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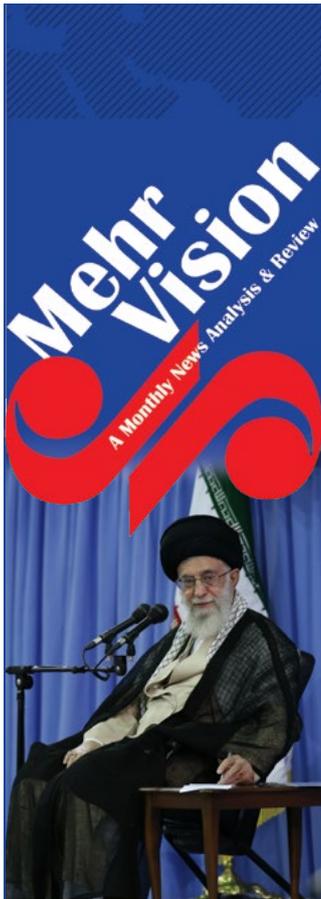
**Mehr  
Vision**  
A Monthly News Analysis & Review



## Profile: A Second #Letter4U

Ayatollah Khamenei's letter to western youth

**Special Dossier: Racism in West**



**Mehr Vision**

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*To the youth in western countries;*

# Today terrorism is our common worry



***Leader of the Islamic Revolution has once again addressed the young cohort of the Western countries, inviting them to 're-consider the threat of terrorism in the world, its roots and to find a deep insight into Islam.'***

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

To the Youth in Western Countries,

The bitter events brought about by blind terrorism in France have once again, moved me to speak to you young people. For me, it is unfortunate that such incidents would have to create the framework for a conversation, however the truth is that if painful matters do not create the grounds for finding solutions and mutual consultation, then the damage caused will be multiplied.

The pain of any human being anywhere in the world causes sorrow for a fellow human being. The sight of a child losing his life in the presence of his loved ones, a mother whose joy for her family turns into mourning, a husband who is rushing the lifeless body of his spouse to some place and the spectator who does not know whether he will be seeing the final scene of life- these are scenes that rouse the emotions and feelings of any human being. Anyone who has benefited from affection and humanity is affected and disturbed by witnessing

these scenes- whether it occurs in France or in Palestine or Iraq or Lebanon or Syria.

Without a doubt, the one-and-a-half billion Muslims also have these feelings and abhor and are revolted by the perpetrators and those responsible for these calamities. The issue, however, is that if today's pain is not used to build a better and safer future, then it will just turn into bitter and fruitless memories. I genuinely believe that it is only you youth who by learning the lessons of today's hardship, have the power to discover new means for building the future and who can be barriers in the misguided path that has brought the west to its current impasse.

It is correct that today terrorism is our common worry. However it is necessary for you to know that the insecurity and strain that you experienced during the recent events, differs from the pain that the people of Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan have been experiencing for many years, in two significant ways. First, the Islamic world has been the victim of terror and brutality to a larger extent territorially, to greater amount quantitatively and for a longer period in terms of time. Second, that unfortunately this violence has been supported by certain great powers through various methods and effective means.

Today, there are very few people who are uninformed about the role of the United States of America in creating, nurtur-

ing and arming al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their inauspicious successors. Besides this direct support, the overt and well-known supporters of Takfiri terrorism- despite having the most backward political systems- are standing arrayed as allies of the west while the most pioneering, brightest and most dynamic democrats in the region are suppressed mercilessly. The prejudiced response of the west to the awakening movement in the Islamic world is an illustrative example of the contradictory western policies.

The other side of these contradictory policies is seen in supporting the state terrorism of Israel. The oppressed people of Palestine have experienced the worst kind of terrorism for the last sixty years. If the people of Europe have now taken refuge in their homes for a few days and refrain from being present in busy places- it is decades that a Palestinian family is not secure even in its own home from the Zionist regime's death and destruction machinery. What kind of atrocious violence today is comparable to that of the settlement constructions of the Zionists regime?

This regime- without ever being seriously and significantly censured by its influential allies or even by the so-called independent international organizations- everyday demolishes the homes of Palestinians and destroys their orchards and farms. This is done without even giving →

them time to gather their belongings or agricultural products and usually it is done in front of the terrified and tear-filled eyes of women and children who witness the brutal beatings of their family members who in some cases are being dragged away to gruesome torture chambers. In today's world, do we know of any other violence on this scale and scope and for such an extended period of time?

Shooting down a woman in the middle of the street for the crime of protesting against a soldier who is armed to the teeth- if this is not terrorism, what is? This barbarism, because it is being done by the armed forces of an occupying government, should not be called extremism? Or maybe only because these scenes have been seen repeatedly on television screens for sixty years, they should no longer stir our consciences.

The military invasions of the Islamic world in recent years- with countless victims- are another example of the contradictory logic of the west. The assaulted countries, in addition to the human damage caused, have lost their economic and industrial infrastructure, their movement towards growth and development has been stopped or delayed and in some cases, has been thrown back decades. Despite all this, they are rudely being asked not to see themselves as oppressed. How can a country be turned into ruins, have its cities and towns covered in dust and then be told that it should please not view itself as oppressed? Instead of enticements to not understand and to not mention disasters, would not an honest apology be better? The pain that the Islamic world has suffered in these years from the hypocrisy and duplicity of the invaders is not less than the pain from the material damage.

Dear youth! I have the hope that you now or in the future- can change this mentality corrupted by duplicity, a mentality whose highest skill is hiding long-term goals and adorning malevolent objectives. In my opinion, the first step in creating security and peace is reforming this violence-breeding mentality. Until double-standards dominate western policies, until terrorism- in the view of its powerful supporters- is divided into "good" and "bad" types, and until governmental interests are given precedence over human values and ethics, the roots of violence should not be searched for in other places.

Unfortunately, these roots have taken hold in the depths of western cultural policies over the course of many years and they have caused a soft and silent invasion. Many countries of the world take pride in

their local and national cultures, cultures which through development and regeneration have soundly nurtured human societies for centuries. The Islamic world is not an exception to this. However in the current era, the western world with the use of advanced tools is insisting on the cloning and replication of its culture on a global scale. I consider the imposition of western culture upon other peoples and the trivialization of independent cultures as a form of silent violence and extreme harmfulness.

Humiliating rich cultures and insulting the most honored parts of these, is occurring while the alternative culture being offered in no way has any qualification for being a replacement. For example, the two elements of "aggression" and "moral promiscuity" which unfortunately have become the main elements of western culture, has even degraded the position and acceptability of its source region.

So now the question is: are we "sinners" for not wanting an aggressive, vulgar and fatuous culture? Are we to be blamed for blocking the flood of impropriety that is directed towards our youth in the shape of various forms of quasi-art? I do not deny the importance and value of cultural interaction. Whenever these interactions are conducted in natural circumstances and with respect for the receiving culture, they result in growth, development and richness. On the contrary, inharmonious interactions have been unsuccessful and harmful impositions.

We have to state with full regret that vile groups such as DAESH are the spawn of such ill-fated pairings with imported cultures. If the matter was simply theological, we would have had to witness such phenomena before the colonialist era, yet history shows the contrary. Authoritative historical records clearly show how colonialist confluence of extremist and rejected thoughts in the heart of a Bedouin tribe, planted the seed of extremism in this region. How then is it possible that such garbage as DAESH comes out of one of the most ethical and humane religious schools who as part of its inner core, includes the notion that taking the life of one human being is equivalent to killing the whole humanity?

One has to ask why people who are born in Europe and who have been intellectually and mentally nurtured in that environment are attracted to such groups? Can we really believe that people with only one or two trips to war zones, suddenly become so extreme that they can riddle the bodies of their compatriots with bullets? On this matter, we certainly cannot forget about the effects of a life nurtured in a patholog-

ic culture in a corrupt environment borne out of violence. On this matter, we need complete analyses, analyses that see the hidden and apparent corruptions. Maybe a deep hate- planted in the years of economic and industrial growth and borne out of inequality and possibly legal and structural prejudice- created ideas that every few years appear in a sickening manner.

