict with each other ensnares them in greater issues than disintegration,” he concluded |



Politics



Saudis playing with fire by killing Nimr

By: Hamidreza Gholamzadeh

Despite numerous international calls against execution of Shia cleric in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has executed Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr.

While most parts of the world are celebrating the New Year amid fears of extremism and terrorism and wish for peace and stability all around the world, Saudi authorities have once again taken a dictatorial measures by executing a religious leader.

On Saturday, Interior Ministry of Saudi Arabia announced that 47 people were executed on charges of 'terrorism' among which the Shia prominent leader Sheikh Nimr Baqer al-Nimr was also named. Saudi officials have put his name in a list most of whom were connected to Al-Qaeda or similar terrorist groups, while Shiekh Nimr has ever been included in any terrorist act or even any activity but peaceful opposition. During the height of unrests in Middle East named as Arab Spring or Islamic Awakening, Sheikh Nimr who gained momentum as opposition leader urged protesters to respond to Saudi police brutality by "the roar of the word" rather than violence.

Nimr Baqr al-Nimr was arrested in summer of 2012 and the court accused him of creating discord and disruption in the Saudi National Security, and called for his execution on the trial held on March 26, 2013 which caused Human Rights Watch's strong criticism for 'unfair trial' and possible execution order. The death sentence was officially issued on mid-October 2014 since when many countries, international organizations and NGOs have been calling for release of Shiekh Nimr and warned Saudis

against the consequences of the execution. Iranian deputy FM has already warned that execution of Sheikh Nimr will cost Riyadh dearly.

The adventurism of young Saudi officials in fatal suppression of oppositions comes amid tension in a volatile region in which Riyadh is aggressively involved in attacks on Yemen and support for terrorist groups in Syria. While long-lasting dictatorship of Arab authorities in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen came to an end in recent years by popular protests, Saudi Arabia has so far been on the brink of such unrests and has tried to prevent it by oppressing any opposition, and of course, trying to shift the unrest to other places, namely Syria. It is by now clear by several evidence to everyone that Saudi Arabia along with the US, Qatar and Turkey have been aware of formation of terrorist groups in Syria and not only have they turned blind eye to it, but also have supported them.

When in early stages of terrorist attacks in Syria, Damascus provided evidence that third parties rather than Syrian army or opposition are conducting gun battles and shooting at UN inspectors, Saudis were among the states who insistently denied the existence of terrorist groups in Syria and when ISIL emerged in 2014, the documents gradually proved their advance intelligence about the group and the support they provide them 'in order to topple Bashar Assad'.

It is by now, crystal clear that Riyadh has invested all its eggs in the basket of rivalry with the Islamic Republic of Iran's upper hand in the region. Saudi Arabia which has for decades benefited

from huge oil incomes and has spent the money to satisfy its consumerism rather than development of infrastructures and knowledge-based technology in its country, has now realized that a strategic country like Iran, which has had a Revolution less than four decades ago, has experienced 8 years of devastating war, which was inflicted upon it by US- and Saudi-backed former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, and has been under so-called crippling sanctions for decades, is pioneering in the region in terms of development in science and technology and it is posed to boost its foreign relations and its role in international scene. This fact has been so irritating that has brought the Saudi officials to miscalculations in the region and the future of their own country. By supporting terrorists in Syria and attacking Yemen – under fatuous pretext of 'restoring democracy' to the country – Riyadh has been trying to play a regional role to undermine Iran's role and influence. Moreover, bitter incidents such as assault on two Iranian teenagers in Jeddah airport and Mina tragedy which resulted in killing of thousands of people, hundreds of them Iranians, along with occasional remarks by Saudi foreign minister and other officials against Iran, seem to be irritating measures to stir reactions from Tehran. In other words, Riyadh would like to engage Iran with conflicts in the region to decline its power.

Another instance of such measures can be seen in oil market. Some analysts believe that Saudi Arabia and the United States have joined hands to decrease oil prices to prevent Iran from spending on what the west believes is support for

groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon or Ansarallah in Yemen. Riyadh has so far been the main opponent to price balancing measures provided by Iran and other OPEC members which strengthens this idea.

Yet, another issue which must be highlighted in reviewing Riyadh policies in the region is its common objectives with Ankara. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are clearly supporting terrorist and extremist groups in Syria and Iraq and as Moscow has proved through several documents and evidence, Ankara has the lion's share in buying Syrian oil stolen by ISIL and sold in black market for \$7 per barrel. What is important about this joint venture between Riyadh and Ankara is Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's recent visit to Riyadh. Erdoğan and King Salman met earlier this week and discussed their so-called anti-Takfiri coalition which is supposed to target Takfiri terrorists in Syria. However, the Wahhabi extremist ideology in Saudi Arabia and the full-scale support by Ankara significantly aids terrorists groups in the region. King Salman is seeking to undermine Iran's power to improve its country's devastated status in the region and Erdoğan is following his high dream of Sultanism and Ottoman Empire revival in 21st century.

Execution of Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr right after this visit can signal what the meeting's outcome has been and what Ankara and Riyadh are planning to compensate their failures in Syria and Yemen. With ISIL suffering huge damages in Iraq by losing al-Ramadi and in Syria through Russian successful airstrikes, the two countries who are exploiting instability in the region, have now begun a new phase of their game with fire by executing Sheikh Nimr and provoking sentiments among Shias and freedom seekers in the region.

Riyadh and Ankara seem to have repeated their miscalculations by seeking violence from Shias and protesters in the region to seize the opportunity to brutally suppress them and involve Iran in another game. But Tehran has insisted it follows good-neighborly policy and improvement of ties with the world. Therefore, such adventurism by Riyadh and Ankara would have no more results than increasing instability in the region and destabilizing their own currently troubled countries in near future |

The New Saudi-Iranian standoff - When Takfirism broke its head on the Islamic Republic



By Catherine Shakdam

2016 is set to be the year of a grand standoff in between the House of Saud and the Islamic Republic of Iran, now that both Riyadh and Tehran appear determined to hold firm on their positions. Only Iran is not looking to score any hegemonic point, rather, it has vowed to oppose the rise of political Takfirism across the Greater Middle East, and thus offer political pluralism its day under the sun.

Where the kingdom ambitions to rise a grand Wahhabism empire - a dark caliphate of sorts, Iran has offered stubborn resistance.

On January 2, 2016 King Salman ordered for the execution by beheading of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a prominent cleric turned political activist in the face of Riyadh's repressive campaign against religious minorities. A Shia from the eastern province of Qatif, Sheikh al-Nimr was more than just a religious adjective. He stood beyond all religious denominations as his stand and his beliefs were universal. A true man of God. A true teacher of Islam, Sheikh al-Nimr spoke words of unity, justice, dignity, and above all tolerance.

His anger was only ever directed at the tyranny and barbarism of the House of Saud. But his words called not for violent retribution - his voice carried instead the memory and the message of Islam's Imams. It was Imam Hussain who said: "If you neither believe in religion nor fear the hereafter than at least be free from tyranny and arrogance."

There are some values which have transcended cultures, religions and even time, as they are rooted in human nature. It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the well-known French philosopher, who most famously defined freedom as being one of Men's innate attribute.

And so naturally men have always reacted to tyranny with resistance - a knee-jerk reaction against a system which denies them what it is that they are: free.

THAT concept of course is completely lost on Riyadh, since the very essence of the regime is rooted in absolute submission - a form of tribalistic political ownership wrapped around a religious dogma which spews hate and vengeance to better legitimize its existence. If History is littered with despots, it is not often that a regime can claim to be both a political and a religious abomination. A violent, ascetic and absolutely reactionary theocracy, the kingdom holds life and death over its subjects.

Under the punitive rule of al-Saud women have been objectified to the extent where they are owned, and religious minorities have been viciously and systematically persecuted. Worse still, Wahhabis have criminalized all faiths and beliefs outside their own, this institutionalizing sectarianism.

In the kingdom, any critic to the king equates to apostasy. In this dys-

topian Islamic world Wahhabi clerics have architected, it is the abuses of Ancient Egypt which are reflected in the oppression of minorities.

And still the world powers choose to side with the kingdom, withdrawing behind their double standards and towers of hypocrisy, while freedom fighters are sacrificed to the pyre of al-Saud.

The explosion of violence which befell the Islamic world has now been pinned on Iran, under the premise Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned al-Saud's crimes would be answered with "divine revenge." To better deflect and distract from the crimes Riyadh committed, the international community is looking to build an anti-Iranian narrative, hoping to whitewash a despot, to better sully the peacemaker.

In an article for Foreign Policy, Philipp Smyth, a self-proclaimed "Shia affairs" expert argues that Iran exploited Sheikh al-Nimr's demise to project political force and rally support around its own political ideology. He wrote: "Understanding how Tehran plays a role in fostering crises of this nature is important. The Islamic Republic sees itself as engaged in a long-term struggle for control of the region's Shiite community, which represents a tool for Iran to counter its main Sunni regional foes and promote its theocratic absolutevelayat-e faqih, which forms the basis of Iran's clerical rule, and so-called "Islamic Resistance" ideologies."

Profoundly prejudiced and bias, Smyth linked Sheikh al-Nimr's rights campaign in Riyadh to what he imagines as a sectarian attempted takeover on the Sunni world. This so-called "campaign" only exists in the mind of Wahhabi Saudi Arabia. There is no plot, no Shia crescent and no Shia



conspiracy theory.

Sheikh al-Nimr rose against al-Saud regime, not Sunni Islam. More importantly his calls for social justice and civil liberties were for the benefit of all people.

And while of course his main supporters were Shias - why would they not be when it is Shias who have most suffered under the ruthless rule of al-Saud monarchy - countless others recognized themselves in al-Nimr's words.

Shia Islam does not give in to proselytism - Shia Islam is not vying for an empire. It does not need to, its ambitions lie in the championing of a just and fair society, where matters of faiths are not dictated but respected.

This revolutionary tide you see taking shape against Saudi Arabia is the expression of a people's discontent - not

sectarianism. And when I say "a people" I mean the oppressed, I mean those whose voices were made silent on account al-Saud Royals suffer no criticism.

Iran here has merely offered his support to those principles of political self-determination, Western powers appear to have lost interest in.

And yes Iranian officials did indeed warn Riyadh there would hell to pay should al-Nimr's blood be spilled - only their warnings did not imply violence and military retribution ... those are the weapons of criminals, not sovereign states. Iran Leadership implied judicial and political repercussions.

May I point out that in the case of Sheikh al-Nimr Iran assumed the very role the United Nations was too cowardly

to carry. May I remind readers that there is such a thing as international law...

And yes Saudi Arabia's embassy was torched by over-zealous protesters! But is such an infringement on Riyadh's sovereignty worthy of such a diplomatic raucous? If one fire and one act of violence can manifest such international outrage, then I ask: where was the world's outrage when Washington violated Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen's sovereignty with its drones?

Where again was the outrage when Riyadh rained cluster bombs on Yemeni schools, hospitals and residential areas?

Iran is sitting on the right side of history here. It is Saudi Arabia which deserves your wrath and your rejection.

It is Saudi Arabia and its Takfirism which is calling for more deaths to its dogma; it is Saudi Arabia again which has exploited its political friendships and economic power to run a series of war across the MENA, NOT Iran. So enough already with the anti-Iranian narrative, especially when few can actually remember why is it they hate Iran so much.

Truly ... what is it? Ask yourself for a second if your hate is not in fact the product of Riyadh's propaganda.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy" - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Catherine Shakdam is a political analyst and commentator on the Middle East. She has written for many publications and is also a regular contributor to Mehr News. Shakdam is currently affiliated with Shafaqna Institute for Middle East Studies |

Interview by: Somayeh Khomarbaghi and Mohammad Mazhari

Iraqi ambassador has said his government will seek responses should Turkey refuse to pull its forces from Iraqi soil.

Somayeh Khomarbaghi and Mohammad Mazhari of Mehr News International service had an interview with Iraqi ambassador to Tehran Mr. Rajih Sabir Aboudi al-Mousavi in his embassy office earlier in December. Mr. al-Mousavi believed that all foreign forces working with Iraqi government had been there with official request by Iraqi government and Turkey's military trespassing of the Iraqi borders in the north was to be internationally condemned as violation of international borders. However, Mr. Ambassador believed that Turkey was still a Muslim country and a friend which should take the example of Iran whom al-Mousavi hailed for supporting Iraq through sending consulting officials in fight against terrorism.

The interview covered wide range of issues, inter alia, and the most important perhaps, Russian involvement in fight against ISIL both in Syria and formation of a four-sided 'Intelligence Center' along with Syria, Russia and Iran:

◆ **How would you interpret Turkish forces coming to Mosul crossing the border, while Ankara has claimed that its forces only crossed the borders by a permission from Baghdad? Is Turkey honest in its claim?**

As you know, the region is witnessing terrible and unfortunate days and countries experience disturbing events in security, political, and economic levels; however, we see a systematic failure and a realistic view of the situation by the international community; we are also a member to this community and are no exception to these influences. It is hapless that conflict has escalated between Iraq and Turkey who otherwise are Muslim neighbors.

When we speak of relations with Iran, a sense of euphoria infuses us, since Iranians had never trespass our borders, rather, they have sent military consultants to help Baghdad in fighting terrorism. We want to see Turkey also doing such things, taking the example of Iran, and have strong relations to Iran, Iraq, and the region at large. Our interests are closely interrelated by the virtue of being located in a single region. Hence, developments in our neighbors definitely spread to our

Iraqi ambassador:

People's Mobilization backbone of Iraqi forces



country. 5 years after the dawn of war in Syria, now the international community have grappled with idea of forging a coalition against ISIL, Al-Qaeda and other terrorists, while Iran and Iraq had been warning since the beginning of the crisis that the danger would spread to all countries.

With Iraqi forces performing highly against ISIL in retaking larger parts of territories in Diyala, Tikrit, and Al-Anbar, Turkey has violated international laws in respecting international borders and trespassed Iraqi soil from the north, under mere absurd pretexts, while claiming that Baghdad agreed to the border crossing. However, their claim is baseless and Iraq will never tolerate ground forces from other countries violating its borders. We do not need new crisis. We condemn Turkey's action and have sent the UN messages to mount pressure on Turkey to pull out of north of Iraq. The action is provocative and we hope Ankara will act wisely, otherwise we will use our right by international instruments.

◆ **Would you predict further escalation of conflict and military engagement by both sides and an incipient war?**

We hope not. Iraqi government and nation would not welcome further escalation, since we are now focused on ISIL, a threat also for Turkey with whom the country claims to fight.

◆ **An 'Intelligence Center,' by Iran, Russia,**

Iraq, and Syria as members, has been established in Baghdad. Would the Center be extended the level of cooperation in the future, and would Baghdad file a request for Moscow to engage in fight against Iraqi side of the ISIL as well?

The Center acts as 'operation chamber;' with fruitful Russian involvement in Syrian setting, strategic changes had been introduced to the way the ISIL is fought back; we believe that some great powers actually back terrorists in Syria and Iraq, however, Russia positively changed the equation on the ground. The Center is crucial to bring coordination to four members. Iran's position has been clear since beginning of the crisis in the region urging establishment of an honest international coalition to fight against terrorism. What Iran has opposed in last two years, has been a hypocritical coalition.

This is our right to call our friends to join fight against terrorism which is a threat to all countries, and hence we welcomed this Center.

◆ **What has been the role of People's Mobilization or al-Hashd al-Shaabi as it is called, in fight against Takfirists, especially with recent fall of some of ISIL's stronghold cities?**

People's Mobilization is the backbone of Iraqi forces and represents all Iraqi ethnic and religious groups such as Sunnis, Shias, Christians and Kurds. They are actually reserved forces, and classified →

as 'security forces.' Mobilization has now succeeded in reclaim larger parts of Iraqi soil from under the ISIL and other terrorist rule. Its role and function is therefore indispensable in Iraqi setting.

◆ **Some criticism are leveled against formation of Iraqi National Guard. Opponents believe the formation will weaken the classical army of Iraq and will precipitate Iraqi disintegration. What do you think of it?**

Now, we see in TV channels broadcasting inside Iraq hold different opinions and positions. We may call these opinions well in line with Iraqi expediencies. Criticisms are natural part of this process. About the regional quotas in the National Guard, we believe that population is not the true and accurate measure to determine its quota of forces participating and being recruited in the National Guard framework. We believe also that the level of engagement in fights against ISIL does constitute a measure of the quota of cities. For example, Mosul is a large city with more population. In comparison, Basra, Samawah, and other cities have smaller number of population. But, people in these smaller cities have been unswerving in their loyal participation in the fight against terrorism, and in Mosul, people did not show that level of enthusiasm and interest. This is the point in the quota in recruitments.

Despite all this, I believe Iraq is strong and will protect its national unity. This is rare across the world.

◆ **What has been Ayatollah Sistani's role in fights against Takfiri terrorists and making the internal public forces and the army united?**

If it were not for Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq would be disintegrated. I have also said, the Iranian success came only when the public followed their Leader Imam Khomeini (RA), and if they failed, no success would embrace the Revolution [of 1979]; there is a parallel of this for Iraq. Any nation who revered their religious charismatic leader, survived the hardships. As we said before, Iraq is the first in a sequence of trenches. If it falls, other trenches will definitely fall, and the region and the world as well will be engulfed by chaos. This is a significant issue, but the religious authority has played a great role in uniting public and restoring a sense of security to community.

◆ **Some analysts believe that a return to oil markets will give rise to a sort of Iran-**



Iraq rivalry. What sort of cooperation Iran and Iraq could engage in about unilateral cooperation or in OPEC framework?

Contrary to those analysts, I am ensured about Iran-Iraq cooperation rather than rivalry in international community. There is a full range of issues where both countries have similar positions. If any rivalry actually exists, is about restoring stability to volatile oil markets, and this is natural. A barrel of crude has gone a long way from \$120 per barrel to \$30 now, and this is a real threat to international financial system and to international security as well. Economy is closely related to security. Iraq's relations with Iran would be a source of stability for global oil markets. We are also working in other oil and gas projects, worth of \$10mn, which are important and have of global dimensions and consequences.

◆ **How Iraqi government would view Persian Gulf security order? Would it believe that this order would be realized with the US and UK present in the region?**

Iraq is especially important for Persian Gulf countries, and all political equations would fall apart without Iraq. As long as Iraq fights as a proxy for these countries, no security will rule the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran has had a critical role in fighting ISIL. Our brothers in Persian Gulf should turn to dialogue with Iran, receiving with welcome Iran's request to address the security and economic issues of the region in post-JCPOA era, otherwise the region will be stuck in a state of pandemonium and bloodshed. Great powers would not have concerns over our security and interests. This is well evidenced by the past history. The issues of the region could solely be solved by the countries in the region. This is what Iran has worked to establish as a fact in forgetting the past, especially Persian Gulf countries' support

for Saddam Hussein in the war with Iran. Great powers only seek to serve Zionist enemy.