In any case, you are the ones that have to uncover the apparent layers of your own society and untie and disentangle the knots and resentments. Fissures have to be sealed, not deepened. Hasty reactions is a major mistake when fighting terrorism which only widens the chasms. Any rushed and emotional reaction which would isolate, intimidate and create more anxiety for the Muslim communities living in Europe and America- which are comprised of millions of active and responsible human beings- and which would deprive them of their basic rights more than has already happened and which would drive them away from society- not only will not solve the problem but will increase the chasms and resentments.

Superficial measures and reactions, especially if they take legal forms, will do nothing but increase the current polarizations, open the way for future crises and will result in nothing else. According to reports received, some countries in Europe have issued guidelines encouraging citizens to spy on Muslims. This behavior is unjust and we all know that pursuing injustice has the characteristic of unwanted reversibility. Besides, the Muslims do not deserve such ill-treatment. For centuries, the western world has known Muslims well- the day that westerners were guests in Islamic lands and were attracted to the riches of their hosts and on another day when they were hosts and benefitted from the efforts and thoughts of Muslims- they generally experienced nothing but kindness and forbearance.

Therefore I want you youth to lay the foundations for a correct and honorable interaction with the Islamic world based on correct understanding, deep insight and lessons learned from horrible experiences. In such a case and in the not too distant future, you will witness the edifice built on these firm foundations which creates a shade of confidence and trust which cools the crown of its architects, a warmth of security and peace that it bequests on them and a blaze of hope in a bright future which illuminates the canvass of the earth.

**Sayyid Ali Khamenei**  
**8th of Azar, 1394 - 29th of Nov., 2015**

# Terror in Paris points to larger war on Muslim youth

By: **Henry A. Giroux**

Coordinator: **Marjohn Sheikhi**

*Welcoming the letter by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayat. Khamenei addressing youth in the West on the topic of terrorism, American critic Henry Giroux believes terrorism is a war waged on youth and by youth.*

I welcome the letter by Iran's Leader Ayatollah Khamenei addressing young people in the West on the topic of terrorism. His call for peace and his insistence that terrorism is a common matter of worry and concern for both the West and the Middle East is a humanitarian and just call to all youth to address the deep rooted seeds of destruction spawned by ideological fundamentalism, economic inequality, the fog of militarism, and the scourge of war. I would like humbly to add to his letter with my own observations.

While Western politicians, pundits, and the mainstream media acknowledged that the Paris attackers largely targeted places where young people gathered—the concert hall, the café, and the sports stadium—what they missed was that this act of violence was part of a strategic war on youth. In this instance, youth became both a target and targeted by other youth. This is a war waged on youth and by youth. By targeting places popular for young people, ISIL sent them a message suggesting that they will have no future unless they can accept the ideological fundamentalism that drives



terrorist threats and demands.

This is an attack not simply on the bodies of youth but also on their imagination, and an attempt to kill any sense of a better and more democratic future. In this script, war becomes the only option for young people to take—a binary forged in a complex friend/enemy duality that erases the conditions that produce ISIL or the conditions that make possible the recruitment of young people to such a deadly ideology.

When the conditions that oppress youth are ignored in the face of the ongoing practices of terrorism—the attacks waged on Muslim youth in France and other countries, the blatant racism that degrades a religion as if all terrorists are Muslims or forgets that all religions produce their own share of terrorists—there is little hope to address the conditions that both impoverish and oppress young people, let alone developing the insight and vision to address such conditions before they erupt into a nihilistic form of rage. At the same time, when war and militarism waged by the West ravage the Middle East, support dictatorships such as Saudi Arabia, and further contribute to the dehumanizing plight

of Palestinians who live under a state of abject occupation, the grounds for terrorism become global, making no one safe.

The seeds of terrorism do not lie in simply ideological fundamentalism, they also reside in conditions of oppression, war, racism, poverty, the abandonment of entire generations of Muslim youth, the dictatorships that stifle young people in the Middle East, and the indiscriminate killing of civilians by drone attacks and air strikes in various Muslim countries around the world, however difficult it might be to address such acts of violence. For too many people, youth are now the subject and object of war, hard targets transformed either into suicide bombers or the collateral damage that comes from the ubiquitous war machines. There are few safe spaces for them any more unless they are hidden in the gated enclaves of the rich.

Maybe it is time to examine the state of youth globally, especially those marginalized by class, race, religion, ethnicity, and gender in order to address those conditions that produce the violence of state terrorism, ideological fundamentalism, militarism, massive inequality, and the →

ever expanding global war machines that thrive on violence and exclusion. Surely there is more to the future than allowing young people to be killed by either drones, or while sitting innocently in a café, or for that matter for their spirit to be crushed or mis-directed by impoverishment of the body and mind. Maybe it is time to ask important questions regarding why some youth are joining and supporting terrorist actions and why some youth sit back and allow themselves to be oppressed without any sense of collective resistance. Or, why some youth are resisting terrorism in all of its forms as an indecent assault on individuals, groups, and the planet itself.

But most importantly, maybe it is time to ask ourselves what it means when a society ignores young people and then hastily goes to war because they engage in terrorist acts or are the victims of such acts. Western powers cannot allow the fog of violence to cover over the bankruptcy of a militaristic response to egregious acts of violence. Such militaristic responses function largely to govern the effects

of acts of terrorism by ISIL and others while ignoring its underlying causes. The rush to violence—the bomb now, think later ethos—kills more innocent people, is strategically useful largely as a recruiting tool for terrorists, and further emboldens those who thrive on a culture of fear and dream of pre-siding over a lock-down society.

The latter is particularly evident as a number of right wing extremists in the US call for closing down mosques, putting refugees in detention centers, and creating data bases for immigrants—a practice eerily reminiscent to what the Nazis did to Jews under the Third Reich. Not only do such actions serve to spread insidious acts of racism and xenophobia, they also enhance the recruiting practices of terrorist groups. Eliminating ISIL means eradicating the conditions that created them and that suggests producing a political settlement in Syria and stabilizing the Middle East. But more importantly, there will be no sense of global safety unless the conditions that produce young people as both the subject and object of violence are

addressed and eliminated.

Safety is not guaranteed by war, militarism, and vengeance. In fact, this response to violence becomes the generative principle for more violence to come, thereby guaranteeing that no one will be safe until it becomes clear that these young people who have been initiated into a culture of violence are the product of a world we have created. Young people cannot inherit a future marked by fear, militarism, suicide bombers, and a world in which democracy has been emptied of any substantive meaning. If the conditions of impoverishment, humiliation, violence, and despair continue, there will be more violence and acts of terrorism, pushing more countries into the dark abyss of militarism and the toxic clutches of an authoritarian society.

*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 |*



*Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich:*

## 'Muslims re-victimized in West'

Interview by Hamidreza Gholamzadeh

**An expert on public diplomacy and US foreign policy criticizes the West for politicizing religion and demonizing Islam to meet their own political interests.**

In an interview with Mehr News, Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich believes resistance to cultural imperialism as mentioned in Ayatollah Khamenei's letter to the youth in western countries is tantamount to independence from modern colonialism.

◆ **What is the significance of this letter in terms of time of publication?**

The timing is significant as once again the Muslims are being "re-victimized." I believe that all Muslims are victims of terrorism yet they are being re-victimized by laying the terrorist actions on "Islamic radicals" thereby making the Muslims collectively responsible for terrorism. This exasperates Islamophobia, prejudice, and dehumanizes them in order to justify assault on Muslim-populated countries. All the pain and tears shed for victims would be for naught if one fails to understand the roots of the problem and neglects to find a solution.

◆ **What's your take on the topics addressed in the letter and what is the main message of it?**

The letter is very rich in content and not easy to summarize. In situations such as the Paris attack and the media/politicians assault on a given group of people (here Muslims), it may become a matter of emotional survival for a young person say in Paris to not only disassociate himself or herself from Islam, but he or she may even want to participate in the blame game in order to feel part of the society and not the 'other' that has been re-victimized. In a sense, abandoning one's identity to become part of the crowd is an easy way out for a Muslim in the West to deal with the current anti-Muslim sentiments being promoted. This is probably more so for a youth as they are always 'subjects of interest' by Western societies. I believe in this sense, Mr. Khamenei is advising the youth to remain steadfast in their



beliefs and to share the true essence of Islam to combat the false narrative that is being projected.

Further, the message drives home the fact that one cannot differentiate between victims based on their religion and nationality. Victims should not be subject to double standards and hypocrisy. While the world is in shock and mourning over the loss of innocent lives in Paris, victims of Western sponsored terrorism in other parts of the world remain faceless and nameless. This reality has to be acknowledged and shared in order to make room for proper dialogue and elimination of terrorism.

Perhaps the other message that stood out for me was Mr. Khamenei's reference to cultural imperialism and its rejection of it. Cultural imperialism is essential to the control of a society/country and resistance to it is tantamount to independence.

◆ **How much is the public in west aware of the bitter facts mentioned in the letter that west and its allies are supporting terrorism?**

Regrettably, the public in the West is woefully ignorant of reality and for the most part, they have lost the ability to think critically. Their politicians have defined the term 'terrorism' for them. In the mind of the average Westerner, when a Muslim commits an act of vio-

lence, it is terrorism but when Western states commit terrorism or sponsor such terrorism, they are either fighting terrorism, or promoting 'human rights' and 'democracy'. That said, the awareness is on the rise.

◆ **How do you see the situation in Europe and the threat they are feeling in west?**

The average European is also a victim of their political elite and their actions past and present. Their fear is real to them. What direction this fear takes them may well prove to be a turning point in humanity's modern history. Whether they will fathom the pain and suffering of the wronged, the victim, or will they allow their fear to turn into hatred and more oppression remains to be seen. This factor is crucial to Mr. Khamenei's message in encouraging the youth to build awareness and understanding and to eliminate double standards.

◆ **Being an expert on public diplomacy in which culture is a key player, what's your comment on the backgrounds, current situation and future of cultural relations between Muslim world and west? How should the future relations be?**

Regrettably religion has become a political tool. It has become imperative for the West to demonize Islam in order to fulfill their ambitions of domination and →

expansion. The latest trend started after the Cold War. As I wrote in an article in 2008 entitled: Terror Most Imperial: The Neo-Conservatives & “Islamofascism”, the end of the Cold War left Israel in an awkward place. According to The Jerusalem Report, in 1991, the idea that radical Islam would replace communism had taken seed among the Israeli right. The basis of the idea was founded on the neoconservatives fear that with the demise of the Soviet Union, and the splintering of the America’s right wing faction, there would no longer be an unconditional support for a US-Israel alliance. Through the media, artistic venues and universities, Islam was presented as a scapegoat.

Although there is controversy surrounding the current presidential candidates in America with regard to their derogatory remarks about Muslims, 2008 Republican candidates were worse! In fact, Mitt Romney raised eyebrows when he suggested that mosques be wire-tapped. The media did not give it the attention it deserved. The hostilities have been going on for a long time and they run deep.

Having said that, this is an interdependent world. It is hard to imagine ignoring 1.57 billion Muslim souls or for Muslims to ignore the West. It is imperative to counter the propaganda with facts. Each one of us, regardless of race, religion, or nationality has a duty to speak the truth and bring to light facts. At the end of the day, it is far easier to live in peace and harmony than the perpetual state of warfare that the Western political elite have opted for.

**Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich** is an independent researcher and writer with a focus on US foreign policy |

*Franklin Lamb:*

# ‘Leader’s letter must be read in every classroom of West’

*Interview by: Lachin Rezaian*

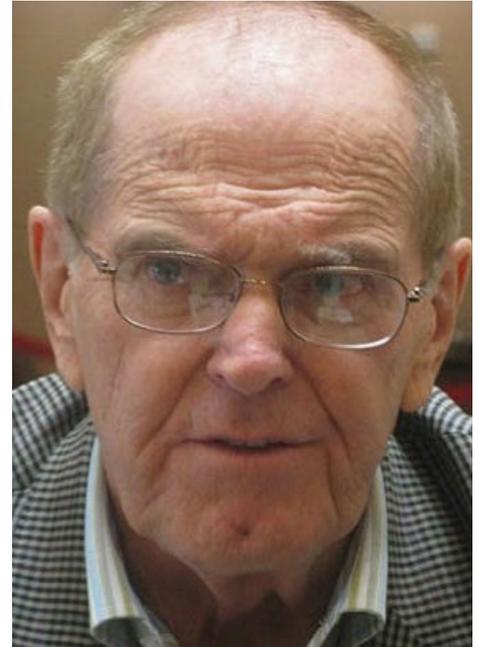
**Director of the Americans Concerned for Middle East Peace evaluated Iran’s Leader’s letter addressing western youth as the most brilliant and constructive analysis by any of the World’s leaders.**

Franklin Lamb, a former Assistant Counsel of the US House Judiciary Committee at the US Congress, called on teachers and parents to take one hour and discuss the essay with their children and students which can help put the current poison of xenophobia and Islamophobia into the dustbin of history.

In an interview to Mehr News, Dr. Franklin Lamb praised Ayatollah Khamenei’s letter, saying that the just issued letter from Iran’s Leader, Seyed Ali Khamenei, to western youth is “brilliant in its analysis and is perhaps the most relevant and constructive act by any of the world’s leaders following the recent spate of terrorist crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, and the continuing Zionist crimes in Palestine.”

Calling it a timely action, Lamb said “Ayatollah Khamenei’s appeal to youth is urgently needed counsel given the anti-Islam hysteria in my country, America, and generally in the West and elsewhere.”

Underlining the importance of issuing such a letter, he said the world is to highly regard the event. “Would that his letter be read in every classroom in the West and discussed paragraph by paragraph. Our young people who will guide the future, if their teachers and parents would take one hour and discuss this essay, our countries can benefit enormously from its insights and recognize that the values expressed are universal norms and that his words restate the underpinnings of American and Western claimed humanitarian values.”



He expressed hope the wise work of Iran’s Leader Seyed Ali Khamenei, be contemplated as a watershed communication that can help put the current poison of xenophobia and Islamophobia into the dustbin of history and aid in our achieving religious and cultural reconciliation as we face the common threat of global terrorism. “I shall discuss it with my children and I recommend that all parents do as well.”

**Dr. Franklin Lamb** is an American international lawyer and former Professor of International Law at Northwestern College of Law in Oregon, who is based in Beirut and Damascus. Author of ‘US Preparing for a Post-Israel Middle East?’ and ‘The Case for Palestinian Civil Rights in Lebanon’ was a former Assistant Counsel of the US House Judiciary Committee at the US Congress. Lamb is director of the Americans Concerned for Middle East Peace, Beirut-Washington DC, Board Member of The Sabra Shatila Foundation and works with the Palestine Civil Rights Campaign-Lebanon |

*Belinda F. Espiritu:*

# Islamophobia discourse helps West maintain world domination

*Interview by: Marjohn Sheikhi*

**A Filipino associate professor and analyst says the West utilizes the ISIL-generated Islamophobia to promote capitalism and maintain the Western hegemony all over the world.**

The recent terrorist attacks in Paris have shocked everyone. Terror and violence of any kind carried out on any ethnicity is fiercely condemned by every country that wishes for peace and security in the world. The attacks claimed the lives of many civilians and left hundreds of families and friends in mourning. In the wake of such horrific incidents, while it is understandable for the public to be swayed by emotional reactions, the governments on the other hand are required to keep a cool head and make responsible and rational decisions in order to ease tension and prevent further damage. Yet, this has rarely been the case so far. With ISIL terrorists claiming affinity to Islam, Muslims in the US and Europe are beginning to feel alienated, met with hostile stares and even targeted in religiously-motivated hate crimes.