◆ **Masoud Barzani, President of Iraqi Kurdistan Region, has recently paid visits to some countries in the region in an attempt to improve relations of Erbil with those countries. How would you interpret these visits? And would they serve Iraqi interests? How would you see the issue of Iraqi disintegration, would you consider as a serious project?**

The Iraqi Constitution of 2003 posits territorial integrity and accordingly, Kurds, Arabs, Christians, Shias, Turkmen, Sunnis, and Yazidis have agreed to this important article. No party is eligible or in a position to deviate from this article. However, Barzani's move is idiosyncratic, not reflecting the public demand by Kurds or Iraqis. Iraqi government authorities leveled critiques on the visits as well. According to Constitution, Iraq has parliament and Kurdistan has representative and minister in the parliament and the cabinet. About disintegration, no time in history did Iraq, Turkey, and Syria countenanced a Kurdish independent state in the region, and never will such a country come to existence. This is not in line with any strategic justification and rational thinking. International coalitions have favored unity and not divergence, and I believe disintegration is unlikely, however, requests for support have always been common. There are differences between Iraqi central government in Baghdad and Kurdistan region in the way issues are addressed. This issues should be negotiated and solved. Despite the discords, all are united against the common enemy which threatens Iraq as a whole. The Iraqi nation rejects the idea as well; we have rejected disintegration since Sykes-Picot Agreement early 20th century. All parties and tribes in Iraq oppose disintegration and our friends help promote territorial integrity of Iraq.

◆ **Iraqi Kurdistan authorities have raised the issue of transiting gas to Turkey. What would you think of the act?**

Such statements lacks seriousness. I believe our Turkish brothers would only buy gas from the Kurdistan region if the central government shows consent. This is to comply with international conventions. I believe dialogue would solve the gas issue with a delegation from Kurdistan to discuss the issue with Baghdad, and no serious concerns should be raised on this |



Fmr. US Army PsyOp officer:

Russia serious in Syria; America schizophrenic

Interview by Lachin Rezaian

A former US army psychological operation officer and counter-terrorism analyst in San Francisco described Russian military campaign in Syria a bid to establish stability and order in the region, while America seeks instability and chaos.

Scott Bennett asserted that Russia's imposition of economic sanctions on Turkey is the first step of a civilized information and economic warfare, which Turkey started by killing a Russian pilot and destroying a multi-million dollar Russian plane. "If Putin is smart, which he is, he will be expanding this negative public relations fire which Erdogan has started," Bennett said in an exclusive interview with Mehr News Agency on Russia's military campaign against terrorism in Syria.

Syria seems to have been turned into a battleground for west coalition and Assad supporters. How do you compare the achievements by Russia's military campaign, so far, and US-coalition in Syria?

The simplest way to compare the Russian and American military strategy in Syria is that Russia is serious, while America is schizophrenic. Russia's objective is to shrink and disintegrate the conflict, while America's is designed to enlarge and integrate the conflicting parties to synergize their destructive agenda. Russia wants stability and order in the

region, while America seeks instability and chaos. Russia has boiled down the conflict, problems and issues in the region to their basic fundamentals in order to clearly understand in the simplest terms how they affect Russia and the world; and then designed a strategy to simply, quickly, and most effectively deal with them. In an act of surreal hypocrisy, America has said it is pursuing one objective, but done the opposite. It has opposed Russia, by complicating and exaggerating the issues, problems, and conflicts by its equipping and supporting the forces of rebellion in Syria without regard to how it would affect the world. The effects of the US policy has been the dissolution of socio-economic stability in Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and now Syria; and a mass exodus of human refugees mixed with opportunists and terrorists into the soft underbelly of Europe in what can only be described as an invasion of chaos sprinkled with suffering.

◆The EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has warned Russia risks a repeat of doomed Afghan war in Syria, do you think this is true? Is current Russian campaign which is carried out at request of Syrian government comparable to Soviet attacks on Afghanistan?

The difference is Russia was asked by Syria to come to its aid against a coalition of

Persian Gulf nations working to destroy the Syrian government, and in its place establish a Wahhabi caliphate that would kill, enslave, and rape non-Wahhabi Muslims, forcibly convert them, and transform Syria into another nation of civil war and chaos. Russia saw this as an existential threat to its own borders and people and government, and acted accordingly by defending itself through defending its ally, the Syrian nation, government, and people.

◆The military campaign reportedly costs \$4 million per day according to IHS Jane's; what interests and benefits push Russia to launch and continue its fight against terrorism in Syria?

Russia has seen extremism in its Afghanistan conflict when the US hired as its own mercenary every Wahhabi fanatic, violent criminal, and desperado floating to the surface of humanity in order to initiate a "Soviet Afghanistan". It saw it again with the similar extremists in the Muslim Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) that launched a civil war against Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic, and witnessed the NATO war against Milosevic framed fraudulently as a "Human Rights" issue — a standard weapon in the US Psychological Warfare arsenal. It also saw it in its Chechnya civil war conflict, and in numerous terrorist attacks against Russians

— most notably the Beslan School attack by the Muslim Black Widow terrorist cell.

Since Russia has been bitten by the snake of Wahhabi terrorism so often in the past, it is only natural for it to crush the head of the snake under its heel now that it is inching closer towards Russia's borders.

◆How do you evaluate the consequences of Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter jet? Why Russia answered Turkey's act in such a way?

Russia's economic sanctioning of Turkey is the first step of a civilized information and economic war, which Turkey started by killing a Russian pilot and destroying a multi-million dollar Russian plane. If Putin is smart, which he is, he will be expanding this negative public relations fire which Erdogan has started, by throwing atop it the gasoline of Erdogan's acts of tyranny (killing journalists) and illegal oil smuggling and ISIL financing, as well as the Turkey refugee human trafficking into Europe and attempt to extort the European Union for \$3billion euros to control the flow. This will isolate Turkey, and facilitate a coup d'état against Erdogan by senior military leaders in Turkey and pro-Russian politicians and businessmen in Turkey, and, once again, check-mate the US and halt its agenda.

◆It seems Turkey has downed the fighter jet feeling support →

from NATO against possible Russia retaliation. Considering previous cases in Georgia and Ukraine, do you think NATO would take measures in case of Russian military measures against Turkey?

It goes without saying that the NATO purpose was originally to defend Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and a few other nations from a Russian military invasion and takeover—at least that's how it was originally sold to the public. However now, post-cold war, with Russia no longer interested in such campaigns, and instead intertwined with European economies and society, NATO logically must be recalibrated and redefined to modernize it. And that becomes the paradigm around which the new European-NATO mindset, as well as the American mindset, should logically be redefined and realigned.

Given that presently Turkey is a NATO member, despite being reviled by many European political leaders for Erdogan's various offenses and violations against European values, Turkey still maintains a legal right to demand NATO respond to any outside attack. Therefore, any disruption of Erdogan must be seen as clearly coming from within the country's own population, and a movement by the people to preserve their lives, their peace, and their right to responsible and accountable government. By defining any coup, overthrow, or removal of President Erdogan as a natural right of free and reasonable people, freedom and reason will become both the origin and the final objective of the changing of Erdogan's rule. Any opposition will therefore be defined as the opposite of freedom and reason—and should be harshly described as slavery and insanity. Which, ironically enough, President Vladimir Putin has already been doing in his public statements.

Putin has said, "Allah has taken away Erdogan's sanity",



in his explanation to the Russian Duma of Turkey's "stab in the back and shoot down of a Russian bomber over Syrian airspace." It is significant that this resembles the Old Testament story about the ancient Babylon King Nebuchadnezzar who because of his own pride and sense of invulnerability, was cursed by God and forced out of his kingdom into the wilderness where he "ate grass for seven years, before he was given back his right mind." Since Turkish Muslims know this story intimately, the allusion to Erdogan could be sufficient to spark the necessary sense of betrayal, resentment, and commitment to change.

◆ What is the impact of Russia's military involvement in Syria on the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, as the most important ally of the Syrian government?

Russia's entrance into the war against ISIL stabilizes the region by strengthening the Assad government, as well as the other governments opposed to ISIL, including Iran, Iraq, China, and many others. Russia has re-asserted itself not only as a government with a leader willing to protect stability and order in the world, but a world that when pushed to choose a side, will choose order and stability rather than the fanciful dreams of universal democracy achieved through the bloodshed of civil war and religious tyranny.

smuggling operations that was previously financing ISIL, and a decimation of the ISIL fighters and their US weaponry.

This has indirectly led to the strengthening of the legitimate government in Syria, led by President Assad, which has effectively checkmated the US agenda of regime change in Syria. Additionally the tsunami of human wreckage from America's Middle East wars that has overwhelmed European shores, has also effectively drowned into silence the European NATO cries for Assad's removal. The absence of these European cries for Assad's removal, will be transformed into affirming nods at the benefit to Europe of keeping Assad in power, in order to keep the "cork in the bottle" restraining the Wahabi genie of terrorism anxious to escape and wreak havoc in Europe as revenge for the destruction of Iraq and in obedience to the agenda of the House of Saud and their Zionist Israeli cousins.

This success of the Russian campaign, and its simultaneous exposure of the US-Turkey-Israel-Saudi Arabia-Perisan Gulf nations coalition funding, aiding, and abetting the ISIL personnel, is what no doubt prompted the recent shoot-down of the Russian fighter bomber. It is also what has prompted President Obama to circumvent Congress' war making powers, violate the Constitution, and send US Army Special Forces once again into Northern Iraq to supposedly fight an enemy they have previously hired, trained, equipped, and protected. At best this policy is hypocrisy, at worst it is treason.

Dr. Scott Bennett, formerly of the US Army 11th Psychological Operations Battalion, attempted to blow the whistle by contacting the commercially-controlled media and writing to US politicians after being sacked from his job as terrorist finance investigator after he proved too zealous at the job |

The more Erdogan is connected to human trafficking of invaders into Europe and financing ISIL through Persian Gulf nations (specifically using HSBC, UBS, Credit Suisse, and other international Saudi Banks); and trying to goad the NATO alliance into defending Turkey as the flashpoint of a conflict, the more a military coup will begin to seem the next logical step... and some pro-Assad, pro-Russian, Pro-China, group will take it. If Iran will give a blessing and their respect to the new Turkey military government, then this too would be an enormous benefit. The new Turkey military government could also be inspired by a generous percentage of the gas pipeline President Putin may want to resurrect with Turkey.

We measure the success of the Russian and American military campaigns very simply, using the results achieved, not the media reports and political rhetoric.

When America was in charge of the air campaign supposedly targeting the ISIL forces, no significant defeats or destruction resulted, and in fact a massive supply of weapons, soldiers, and money found their way into the coffers of ISIL. While the opposite seems true now that Russia has been engaged in fighting ISIL for the past few months, which has resulted in the absolute destruction of all illegal oil theft and



Interview by Lachin Rezaian

A former US Diplomat and US Senate staffer told Mehr News that US-led coalition's goals are at best ambiguous and includes countries like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, who are really on the side of ISIL.

On 30 September 2015, following a formal request by the Syrian government for military help against rebels and terrorist groups, Russia intervened militarily in the Syrian crisis. The activities consisted of air strikes primarily in north-western Syria against terrorist groups fighting Syrian government, including al-Nusra Front, ISIL and the *Jeish al-Fath* (Army of Conquest). On 24 November 2015, a Russian Sukhoi Su-24 aircraft was shot down by a Turkish Air Force F-16 fighter jet, the first time a NATO country targeted a Russian plane in half a century.

In an exclusive interview with Mehr News, James George Jatras discussed the Russian war against terrorism in Syria and the possibilities and consequences regarding the issue:

◆ **Syria seems to have been turned into a battleground for west coalition and Assad supporters. How do you compare the achievements by Russia's military campaign, so far, and US-coalition in Syria?**

From all reports the Russian campaign seems much more effectively targeted at ISIL and the other terror groups like al-Nusra. The difference is that Russia's goals are clear: preserve the Syrian government and state, kill the terrorists. The US-led coalition's goals are at best ambiguous: fight (or pretend to fight) ISIL while keeping them as a pressure against Assad, whose overthrow remains a western goal. And of course, our so-called coalition includes countries like Turkey and Saudi Arabia, who are really on the side of ISIL. That's why I have posted a petition on the White House site to declare Turkey a State Sponsor of Terrorism: <https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/list-erdogans-turkey-state-sponsor-terrorism-void-us-alliance-turkey>

◆ **The military campaign reportedly costs \$4 million per day according to IHS Jane's; what interests and benefits push Russia to launch and continue its fight against terrorism in Syria?**

Russia cannot afford another Libyan-style chaos, or worse ISIL's black flag over Damascus, only a long day's drive from the Russian border. For Russia, this is a very real terrorist threat. Also, Moscow is signaling that the days of the US-run "regime change" machine are over. Also, the Orthodox Church in Russia is a very strong influence with the Kremlin. The idea that terrorists would eliminate Syria's Christians,

along with millions of Alawites, Shiites, and secular Sunnis, if not acceptable to Mr. Putin, and rightly so.

◆ **How do you evaluate the consequences, I mean the sanctions, of Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter jet? Why Russia answered Turkey's act in such a way?**

I don't think we know yet what the full consequences will be. Russia has made some modest steps on the economic front, but President Putin has signaled there will be more. He has also made this very personal with President Erdogan. This is not over yet.

◆ **It seems Turkey has downed the fighter jet feeling support from NATO against possible Russia retaliation. Considering previous cases in Georgia and Ukraine, do you think NATO would take measures in case of Russian military measures against Turkey?**

In order to keep open the lifeline to his terrorist clients, Erdogan is seeking to turn his confrontation with Russia into one between Russia and NATO. It is clear that beyond pro forma pledges of solidarity most NATO members don't want to take the bait. The Turkey-Russia confrontation could become a potential flashpoint for World War III if Erdogan's dirty game goes wrong (or in some warped minds, "right"), and it's hardly likely our European allies would be any more enthusiastic for that possibility than they were when the Ukraine

conflict appeared to be escalating uncontrollably. Indeed, Erdogan's adventurism in support of ISIS and other jihadists raises the question: Why we are allied with Turkey in the first place? (examples: Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Chairman of House Subcommittee on Europe; "Turkey is now a huge liability for NATO — and America"; "Turkey Downs Russian Plane, Joins With Islamic State: US Should Drop New Ottoman Empire As Ally"; "Time Has Passed the Turkish Alliance By").

Never has Turkey's stock in Washington been as low as it is now. Conversely, never have so many voices not usually friendly to Russia or President Vladimir Putin now taken a pro-Moscow stance.

◆ **What is the impact of Russia's military involvement in Syria on the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, as the most important ally of the Syrian government?**

Clearly, Russia and Iran have very different social, political, and ideological identities based largely on religion. But their strategic interests intersect in Syria, and there are no obviously points of strategic discord. That is likely enough for the time being.

James George Jatras is Deputy Director of the American Institute in Ukraine, a privately funded American NGO. Based in Washington, DC, he is a former U.S. diplomat and adviser to the US Senate Republican leadership

Andreeva Mina Alexandrova:

EU crucial in deescalating Turkey-Russia tension

Interview by: Abdolhamid Bayati

The European Commission Chief Spokesperson has told Mehr News EU residents going to and coming back from Syria are hidden threats to the EU countries.

In an interview to Mehr News International Service, Andreeva Mina Alexandrova told Abdolhamid Bayati of the Service that EU and Turkey had been cooperating about migrant/refugee crisis and that Turkey-Russia tension triggered by downing of a Russian Sukhoi Su-24 by Turkish fighters earlier this month had been addressed seriously by the EU which had not downplayed the importance of diplomatic efforts:

As you know, so far, Europe has been facing a huge number of migrant/refugees who come from Turkey for the most part; accordingly, some experts believe that Turkey have not had enough priority on migrant crisis because this country sought compensation from Europe. To what extent this analysis holds true?

Turkey and the European Union are strategic partners in addressing the refugee challenge. At the EU-Turkey summit on 29 November, the EU and Turkey reached an agreement on how to move forward speedily in all key areas of our cooperation. Both sides agreed to activate the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan which addresses the current crisis situation in three ways: (a) by addressing the root causes leading to the massive influx of Syrians, (b) by supporting Syrians under temporary protection and their host communities in Turkey and (c) by strengthening cooperation to prevent irregular migration flows to the EU. Turkey has committed to implementing immediately the elements agreed on in the Action Plan, notably immediate action to stem the flow of irregular migrants to the EU; and to improve the socio-economic situation of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. The European Commission is now working to ensure implementation is carried out swiftly, effec-

tively and immediately and will prepare a report on the State of Play for the 15 December for the European Council.

◆ **During Turkish parliamentary elections, EU delayed publishing of Turkey's human right report and some said that EU had made a deal with Turkey on migrants which is why Europe has turned a blind eyes at Turkey; how do you think of that?**

The Commission always publishes the annual enlargement package in the autumn. This year it was published on 10 November, the date was chosen to ensure good visibility for these important documents. There are fair and objective reports on the progress achieved. If you read this year's report on Turkey, you will see that as usual we have been fair but also very firm and critical where appropriate, as regards the judiciary or media freedoms.

◆ **As you know, tensions has escalated between Turkey and Russia in recent days; what is EU's position on this?**

Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy /Vice-President of the Commission had a lot of contacts to help deescalate the situation. She spoke to Secretary General of NATO but also to the Turkish Minister and Russian ministers for scaling down the risks of escalation and calming and trying to calm down the situation. She also stressed the need to preserve the process started in Vienna and to deliver concrete results soon.

"It would be a terrible mistake if, out of tensions on the ground that can be very high and very difficult to manage, we cancel or we downgrade the level of diplomatic and political engagement. The real way of defeating ISIL in the long run is guaranteeing a political transition in Damascus, a ceasefire in Syria and unity of forces inside and outside Syria to fight against ISIL and Al-Nusra. I believe we have to protect this political space we have finally created," Mogherini had said.



◆ **Last month, we saw Paris terrorist attacks; why western countries face these kinds of threats?**

EU member states face an increasing number of EU nationals who travel abroad for the purposes of terrorism. While the phenomenon of so-called "foreign terrorist fighters" is not new, the scale of people travelling to conflict zones, in particular to Syria and Iraq, to fight or train with terrorist groups is unprecedented. The threat posed, both within the region and upon their return, by the approximately 5,000 EU residents who have travelled to join terrorist groups such as ISIL is of course of an increased concern. The Commission adopted a European Agenda on Security in April 2015, setting out the main actions envisaged by the Commission to ensure an effective EU response to security threats over the period 2015-2020. Progress has been made on several points since then.