Islamophobia and xenophobia are also being whipped up by US Republican presidential candidates, with Donald Trump swearing to close all mosques and force American-Muslims to carry special ID cards, or Ben Carson referring to Syrian refugees as “rabid dogs.”

The situation made us reach out to Dr. Belinda F. Espiritu, an associate professor of communication and Coordinator of the Mass Communication Program of the University of the Philippines Cebu., who believes that ‘the predominantly negative media portrayal of Islam and Muslims needs to be balanced by widespread knowledge of peace-loving Muslims who pursue the path towards union of love and will with God’, as mentioned in her article



on Islamophobia.

What follows is the text of her interview with Mehr News Agency:

**◆ No one called Israel’s attack on Gaza ‘Judaic terrorism’, because that would have been anti-Semitic and wrong. But people are encouraged by western media to call ISIL ‘Islamic terrorism’, while the terrorist group has nothing to do with teachings of Islam, particularly the fact that Quran advocates only defensive war. Firstly, what possible objectives are the ISIL terrorists pursuing by using Islam as a cover for committing their heinous acts? And secondly, how effective do you think western media and governments have been in distorting the general opinion about Islam and why are they doing this? What will they gain by turning Western people against Islam?**

The nature of ISIL is something I can’t vouch to completely and certainly know, but based on a few articles from independent media that I’ve read regarding ISIL, it is an organization funded by CIA and other NATO countries in particular for military-industrial profits and expansion in oil-rich Middle-East.

Questions come to my mind like “Is ISIL sincere in its objective in desiring to establish an Islamic Caliphate, or is it just using this as a cover for the intentions of those funding it? Are those recruited to become members of ISIL aware of the intentions of their funders or are they oblivious to their real intentions?” I heard from Dr. Chossudovsky that those recruited to become ISIL members are the renegades and delinquents of societies. Is the ISIL an organization created by the CIAs but has become a monster gone loose like the Talibans of Afghanistan?

Western media and governments have been quite effective in distorting the general opinion about Islam. They could be doing this because of their aversion to what stands antithetical to Western way of life and ideologies, particularly the capitalist lifestyle adopted by Western societies. What they can gain by turning Western people against Islam is the promotion of capitalism and Western ideologies and lifestyle and the maintenance of the Western hegemony all over the world, including the Middle Eastern world with its rich oil resources.

◆ **The House recently passed a bill that would suspend the program allowing Syrian and Iraqi refugees into the US. Some 50 Democrats have also joined a great number of Republicans in favor of the bill. While President Obama has promised to veto the legislation, calling the move ‘hysterical’ and based on ‘an exaggeration of risks’, what do you think would most likely become of the US refugee program and how will it affect the lives of refugees should the US government shut down over them?**

We still have to see whether President Obama will really keep his word or not when he promised to veto this legislation. With the wariness against the infiltration of so-called “terrorists” among the Syrian refugees, the US refugee program would become threatened by this ‘exaggeration of risks’, as President Obama put it. The lives of refugees will become harder, calling for other nations to open their countries to come to the aid of the Syrians and other refugees to address this massive humanitarian crisis.

◆ **The Republican favorite for President, Donald Trump, has recently declared that he’d strongly consider shutting down mosques in the US and confirmed his plan to force all Muslims in the US to register on a database. Observers have drawn comparisons between his policy and Nazi Germany’s laws that required Jews to register. What are the consequences of xenophobia for a country which champions ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights’?**

The consequences of xenophobia for a country which champions ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights’ with Donald Trump’s plans when he is elected as President would be disastrous. Such xenophobic moves would be in complete opposition to America’s championing of liberty. It would be completely against human rights and freedom of religion.

◆ **In a recent phone conversation with French President Francois Hollande, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani voiced the country’s readiness to extend security and intelligence cooperation with France in the fight against terror and violence. He maintained**

**that the only way to root out terrorism is if all countries are truly united against it. Hollande has reportedly said that he would try to unite all countries for a military fight against ISIL. Just how realistic this plan is, considering the fact that there are a number of countries actually funding terrorism?**

This question brings us to the question of whether terrorism is just staged or not. I am of the opinion that terrorism may both be funded and non-funded, staged and not staged. There could really be Muslims inclined to suicide bombing and violence, and there could be “terrorism” that is staged. Both could be happening. In my country, the Philippines, the Abu Sayyaf group, a group of Muslim bandits, is a terroristic group which kidnaps foreigners and Filipinos alike for huge monetary ransoms, beheads captives and rapes the captivated women. I am not saying that it is only Muslims who are capable of such things. Under the guise of separation of Church and state, those who profess to be Christians have done terroristic activities as well such as the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq and the unjust arrest and detention of suspected terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, among others.

If ISIL is just being used as a ploy by the NATO for its military-industrial expansion and its desire to control the Middle East and the whole world including its resources, Hollande’s plan to unite all countries for a military fight against ISIL is a form of deception. But if ISIL is a monster set loose, a group that has become uncontrollable by NATO itself, there may be a real reason for Hollande to seek unity to fight against it.

◆ **Observers believe that the reason ISIL managed to become so powerful is that the Americans and the Europeans chose allies – namely the Persian Gulf Arab states plus Israel – that ultimately fed this extremism which led the whole region moving towards destabilization. Now with Iran, as a serious and mighty opponent of terrorism, sitting at high-level Syria talks in Vienna for the first time, how will that change the equation in favor of stability in the**

**region?**

With Iran siding with NATO forces against terrorism, this means that Middle East has been divided and conquered. The Persian Gulf Arab states and Israel are allies of NATO, while other adjacent nations like Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Syria have been destabilized. Saudi Arabia is an ally of America. North Africa is next to be destabilized. It appears that the Muslim population is placed under control, but the anti-West feelings are still brewing up and alliances among countries show the division of the world’s armies. China, Russia, and Syria are allies. America is allied with Israel, Turkey, Britain, France, and the Persian Gulf Arab states. The recent shooting of a Russian war plane by Turkey is a cause for alarm if Russia will retaliate against Turkey.

◆ **The western ‘anti-terrorism’ coalitions have come under a lot of criticism by regional states for not being serious in fighting terror. Can we actually say that the West, particularly the United States, is using terrorism as the rationale for the militarization of the country and to justify its military adventures abroad?**

In the case of the Bush administration, the war on terror or terrorism itself was most certainly used for the militarization of America and as a justification of its military adventures abroad. I cannot for certain say that all terroristic activities are being used for the militarization of the West and as justification of its military adventures abroad because of my opinion that not all terroristic activities are staged. The Paris attacks may or may not have been staged. But if it was staged or deliberately done to appear that there were suicide attackers in Paris, then that would mean that the West was just using it as a pretext for its military adventures abroad.

*Belinda F. Espiritu is an associate professor of communication and Coordinator of the Mass Communication Program of the University of the Philippines Cebu. She has conducted research in Turkey focusing on the writings of Osman Nuri Topbas and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi |*

*Joachim Hagopian:*

# Western elite feeds off fear to gain control over masses

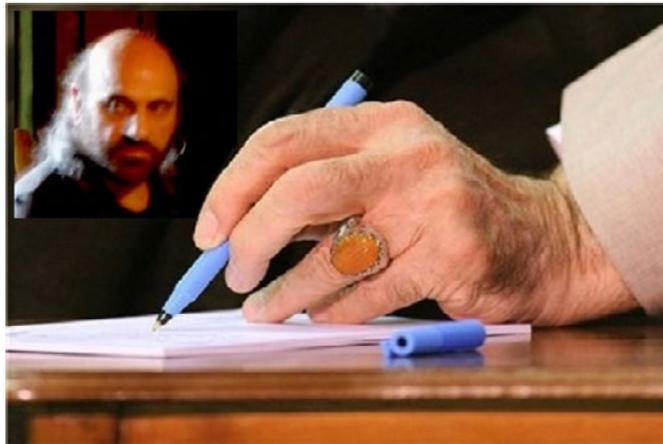
*Interview by: Marjohn Sheikhi*

**Regarding Ayat. Khamenei's second letter to youth in west, former US Army officer and columnist Joachim Hagopian says the ruling elite in the West needs terrorists to extend their endless war on terror.**

In his second letter addressed to young people in Europe and America following the tragic terror attacks in Paris on Nov. 13, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei has called on the youth who have the power to positively change the mentality of Western foreign policy makers, to evaluate and study Islam through their own perspectives instead of absorbing their governments' propaganda so that new conflicts and terror threats can be avoided around the world in the future.

In order to shed more lights on various aspects of the letter, MNA has contacted Joachim Hagopian, a columnist at Veterans Today and a former US Army officer, who believes that Ayatollah Khamenei's letter appeals to 'our common values of altruism' and brings to light the dangerous brainwashing policies of Western ruling elites who have been profiting from war for centuries by manufacturing enemies based on ideological propaganda:

◆ **The Leader's letter on terrorism as a common worry for both the Muslim world and the West is specifical-**



**ly addressed to the youth. What is the significance of that, in terms of the time of the letter's publication, the nature of the terrorist attacks and the global reaction to them?**

I think the Leader of Iran chose to address his letter to young people in the West because so many of the jihadists are young Westerners. Obviously young people are at an extremely impressionable age and knowing that ISIL recruits so many individuals from online social networks, the Leader hopes to appeal to their sense of humanity and compassion toward others. After witnessing these type of terrorist acts increasing over time, two major events in Paris alone this year, Ayatollah Khamenei felt the need to reach out and connect with young people hoping that his heartfelt words may somehow resonate and perhaps make a positive difference in those who are vulnerable to being swayed in the wrong direction. He is appealing to our common values of altruism, understanding and spiritual-

ity in efforts to bridge the gap dividing people especially in these times we're living in.

◆ **In the letter, the Leader speaks of how Western interventionism is a major cause for the formation of terrorist groups such as ISIL, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban who are wreaking havoc both in the Muslim world and in the West. What is your take on this? Doesn't this actually undermine the whole xenophobic and Islamophobic propaganda of the West as inherently hypocritical?**

To a person who maintains an open mind and is open to the truth, letter's point about Western interventionism causing terrorism should not induce either xenophobic or Islamophobic feelings. I go a step further in saying that Western leaders created jihadist terrorism, for many decades with US taxpayer dollars they've fended it, they've armed terrorists, trained terrorists, used US military to protect and defend terrorists on the battlefield. The ruling elite in the West that's been prof-

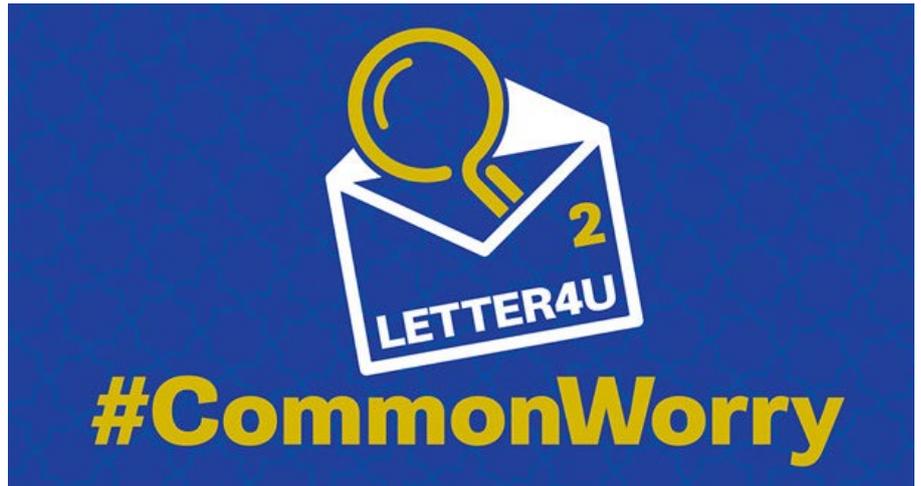
iting from war for centuries manufactures enemies based on ideological propaganda, brainwashing, miseducating and misinforming generation after generation of Americans into believing the enemy is a bad guy who must be killed. Pure brainwashing. The elite needs terrorists to extend their endless war on terror. So US Empire foreign policy rests on war, be it covert or overt. Use of drones is to turn people in the Middle East and North Africa into hating America and driving them to join terrorist groups like ISIL. It's all for the profit, power and control of a ruling elite who own the central banking system and the military industrial complex. It's highly ignorant and hypocritical to ever buy into the xenophobic and Islamophobic propaganda. Unfortunately the policies of Western leaders are exploiting and polarizing uninformed, ignorant individuals into buying into the anti-Muslim, anti-Middle East sentiments, particularly in light of the major problems associated with the current and ongoing refugee migration crisis in the West. But the elite's agenda is to divide and conquer humanity, creating religious and race wars. The elite promotes and feeds off of fear and hatred to gain greater control over the masses.

◆ **The Leader says in the letter that the "insecurity and strain" experienced by the Western youth following the Paris attacks "differ from the pain that the people of Iraq, →**

**Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan have been experiencing for many years.” Why do you think a terror attack in Paris causes so much outrage and global solidarity but attacks in larger scales in the Middle East barely affect Western people?**

By sociocultural design, there is an inbred disconnect between the West and those from Eastern cultures. Seeing young people who look like them being massacred will automatically stir up an emotionally reactive response because they more easily see that terrorism could happen to them too. Unfortunately the disconnect largely comes from and is maintained by disinformation and propaganda from mainstream media. Because violence in the Middle East in people’s minds has been going on for so long, for many all their lives, they become desensitized and because the media promotes barriers, stereotypes and ignorance that separates cultures, religions and races, it becomes mere background noise the strife and bloodshed of people from ‘that’ part of the world. I brought up this point in my article on the Paris attacks, how 44 people being blown up in a Beirut marketplace was ignored by both the press and Westerners too busily caught up grieving for people who look more like them in Paris. The Western mainstream media is controlled by six oligarchs and they are master manipulators with an agenda to keep people afraid, confused, angry, and ignorant. Today human connectivity based on similar needs, family values and even similar guiding religious/spiritual principles are rarely featured in any mainstream news or entertainment mediums.

*Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former US Army officer. After the military, Joachim earned a master’s degree in Clinical Psychology and worked as a licensed therapist in the mental health field for more than a quarter century. He now concentrates on his writing and has a blog site at Empire Exposed. He is also a regular contributor to Global Research and a syndicated columnist at Veterans Today |*



## Let’s learn from our sorrows: A call for change

*By: Elham Kadkhodae*

***Iranian academician believes Ayat. Khamenei’s letter is shattering the dominant binaries presented to Westerners through the Islamophobic discourse.***

The devastating events of 11th September 2001 had a lasting impact on the whole globe. Whilst the terrorist attacks traumatized Americans who had got used to the sense that war would never reach their shores, they were also the beginning of an era of “shock and awe” style bloodshed in the Middle East, an era that does not seem to have a clear end in sight. The attacks were also framed as adequate evidence for the representation of Muslims as irrational and inherently violent, leading to rising levels of islamophobia, and making life more and more difficult for Muslim minorities living in Western countries. The terrorist attacks in Paris, whilst reviving the bitter memories of 9/11, appear to have the potential of bringing about all the negative outcomes as well. American presidential candidates have already begun suggesting Nazi-style policies such as mass surveillance and special ID for Muslims[1], excusing such racist bigotry with claims of Muslim joy in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks[2].