The Commission, together with member states, the European External Action Service, Europol and Frontex finalized in June 2015 a set of common risk indicators for foreign terrorist fighters, to be used by border guards to help them when conducting checks.

The Commission is currently working on the European Border and Coast Guard package, planned for December 2015. In the context of this package the Commission is preparing a targeted amendment of the Schengen Borders Code to allow for systematic checks against relevant databases at external borders of all travelers, including those who benefit from the right of free movement under Union law. In the light of the recent tragic attacks in Paris on 13 November, work has been significantly accelerated on a number of proposals to address terrorism, that make it more difficult to acquire firearms and to address illegal trafficking of firearms and explosives.

Andreeva Mina Alexandrova is the European Commission Chief Spokesperson |



By: Majid Akhavan

Turkish economy to bear Russian jet downing costs

Turkey is so heroically engulfed in its nationalism that has not yet realized what consequences the downing of Russian fighter jet adventurism would have on its economy.

Early Turkish election of November 1, upon completion, produced its early results indicating the victory of a man's party who was dreaming of Turkey in 2023, with the people feeling free to go to bed quietly after five months of unrest. Immediately on the day after the event, markets showed signs of flourishing and a new hope returned to Turkish politics, society, and economy. However, no sooner had everything got settled down than the tables were turned and at a point where Turkish disputed policies in the region – on the Syrian conflict – led to a Turkish-Russian tension.

On which direction will the upcoming tension move and continue? Will it develop into other crises? As the first step prior to rising verbal war between both countries' authorities, this was a media war between the two countries in which the media were used as means of shooting at each other.

In a major revealing piece of news, the Russia 24 TV

network launched a propaganda shooting against Erdogan and his family, followed by raising the question of whether or not the money from ISIS-export oil goes to Erdogan family. During their broadcast, the TV showed a number of secret documents labeling the Turkish president as the "Turkey-ISIS liaison." Also heard on the same TV was the recorded voice of Erdogan calling his sons and ordering the latter to relocate the money from their residence to a safer place, plus a number of images showing regular visits by Erdogan's son Belal to ISIS leaders.

In their analysis of Russo-Turkish position toward them, the Turkish media were quite cautious not to hint at recently hot issues, mostly because of fearing the ambiguous Russian reaction. Regardless of a possible influence of both countries' media on Russian and Turkish authorities, so far one thing has become clear-cut: Russia is going to show an economic rather than military reaction toward Turkey.

Following the downed Russian jet, the Lt-USD exchange rate soared, with the descending Lt-FC exchange rate from early October and even after the recent Turkish election taking a soaring trend, as well. In early October, the USD-Lt exchange rate was 1: 3.5 (3 Lt and 5 kuruş); on October 24, however, it was decreased to 2.80 (2 Lt and 80 kuruş). Considering the stability achieved after

the formation of the new cabinet in Turkey and the resulting coordination between governmental bodies, economic experts had guessed that the descending trend would continue and even reach a lower level of 2.70 (2 Lt and 70 kuruş) simultaneous with the commencement of the newly-formed state. The equation was disrupted, however, when Turkish fighters fired at the Russian jet.

For Putin, who had been elected as the "Most Powerful Man on Earth" in 2015 by the reputed American Forbes magazine, and met with the Supreme Leader of Iran as Russia's greatest regional ally on the eve of the event, the accident cost dearly. Thus, despite all sorts of claims by Turkish authorities, supposedly correct, it would be unlikely for the event not to bring about any Russian reaction.

It must be noted that in their initial reaction, Russians cancelled a scheduled visit by their foreign minister to Ankara. This was supposed to take place on the day following the event. Also the Russian prime minister invited all Russians not to travel to Turkey. Following the said invitation, purchase and import of white meat from Turkey was declared prohibited as of December 2. Already six ships carrying chicken meat to Russia are kept in waiting under the pretext of incomplete bill of lading, shipping documents, and relevant permits.

Last year, Turkey exported 16 million dollars' worth

white meat to Russia, and it is estimated that the figure will rise to 24 million dollars for the coming year. Russia is Turkey's largest economic partner after Germany, and in some cases in a position above Germany. Turkey's overall annual export to Russia amounts to 6 billion US dollars, 1.7 billion dollars of which constitutes foodstuff. Volume of Russian exports to Turkey, including natural gas, approximates 25 billion dollars. More than half of Turkey's imported gas is purchased from Russia, the lion's share of which is used for power generation along with its consumption for heating purposes.

Meanwhile, Russia is a major investment target for Turkish contractors. The volume of this type of investment exceeds the frontiers of 50 billion dollars. Russia, too, has been awarded a 20-billion-dollar worth tenders for the construction of Ak Koyu Atomic Power Plant by Turkey, and the input for the purpose of the said project has already reached 3 billion dollars.

Turkey earns its greatest income from tourism. Annually more than 4 million Russian tourists travel to Turkey, and Russia occupies the first place in terms of sending tourists to Turkey among other countries of the world.

If impacts of political tension between Turkey and Russia spread through the economic relations between the two countries, both countries will suffer heavily. →

Considering that Russia represents Turkey's first and/or second commercial partner while Turkey represents Russia's seventh commercial partner, it is not difficult to foresee that the losses to be incurred by Turkey in this context will be much heavier. At this moment, many Turks, and even many Turkish politicians, have adopted an epic position toward this incident. Here, any person willing to invite people to "moderation and foresight" shall be accused of xenophilia and taking sides with Putin.

When in his Tuesday evening speech delivered on the occasion of "Teacher's Day" Erdogan said that the Russian jet has been downed by Turkish fighter planes, the audience applauded his speech warmly. Despite having respectfully said that it is not something worth applauding, it was a reflection of an epic emotion among people for the fact that Turkey has downed a fighter belonging to a super-power without thinking of its consequences.

The same scene, or even a more epic one, was repeated when the Prime Minister Davutoğlu was speaking among people's representatives in Turkish parliament. He referred to the event on several occasions and received the audience's warm applaud and encouragement. Finally, it should be said that at this point it is not known definitely how the Turkish military attack will be retaliated by Russia, where it will take place, and what will be the means for this retaliation. The most striking reflection, however, will be seen in Turkish economy.

Majid Akhavan is a senior international correspondent of IRIB who is currently based in Ankara |



An American writer, journalist and political analyst said Erdogan has dreams of becoming the new Sultan of a reinvigorated Ottoman with United States and NATO's support.

"Clearly the shooting down of the Russian jet was done as a provocation in the hopes that Russia would retaliate in some dramatic fashion that could then be used for political and propaganda effect in turning the world against Russia at a time when she is achieving great success both in Syria and in terms of world opinion", Mark Glenn underlined.

In an interview to Mehr News, American political analyst Mark Glenn answered the questions on the issue:

◆ **Syria seems to have been turned into a battleground for western coalition and Assad supporters. How do you compare the achievements of Russia's military campaign, so far, and that of the US-coalition in Syria?**

I think it's important that we begin answering this question by stating that it was never the intention of the United States or its western partners to do anything about the situation in Syria except to make it worse as a pretext to replacing the government of Bashar al Assad with something more cooperative and pliable with the interests of Israel, America, and the West. The entire drama of America and its coalition partners 'engaging' ISIL was merely that--a drama--meant for public consumption so as to create the appearance that the United States and the West were serious about defeating terrorism in Syria when in fact the terrorists themselves were the creation of the CIA, Mossad, MI6, and other anti-Assad/

Mark Glenn:

Turkey acting as hired gun for US, Israel

Interview by Lachin Rezaian

anti-Iran/ anti-Russian intelligence services. Where Russia, Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah obviously showed brilliant political strategy was in allowing America and the West to continue with the facade of pretending to fight the very same terrorists they themselves created but with no success, setting the stage then for those aforementioned countries making up the Axis of Resistance to deal with ISIL, and in the process, achieve for themselves a great victory in terms of public perception around the world.

◆ **The EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has warned Russia risks a repeat of the doomed Afghan war in Syria--Do you think this is true? Is the current Russian campaign being carried out at request of the Syrian government comparable to the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan?**

We have to understand the coded language Mogherini is using here. Remember that the reason the Russians suffered the disaster they did in Afghanistan was because the Americans armed the Mujaheddin (the very same militants that would one day come to call themselves Al Qaeda) with the most sophisticated and high-tech weaponry that the US possessed at that time. So, in making this statement, what Mogherini was in effect doing was acting as a messenger on behalf of Western and American interests in conveying the warning to Putin that they--America and the West--are willing to arm ISIL and the other terrorist groups in Syria with the same type of hi-tech weaponry that made the campaign so difficult for the Russians in the 1980's.

However, I think that the field has changed quite a bit. Politically speaking and in terms of world opinion, the upper hand has been won by Russia and by Putin and →

therefore the West (and principally the US) is going to have a very difficult time trying to paint the Russians as the bad guys in this scenario and are therefore going to find themselves without the kind of popular support from their own people in funding/arming/training the very same terrorists that are now credited with murdering 130 Parisians just last month.

This in itself poses a very dangerous possibility, which is that according to the plans laid out by Israel, America, NATO, and the West, something dramatic must be done to turn what is now very favorable public perception for Putin and Russia in the opposite direction, and we know what this entails--a false flag event, possibly an attack on an American or British military asset leading to significant loss of life and subsequent public outrage on the part of the 'attacked' country that is then blamed (falsely) on Russia. Let us remember that this was precisely the scenario the US and Israel jinned up in 1967 when the Israelis attacked the USS LIBERTY, hoping to create a political situation whereby the then-Soviet Union would be pushed out of the Middle East by virtue of its close association with Egypt who was supposed to be blamed for the attack.

◆ **The military campaign reportedly costs \$4 million per day according to IHS Jane's; what interests and benefits push Russia to launch and continue its fight against terrorism in Syria?**

Again for a proper understanding of what is occurring right now viz a viz Russia coming to the aid of Syria we must go back to the events of June 8th, 1967. It was the time of the Six Day War when Israel was busy stealing land from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, who at the time were allied with Russia. The United States, working in collusion with Israel, conspired to attack a United States ship, the USS LIBERTY, with the intention of sinking the ship and blaming it on Egypt. At that tie, Egypt was Russia's biggest client state in the Middle East and this would obviously have put enormous political pressure on Russia that would eventually have led to worldwide outrage against Russia, leading then to a breakdown in relations between Russia and the aforementioned countries in the Middle East.

As increased political pressure was put on Russia for the sinking of the ship, this would increase Russia's isolation and loss of influence in the Middle East, thus the

paving the way for the United States to move into the region as the only untested world power. Despite the fact that the LIBERTY was not sunk, nevertheless in some respects this plan worked in that both Egypt in Jordan fell into the American sphere of influence. The one nation obviously remaining with Syria. Therefore what we see taking place right now is the attempt to finish a job that was begun on June 8th, 1967, i.e. the removal of all Russian influence in the Middle East.

Russia's interests in Syria are simple-- She maintains a navy base at the Syrian port of Tartus that affords her the ability to project military power throughout the Mediterranean Sea which she is unwilling to give up. Furthermore Russia understands very well that being a nation that is rich in natural resources means that the United States, the West, and Israel also have their sights set on Russia and on her wealth and therefore what Russia has been quietly yet steadily doing now during both presidential terms of Vladimir Putin is to begin building a block of resistance to the West that is intent upon invading country after country and stealing not only the wealth of those nations but their sovereignty as well.

◆ **How do you evaluate the consequences of Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter jet? Why has Russia answered Turkey's act in such a way?**

In my opinion there is no way to view Turkey's actions viz a viz the shooting down of the Russian jet other than within the context of Turkey acting as the hired gun for the US, NATO, and Israel. It is true that Erdogan has dreams of becoming the new Sultan of a reinvigorated Ottoman Empire but he would never have moved in such a dangerous way had he not had the backing of the United States and NATO beforehand. Clearly the shooting down of the Russian jet was done as a provocation in the hopes that Russia would retaliate in some dramatic fashion that could then be used for political and propaganda effect in turning the world against Russia at a time when she is achieving great success both in Syria and in terms of world opinion. As I indicated earlier however, we must watch the situation very carefully because America, Israel, and the West are not going to sit idly by and watch as Russia and as Vladimir Putin win the lion's share of favorable world opinion, a situation that could very easily upset the

delicate balance that has been created now for decades with America seen as the world's lone superpower.

◆ **It seems Turkey has downed the fighter jet feeling support from NATO against possible Russia retaliation. Considering previous cases in Georgia and Ukraine, do you think NATO would take measures in case of Russian military measures against Turkey?**

I believe this is precisely what NATO was and is planning, i.e. eventual armed conflict with Russia despite the fact that Russia is a nuclear power and can defend herself very capably. It would appear as though the various military and political planners in the countries making up NATO have somehow arrived at the unrealistic conclusion that a military conflict with Russia can be waged short of it going nuclear. We can therefore expect that there will be other provocations that will take place in the future with NATO or one of her hired agents goading Russia into some type of situation where she lashes out, at which point Russia will be painted as the aggressor that must be dealt with.

◆ **What is the impact of Russia's military involvement in Syria on the position of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, as the most important ally of the Syrian government?**

As we have seen from various news reports it has not been only the Russians who have been engaging against ISIL. Besides the Syrian army we also have the brilliant efforts of General Soleimani and of Iran's Revolutionary Guards working alongside Hezbollah. What this is done in terms of public perception for all of the aforementioned players (who up to this point have been painted as terrorists or as state sponsors of terrorism) has been nothing short of a miracle in role reversal. Besides the liberation of Syria itself from the terrible suffering she has endured at the hands of these Western-created/Western-backed terrorism, perhaps the greatest victory that has been achieved has been the reversal of perception for nations such as Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Russia.

Mark Glenn is an American author and journalist in Idaho who has co-founded Crescent and Cross Solidarity Movement. He regularly writes on different topics on [The Ugly Truth](#) |

Nigerian analyst:

'Truth, reason constituting our weapons'



Interview by: Parnaz Talebi

A Nigerian analyst has condemned massacre of Shia Muslims in Zaria, believing that despite all atrocities, the spirit of the Islamic Movement would survive.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, the Nigerian analyst and student of Al-Mustafa International University Ali Mustafa said that the Islamic Movement's weapon against the enemies was positive reasoning, digging for truth and good conduct, and that the teachings of their leader Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky would never be forlorn.

◆ **Would you please update us on the latest news from Nigeria? How is the condition of Sheikh Al-Zakzaky? How many have been injured or killed?**

Since after the military brutality against Shiite Muslims in Zaria, which left about 2000 killed, many missing, some injured, properties worth millions of dollars destroyed and stolen also the revered Leader of the Islamic Movement, Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky was shot four times and whisked away by the military, people all over the universe have been condemning the inhumane acts of the Nigerian Army. During the raid on the house of Sheikh Ibraheem Zakzaky his three biological

sons were among those killed by the Soldiers on Sunday. Also killed is Malama Binta Yaqoub, the senior sister of Sheikh Zakzaky who lived in the same house with the Sheikh. The Children are Hammad, Ali and Humaid. Humaid, a thirteen year old boy, is the last child of the Sheik.

The children were killed in front of the Sheikh when the soldiers broke into his residence. Suhaila Ibraheem Zakzaky, the Sheikh's daughter, sustained brushes on her face. It could be recalled three sons of Sheikh Zakzaky were killed on July 2014 while holding International Quds Day rally in Zaria. The members of the Islamic Movement who sustained different degrees of gunshot injuries are still in prison without medical care. Nigerian Police killed thirteen members of the Islamic Movement in last week's procession which was held in Kaduna State, Northern Nigeria.

Reports reaching us have indicated that there are more than forty members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, who are languishing in two prisons in Kaduna after surviving gunshots on Saturday, 12th December, 2015. Among them two died Tuesday due to unattended wounds, whose release we are still negotiating with the Police authorities in Kaduna. Some of the wounded members are detained in Open Prison at Bar-

nawa quarters, while the rest are in Kaduna Central Prison. On Wednesday, five corpses of our members were handed over to us for burial by the Police in Kaduna, who were given proper Islamic burial. However to our greatest shock, they were tortured using electric shock and also stabbed several times. It was gruesome murder. They were killed after being arrested at the peaceful procession staged in Kaduna on Tuesday, 2015-12-15, condemning the continued detention of our Leader, Sheik Ibrahim Yaqub Zakzaky and the military brutality against Muslim brothers in Zaria. On Thursday, 2015-12-17, four were buried; the following day, Friday, three were again buried after being handed over to us by the Police Command. This made the total number of people killed by the Police during this peaceful protest in Kaduna to thirteen.

Meanwhile, the Kaduna state government has taken over the destruction of all the properties of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria located across Zaria. They have destroyed the remaining parts of the Husainiyya Bakkiyatullah and the Fudiyya Islamic Center Tuesday and on Wednesday, 23 December, they commenced the destruction of Darur Rahma in a village called Dembo, a place where we bury our martyrs.

◆ **How is the atmosphere in Zaria? How is the condition of Muslims in general and Shia community in particular?**

As I said earlier, the enemies are now engaged in destroying the Islamic Movement's properties. Many people in the country, including Christians, are not happy with the continued atrocities being committed against the innocent Muslim brothers. Recently, the Nigerian Army and Kaduna State Government of Nasir El-rufa'i have demolished the grave of Hajiya Hari Jamo the Mother of Sheikh Zakzaky locat- →

ed at Jushi yard in Zaria. The building was reduced to rubbles on Thursday , 2015-12-24; at around 10am local time. On the other hand, many are happy to the extent that they engage themselves in looting the properties of the martyred brothers and sisters from their pockets as well as stealing and selling the properties gotten from the demolished buildings of the Islamic Movement. Despite the hardship, the Muslim brothers, followers of Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky maintain peace and remain calm holding with their peaceful processions in different parts of the country demanding the unconditional release of their Leader. Meanwhile, some of the state governors have issued a statement prohibiting any religious gathering.

◆ **What are the reasons behind such a massacre by Nigerian army? Has the army in Nigeria the authority to act like this?**

Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky, may Allah protect him, has been a target of successive Nigerian governments for several decades. He has been jailed by most of the Nigerian Presidents, because they see him as a threat to their worldly goals. Sheik Zakzaky is a man that loves justice and hates injustice. He has been serving his society right from his childhood. He also tries to defend human right and dignity. He is very brave and remains steadfast in implementing the pure teachings of Prophet (SAW) and his holy progeny. He also tries to unite the Muslim community, which is being targeted by the policy of the enemies of conquering to rule. These, and many other of Sheik Zakzaky's achievements, including his achievement in propagating true Islam and promoting mutual understanding among Muslims and Christians, provoke the enemies of Islam, Israel and America.

◆ **Would the incident affect the Islamic Movement and its activities?**

Really it has been a sad moment to every person who cares about humanity on the unfortunate genocide in Zaria as well as the continuous



demolitions of houses and properties belonging to the Islamic Movement in Nigeria. This is an obvious fact that the Leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria and his disciples are being victimized and killed.

◆ **How do you see the future of the Movement in the absence of the Sheikh and his unknown fate?**

This is how the path is. If we go back to the Islamic history, we will realize that this is what happened to all Messengers of Allah, Nuh (AS), Ibrahim (AS), Hud (AS), Musa (AS), Isa (AS), and the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (SAW). This is also what happened to our holy Imams, especially to Imam Husain (AS) in Karbala.

Allah (T) says:

(Respite will be granted)until, when the messengers give up hope (of their people) and (come to) think that they were treated as liars, there reaches them Our help, and those whom We will be delivered into safety. But never will be warded off our punishment from those who are in sin. (12:110)

From the above mentioned verse of the holy Qur'an, we can be assured that Allah's help is very close.

We can't wait to seeing Allah's help and assistance. We are very optimistic.

Let me conclude with the words quoted from the great Leader of the Islamic Movement, Sheik Zakzaky saying:

Our weapon is positive reasoning, truth and good conduct. Guns are for the reckless and foolhardy. We have been conducting our affairs peacefully, calling people to the truth for the last 36 years. So you cannot come overnight and attribute violence to us that we now resort to killing people. This is impossible. We save lives, not kill them.

Surely, the enemies can destroy and demolish our material and physical buildings, but they can't destroy the spiritual building and faith built depth inside our heart by the revered Leader, Sheik Ibrahim Zakzaky, may Allah protect him.

Ali Mustafa is doing his MA in Islamic Philosophy in Al Mustafa International University (MIU) in Qom |

Muslim lives don't matter: why we don't hear much about the Mina Massacre, or the one in Nigeria

By: *Elham Kadkhodae*

I used to think that the pseudoscientific theory of social Darwinism has been over for years. Seems it's live and kicking in the depths of the minds of most of us!

A long title; but it would have got longer if I had decided to add the names of all the other places where Muslims are dying in large numbers and nobody seems to care: Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Syria, Yemen... So I thought to remain focused on the most recent crimes against humanity, if Muslims are considered human beings at all.

Thinking about the recent events in Nigeria, where hundreds of Muslims have been killed, and the prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zakzaky has been injured and arrested, the by now famous slogan: "Black Lives Matter" came to my mind. Faced with the apparent lack of respect for the lives of black people, African Americans came up with a simple, three word sentence that says it all.

I used to think that the pseudoscientific theory of social Darwinism has been over for years. Seems it's live and kicking in the depths of the minds of most of us! So, white people are at the top, especially if they are European or American. The whole world is in grief when a few journalists are killed at the Charlie Hebdo headquarters, or a few hundred people are terrorized in Parisian restaurants, cafes and stadiums. But have you ever heard about the one thousand or so people who met their gradual and painful death in the Hajj pilgrimage, due to Saudi mismanagement (no, it was not a stampede!), or about the one thousand African Muslims slain the other day in Nigeria? No one is changing their social media status to "Je suis Nigeria" or anything like that. That's because, generally speaking, Muslim lives

do not matter. Muslims are near the bottom of the hierarchy, and black Muslims, I guess, are the very last group!

I really don't like to enter the numbers wars, where the number of our slain is compared to yours, to prove that we are the real victims, something like what ensued in the aftermath of the Holocaust, where certain Jewish-Zionist organizations (and not Jewish people) started a battle to prove that the Holocaust was the single most evil crime against humanity, because six million Jews were killed. And no other nation is allowed, ever, to make a similar claim, because it was six million. I believe that numbers do not necessarily demonstrate the severity of the crime. As Islam teaches us, killing one human being is equiva-



lent to killing humanity, and the text states clearly: human being and humanity, not Muslims, believers, or anything like that: "For that cause We decreed for the Children of Israel that whosoever killeth a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he had killed all mankind, and whoso saveth the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind" (Surat I-Maidah, verse 32).

So my point is not to complain about the high numbers of those killed in Mina or Nigeria as opposed to those in France

or America, since spilling the blood of one innocent civilian is enough to burry one into deep sorrow. I do not want to complain why people are shocked at, angry with, and expressing grief at terrorism in the West, but to question why similar attention is not paid to civilians getting killed in other places on the globe. Why do we not hear a single news article or analysis of the massacre that the Nigerian army has just committed? Why is it that a government that is helpless in confronting a terrorist like Boko Haram is able to massacre one thousand people in one day? Do we not have a responsibility towards all of humanity?

Part of the answer to these questions lies with the concept of representation. The media,

ings? They are less than human, and death and bloodshed has always been part of their everyday lives. You might not hear such sentiments expressed explicitly (although nowadays, people like Donald Trump have managed to raise the threshold for overtly racist and Islamophobic language), but lack of concern for Muslim lives that are lost in large numbers reflects that such beliefs are implicitly held by many.

The situation is extremely bleak, and no optimistic future seems to await us, unless we decide to make change. We here refers to both the Muslim and the Western worlds. As the Iranian Leader's first letter to Western youth suggested, remedy for the mistrust and misconceptions that have existed for so long and are damaging the lives of all of us, can be obtained through a mutual endeavor towards more accurate understanding, and a reference to original sources to understand the true message of Islam. As long as Saudi supported Wahhabism is able to reflect itself as the manifestation of Islam, our troubles are going to worsen. This deadly ideology has been successful so far because of the liberties and privileges that the West has endowed it, it's economic and political interconnectedness with Western governments, and the Muslim world's lack of effort in representing the true face of their religion. The Western world has to realize that free and unrestricted access to oil is not worth the global bloodshed that the Saudis are financing. It has to disentangle itself from the World's largest exporter of terrorism!

Elham Kadkhodae is a PhD candidate in North American Studies in University of Tehran and a regular contributor to Mehr News Agency |

Censorship vs. Letter4U: NYTimes, WP censor Leader's letter after publishing it

By: Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh

After publishing Ayat. Khamenei's second letter to the youth in west, NY Times and Washington Post have removed the articles from their websites.

On November 29, Leader of the Islamic Revolution ayatollah Khamenei wrote a letter to the youth in western countries which was motivated by the recent Paris attacks in mid-November. The event – a second after a first letter which was communicated earlier this year in January – was newsworthy enough to have many media outlets and news agencies cover the letter and talk about it – though western mainstream media preferred to cover it to the least possible form.

In a world of easy access to information, the media cannot afford to risk their reputation and credit by ignoring such a newsworthy event. Yet, some American papers seem to have reached a new formula to override this significance of the letter by publishing and then removing the news! As two major American outlets, both 'New York Times' and 'Washington Post' published the news about the letter the very same day it was published.

Quoting the Associated Press, New York Times wrote that "Iran's Top Leader Calls Paris Attacks 'Blind Terrorism'" and according to its website the same title appeared on the print edition.

Washington Post also used the same source and title for

its report. But interestingly, only two weeks after the release of the letter and news about it,

When searching for the keyword 'blind terrorism' which had appeared in the title of both papers, the search results show the news items here and here, as it is seen in above screenshots all retrieved on Monday Dec. 14 and double-checked on Dec. 15; but it is enough to click on the link to see the Times tells you that "Page No Longer Available... This news-agency article is no longer available on nytimes.com."

Similarly, Washington Post would tell you "Sorry, we can't seem to find the page you're looking for."

While the mere fact of providing news and then censoring it is unacceptable, such a weird move can be less surprising from less important media such as Stars and Stripes which has done the same, but when it comes to mainstream, major media outlets such as the two abovementioned samples, their professionalism and unbiasedness would be questioned.

While many politicians from across the world did not hesitate to react to the terrorist attacks, Ayatollah Khamenei's letter was a rare reaction by a religious-political leader belonging to Islam; amid huge Islamophobia campaigns in west, Ayatollah Khamenei outspokenly reacted to terrorism and con-

demned both terrorism and western policies nurturing terrorism.

He, of course, had earlier this year written another letter to the youth in North American and Europe and had called on them to gain their knowledge of Islam through reliable sources and avoid stereotypes on mainstream media and political propagandas.

The first letter in fact was addressing a key notion for western countries whose youths are increasingly being recruited by ISIL and other extremist and terrorist groups. In an age of the internet and social networks in which communication has become fast and easy, Al-Qaeda, ISIL and other extremist groups are abusing the networks to propagate their misinterpretations of Islam to absorb and recruit more and more young people from different countries around the world. Considering this fact, Leader of the Islamic Revolution in his first message encouraged the youths to read and know Islam by reading correct sources; this is the only way to prevent extremism and fundamentalism being disguised as true Islam.

Moreover, extremism in west is being addressed by radical reactions rooted in Islamophobia and racism; calls for banning Muslims or attacks on Muslims and their entities and buildings in Europe and the United States reveal the deep-rooted radicalism in western policies and societies.

Radical measures that alienate Muslims or other minority groups, would inevitably add to further radical reactions by those being discriminated and the domino effect would ruin everything. OHere comes the message of ayatollah Khamenei's second letter which calls on the western societies to avoid discriminatory measures and instead of alienation of minority groups, embrace them and lay foundations for a better communication and mutual understandings between Muslims and non-Muslims. This will prevent grounds for extremism and radicalism in both groups.

Yet, despite practical and realistic views and suggestions offered by Ayatollah Khamenei, western media outlets seem to be trying to curb the word spread and prevent western societies from reading the message. Iran's broadcasting service IRIB reported on Monday that the letter and reports on it on the websites of its foreign services have received over 19 million views within these two weeks. If western media outlets and newspapers just adhere to their inherent nature of publishing news and information 'without bias and prejudice,' this figure can raise to more and more people and public awareness would definitely help rejecting terrorism in a world torn apart by fear of terrorism and filled with wrong policies |



Heinonen: IAEA report on Iran's PMD 'commendable'

Interview by: Javad Heirannia



Former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and head of its Department of Safeguards has told Mehr News the IAEA has been facing 'difficulties and constraints' in preparing report.

Olli Hainon responded, through an email interview, to some questions by Javad Heirannia, of Mehr News International Service. His assessment of the overall picture of the PMD case, the IAEA's allegations of past concerns about Iran's program, and a host of other issues are all covered in Hainonen's ideas:

◆ **What is your assessment about the new IAEA report on Iran' PMD?**

The IAEA report, "Final Assessment on Past and Present Outstanding Issues Regarding Iran's Nuclear Programme," examines long outstanding concerns about the possible military dimensions (PMDs) of Iran's nuclear program. Given the reporting time constraint stipulated by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and limited cooperation provided by Iran on the full range of the Agency's concerns, the IAEA has done a commendable job in its report.

◆ **Do you think according to Yukiya Amano's report, member states of the agency's Board of Governors will vote on closing the PMD file in a session on December 15?**

The IAEA report notes that the Agency has not seen any indications that Iran

has diverted declared nuclear material for military-related activities. That is good news. Yet it's unlikely that Iran would divert material from declared facilities. Instead, Tehran would likely use undeclared facilities and materials for such activities. Until the IAEA reaches a broader conclusion that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful and accounted for, it can't verify with high confidence that no undeclared activities exist – a certification that is likely many years away. This uncertainty, coupled with the fact that under the JCPOA Iran is permitted to maintain a substantial uranium-enrichment capacity, means that the IAEA will face a significant challenge as it implements its ongoing verification procedures.

◆ **Iran has emphasized on closing the PMD for implementing the JCPOA. Do you think that JCPOA will be implemented?**

The questions regarding Iran's nuclear activities remain outstanding. Given the history, extent, and scope of Iran's nuclear program, it is highly unlikely that this report is the last word on understanding the extent of Iran's possible nuclear weapons related work. Instead, the IAEA would continue its verification procedures as part of its efforts to reach a broader conclusion.

In the light of the above, the JCPOA's verification and monitoring procedures need to be reinforced. The 5+1 needs to take additional action before the IAEA confirms that Iran has met its nuclear obligations, triggering sanctions relief

set to come on "Implementation Day" (likely in mid-2016). When the new report is brought before the IAEA's Board of Governors on December 15, it should adopt a resolution based on the following:

1. The detection of undeclared nuclear material and activities requires a credible baseline for monitoring and verification. The 5+1 and IAEA should therefore request a complete declaration from Iran of all of its past and present nuclear activities.

2. The IAEA needs to provide assurances, with high confidence, that all weapons-related activities have been terminated. The Agency must consequently have direct access to all relevant people and sites.

3. The environmental sampling process at Parchin served as a poor precedent for investigations at other locations, including military-related sites. Any future sampling and investigations, in Iran and elsewhere, must be done in-situ by IAEA inspectors and experts.

Olli Heinonen is the former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency and served as the head of its Department of Safeguards. He is currently a Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and a member of the Iran Task Force, an independent, non-partisan group of former government officials and nuclear, legal, and sanctions experts |



By: Henry A. Giroux

Fascism in Donald Trump's America: Dirty secret of American politics

In this piece, American critic Henry Giroux argues how Donald Trump's politics are founded on 'a deeply ingrained racism', expressing alarm over how few people recognize that Trump is 'symptomatic of the brutal seeds of totalitarianism now being cultivated in American society.'

Business Mogul, reality TV star, and presidential candidate, Donald Trump recently mocked Serge Kovalski, a New York Times investigative reporter with a disability, at a rally in South Carolina.^[1] This contemptuous reference to Kovalski's physical disability was morally odious and painful to observe, but not to comprehend, at least not politically. Trump is a hate-monger, and spreads his message without apology in almost every public encounter in which he finds himself. Some reporters claim he stepped over the line with this act of reprehensible cruelty. That is only partly true. In this

loathsome instance, he just expanded his hate-filled discourse, making clear his embrace of a politics founded on arrogance, cynicism, unchecked wealth, and a deeply ingrained racism. In actuality, he stepped over the line the moment he announced his candidacy for the presidency and called Mexican immigrants violent rapists, gang members, and drug dealers. Or for that matter when he called, along with other right-wing extremists, to put refugees in detention centers and create a data base for them. These comments sound eerily close to SS (SS chief) Heinrich Himmler's call for camps that held prisoners under orders of what euphemistically called "protective custody. To quote the Holocaust Encyclopedia:

In the earliest years of the Third Reich, various central, regional, and local authorities in Germany established concentration camps to detain political opponents of the regime, including German Commu-

nists, Socialists, trade unionists, and others from left and liberal political circles. In the spring of 1933, the SS established Dachau concentration camp, which came to serve as a model for an expanding and centralized concentration camp system under SS management.

What is truly sad, alarming, and even cowardly is how few people along with the corporate media and his intellectual defenders recognize that Trump is symptomatic of the brutal seeds of totalitarianism now being cultivated in American society. Donald Trump represents more than the anti-democratic practices and antics of Joe McCarthy.^[2] On the contrary, he signifies how totalitarianism can mutate and take different forms in specific historical moments. Rather than being dismissed as a wild-card in American politics or as "careless and undisciplined," as some of his conservative supporters claim, it is crucial to recognize that Trump's popularity represents a dangerous

"political space...in both the wider culture and in recent history."^[3] This is evident not only in his race baiting, his crude comments about women, or his call to round up and deport 11 million immigrants, but also in his increasing support for violence against protesters at his rallies.^[4] There is a disturbing totalitarian message in his call to "make America great again" by any means necessary, none of which is entirely new to American society. What is new is the degree to which this endorsement of violence, racism, and the call to violate civil liberties are expressed so visibly and without apology. How else to explain the muted criticisms, if not almost non-existent public and media response, to his comments that: "we're going to have to do things that we never did before. And some people are going to be upset about it, but I think that now everybody is feeling that security is going to rule... And so we're going to have to do certain things that were frankly unthinka-

ble a year ago..."[5] This call to do "the unthinkable" is a fundamental principle of any notion of totalitarianism, regardless of the form it takes.

Trump and his ilk merge a hyper-nationalism, racism, economic fundamentalism and religious bigotry with a flagrant sense of lawlessness. His hate-filled speech is matched by an unsettling embrace of violence against immigrants and other oppositional voices issued by his supporters at many of his rallies. This type of lawlessness does more than encourage hate and mass hysteria; it also legitimates the kind of inflammatory rhetoric that gives credibility to acts of violence against others. There has been an eerie silence by Trump and other Republican Party presidential candidates in the face of the killing of three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado, white supremacists shooting at Black Lives Matter protesters in Minneapolis, the increasing attacks on Mosques throughout the United States, and the alarming number of shootings of Black men and youth by white police officers, not to mention the recent shooting in San Bernardino, California. Trump and his fellow right-wing extremists rail against Mexican immigrants, Syrian refugees, and young people protesting police violence, but say nothing about a police officer who shot Laquan McDonald, a black 17-year old, sixteen times and then the Chicago Police Department's



refusal to make public a year-old squad-car video of the incident. Nor is there anything said about the threat of white supremacists groups in the United States, the killing of members of wedding parties by drone attacks, or the illegal targeted assassination of alleged terrorists.

This is not simply the behavior of moral and political cowards, it is the toxic affirmation of the machineries of death we associate with fascism. There are historical precedents for this type of violence and the hate-filled racist speech by politicians who create the climate that legitimates it. We heard it in the words of Hitler, Mussolini, Pinochet, and other demagogic orators, ranting in a tone of neurotic hys-

teria against Jews, communists, and others alleged "infidels."

Trump's recent call to bring back waterboarding and to support a torture regime far exceeds what might be called an act of stupidity or ignorance. Torture in this instance becomes a means of exacting revenge on those considered "Other," un-American, and inferior – principally Muslims, immigrants, and members of the Black Lives Matter Movement. We have heard this discourse before in the totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and later in the dictatorships in Latin America in the 1970s. Heather Digby Parton is right when she writes that Donald Trump "may be the first openly fascist frontrunner for the Republican presidential

nomination but the ground was prepared and the seeds of his success sowed over the course of many years. We've had fascism flowing through the American political bloodstream for quite some time."[6]

This is a discourse that betrays dark and treacherous secrets not simply about Trump, but more importantly about the state of American culture and politics. Trump's brutal racism, cruelty, and Nazi-style policy recommendations are more than shocking, they are emblematic of totalitarianism's hatred of liberalism, its call for racial purity, its mythic celebration of nationalism, its embrace of violence, its disdain for weakness, and its anti-intellectualism. This is the discourse of total terror. These elements of totalitarianism have become the new American normal. The conditions that produced the torture chambers, intolerable violence, extermination camps, squelching of dissent are still with us. Totalitarianism is not simply a relic of the past. It lives on in new forms and it is just as terrifying and dangerous today as it was in the past. (See, especially, Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York: 2001).