Ayatollah Khamenei’s second letter to Western youth seems to be a caution against just that, suggesting alternative ways of addressing the ‘common enemy’

of terrorism. It should be clear by now that the ‘war on terror’ response to 9/11 not only did not solve any problem, but in fact backfired and produced a new, more lethal breed of terrorists.

What the Leader’s letter is trying to convey is the simple reality that has been obscured so much by Islamophobic propaganda waves: that the ongoing battle today is not one between Islam and the West, as adherents of the ‘clash of civilizations’ theory so earnestly want us to believe, but one between vice and virtue. Virtuous people exist in both the Islamic and Western world, and extremism exists in both places as well. Muslims do not hate Americans and Europeans because of who they are, and because of their liberal and democratic values, as people like George W. Bush[3] and Liam Fox[4] want us to believe[5], but they question what American and European governments actually do; the aggressive colonial and neo-colonial policies that have effected their lives in negative ways for generations. The majority of Muslims do not view the blind violence carried out by al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorists as relevant response to their legitimate grievances. Terrorism is in contradiction with both their human nature and religion, needless to say that Muslims themselves constitute the largest population of ISIS victims.

The 9/11 experience has demonstrated that defeating terrorism will not be achieved through hate-based policies →



that do not address causes and roots of the problem in an unbiased manner and often begin with the wrong definitions, and analysis that do not go deeper than simple Otherization and essentialization. Ayatollah Khamenei is urging Western youth to take a different stance that would have more peaceful and promising outcomes than what Western politicians have so far achieved. Such positive change could be achieved through:

- Changing the way terrorism is defined. In today's popular and academic discourse, it is usually the subject that defines which type of violence is illegitimate. If we are the victims, its terrorism, whilst if it's the Other, the act is defined as necessary retaliation, preemptive strike, etc.

- Acknowledgement of the devastation that colonialism, foreign occupation and Western intervention in the Middle East has brought about for generations, and of the plight of Palestinians, a people robbed of their homeland and facing terror and discrimination/oppression on a daily basis. ISIS, the monster which has killed, maimed, and displaced millions of Middle Easterners before extending its activities to Europe, is the direct outcome of such illegitimate foreign intervention.

- Admitting to and accepting differences, which can be the beginning of constructive dialogue. Forcefully im-

posing Western values through illegitimate means and tools, as is evident today, leads to radicalization and eventual confrontation. Peaceful coexistence does not mean that everyone should be westernized; people should be able to choose their lifestyles. Many Muslims do not embrace the violence and promiscuity of the Western culture and prefer a larger role for religion in their everyday lives, this should be respected without resorting to stereotyping and Otherization.

- That the rise of extremist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS would be impossible without the support of the American government and its closest friends such as the Saudi monarchy is by now an undeniable fact, and people should try and look deeper at such facts. The West should stop portraying global terrorism as an essentially Islamist phenomenon and start accepting its share of the blame, and Western youth should start seriously questioning their governments on such issues, and on their seriousness in fighting terrorism. The commonness of the threat implies that the solutions should come from both sides.

In effect, the letter is shattering the dominant binaries that have been presented to Westerners through the Islamophobic discourse of the media and politicians: Islam is not al-Qaeda and ISIS, and Wahhabism - even if considered

as an Islamic belief - is not the dominant Islamic ideology. We and you are not in the opposite camp. Although we have differences, and we have a problematic past that needs to be discussed/addressed rather than forgotten, we also have commonalities. We share an enemy that can only be defeated if definitions of terrorism, and counter-terrorism policies change... and the youth are the only ones who can bring about such change.

The letter starts with the expression of sorrow for people who have been victimized by terrorism, and ends with hope for the future; a hope that is dependent on the determination of young people to hear and act.

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

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# What Ayatollah Khamenei's letter didn't say

By: Waqar Rizvi

*Political commentator and media activist Waqar Rizvi has discussed why Ayat. Khamenei's letter is written for the Western youth and what has not been mentioned in the letter.*

All words that will be spoken, written, and read (or not!) about Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's second letter to Western youth will be telling. While the content can be spoken of, twisted to fit specific narratives, analyzed through prejudicial lenses at length, what will be ignored is what wasn't said, and why the letter was written to begin with.

That Ayatollah Khamenei needs to write two letters, so far, directly to Western youth, instead of simply giving speeches, or releasing press statements can be interpreted in a few ways.

The letter, a condemnation of terrorism, can also be seen as a plea for self-reflection and clarification of misreported facts at a time of heightened tensions, bloodshed, war, occupation, hate. Indeed, in the twilight zone where many Islamophobes live, Muslim leaders never speak out enough against the senseless killing of Western innocents. The fact remains that Muslim leaders, such as Ayatollah Khamenei himself, have always spoken out against terrorism and oppression of all sorts against all people regardless of age, race, faith, albeit in a manner that Islamophobes do not find convenient. No one likes to be criticized, and that is no different in the Western world. Yet, Muslim leaders are beyond limits on who to criticize and who not to. If it is Western policies which have provided fodder for terrorists to grow, then that must be pointed out unapologetically. There need not be censorship of the truth.

Another way to see this letter, as in the previous one, is the lack of an alternative medium for a Muslim leader to get his voice out there. In trying to directly address the audience, and providing direct links to the letter, this is an attempt to overcome mass media that has proven its bias against the likes of Ayatollah Khamenei by constantly twisting his actual words to fit their narrow, hate-filled vision.



This puts Muslim leaders into a box in which they do not belong, and they are not sitting silently by accepting this situation. While it can be argued that such a letter is good for Muslims to read and reflect on as well, the goal is beyond just the Muslim community. In a world so divided along ethnic and sectarian lines, breaking through barriers is no easy task.

Even if one does not agree with the content of Ayatollah Khamenei's letter, it is important to note that in limiting the medium available to Muslim leaders, one in fact limits the very free speech most spoken of as a fundamental human right for all. Ayatollah Khamenei, as any other person on Earth, has a right to speak his mind and to be given a fair hearing. Again, one's personal feelings about the content of such communication is of little consequence. It must be repeated that for a world which wants Muslim leaders to speak up more, it cannot then limit their ability to do so when they do speak out.

Beyond why the letter was written is what may be the more important aspect: what Ayatollah Khamenei did NOT say. In his first letter, he made it clear that he does not expect anyone to simply believe him about what Islam is and isn't, encouraging all to study Islam directly and independently through the Quran and Ahadith (Prophetic narrations). In this more political letter, Ayatollah Khamenei does not speak to sell the Islamic Republic of Iran to the world. This is not pro-Iran propaganda, but is a Muslim leader

speaking his mind. That he is also the Leader of the Islamic Revolution is a minor detail here, which is much too magnified. If he were indeed only representing Iran through such letters, why hasn't he done a better job of in fact speaking about Iran?

That he hasn't proves the goal is much beyond any propaganda. That every Muslim leader is immediately seen within the prism of national politics, be it Ayatollah Khamenei or Ayatollah Sistani, is proven by the shock, unsure reactions, or simple ignorance of every time any of the above and others legitimately criticize their own respective governments. Muslim leaders are beyond needing to appease anyone, and this is not an "us versus them" moment. Those who must be called out will be called out regardless of who they are. This is an honorable tradition among Muslim scholars and they are duty-bound to be just, critically looking at all who would prefer otherwise, within or outside their societies.

For most Westerners, Ayatollah Khamenei is only known through what they are told, often negative, and that is too bad. Even if they were to choose not to agree with his opinions, they must be given all the information to be able to make that decision properly and independently. This letter, as well as the previous and possible future ones, signifies a dialogue needs to occur. Ayatollah Khamenei is stretching his hands out for such a conversation, but is anyone on the other side willing to respond in kind? |

# 'Westerners mourning French tragedy should pause for a moment'

By: **Eric Walberg**

Coordinator: **Lachin Rezaian**

***In his second letter to the West's youth, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calls on them to "reconsider the threat of terrorism in the world, its roots and to find a deep insight into Islam."***

The leader of the Islamic Revolution has once again addressed western youth, who either for the most part are misinformed about Islam because of the bias in media and society in favour of Israel and Zionism, or are Muslim but living in a climate of Islamophobia and in desperation have drifted to the militant jihadist movement which began in Afghanistan in 1979 with US blessing, and is now a permanent feature of world politics. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei calls on them to "reconsider the threat of terrorism in the world, its roots and to find a deep insight into Islam."