Mark Summer is right in arguing that the ghost of fascism runs through American society indicating that it never went away and that the threat of fascism has to be taken seriously. He writes that fascism didn't win on the battlefield, but it won ideologically.

It won because the same →

fears, the same greed, the same hatred that fueled its growth in the first part of the twentieth century never went away. The symbols of fascism became anathema, but the causes ... went deep. And gradually, slowly, one step at a time, all those vices became first tolerated, then treated as virtues, and then as the only acceptable view.... [For instance] our long, stumbling lurch to

a long line of fascists who shut down public debate, attempt to humiliate their opponents, endorse violence as a response to dissent, and criticize any public display of democratic principles. America has reached its endpoint with Trump, and his presence should be viewed as a stern warning of the nightmare to come. This is not the discourse of Kafka, but of those extremists

insolently unhidden.” (Personal correspondence with David L. Clark. November 30, 2015)

Trump is a monster without a conscience, a politician with a toxic set of policies. He is the product of a form of finance capitalism and a long legacy of racism and violence in which conscience is put to sleep, democracy withers, and public values are extin-

machineries of death, and its moral emptiness. What is crucial to acknowledge is that the stories, legacies, and violence that are part of totalitarianism’s history must be told over and over again so that it becomes possible to recognize how it appears in new forms, replicated under the banner of terror and insecurity by design, and endlessly legitimated by in the image making of the corporate disimagination machines. The call to safety in authoritarian societies is code for illicit spying, treating people as criminals, militarizing the police, constructing a surveillance state, allowing Blacks to be killed as acts of domestic terrorism, and ultimately making disappear those individuals and groups that we dehumanize or consider threatening.

Dark times are here but history is open and Trump’s presence – along with his fellow extremists and supporters – should be a rallying cry for a struggle not simply against a crude and reactionary populism, but against the tyranny of totalitarianism in its new and proto-fascist forms.

Henry A. Giroux currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest in the English and Cultural Studies Department and a Distinguished Visiting Professorship at Ryerson University. His most recent books are *America’s Education Deficit and the War on Youth* (Monthly Review Press, 2013) and *Neoliberalism’s War on Higher Education* (Haymarket Press, 2014). His web site is www.henry-agiroux.com |



the right; the building force of corporate power; the relentless need for war; a police whose power of enforcement is divorced from law; a preening nationalism that rewards the full rights of citizenship only to those who fit an ever-narrower mold... I’m not saying we’re moving toward fascism. I’m saying we started that drift a long time ago, and now we’re well across the line. [7]

Trump is not just a fool or an idiot, or ethically dead, he is symptomatic of

who have become cheerleaders for totalitarianism. Trump is not a straight talker as some writers have claimed or merely entertaining. As David L. Clark points out, the frankness of his call for violence coupled with the unapologetic thirst for injustice position him as the “latest expression of a fascism that has poisoned political life throughout modernity. He is unabashedly vicious because he is both an agent and a symptom of a barren political landscape in which viciousness goes

guished. This is truly a time of monsters and Trump is simply the most visible and certainly one of the most despicable.

Totalitarianism destroys everything that makes politics possible. It is both an ideological poison and a brutal mode of governance and control. It puts reason to sleep and destroys and viable elements of democracy. Trump reminds us in the most exacerbated and dramatic forms of totalitarianism’s addiction to tyranny, its attachments to the



Economy

Investing in post-sanction Iran



By: Azadeh Meskarian

Head of Iran Desk at Zaiwalla & Co. LLP Azadeh Meskarian discusses how removal of sanctions will bring around a host of new opportunities to foreign businesses with Iran.

Impact of sanctions on the Iranian economy

The imposition of blanket sanctions and extensive trade restrictions by the US, EU and other countries on Iran's financial, banking and energy sectors has crippled its economy in the past few years.

Exchange rates and the depreciating value of the Iranian Rial has significantly affected the day to day lives of local Iranians, foreign companies and individuals with an interest in investing in the country. As a result, foreign investors with significant presence in Iran were left with no option but to close down and/or significantly reduce their activities.

These prohibitions made it impossible, for Iranian banks and their foreign subsidiaries to carry out transactions with the rest of the world. Furthermore, many European banks with representative offices in Iran had to close down or significantly reduce their activities and resources in Iran. The cut-off of key banking channels, corresponding relationships and swift services has distanced

Iran's financial sector from the international banking sector. This negatively impacted the value of the Iranian Rial and the rate of inflation reached a high of 34.7% between March 2013-March 2014, and then fell to 15.5% the following year after President Rouhani's election.

What remains essential even after the Implementation Day is the re-establishment of banking channels and international corresponding relationship with Iranian banks and their foreign branches and subsidiaries. Although the return of international banking services to Iran is bound to happen, the removal of sanctions would not necessarily mean

meet the international standard of relevant regulatory frameworks and deal with significant money-laundering concerns for the return of foreign international banks.

Domestic and International opportunities by lifting of sanctions

As the largest untapped market with a very young population, the lifting of sanctions will bring around a host of new opportunities to foreign businesses with a prior presence in Iran as well as those interested in entering the Iranian market. Delegations from various European countries have been visiting officials in Iran since the finalization of the JCPOA

by its agreed obligations as set out under the JCPOA. Those interested should bear in mind what will happen to any deals they enter into between Implementation Day and potential snap-back of sanctions. Working around the Iranian economy and complex politics can be tricky and requires assistance.

New Iranian legislations such as the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act have come into force in an attempt to attract more foreign investment, removing previous restrictions on the percentage of foreign shareholding in Iran, and the possibility of registering an Iranian company with 100% foreign capital as well as un-



an immediate return of foreign banks to Iran, and I believe it will take much more than that for that to happen. Banks have faced extensive fines by US authorities (most recent Deutsche Bank paid fines of \$258m for dealing with US sanctioned Iranians and Syrians) for breaching international sanctions relating to Iran and will remain hesitant in entering the Iranian market. Iran will need to

in July 2015 elaborating various opportunities in tourism, transportation, technology, foodstuff, aviation and machinery as well as oil and gas.

Those interested should be aware of the domestic applicable law, recent changes in the Iranian law, international restrictions that remain on trading with Iran and the possibility of snap-back of sanctions, although it is unlikely for Iran not to abide

limited transfer of capital and dividends where applicable.

Investors and businesses must be vigilant of sanctions that will remain in place after the Implementation Day—some UN, EU sanctions, as well as all primary US sanctions applicable to all US citizens will remain in place—and businesses must ensure they comply with all applicable sanctions to prevent problems.

Investors should also take advice on protecting their intellectual property rights to protect their interest in Iran, this is perhaps also another area that domestic Iranian law will require further improvement to make the market more attractive.

Framework in which foreign investment will flow in to post-sanctions Iran

Iran as the holder of the world's largest gas reserve and the fourth-biggest oil reserves, has revealed its modelled Iran Petroleum Contract (IPC) earlier last month (21-22 November) replacing its previous buyback deals. This is in line with Iran's widely publicised intention to increase its oil production capacity after the lifting of sanction under the JCPOA as of Implementation Day, to approximately 5million barrels a day from about 1mb since the imposition of blanket sanctions on Iran's oil and gas sector.

The IPC replaces the previous unattractive buyback deals. The new IPC will cover different stages of exploration, development and production and will be offered to contractors as an integrated package for an estimated duration of 15 to 20 years. Iran hopes to attract around \$30bn of foreign investment necessary to substantiate its intention to increase its oil production despite the falling oil prices. Although as far foreign investment is concerned, changes to domestic law may be necessary to make the system more transparent and reliable.

Another thing to note is the possibility of snap-back of the sanctions if there is doubt about Iran's performance under the JCPOA, so it may take time for the necessary level of confidence to build up for significant foreign investment.

The new framework is expected to create a win-win situation for both the foreign investors and the Iranian side of the deal, and hopefully attract medium-sized foreign investors as well as the previously present MNCs. It will also bring about potential opportunities for foreign companies to book reserves or take equity stakes in Iranian companies. It is worth noting that NIOC will maintain exclusive ownership of all resources.

Azadesh Meskarian qualified as a solicitor at Zaiwalla & Co (active in the field of both contentious and non-contentious law) in 2014 and currently handles and advises clients along with the fee earners on various commercial and civil disputes at the County Court and the High Court |

Chris Cook:

Global market in oil at point of 'Peak Demand'



Interview by Lachin Rezaian

Director of Petro Scotland expressed his skepticism towards IEA forecasts, saying that once the oil price approaches \$60/barrel for any length of time, there are some possibilities to lead to the oil price collapsing again.

Chris Cook, a senior research fellow at University College London, said once the oil price approaches \$60/barrel for any length of time then there are three possibilities to be combined to lead to the oil price collapsing again: "(a) A flood of high cost but easily accessible, US shale oil; (b) substitution by renewable energy which becomes cheaper by the day; and (c) the simple fact that the more expensive carbon fuel gets in Dollar terms then the more Dollar profit there is in saving it."

As Chris Cook observes, lack of cooperation is a consequence of the existing dysfunctional market model of 'oil-as-a-commodity' where oil is bought and sold for transaction profit by middlemen. "I believe that it is now possible for Iran to lead a market transition to supply oil directly to refiners on a partnership

basis of production sharing with refiners in entitlements to products."

In an exclusive interview with Mehr News, Cook answered the questions regarding the issue:

◆ **Oil prices continue declining slowly. Do you think they have reached the bottom, or we should wait for the next negative record this year?**

In the absence of significant production cuts I have no doubt that the price has the potential to fall much further, and I do not disagree with the view of Goldman Sachs - the US investment bank - that it could fall to \$20 per barrel or less.

◆ **Iran is trying to lure back international oil companies to develop its vast oil and gas reserves once sanctions are lifted under a deal with world powers, and recently lifting of four of them on Iran's petrochemical industry. Do you think it will have strong effect on the oil price? How will Iran's presence affect the market?**

Even the upgrade of existing infrastructure takes considerable time to mobilise even when financing is →

both available and deliverable into the contractors' bank accounts. So the development of new oil and gas fields cannot even begin until agreement is reached between Iran and international oil companies. So I cannot envisage that such development in Iran will affect the oil price for years to come. In the short term, unwise action by Iran - such as dumping oil stored in tankers on the market, or rapidly ramping up production to sell into the market - can benefit only the buyers, who will probably think that Christmas has come early!

In my view Iran should carefully examine other types of oil supply and funding arrangements such as oil swaps and prepayment.

◆ **The future of this trend is in favor of what groups or countries? Is it beneficial to consumers or producers? What is the effect of falling prices on the countries of Middle East, especially Iran?**

Naturally, falling oil prices benefit consumer nations in the short term to the detriment of oil producers. But for consumers, the effect is a little like the effect of illegal drugs: it feeds an addiction to oil, and through increased consumption it means that another boom cycle in oil prices will only be a matter of time. As Mr. Zaki Yamani, the former Saudi oil minister said: "The cure for low prices is... low prices".

◆ **The IEA said in a monthly report in December that growth in demand for oil will ease next year to 1.2 million barrels per day, from 1.8 million barrels a day this year. Why will many oil producing countries, largely OPEC member states, not reduce production in a coordinated effort to raise prices?**

I am a long-standing sceptic of IEA forecasts. Firstly, the IEA assumes that consumer nations will be able to pay for increased demand no matter what the price is, and this is manifestly not the case. Secondly, it is impossible to tell how much of China's demand in particular is for refining and consumption, and how much is simply for storage both as a strategic reserve and on the premise that at the zero \$ interest rates which applied until last Wednesday, reserves of oil also represented a better investment than holding re-



serves of dollars.

In my view once the oil price approaches \$60/barrel for any length of time then: (a) a flood of high cost but easily accessible, US shale oil; (b) substitution by renewable energy which becomes cheaper by the day; and (c) the simple fact that the more expensive carbon fuel gets in \$ terms then the more \$ profit there is in saving it; will combine to lead to the oil price collapsing again.

In other words, I believe that the global market in oil has reached a point of 'Peak Demand' which demonstrates another of Mr Yamani's observations to the effect that the Stone Age did not end because of a shortage of stones, and the Oil Age will not end because of a shortage of oil.

Finally, in answer to your question concerning production cuts, this lack of co-operation is a consequence of the existing dysfunctional market model of 'oil-as-a-commodity' where oil is bought and sold for transaction profit by middlemen. I believe that it is now possible - indeed essential - for Iran to lead a market transition to supply oil directly to refiners on a partnership basis of production sharing with refiners in entitlements to products. Such an oil for product swap is in the interests of everyone other than those who seek something for nothing, and it gives rise to an energy-as-a-service market model where collaboration and transparency are in everyone's interests.

So to summarise, the global oil and gas markets require - as President Rouhani pointed out at Davos almost two years ago - new multilateral institutions,

agreements and market instruments.

◆ **What will be the effect of offshore development and rig building, having lower costs, on oil market prices and how will it be affected by the current oil market situation?**

Naturally, development of higher cost oil projects will be rendered more and more difficult the lower the oil price fall.

◆ **How will the low price of oil affect Iran's cooperation with European countries, including Scottish companies?**

There are several European countries, notably Spain, Portugal, Italy and above all, Greece, where the need for security & diversity of supply - combined with constraints over € bank credit to purchase oil at all - are an excellent fit for Iran's need for security and diversity of demand, and capacity to enter into the oil for product swaps described above. In the case of Scotland, there is scope for such swaps to be extended to the exchange of the value of state of the art oil & gas technology and services for the value not only of Iran's oil, but also for the value of oil and gas savings in Iran, where there is a great deal of scope for improvement. As a wise man said, the cheapest oil of all is oil saved!

Chris Cook is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies at University College London. Chris was director at the International Petroleum Exchange IPE. IPE is known for trading Brent Crude until 2005. Chris Cook was originator of the Iranian oil bourse!

Iran, France to build 1st FLNG unit in Persian Gulf



Deputy oil minister announced on Dec. 13 reaching the final agreement with a French company on creating the first FLNG unit in the Persian Gulf.

Roknodin Javadi described the details of the construction of the first floating liquefied natural gas (FLNG) production unit in the Persian Gulf adding “the final negotiations between two Iranian companies and a credited French company have been conducted on setting up the FLNG unit.”

Managing director of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) noted that the unit will be launched with a consortium of Iranian and French companies marking the first FLNG facility in Iran and even in the Middle East; “the plant will be capable of producing one million tons of LNG per year,” he underlined.

“The FLNG unit will be fed by the burning gas of Forouzan oil rig,” said the official asserting “according to the contract, the Iranian and French investors will be in charge of supplying an LNG ship to transfer gas and an FLNG ship to convert gas to liquid gas, respectively.”

Javadi went on to stress that, “the marketing and sale of LNG cargoes will be carried out by NIOC.”

Meanwhile, Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh had recently deemed construction and launch of LNG factories as Iran’s main plan to export natural gas to the European countries; “currently, the construction of the LNG production plant is 60 per cent through and the country’s LNG production will reach 10.5 million tons after it becomes operational,” he had explained.

Iran, India ink all-embracing economic agreement

A comprehensive economic cooperation agreement was signed on Dec. 29 by Iran’s economy minister and minister of external affairs of India.

At the end of Iran-India Joint Economic Commission held in New Delhi, an extensive agreement on economic collaboration was signed between Iran’ Minister of Economy Ali Tayebnia and the Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj.

“The two sides agreed on cooperation in the fields of energy, infra-structure, banking, consular services, trade and tourism,” noted Tayebnia.

The official underlined that the agreement is outcome of activities of three working groups in trade, energy and infra-structure which can offer effective assistance on development of bilateral cooperation.”

He went on to state that “India has expressed interest in development of Chabahar Port and construction of railway network to connect to Central Asian countries.”

Tayebnia further deemed agreement on banking and insurance ties as important parts of the agreement.

He expressed pleasure with signing the agreement and said that it can remove barriers and

existing obstacles on the way of trade and commerce between the two countries.

Tayebnia also pointed out that “unfortunately, the Middle East has been plagued by insecurity and violence endangering economic growth and improvement in the lives of people in all regional countries.”

“Iran is at the frontier of the fight against terrorism,” asserted the official urging all countries with any nationality, language or religion to work together in order to eradicate violence and terrorism.

The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi also at a meeting with Iran’s economy minister highlighted the role of Iran in regional stability calling for cooperation among all countries to counter extremism and terrorism.

He emphasized the importance of expanding economic cooperation between Iran and India; “as two vast and friend countries, Iran and India conduct more effective collaborations particularly during the post sanction era.

Iran’s Tayebnia, for his part, noted the serious decision of Iran to boost trade and economic cooperation with India adding “effective and friendly negotiations have so far taken place with the Indian side.”



Iran's ISOICO, Russia's Barrikady ink shipbuilding MoU



An MoU was signed between Iran's ISOICO and the Russian Krasnye Barrikady Shipyard on Dec. 28 on the sidelines of Russian National Industrial Exhibition - Trade and Industrial Dialogue: Russia – Iran 2015.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by managing directors of Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex Company (ISOICO) and the managing director of Russia's Krasnye Barrikady Shipyard with the presence of Iran's Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Mojtaba Khosro Taj.

"Being Russia's largest shipyard, Krasnye Barrikady is active in the production of ships and vessels for transporting petrochemicals as well as building oil rigs," ISOICO Managing Director Hamid Rezaeian told the reporters on Sunday deeming the newly-signed MoU as a major step in the development of his company's activities.

Rezaeian went on to add that "three important indicators of the MoU are engineering discussions, exchange of technology as well as taking advantage of the Russian company's international rating agency which will resolve our need to produce certain equipment."

"With the signing of the MoU, Iran will enter the Russian market with ISOICO trademark," highlight-

ed the official asserting "the other significant advantage pertains to the receiving of international approvals by the Russian firm's rating agency."

Managing director of Russian Krasnye Barrikady Shipyard, for his part, expressed willingness to boost cooperation with Iran by defining new projects in various sectors.

Underlining that his company sees no limits in expanding activities, the Russian official emphasized "although the company's headquarters is located in Astrakhan, we perform tasks in northern Russia as well."

He further expressed readiness to dispatch ready-made ship construction equipment to Iran and the new MoU provides the possibility to send the equipment to be put to test in Iran.

Barrikady managing director pointed out the existence of numerous venues for collaboration adding "considering the current level of relations between the two countries, we are ready to provide ISOICO with the necessary equipment thanks to the financial and insurance support of the Russian government in this regard."

The Russian minister of industry has also expressed satisfaction about the signing of the MoU emphasizing the need to support the agreement.

Iran to join electricity grid with Georgia, Russia

Iran, Armenia, Georgia and Russia have reached an agreement on Dec. 26 to synchronize their power grids until 2019.