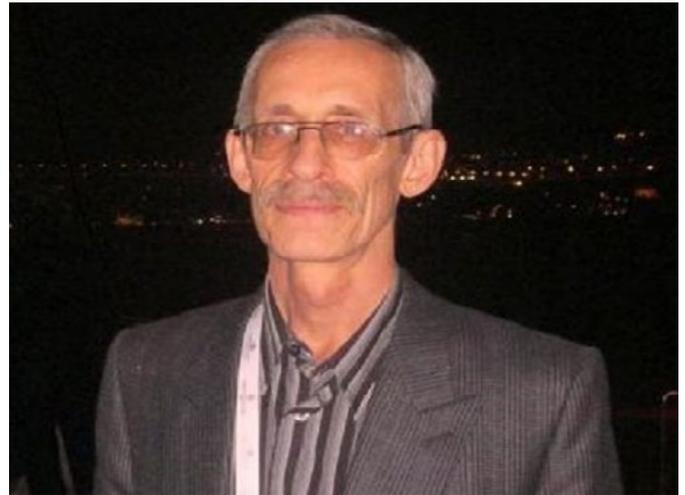
The tone of the Ayatollah's reflections is calm and friendly, the content intelligent and at the same time heartfelt. You can feel his spirit of universal love and his anguish at the suffering that terrorism brings. It is sad to note that western media and politicians have an obsession against Iran, despite Iran's constant reaching out and attempts to help the West fight terrorism. The reasons, of course, are Iran's staunch

support for Palestine and its refusal to submit to the dictates of imperialism. Both unforgivable 'sins'.

These are not rational reasons. Following 9/11 Iranian intelligence shared information with US intelligence--until President Bush found out and put a stop to it. Iran made intelligent proposals to resolve the nuclear energy stand-off for the past decade, all rejected by the US. The world is blessed by Iran's support for Palestine, as the Arab states are just not up to the task.

Like his earlier appeal, once again the Ayatollah calls for dialogue on the most painful matters to "create the grounds for finding solutions and mutual consultation", or the situation will continue to spin out of control.

For the Ayatollah, each life is important and each unnatural death is a tragedy. "The sight of a child losing his life in the presence of his loved ones, a mother whose joy for her family turns into mourning, a husband who is rushing the lifeless body of his spouse to some place and the spectator who does not know whether he will be seeing the final scene of life -- these are scenes that rouse the emotions and feelings of any human being ... whether they occur in France or in Palestine or Iraq or Lebanon or Syria. The Muslim world shares these feelings and are revolted by the per-



petrators".

The supreme leader explaining that Muslims have suffered far more than anyone else due to colonial occupation and the trauma that Israel inflicts daily on Palestinians. Westerners mourning the French tragedy should pause for a moment. "If the people of Europe have now taken refuge in their homes for a few days and refrain from being present in busy places -- it is decades that a Palestinian family is not secure even in its own home from the Zionist regime's death and destruction machinery. What kind of atrocious violence today is comparable to that of the settlement constructions of the Zionist regime?"

"This regime ... every day demolishes the homes of Palestinians and destroys their orchards and farms. This is done without even giving them time to gather their belongings or agricultural products and usually it is done in front of the terrified and tear-filled eyes of women and children who witness the brutal beatings of their family members. Shooting down a woman in the middle of the street for the crime of protesting against a soldier who is armed to the teeth -- if this is not terrorism, what is? This barbarism, just be-

cause it is being done by the armed forces of an occupying government, is it not extremism? Or maybe only because these scenes have been seen repeatedly on television screens for sixty years, they no longer stir our consciences."

The Ayatollah laments the ongoing invasions and violation of the Muslim world by the West, "another example of the contradictory logic of the West. The assaulted countries, in addition to the human damage caused, have lost their economic and industrial infrastructure. Their movement towards growth and development has been thrown back decades."

The Ayatollah looks to the youth of today, who he hopes will be educated to understand the beauty of Islam, its compatibility with both Christianity and Judaism, its long history of peaceful relations, its rejection of imperialism and colonialism. They must "discover new means for building the future and be barriers on the misguided path that has brought the West to its current impasse."

The Iranian leader optimistically assumes that people in the West mostly understanding of the true nature of modern politics. That westerners understand the role of the US in "creating, nurturing →

and arming al-Qaeda, the Taliban and their inauspicious successors, [that] these forces behind terrorism are allies of the West, while the most pioneering, brightest and most dynamic democrats in the region are suppressed mercilessly." I wish his words reflected the reality that I see around me in Canada. People are willfully ignorant about these matters, not wanting to see their governments as guilty of nurturing terrorism. My goal in writing is to inform people in these matters, but it is hard to get the message out. It is primarily time-servers who are welcomed by the mainstream media to 'inform' citizens.

I admire the Iranian leader's honesty in pointing out that it is western 'culture' that promotes "aggression and moral promiscuity", and tries to destroy other cultures. "The western world with the use of advanced tools is insisting on the cloning and replication of its culture on a global scale. I consider the imposition of

western culture upon other peoples and the trivialization of independent cultures as a form of silent violence and extreme harmfulness."

He does "not deny the importance and value of cultural interaction, but warns against "inharmonious interactions". That conjures up the image of westernized youth sneaking into a Russian Orthodox cathedral or a Tehran public place and loudly promoting a western 'human rights' agenda, with western photo-journalists on hand, waiting to send some distorted image out on the internet. The upshot is either Russophobia or Islamophobia, whereas the real violation is of national dignity.

This shows that western culture is in fact nonculture, and promotes apathy, decadence, or nihilism, which oppresses us all today. But, disillusioned as I am with western media and its brainwashing, I was heartened after the Paris bombings to hear sensible Canadians reject the jihadists' plan to pro-

mote Islamophobia, forcing Muslims to join them in their will-o'-the-wisp caliphate. There are many Muslims in Canada now -- ten of them are members of Parliament in the ruling Liberal Party, a 30-year-old Afghan woman Maryam Monsef is Minister of Democratic Institutions. Muslims are first rate Canadians -- hard working, quiet, educated, devout. They are slowly transforming Canada for the better, including acting as examples of what Islam can do to benefit society.

I am also encouraged by the election of Justin Trudeau as Prime Minister, ousting the ultra-Zionist Iranophobe Stephen Harper. Muslim Canadians voted for Trudeau en masse. He has a silver bullet against terrorism: the only way to fight ISIL responsibly is to 'do the right thing', and expose their policy of violence as bad for Muslims, bad for everyone. Already thousands of communities across the country have pledged to sponsor Syrian families and are busy hosting

fundraisers.

Terry Nelson, Grand Chief of the Southern Chiefs Organization, says Manitoba's plans to bring refugees in from other countries should not be impacted by events in Europe. "There's been an invitation for 2,500 Syrian people to be here in Winnipeg," he said. "They should not be judged by a small minority of people that are terrorists. We live in the greatest country in the world. The most peaceful country in the world. We are blessed."

So please tell Ayatollah Ali Khomeini that there are voices of reason, and thank him for his great leadership of a wonderful nation.