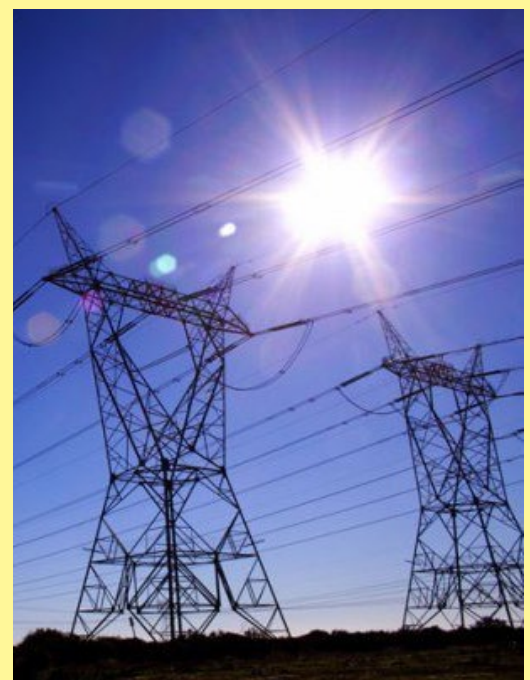
The deal was inked during a visit by Iran's Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian to Armenia's capital Yerevan to join his counterparts from the three countries and on the basis of the agreement, the power grids of the four states in the Caucasus will get connected until the year 2019.

Hamid Chitchian, who had attended the fresh round of talks with officials of Georgia, Armenia and Russia, deemed the power grid connection deal among the four countries as the most significant outcome of the session.

According to Iran's Energy Ministry, construction of Iran-Armenia marks the most important prerequisite for the project, emphasizing that both countries have agreed to make the required arrangements to do this in the nearest time possible.

The 13th Iran-Armenia joint economic commission has also kicked off in the Armenian capital since Thursday.

On the sidelines of the visit, Iran's Chitchian has met and talked with the Armenian Prime Minister Hovik Abrahamyan as well as with the country's President Serzh Sargsyan discussing development of bilateral trade and energy cooperation between the two countries.



Iran, Russia sign two economic MoUs



Iran and Russia inked two MoUs for economic collaboration on Dec. 22 on the sidelines of Russian National Exhibition in Tehran International Permanent Fairground.

The agreement was signed by Russian Trade and Industry Minister Denis Manturov and Iran's Industries, Mining and Trade Minister Mohammadreza Nematzadeh.

The second contract was inked by the two countries' private sectors which pertains to exchange of technology for production of combine harvesters.

Russian National Industrial Exhibition - Trade and Industrial Dialogue: Russia – Iran 2015, which is being held under the supervision of the Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation Denis Manturov, opened in Tehran Airshow Center, on December 21 and will end on December 23.

Participating government officials and dignitaries at the event include Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran Surena Sattari, Minister of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation Denis Manturov, President of United Aircraft Corporation Yury Slyusar, Governor of Kaluga oblast Anatoly Artamonov, EXIAR's General Manager Alexey Tyupanov, and Export support agency of Russia CEOs of over 100 Russian industrial and technology companies and the regional governors.

In addition to over 10 conferences and seminars, the Russian side presents the 3,000 square meters exhibition with the most advanced technologies in heavy machinery, transport and agricultural machinery, pharmaceutical, energy technologies as well as famous Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircraft and Sukhoi SuperJet 100 Business Jet.

Iran and Russia have envisaged prospects for cooperation in various fields with a total value of 40 billion dollars.

The worth of economic relations between Tehran and Moscow is estimated to increase from the current two billion dollars to ten billion dollars in the near future.

Iran, Russia ink MoU on Free Trade Zones

Iran and Russia have signed an MoU between Anzali Free Trade Zone and Russia's Lotus Astrakhan Special Economic Zone on Dec. 22 to bolster regional cooperation and reinvigorate economic ties.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between managing directors of Anzali Free Trade Zone Organization and Russia's Lotus Astrakhan Special Economic Zone in order to develop economic, commercial, industrial, transportation exchanges as well as to boost port services and transport of goods aiming to improve bilateral cooperation by employing existing and potential facilities.

The two sides have agreed to consider the capacities, capabilities and opportunities of the two regions including the availability of industrial sites and ports in order to strengthen and expand bilateral cooperation in various areas like trade and export, co-production, transit, transportation of goods, promotion of port exchanges, loading and unloading of goods as well as meeting the two countries' needs by exploiting the two zones' capacities.

Given the importance of Anzali and Astrakhan zones as the trade route to Europe as well as their role in expansion of trade ties, the two sides pledged joint efforts to secure the route through the two countries' respective organizations in order to boost transit and goods transportation capacities between the two areas.

The MoU consists of a wide variety of other provisions including following up the necessary facilities to expedite business visa issuance for entrepreneurs in both areas, development of cooperation in the field of goods transport, increasing commercial services, providing the possibility of activity for Russian banks and insurance countries according to the laws of the two countries, establishment of a direct air route between Rasht airport and Astrakhan, development of trade relations and the introduction of products on both sides by holding exhibitions with the attendance of Iranian and Russian companies, holding seminars as well as trade and economic commissions along with education and exchange of information by traders.



Worth of Iranian oil reserves to rise by \$30bn

The scenario to increase the recovery factor of Soroush oilfield by 10 per cent is on the verge of implementation and will add 30 billion dollars to the worth of oil reserves in the Persian Gulf.

The Soroush oilfield, with more than 10 billion barrels of in-place reserves, is one of the largest oilfields in the Persian Gulf and recoverable reserves of the oilfield are estimated at 585 million barrels.

The last developmental phase of the field was carried out by the English-Dutch Shell Oil Company in the year 2000. However, in order to protect the oil and gas production projects, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has carried out a project to increase the recovery factor of Soroush oilfield; it is estimated that the 10-percent increase in recovery factor will raise production of oil from the field by one billion barrels of crude oil in the offshore oilfield.

In other words, in case of the one-billion-barrel rise in the recoverable crude oil reserve of the oilfield and taking into account the value of each barrel of crude oil at 30 dollars (based on current market prices), about 30 billion dollars will be added to the worth of Iranian crude oil reserves.

Describing the new program

to increase the recovery factor of Soroush oilfield as the largest oilfield in the Persian Gulf, Head of Technology and Research at Iranian Offshore Oil Company (IOOC) Javad Rostami said "with the new cooperative project between IOOC and universities, different scenarios are being reviewed to increase the recovery factor of the oilfield."

Rostami stressed that Soroush enjoys a high degree of potential for increasing the recovery factor while its initial recovery factor is about five per cent.

The official further enumerated various possible methods for increasing the oilfield's recovery factor including injection of miscible or non-miscible gas as well as chemical injection; "good ties have been developed between IOOC and Sahand University of Tabriz and the comprehensive road map for the implementation of EOR projects in the field are being designed benefiting from some foreign consultants," he asserted.

Soroush oil field was discovered in 1962 and was made operational after drilling the first well that yielded 14,000 barrels crude oil from Burgan oil layer; the approximate area of the field is about 260 sq. km. and is located 82 km southwest of Kharg Island.



Iran to remain oil exporter for 70 years



Stating that Iran will remain capable of producing and exporting oil for the next 70 years, NISOC managing director said the largest salt oil processing plant in the Middle East will become operational by the next Iranian year.

Managing Director of National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC) Bijan Alipour declared that the most important projects for the post sanction era include secondary production as well as increasing the recovery factor in southern oil fields; "the use of new technologies will bring about the potential to increase the recovery factor in most southern Iranian oil fields," he added.

"Majority of southern oilfields are in the second half of their production life," noted Alipour asserting "however, it does not mean that the period of increasing oil production is over."

The official went on to stress that "excluding new discoveries, the possibility remains for Iran to produce and export oil from the oilfields located in the south of the country for at least 70 more years while increasing the recovery factor would even make further harvest possible."

NISOC director manager also pointed to the launch of new desalination units and improvement in the quality of Iranian crude oil adding "accordingly, the largest desalination plant in the Middle East is being constructed in Karun region with a daily processing capacity of 220 thousand barrels of crude oil."

"It is predicted that the huge salt oil processing complex will become operational by the next Iranian calendar year," maintained Alipour concluding "the desalination plant consists of four 55-thousand-barrel processing units."



Germany to build 4 solar power plants in Kerman

Iran and Germany have signed a new electricity agreement on building four solar power plants in the city of Kerman with a capacity of 40 megawatts.

After the signing of some Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with German companies in order to build solar power stations in Tehran and Khuzestan provinces, a new contract has been inked to construct four new 40-megawatt solar plants in the southeastern city of Kerman.

The agreement was reached after three days of negotiations in time with the trip of the German Ambassador to Iran along with Iranian government officials to Kerman.

According to the conducted studies, Kerman province enjoys 320 days of sunshine as well as wind tunnels in Reagan and Fahraj areas which mark a good opportunity for foreign investors to use the potentials of renewable energies.

The construction of the new solar plants is expected to begin one the international sanctioned against Iran are lifted.

Managing director of Tehran province Electricity Distribution Company Seyed Ali Barband had recently referred to the signing of a joint MoU with German investment companies adding "with the investment on the part of the Germans, the first 50-megawatt solar power station will be established in Tehran and on the basis of the terms of the deal, the produced energy is guaranteed to be purchased from the investors at the approved price for a period of 20 years."

Moreover, an MoU had been signed earlier this year between Khuzestan's Regional electricity Company and Germany's Green Energy 3000 GmbH to build the first phase of a 10-MW photovoltaic power plant in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahwaz.

Meanwhile, Iran's Deputy Energy Minister Hoshang Falahatian had also pointed to the new round of talks between Iran and Germany stressing "new proposals for construction of power plants have been presented to German companies and new contracts will soon be signed."

Iran able to produce oil at \$1 per barrel

Announcing that Iran can produce oil at 1 to 1.5 dollars per barrel, ICOFC's managing director said the global market won't let oil prices remain low for a long time.

Directing Manager of Iran's Central Oil Fields Company (ICOFC) Salbali Karimi said Iran enjoys one of the lowest levels of oil production costs in the world adding "the least expensive crude oil in terms of low cost of production is currently being produced in the central areas of the country."

"In a number of oil fields, the cost of producing one barrel of crude oil is 1 to 1.5 dollars," he noted.

The official recalled that despite low production costs, several measures are being taken to optimize the costs of producing oil and gas; "accordingly, it is anticipated that oil and gas production costs will reduce to a minimum once the ongoing projects are implemented."

He also explained the impact of crude oil price fluctuations on projects to increase oil and gas production in central areas and southern Zagros of Iran stressing "experience has shown that the oil prices are always faced with ups and downs in a way that an oil shock has occurred every 7 to 10 years since 1973."

Karimi said that in 1979, coinciding with Iran's Islamic Revolution, as well as during Saddam's anti-Iran war of 1980s, fluctuations have been noticed in oil prices; "however, the prices followed a rising trend after these incidents until 1997 when they reached the range of 60 dollars a barrel."

Pointing to the economic crisis of 2008 leading to the volatility of oil prices, ICOFC official said "the cause is that oil is not a commodity and many factors are involved in its purchase due to having influence on all security, economic and political areas, which imposes the maximum risk on oil prices."

"The oil and energy market cannot last long with low prices," maintained Karimi concluding "crude oil has an optimal price at which costs and benefits for investors, producers and consumers are reasonable; therefore, sudden changes in the economy section need to be prevented in order to avoid ambiguities for the consumer and the producer."





Culture

Iran's Cinéma Vérité: Pulsing heart of 'truth' among the debris

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Iran hosted the ninth International Documentary Film Festival 'Cinéma Vérité' from 13-19 Dec. 2015, screening the greatest film productions that revealed the best and the worst of our human life.

Iran's International Documentary Film Festival 'Cinéma Vérité' is truly a special event, unlike any other film festivals hosted by the country. The atmosphere surrounding the whole event as it buzzes with excitement and happy energy puts you right in the middle of a very exhilarating experience. Now enjoying its ninth year, Iran's Cinéma Vérité was underway until December 19 in Felestin and Sepideh cinemas, two old but otherwise in excellent shape movie theaters located in downtown Tehran, possibly chosen because of their ease of access to subway and other forms of public transport.

Cinéma vérité, literally meaning 'truthful cinema', regardless of how truthful it really is, if it actually mirrors or constructs reality, has gained wide-spread popularity among filmmakers across the globe. It has its own kind of audience, those who are looking for something beyond the chroma key, in search for a light that would be shed on their own limited perspectives.

The opening night was quite a sensation, although returning to Felestin Cine-

ma on the following days did not seem to have taken away much of the original enthusiasm and thrill from the attending crowd. 124 documentaries by Iranian filmmakers and 113 titles from other countries were screened during the seven-day cinematic event. 27 of the foreign films from 25 countries including Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Finland and Switzerland were chosen to participate in the main competition section.

The themes were diverse, ranging from cultural ones such as the story of a mannequin, traditional ceremonies and carpets to socio-political ones focused on the lives of Syrian refugees, war, and terrorism. One of the Iranian documentaries that attracted a lot of attention was 'A157' directed by Behrouz Nouranipour, with a story of war and life in a refugee camp on the Turkish border with Iraq. "This documentary narrates nine months of dreadful and challenging lives of three girls aged 10, 13 and 15 years old at a camp on Iraq-Turkey borders," said Nouranipour, noting that A157 referred to the number of the girls' tent in the refugee camp.

The 'A157' director explained that the ISIL violence depicted in the film is merely just one aspect of the grim picture of war in the Middle East.

The 57-minute documentary 'Alone among the Taliban' directed by Mohsen



Eslamzadeh was another successful documentary on the adverse impact of war and violence on the lives of people. The film directly depicts the story of an Iranian documentary maker's adventures in the Taliban-controlled regions of Afghanistan.

"In recent years," said Eslamzadeh, "Taliban-related news have surfaced on different media outlets. But what was always missing was a first-hand story from the group. That's why I went on several trips to Afghanistan and eventually managed to spend 15 days among the Taliban to document the way they think and govern their state."

Richard Pettigrew, Board President and Executive Director of The Archaeology Channel International Film and Video Festival, who was also participating at Cinema Verite festival was also quite

taken with Eslamzadeh's documentary.

"Watching this film is essential not only for me but the world in general," he said, "Afghanistan is a country wrought with war and has always been the center of attention for counties such as the US which are involved in Afghanistan's affairs."

He called 'Alone among the Taliban' a courageous production, saying participation in various festivals such as Iran's Cinéma Vérité would allow the world to get a glimpse into the cultures of other countries.

The highly-acclaimed German filmmaker Wim Wenders also participated in the festival with 'The Salt of the Earth' which he co-directed with Juliano Ribeiro Salgado. The documentary which runs like a 40-year diary of photographer Salgado, frames various aspects of the →

recent human history from international conflicts to the discovery of pristine territories and grandiose landscapes as part of a huge photographic project, which is a tribute to the planet's beauty.

But perhaps the most controversial screening was of 'I Am Nasser Hejazi', directed by Nima Tabatabaei and produced by Amir Rafiei that was screened on the eve of the late legendary goalkeeper's birthday that coincided with Cinema Verité's opening night. The documentary soon after its first night screening was banned due to a personal complaint filed by former Esteghlal of Tehran coach Amir Ghalenoei, who was upset about his black and white portrayal in the film. The documentary 'I Am Nasser Hejazi' looks upon the life of the former goalkeeper and head coach of Iranian football in five chapters, namely I Have a Dream, The Last Man Standing, Killing Sohrab, Esteghlal to Esteghlal and the Eagle's Flight.

The ban was finally lifted a few days later once the film was edited and certain scenes were removed.

The festival this year had a special section titled 'American Documentaries' that had a look at the contemporary American society through the eyes of 7 different filmmakers. Notable among

them were 'Killing Time' (2015, Lydie Wisshaupt-Claudel) and 'Of Men & War' (2014, Laurent Becue-Renard) which narrate the story of American soldiers returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan suffering PTSD due to combat experiences.

The documentaries 'The Seventh Fire' (2015, Jack Riccobono) and 'Cartel Land' (2015, Matthew Heineman) dealt with inevitable addiction among American Indians, the indifference of the US government towards them and the huge drug cartels across the US-Mexico border.

The ninth edition of International Documentary Film Festival 'Cinéma Vérité' came to a graceful close on December 20, announcing its winners in different sections of short, mid-long, and long documentaries. In the international section, Francesco Dongiovanni's 'Giano' with its fleeting visions from an unfinished film about time won the Special Jury Award, while Iranian 'Bard' directed by Hamid Jafari and the Argentinian production 'The Chechen Family' by Martin Sola won the top prizes in the 30-60 minute long section.

The powerful documentary 'A157' was indeed deserving of being awarded the Special Jury Award. Behrouz Nouranipour's latest production which

follows three Kurdish girls who fell pregnant after been raped by members of ISIL terrorist group, paints a bleak and devastating picture of a suppressed and suffering people whose trembling voices can hardly reach the world over the buzzing white noise of mundane and indifferent daily life in clean, wealthy veins of Western countries.

'My Love, Don't Cross That River' directed by South Korean filmmaker Jin Mo-Young took home the top prize and \$5000 for its beautiful and touching portrait of a couple who had lived together for 76 years and now were facing the last moment of their marriage.

Iran's Cinéma Vérité is much loved among the younger generation, the university students studying arts and cinema and other film enthusiasts as they crowd the lobby of Felestin Movie Theater to talk to the filmmakers and freely exchange ideas and watch films that they would not be able to see on normal occasions. The festival wrapped up its ninth edition on a Sunday afternoon and the people of this huge metropolis pulsing with life and energy, poured into the cold streets in the middle of downtown Tehran, contemplating the meaning of truth and reality in a world of ever-shifting concepts and constructs |



Iranian filmmaker 'Alone among the Taliban'

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

'Alone among the Taliban' directed by Mohsen Eslamzadeh and winner of Shahid Avini Award offers a bold and interesting perspective on the Taliban militants in Afghanistan.

"I was terrified."

The first thing you notice about the director of the bold documentary 'Alone among the Taliban' is his staggering honesty; a trait that does quite well with his choice of occupation. Being a documentary filmmaker demands a certain amount of honesty coupled with courage and a critical as well as creative mind, all of which Mohsen Eslamzadeh seems to have in spades.

'Alone among the Taliban' was definitely a bold move on the part of a filmmaker new to documentary filmmaking, and who had spent 15 long, terrifying days among a militant group armed to the teeth, with whom Iran carries a dark history after the 1998 attack on the Iranian consulate in Mazar Sharif and the subsequent execution of 11 Iranian diplomats.

"For nearly two decades, we have seen films depicting the opposing side to the Taliban, but I wanted to show why is that the Taliban has maintained its presence in Afghanistan for such a long time? I believe that the Taliban have popular support," Eslamzadeh explained.

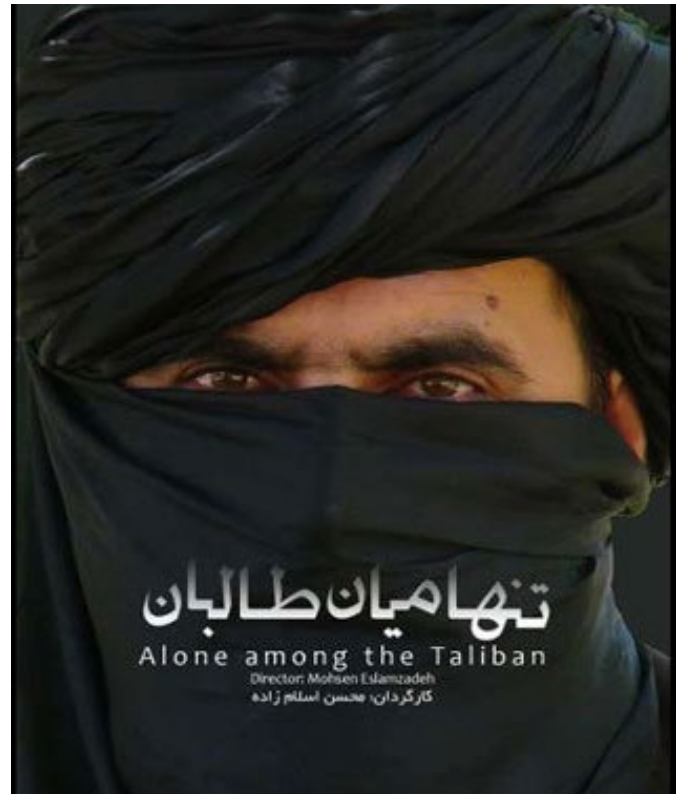
It is interesting that the narrative kicks off with a close-up shot of a white US

spy balloon shimmering blindingly in the blue expanse of sky some 2,000 feet above. Eslamzadeh's voice breaks through the images, "it has become part of the Afghanistan's landscape", and the camera shifts over to the people going about their daily lives under the watchful gaze of the constant aerial surveillance balloon. And the narrative slowly moves toward the main characters, the Taliban militants, with their faces covered in long scarfs and their hands gripped tightly around their rifles. Perhaps, from a certain point of view, the Taliban and the Americans do not make much difference to Afghan citizens, but Eslamzadeh insists that he had attempted to depart from the traditional view of the Taliban in media outlets and instead look at them from a completely different angle.

"I wanted to show that the Taliban in Afghanistan are not Takfiris," said Eslamzadeh, "more than a dozen countries have for years tried to eradicate them but to no avail. I asked Taliban leaders what they sought to do after fighting for some 40 years and they said they wanted to respect the rights of other ethnic groups."

But perhaps the director's desire to offer a neutral perspective on the Taliban had at times approached the borders of sympathetic.

"This wasn't my intention," he assures. "I just want the war to end in Afghanistan, and as such I condemn the



killing of people by any groups there. I am not trying to depict a benevolent picture of Taliban, I was solely aiming for a different point of view from inside the group as opposed to an outsider perspective."

The theme of the documentary is controversial enough to nearly eclipse its other important components, namely the form and the content. While Eslamzadeh could be highly praised for his courageous decision to spend half a month in a hostile environment around people whose language he did not speak, one could actually find a number of faults with the overall form of the narrative and the content which could have included more commentary on the differences between the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the necessary backgrounds for certain traditions depicted in the film, but perhaps most importantly, the condition of women living under the control of the Taliban, an issue that became more prominent and urgent after the touching

story of Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai who was shot by a Taliban gunman on her school bus in 2012.

But perhaps one could forgive the jumpy scenes and a lack of focus on certain important topics due to the prickling sensation of dread inherent in the whole course of the narration, sometimes broken by a joke or two off-handedly thrown by the covered faces, which the narrator had a hard time to decide how to interpret. The music was also another positive aspect of the documentary, which was a combination of Pashto and Western music. Wherever the content was too cursory to perfectly instill the sense of fear, the music did its job wonderfully.

'Alone among the Taliban', a 57-minute documentary by Mohsen Eslamzadeh, was first screened in the ninth edition of Iran's International Documentary Film Festival 'Cinéma Vérité' from 13-19 Dec. 2015, and won the International Shahid Avini Award for the Best Mid-Length Documentary |

By: Ehsan Shariati

Edited by Pegah Hajian

The son of famous Revolutionary sociologist Ali Shariati, an Islamic thinker and author believes 'a return to self' would not mean ethnocentrism for Shariati, but rethinking native traditions.

The role of Dr. Ali Shariati, in employing new human sciences (especially history and sociology), for a scientific and realistic understanding of the national and religious culture of Iran and Islam, was a sobering experience and this endeavor is still ongoing and current.

The work of Shariati, following the foundation of this pathway by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (and the philosophical depth of Iqbal of Lahore), had two profound effects. It managed to posit the "reconstruction" of religious thought in the Islamic world, thanks to modern human sciences, and prepare a cultural and ideological resistance to the era of "ideologies and revolutions" (anti-imperialist, anti-despotic and anti-capitalist). It also created among the younger generation awareness of and hope for a new reflection on the basis of the autochthonous culture. The widespread impact of the Shariatian discourse, recognized by his supporters as well as by his critics, testifies to his success and enthusiastic reception.

However, since the time of Shariati until today, we have witnessed a paradigm shift, a change in "episteme" in the humanities. Progressing from at first the transformation of the positivist and scientific model (explaining the 'causes' of the facts), to later the hermeneutic understanding and phenomenological description (understanding the 'meaning' of events), promoted the "Science" of humanities at an unmatched level. With the entry of philosophy and science in the era of the "posts" (postmodern, post-metaphysical, post-industrial society, etc ...), and the "ends" (end of history, of man, of ideologies, etc ...), the concepts of man as an object of humanities research, as well as "objectivity" and scientific impartiality, are now challenged.

"The future" of the humanities is profoundly linked to the redefinition of "man's humanity" and to the "objectivity of (this) object" (human). In each of

Shariati's 'return to self' rejection of sectarianism, ethnocentrism



these sciences, it is central to explore a humanity in search of a superior dignity to that promised yesterday by ideologies and an objectivity in the phenomenological sense of to go "back to the 'things themselves'" (Husserl), and not the reification of human affairs as a natural material and "object" of study.

Future humanities will have to have an answer for the crisis of meaning in our time and of the worthy style of life of man on earth, respecting the characteristics of each country and each culture. Otherwise, it will be condemned to death, and become merely a tool in the service of great powers that determine the fate of the world: the support base of technical sales companies, or political-military powers, or apologist justifier of propaganda for new "crusades" and the "clash of civilizations".

Shariati was a committed intellectual who wanted to learn "human sciences" for its role in social emancipation and human salvation. After his university period, he expanded his perspective outside of the academy, to develop a "critical theory" alive in society, particularly in a religious society. His intellectual legacy had a wide impact, subject to conflicting interpretations.

After Shariati, there arose in Iran and

in the Islamic world the phenomenon of so-called "fundamentalism". Its impact differed in Iran, however, for two reasons: Iran experienced the civil development of "religious modernity", as well as the achievements of a range of trends from "traditionalist" to "fundamentalist" at governmental and community levels. As a result, Iran is now in a way "vaccinated" against the deadly scourge of extremism. And given that we are regarded as the pioneer of a (tinted color) Islamic revolution, our experience may be considered by other Muslim nations as a sort of social laboratory.

The transversal approach of Shariati on "interfaith rapprochement" manifested by such phrases as "Sunni prophetic" equal to "Shia Alawite" against "Sunni Umayyad" and "Shia Safavid," or the triangle of Sartre, Marx, and Bergson (or Pascal) in the West, or Buddha, Mazdak, Hallaj in the East, as equivalent of Imam Ali, etc., have ground down the regressions and ethno-religious conflicts and this underlies the successful receipt of the work of Shariati in different Muslim countries.

In analyzing the draft of Shariati's thought, which consists of "rebirth" of national culture and religious "Reformation", an "interdisciplinary" approach is →

recognizable in:

- the exploration of the “continent of history” (the item Shariati had introduced into the field of Islamic theological studies) ;
- the Marx-Weber interaction between sociological infrastructural base and cultural and ideological superstructures ;
- serious attention to issues of political economy and the development of a kind of scientific Marxology ;
- the psychological approach and equilibrium established between the psychoanalysis of Freud and that of Jung, throughout Shariati’s work, especially in the writings called Kaviriyât (Desert) ;
- the recognition of a mission for art by, for example, examining recent trends in the art world, and bringing in the field of “liberation theology” in Islam and Iran;
- And generally, in the field of philosophy, the observation of the famous “linguistic turn” of the twentieth century, and the lessons of hermeneutics and phenomenology, philosophy of existence, following Kierkegaard and his posterity, in the context of continental philosophy, including the study of the history of ideas by his “comparative methodology”, which our generation has learned first from Shariati.

However, the originality of Shariati

lies in his slogan “return to the self”, which means authentic, an invitation to awareness, self-reflection, and the deconstructed recovery of tradition and autochthonous cultural heritage, national and religious. The meaning of this return is by no means a call to ethnic or religious identitarianism, but rather the preparation of conditions enabling an equal dialogue with the Other, in this case, with the West, as a sort of mirror: Me found in the eyes of others.

Shariati examined the history of civilizations, religions, Islam, and Iran, with a look from below, so to speak. He integrated marginalized texts and reread the tragic story of the underprivileged and the comedy of the powerful. In denouncing the “tripartite ideology” (in the words of Georges Dumézil), and the dominant classes--politically, economically, and culturally--and mystification (antique and new), Shariati opened the way for a new historical understanding in “postcolonial studies”, similar to the work of Fanon, Said, etc.

To criticize and clarify Shariati’s message, we need to continue to develop the methods of human sciences with universal scientific standards.

Understanding the emancipatory trilogy of “liberty, Justice and mysticism”, in direct contrast to the dominating triangle of “exploitation (zar), oppres-

sion (zoor), and mystification (tazwir)”, according to the latest text of Shariati, requires learning widely. For example, new philosophy and political sciences in their latest developments, from reading the classics such as A. Tocqueville and B. Constant up to H. Arendt and Leo Strauss; studying the thought of social democratic movements from astro-socialism and anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian socialism, to the current movement of “alternative globalization”; and finally, the knowledge of the Existenzphilosophy and the Oriental (and Islamic and Iranian) wisdoms and mystical spirituality.

Reviewing and evaluating the legacy of Dr. Shariati helps to improve its quality, to lift its ambiguities and resolve problems of this path of thought. Thus, we expect holding seminars like this to illustrate the current situation and the future of the humanities in Iran, to contribute to the theoretical and practical implications of this school of thought and Shariati’s contribution to the future of these sciences, particularly in the context of our culture or civilization.

Through fostering freedom of expression, such as the critical approach of the researchers present at this meeting, we expect to see a new flowering of ideas and a leap forward in research, and a new contribution to the future of the humanities in our countries |



UN envoy in Iran:

Asiatic cheetah extinction trend reversed

By: Samad Habibi

UN resident coordinator in Iran has said cooperation between Department of Environment and the Conservation of Asiatic Cheetah Project has reversed the extinction trend among Asiatic cheetahs.

Gary Lewis who was addressing the ceremony to celebrate the International Cheetah Day (December 5) on Saturday, told the meeting that the ceremony celebrated 12 years of cooperation with Iran's Department of Environment in protection of Asiatic cheetah; "during the last 12 years, the UN came to help us in installing trap cameras in cheetah habitats; the aid also proved effective in extending the scope of the protection, which drastically reversed the down-hill extinction curve now into a flat," Lewis added.

"We have the opportunity now to save Asiatic cheetahs and their habitat, and the UN will provide Iran's government with any help needed; in the past decade, the UN pumped \$10mn into the project, and has actually on the agenda increasing the aid allocated to the project CACP (the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project)," Lewis told the meeting, however adding that no precise figures had been announced for new pledges, and that he was doing necessary arrangements for securing a lump sum.

Masoumeh Ebtekar, Head of Department of Environment, also addressed the meeting in a brief speech; "our trap cameras had revealed the rising number of cubs up to 18, which is the outcome of a collective attempt by CACP, Department of Environment, local public, and the UN experts; Pardisan Park of Tehran is now home to a couple; and we now receive expert information from international large cat consultants to bring under control the couple's behavior," she said. "We are very hopeful to see the couple's mating and birth of at least a cub after a miscarriage which squandered the genetically valuable cub months ago."



Ebtekar then addressed Lewis in English in reminding a national commitment to save the animal under extinction; "Lewis, when in Yazd, we spoke of cheetah, which is a valuable species under extinction," she said.

Houman Jokar, the Director of CACP told the meeting of an idea which hit the project to bring the male and female cheetahs so that they mate. He calls female cheetah 'Delbar,' and male cheetah 'Koushki.' "Scarcely would cheetahs actually mate in captivity; excellent conditions should be present so that a couple establish psychological connections before physical contact; this is a prerequisite in the wild for a successful mating and birth of new cubs," he commented. As Iman Memarian, wildlife veterinarian and a contributor to CACP says, Delbar had underwent an abortion due to an infectious kidney problem, which fortunately was treated in Tehran; "however, the disease will accompany Delbar to her death; the kidney problem is endemic to the cat family and could be controlled as well."

Memarian invests much hope in the mating of the two and coming of fresh cubs; "apart from new births in captivity which actually is good news (and unique experience as well), we have amassed invaluable information as to the species' reproductive behavior; we detect-

ed differences in levels of red and white blood cells and other enzymes of Asiatic cheetahs with those of African cats," he detailed.

Houman Jokar said in a hope-inspiring remarks that the habitat of Asiatic cheetah had undergone the least changes during 14 past years unlike other habitats across the country; "in northern wildlife refuges of Khar-touran and Miandasht, we observed higher dynamism in the cheetah population, with visitors fortunate enough to catch a rare glimpse of cheetah and her cubs quite infrequently," he added.

"8 years ago, the public awareness was not as high as it today at least among the rural locals; for example, a local shepherd on motorbike would chase a female along her cubs in search of finding a plaything for his child; he succeeds in tiring and trapping Koushki which was lagging behind his mother and sibling; however, the locals find the cub invariably priceless and inform the Department of Environment local officials who come to save the cub," Jokar accounted. "The 4-month-old cub was in no condition to manage itself on the wild and fortunately, a fence in Minadasht accepted it as beloved child of the nature; the second cub with the similar fate four years later met Koushki as father of her cubs for the first time." |

MNA throws birthday bash for kids in need

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

December 13 was a special day here at Mehr News Agency; two underprivileged kids whose father was imprisoned and the mother could barely make ends meet had a birthday party with MNA personnel in attendance.

If there is one thing most children, if not all, like so much it's having birthday parties. Today, Mehr News Agency took some time off work to host one for two little sisters, Helia and Hasti, about five years old with angelic faces and reserved smiles.

The mother sits the girls on two chairs behind a table topped with a pink birthday cake and big and small presents, courtesy of MNA journalists and other personnel. The conference room looks so different today, with the walls adorned with colorful balloons and the upbeat tone of birthday songs carrying through the room. There is an air of self-contained emotion about

the girls, young as they are. They aren't like normal girls. They have been through so much hardship already. The father has been behind bars for four years for committing a crime and the mother has to shoulder all the burden now.

"The girls haven't seen their father for a long time, almost seven months now," says the mother as she watches her little kids putting birthday hats on their heads and getting into a merrier spirit.

Everyone is clapping their hands to the jolly music and singing happy birthday songs. Hasti whose name means 'life' and Helia, 'daughter of Sun' are the only source of hope and happiness for the mother now. Watching her children having a birthday party, like any normal child, fills her with a peaceful sense of bliss, and for a little while she too can allow herself to have fun.

"The families of the convicts should not pay the price for a crime they had no part



in committing," says Mohsen Nasiri, Head of Prisoners Support Association, who is also among the guests at the two girls' birthday party; "But what happens in reality is that it is the families who suffer the most when the head of the family who was in charge of making a livelihood becomes imprisoned and leaves the family to fend for itself."

"About 70 percent of the prisoners' families are underprivileged, with most having problems getting a place to live in," he adds.

"Mehr News Agency has a long-standing history in taking steps toward such humanitarian acts," says Nasiri, "such as making frequent visits to the families of the convicts and other underprivileged families, raising money for them and holding birthday parties such as this one today."

Nasiri hoped that other

agencies and organizations would follow suit; "the families of the prisoners have a right to live a normal life. We have a duty to make that possible."

"I hope this party will leave a good impression on the children," he said, looking at Hasti and Helia who were sitting demurely on their chairs and staring at the presents, no doubt feeling quite impatient for unwrapping them.

When it comes to unwrapping the presents, the children are definitely beaming. There is something about receiving presents, no matter how old you are, that can never be compared with any other form of happiness. The girls get lots of dolls and toys, as well as pencil crayons and drawing books, all in bright, joyous colors. Their happiness is contagious, no one can stop the smile that finds its way to their lips. When the cake is served, everyone feels like it has been their own birthday party. Hasti is pressing a huge plushy bear to her little chest while Helia's small fingers are wrapped around a toy kit. This is just a short moment of fun for these children who deserve so much more. The Prisoners Support Association and the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation promise to help the family and other families with similar needs.

The kids watch as their toys are put into the trunk of the taxi to go home. We can only hope that things would look up for them in the future |





THE 2015
MUSTAFA PRIZE

جائزة مصطفى

Science and Technology Award

www.mustafaprize.org

Editor: Marjohn Sheikhi

Dossier



The Mustafa Prize is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states biennially.

The Mustafa Prize seeks to encourage education and research and is set to play the pioneering role in developing regional relations between science and technology institutions working in the OIC member countries. It also aims to improve scientific relation between academics and researchers in order to facilitate the growth and perfection of science in the OIC member states.

The Prize is awarded in four categories, namely "Life Science and Medical Sciences", "Nano Science and Nanotechnologies", "The Information and Communication Science and Technologies", and "Top Scientific Achievement in other fields". The laureates in each section will be awarded 500,000 USD which is financed through the endowments made to the Prize. The winners will also be adorned with a special medal and certificate.

The Mustafa Prize started its job in 2013. The Policy making Council of the Prize which is tasked with supervising various procedures of the event is comprised of high-profile universities

and academic centers of OIC member states. The prize will be granted to the works which are deemed to have improved the human life and have made tangible and cutting-edge innovations on the boundaries of science or have presented new scientific methodology.

At the end of the first press conference of Mustafa Prize on December 16, Mehdi Safarinia, secretary of Policy Making Council of Mustafa Prize, noted the financial supports of the government regarding the remarkable amount of the prize as 500,000 USD and said, "this prize is organized based on nongovernmental supports and charity organizations will support it financially. So far about 240 individuals and legal organizations declared their support. Besides, the prize was approved in Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution so the political or governmental changes will not affect the activities of Mustafa Prize."

He went on to add that about twenty organizations and educational centers including IRIB, Ministry of education, artistic and research centers were contributing to select the best works in the scientific field.

"The jury of Mustafa Prize consists of 7 senior Iranian and foreign scientists and consultants. The work and

achievements of selected scientists for this Prize should be innovative and creative and must further develop frontiers of knowledge. It should also have a clear and tangible effect and application in the lives of people. The work must not be precedent while the scientist in question must have a global reputation. For this purpose, 61 jury sessions were held and 13 international consultants and referees attended these sessions along with main referees. Two international scientific centers must have confirmed the comments and decisions of the referees," he said.

"This prize will be held biannually and its secretariat is working permanently. There might be some reorganizations and changes for next editions such as adding more research centers or other categories to prize section, increasing amount of the prize or other issues which will be decided at the official meeting of the policy making council of Mustafa Prize. We also hope that the second call for the next edition of the prize to be announced next month," he added.

The first round of Mustafa (PBUH) Prize took place on 24-29 December 2015. The Award Ceremony was held on 25 December hosting more than 60 top scientists from 28 countries at Talar Vahdat, Tehran, Iran |



Laureates of First Mustafa Scientific Prize

On December 23, the laureates of the first Mustafa Scientific Prize were announced as Professor Jackie Y. Ying from Singapore and Professor Omar Yaghi from Jordan.

According to Dr. Hossein Zohour, Chairman of the science committee of Mustafa Scientific Prize, the prize is awarded in four categories including: Life Sciences and Medicine, Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, Information and Communication Technologies and Top Scientific Achievement in general fields.

"In the first three categories, the nominees must be citizens of one of the 57 Islamic countries while in the fourth category the nominee must be Muslim but being citizen of an Islamic country is not mandatory," he added.

Explaining the selection method he said, "laureates of this prize are selected among 100 works that have been selected for the final arbitration by the jury. These works must be original and innovative and lead to a tangible effect on human lives. Also, the nominated scientists must have good international reputations. At the end, and with regard to the criterion described earlier, two scientists were selected in the fields of Nano-biotechnology sciences and Nanoscience and Nanotechnology."

Professor Jackie Y. Ying, CEO and faculty member of the Institute of Bio-engineering and Nanotechnology of Singapore and Professor Omar Yaghi, president of Kavli Nano-energy Organization and faculty member of University of California, Berkeley are the laureates in

the fields of Nano-biotechnology sciences and Nanoscience and Nanotechnology respectively.

Zohour continued, "professor Ying is awarded in recognition of her efforts in development of 'stimulus response systems in targeted delivery of drugs' in the field of Nano-biotechnology."

These systems are consisted of polymeric nanoparticles, which auto-regulate the release of insulin therapeutic depending on the blood glucose levels without the need for sampling. The technology was first developed in her knowledge-based company and now being commercialized in big pharmaceutical firms to be at the service of human health.

Upon receiving her award during a ceremony on December 25 in Vahdat Hall, Professor Ying maintained that "Islam changed my life and it changed my

goal in life."

She also appreciated the jury of Mustafa (pbuh) Prize and said, "the best thing in this event is that it is a gathering of Muslim World scientists which is very helpful for improving science and technology in Muslim countries."

Professor Omar Yaghi, prominent Jordanian chemist, has also been selected for his extensive research in the field of metal-organic frameworks (MOFs) in the category of nanoscience and nanotechnology.

"It is a great honor to receive Mustafa Prize. I was born in Jordan and when I was 10, I got familiar with drawing molecular structures and this love has remained by me since then," Professor Yaghi said during his speech, stressing that governments should give freedom to scientists to experiment as many times as it is needed to finally achieve success |





Shaukat Hameed Khan:

Mustafa Prize, a global cooperation to eliminate poverty of mind

Shaukat Hameed Khan, a Pakistani nuclear physicist, believes that the Mustafa award enhances social and political wellbeing and solidarity, and the pursuit of knowledge in all its forms.

Shaukat Hameed Khan is a Pakistani nuclear physicist. He previously had served as the rector of Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology (GIKI). Khan has been associated with GIKI since its inception and served as a member of the Board of Governors till early 2013. He is a Fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. Khan previously worked for the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), where he retired as Chief Science Officer (CSO) in 2005. He is the Coordinator General of COMSTECH (OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) Standing Committee on Scientific & Technological Cooperation), Islamabad.

Khan has made numerous contributions to the field of Laser physics, and is an author of two books, which are heavily emphasized to the field of Laser sciences. Khan has also made important research and contribution in the fields of laser produced plasmas; Ultra-fast High Voltage Switching; Spectroscopy, laser isotope separation, and precision measurement with lasers.

Dr. Khan, gave his speech at the awarding ceremony of first edition of Mustafa Prize and insisted on necessity of

scientific development in the world.

At the beginning he said, "I bring warm greetings and felicitations from Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, the secretary General of the OIC to this august event, the launch of Mustafa Award in science and technology. I am honored to speak on his behalf, on behalf of the OIC, and on behalf of the Pakistani scientific community."

Shoukat added, "this important event signifies the commitment of your esteemed country in recognizing and promoting excellent science wherever it occurs. This is reflected in your choice of the award winners. I convey my felicitations to them."

He referred to the Mustafa Prize initiatives and said, "the Mustafa award also complements the key initiatives of the OIC over the years towards enhancement of collective capabilities of member states across the entire spectrum, which includes social and political wellbeing and solidarity, and the pursuit of knowledge in all its forms. Poverty of the mind has no place in the 21st century."

This Pakistani scientist described the role of science and technology and said, "science and technology will play a crucial role in socio-economic and human development in the years to come. Science is the great game in this century and technology is its most visible symbol. It is part of our

heritage and tradition, and needs to be nurtured at every level of society. In the last ten years we have seen the tripling of scientific publications and researches because of major investment by several member states in education and scientific infrastructure. We must always remember also that science is disruptive, and flourishes in an environment of irreverence. This is also the message from the life of Ibn Al Haytham. The year 2015 is being celebrated as the international year of the light and is also the 1000th anniversary of his remarkable Book on Optics, Kitab Al Manazer. Here was evidence and reason at its best. His methodology of investigation in particular using experiment to verify theory shows certain similarities to what is now known as the modern scientific method."

He also pointed to the requirements of scientific pursuit and emphasized, "we need to place modern scientific pursuit within the context of the ongoing global imperatives and the accompanying techno-economic-information revolution. We need to leverage this massive realignment and shift in centers of economic activity and relocation of manufacturing, services and design from developed to developing countries, globally and regionally."

This Pakistani scholar listed the key features as, "the nature of work and work-

place is changing, leading to a 24/7 society. Physical proximity is no longer necessary to make critical decisions, small and medium enterprises in emerging economies are evolving into global players offering complete end-to-end services in the supply chain, technological and organizational changes have reduced the demand for unskilled labor in developing countries since 1980s. The skilled worker may actually be more sought after than the scientists, new centers of power are emerging because of urban concentrations and growth of large cities, with completely different dynamics and, major demographics transitions are taking place in the OIC member states with important implications for health and employability."

He insisted on necessity of elimination of poverty and said, "elimination of poverty whether physical or of the mind is within our grasp. Its elimination however will require strong synergies with political and social capabilities of our societies. Science and technology can and will provide the tools for making change and managing change."

At the end Khan stated, "I invite your Excellencies to take active part in the new programs for science and technology prepared by COMSTECH. We eagerly look forward for your active assistance in ensuring its implementation." |

In an interview with Mustafa Prize Secretariat, Prof. Aliasghar Mirarefi, a faculty member at University of Illinois and the AUIP Program Director has shared his thoughts about the Mustafa Prize Initiative.

The Mustafa Prize is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states biennially. In its first round, the prestigious prize was granted to the Laureates, Professor Jackie Y. Ying from Singapore and Professor Omar Yaghi from Jordan.

What follows is Mustafa Prize Secretariat interview with Prof. Aliasghar Mirarefi, a faculty member at University of Illinois, US, and also the AUIP Program Director:

◆ **How do you evaluate the status of the Islamic World in scientific advancements and in technology-based achievements?**

Definitely much below that in the developed countries that have invested a lot of resources to science and technology.

◆ **What is the share of scientists from the Islamic World in the science and technology progress?**

Developed countries have benefited a lot by attracting scientists from Islamic World and giving them the opportunities and funding to carry out research and contribute to their advancements. Unfortunately Islamic World has not invested enough to be among the beneficiaries of the outcomes of research in developed countries.

◆ **How can we achieve even faster progress in science and technology development in the Islamic countries and benefit from the existing capacities?**

Investing in attracting expats who are anxious to bring the result of their research to Islamic World countries and commercialize the outcome of their research that can bring economic growth to Islamic World. Industrial involvement can be very important in this respect.

Prof. Mirarefi:

Mustafa Scientific Prize to present Islamic values



◆ **How can the Islamic golden era pioneered through science and technology progress be revived?**

Following the guidance of Prophet (PBUH) who emphasized seeking knowledge from birth to death. He made it a necessity for every man and woman to acquire science and encouraged traveling even to China to fulfill their thirst for knowledge. Islamic World need to pay more attention to these facts and invest much more in education and research. They need to facilitate collaborations with scientists from the Western World who are keen to make contribution to advancement of knowledge. Advancement of knowledge and research in the developed countries became possible because these countries invested a lot in attracting top ranked talented researchers and educators and providing an environment that enabled them to flourish and develop their ideas that improve lives.

◆ **How do you evaluate science and technology prizes as an instrument for increasing research and development of scientists for regional development and improving the welfare of human beings?**

Definitely draws attention, acknowledges, and rewards researchers and research that ultimately contribute to human capital development, bring economic growth to the Islamic countries resulting welfare of human beings.

◆ **How do you evaluate the necessity of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize in developing science and technology in the world of Islam and its role in promoting the quality of the life of people?**

It is a very good step to advertise and market the value that Islamic World gives to research and education.

Professor Aliasghar Mirarefi is a faculty member at University of Illinois, US, and also the AUIP Program Director |

Prof. Naveed Amjid Sattar, a Professor at Glasgow Royal Infirmary of Britain, says Mustafa Prize would act as a beacon to other Islamic researchers to show that they too can preform high quality, impactful research.

The Mustafa Prize is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states biennially. In its first round, the prestigious prize was granted to the Laureates, Professor Jackie Y. Ying from Singapore and Professor Omar Yaghi from Jordan.

Prof. Naveed Amjid Sattar is the Professor of Metabolic Medicine and Honorary Consultant, Glasgow Royal Infirmary of Britain and one of the guests of the Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Award Ceremony 2015. In an interview with Mustafa Prize Secretariat, he shared his views about the status of Islam in the world of science:

◆ **How do you evaluate the status of the Islamic World in scientific advancements and in technology-based achievements?**

Very highly – there are some very eminent Islamic academics who have made major contributions in science. But it is difficult to attribute the share of scientists from the Islamic World in the science and technology progress.

◆ **How can we achieve even faster progress in science and technology development in the Islamic**



Prof. Naveed Sattar:

Mustafa Prize to act as beacon to Islamic researchers

countries and benefit from the existing capacities?

Collaboration across sights for major clinical trials would be very welcome – some of the major trials in major areas in western countries have come from collaborations between major centers so it would be nice to foster better collaborative potential. The community needs to identify where they have needs for trials, where to focus their collective energies and then work together to be internationally competitive. Investment in clinical trial units would be helpful – pairing up with some centers in other countries which can share experience would also be helpful; I am of course biased towards clinical research.

◆ **How can the Islamic golden era pioneered**

through science and technology progress be revived?

This is hard to do quickly but developing the right environment for big research is important.

◆ **How do you evaluate science and technology prizes as an instrument for increasing research and development of scientists for regional development and improving the welfare of human beings?**

Awards are always helpful if they are given in a competitive manner and the best chosen candidates are of a high caliber and have an excellent international reputation for research and for the quality of their impact and their presentations – this acts as a beacon for other younger Islamic researchers to know

that they can achieve similar or better things.

◆ **How do you evaluate the necessity of the Mustafa Prize in developing science and technology in the world of Islam and its role in promoting the quality of the life of people?**

As noted above, these awards, if given to very high caliber candidates can only help to show Islamic researchers are as bright as other groups, are articulate and can contribute major findings. It would act as a beacon to other Islamic researchers to show that they can also preform high quality, impactful research.

Prof. Naveed Amjid Sattar is the Professor of Metabolic Medicine and Honorary Consultant at Glasgow Royal Infirmary of Britain |

وَلَا تُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَأْتُوا مَحَلَّاتٍ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ الَّتِي بَنَى اللَّهُ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالْآلِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْمَحَلَّاتِ لِقَوْلِهِ رَبِّ نَبِيِّنَا وَسَيِّدِنَا وَمَنْ آتَى بَيْتَنَا فَسَبَّهَ أَوْ طَعَنَهُ فَعَبَّأْنَاهُ نِجَابًا مِمَّنْ سَبَّهَهُمْ وَلَا تَجْرَأْ عَلَى إِلَهِ رَبِّنَا نَبْذُوكَ مِنْهَا حَتَّى تَسْأَلَ بَأْسَ بَئِذٍ لَظِيمٍ



Vision in News



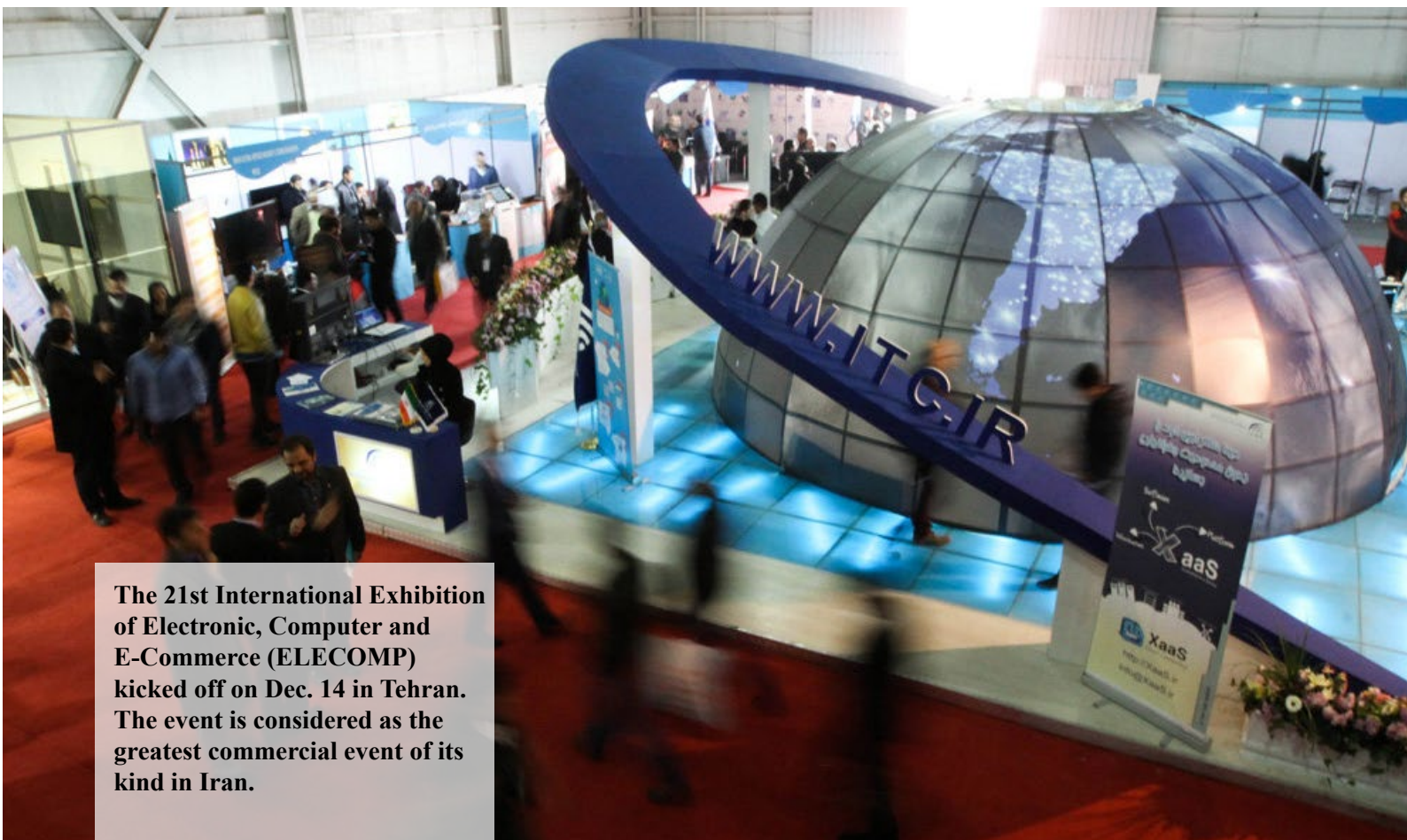
On the occasion of Christmas, Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei paid a visit to the house and family of a Christian-Iranian martyr.



President of the French Senate Gerard Larcher met with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Dec. 20 in Tehran.



Friday Prayers attendants in Tehran on Dec. 18 marched after their worship to show support for Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky and Islamic Movement of Nigeria members who were arrested and killed on Dec. 12 in Zaria.



The 21st International Exhibition of Electronic, Computer and E-Commerce (ELECOMP) kicked off on Dec. 14 in Tehran. The event is considered as the greatest commercial event of its kind in Iran.



پیشگامان
دیلم افتخار
بهترین تصویربرداری
نهمین جشنواره بین المللی سینما حقیقت
اعضای شورای
آقای محمد حدادی
تصویر بردار فیلم مستند
روایاتی دم صبح

نهمین جشنواره بین المللی فیلم مستند ایران
The 9th CINÉMA VÉRITÉ
سینما حقیقت
آذرماه ۱۳۹۴ تهران
TEHRAN, December, 2015

Iran hosted the ninth International Documentary Film Festival 'Cinéma Vérité' from 13-19 Dec. 2015, screening the greatest film productions that revealed the best and the worst of our human life.



The official registration of candidates for the fifth round of the Assembly of Experts elections and the tenth Parliament elections started on Dec. 19 and ran until Dec. 25 at Ministry of Interior and Governorate of Tehran. The Parliament and Assembly of Experts elections will be simultaneously held on February 26, 2016 across the country.