*Eric Walberg is a Canadian writer specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. He has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s, presently for Al-Ahram Weekly and is a regular contributor to several globally-recognized websites, and a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio |*



# Resisting tyranny - The message behind Ayat. Khamenei's letter to the West

By: Catherine Shakdam

***We are living hard times indeed when words of peace and reason are no longer heeded but mocked ... Such are the days we find ourselves in! From Britain's calls for war in Syria, to Turkey's mad campaign against Russia, war and bloodshed have driven the narrative, sinking the world into a dynamic of hate and violence, resentment and hatred.***

And yet, just as the world seems to have all but bowed completely to ignorance and bigotry, as those new armies of Yazid are moving once more against the innocent and the helpless, a call was made to soften the darkness.

A call was made so that people would know that hope belongs still to those brave enough to resist oppression; a call was made to humanity so that Man would eventually reclaim the freedom which imperial powers stole from under his feet.

There is still much hope and much strength to be found in those words righteous clerics utter - for they seek not power for their own, but salvation for their flocks. There is courage to be rebuilt in the quiet, and immovable strength of piety - for whoever knows God, fear nothing of Men.

Just as the world, our world, stands to be lost to a cancer which perverse nature emanates from Riyadh, the royal seat of Wahhabism, this devolution which claims itself of Islam when in truth it understands not its beauty, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution extended a hand of friendship.

From Tehran, a bridge was built towards the West, so that its youth could break away from those invisible shackles which were built around their minds.

"Today terrorism is our common enemy," said Imam Khamenei. Indeed, terror is a plague which has claimed too many lives to its sickening ideological hatred - a hate which known can claim immunity from.

And because this terror born of Wah-

habism is one which seeks to destroy faith, order, justice and social order, Ayatollah Khamenei chose to stand not just for his people, or even Islam, but for those who still think him the enemy, for he believes that evil can only be defeated by which is better.

True to the Word, Ayatollah Khamenei spoke compassion and reason where others have spewed poison and ignorance.

True to Islam's teachings Ayatollah Khamenei chose to raise a tide against those armies which feed from destruction and sorrow, walking in those steps the Prophet of Islam and his progeny lit before humanity.

And while Islam's essence is peace, it will always meet tyranny with resolve and immovable determination.

It is Resistance above all Ayatollah Khamenei spoke of and call for as he beseeched the Western youth to open their eyes to their leaders' ambitions and others' manipulations.

"For me, it is unfortunate that such incidents would have to create the framework for a conversation, however the truth is that if painful matters do not create the grounds for finding solutions and mutual consultation, then the damage caused will be multiplied," wrote Ayatollah Khamenei, offering cooperation over damnation.

If terror seeks to destroy it also needs to divide - setting communities against each other to better assert its own rationale of power. And so the Imam offered to build a grand coalition, instead of playing in the hands of the Black Flag army.

"I genuinely believe that it is only you the youth who by learning the lessons of today's hardship, have the power to discover new means for building the future and who can be barriers in the misguided path that has brought the west to its current impasse," he went on, relating hope and the need to begin anew, away from old prejudices and learned political patterns.

Great politicians can forge new directions, but only great leaders can manifest new social and political dynamics.

But if Ayatollah Khamenei conveyed



his desire to oppose terror together, he also underscored the irrationale, and let's say it, hypocrisy of Western powers before those policies, and those friendships they have held in the Middle East.

If Western capitals have long claimed the moral high ground, arguing democracy-building and counter-terrorism to legitimize their military interventions in the Middle East, they have courted those very powers in the region which have tyrannized and oppressed their people. From al-Saud, to al-Thani, al-Khalifa and countless others, Western leaders have stood by despots in the name of profits, selling their political grandstanding to the highest bidders.

And so Ayatollah Khamenei asked: "Shooting down a woman in the middle of the street for the crime of protesting against a soldier who is armed to the teeth- if this is not terrorism, what is? This barbarism, because it is being done by the armed forces of an occupying government, should not be called extremism? Or maybe only because these scenes have been seen repeatedly on television screens for sixty years, they should no longer stir our consciences."

It is here justice the Imam refers to - this obligation we all have to look at events objectively and rationally in order to act justly. It is racism, bias and bigotry Ayatollah Khamenei rejected, as such feelings are what have allowed terror to grow and spread as it has.

Radicalism and terrorism are far from being DAESH's monopoly ... there are other terrors in the world which are just as despicable, just as dark in their expression.

But terror needs not be the end. Terror can be defeated if only we are willing to resist it. There remains the heart of Ayatollah Khamenei's message - a reminder that no matter the odds, standing against injustice is not a choice, but a duty |



# Politics

# French leaders blind following of US suicidal



*Interview by: Parnaz Talebi*

**American political writer believes that Paris terrorist attacks proved that the French leaders are wrong in following the policies of the United States.**

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Diana Johnstone shared her views on the recent terrorist events in Paris, the refugee crisis in Europe and the condition in Middle East. Johnstone, while condemning the EU foreign policies and calling for the European leaders independence from US, urged them to “work with Russia to try to restore international law and respect for national sovereignty.”

◆ **First of all I want to know your idea on the terrorist attacks in Paris. I think this is the first time Europe faces such violent terrorist attacks in such a scale. How do you analyze the event?**

There have been similar attacks in Madrid and London. But these have had wider impact. The fact of killers machine-gunning down people sitting in sidewalk cafés in Paris strongly carries the message that nobody is safe. That is the purpose, I suppose. The government tries to distract from its inability to prevent such acts with patriotic speeches, flags, police and soldiers all over the city.

The short-term reaction is predictably ritualistic and insignificant. The long-term effects are uncertain.

◆ **In your opinion what are the causes of the Paris terrorist attacks? Or better say, how do you see the role of Western states in emergence of terrorism?**

These attacks were inspired by a triumphalist strain of Wahhabi ideology whose growth is primarily the result of years of deceptive and aggressive US policy in the Middle East, in cahoots with Israel and Saudi Arabia. This aggression has been aimed at systematically destroying all modernizing Arab forces in the region. For Israel, this meant weakening support for the Palestinians as well as the prospects of territorial expansion, from the Golan Heights onward. For Saudi Arabia, it meant spreading its ideological domination. For the United States, it meant maintaining control of dollar trading in oil. In each case, dishonest pretexts were used for aggression: responsibility for 9/11, weapons of mass destruction, “dictators”. Now Turkey is involved, evidently hoping to grab pieces of northern Syria.

President Jacques Chirac was the last French president to recognize that these aggressive policies were contrary to French interests when he refused to take part in the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The eloquent speech of Dominique de Villepin expressed what French policy should be. Instead, subsequent French Presidents, frightened by US retaliation, became obedient puppets of Washington.

United States aggression began in 1979 with US support of Osama bin Laden and other Mujahideen to entrap Soviet forces in Afghanistan and thereby weaken the Soviet Union. Then came the destruction of Iraq, the destruction of Libya and now the effort to destroy Syria. With Israel and Saudi Arabia, the United States has incited religious war between Sunnis and Shias. In its effort to transform the Middle East, the US has made use of the very Islamist forces – today labeled DAESH (aka ISIL) – that are most hostile to the West, enabling them to thrive. At the same time, the spectacle of constant Western massacres of Muslims has ironically attracted alienated youth precisely to the cause of those same Islamist forces that have benefited from Western support. The terrorist attacks in Paris are making it clear to more and more people in France that their government’s policy of blindly following the United States has been suicidal. More and more voices are calling for a drastic reversal of foreign policy and a change in alliances. But current government leaders lack the courage to admit their mistakes.

◆ **What’s your idea on the refugee crisis? How do you define it regarding that the asylum seekers are in fact escaping the same fear and threat the EU countries are facing now.**

Refugees have been fleeing to neighboring countries in the Middle East for many years. The timing of the current huge influx of refugees into Europe is due to two factors. One is the destruction of the Libyan State. The other is Turkey’s move to incite refugees in Turkey to head to Europe. Erdogan is using this mass of refugees to try to blackmail Germany. In any case, the fear and threats suffered by people in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan for many years are much worse than those faced so far by EU countries.

◆ **What do you think on relating the attacks to the refugees? And the measures taken after the attacks regarding →**

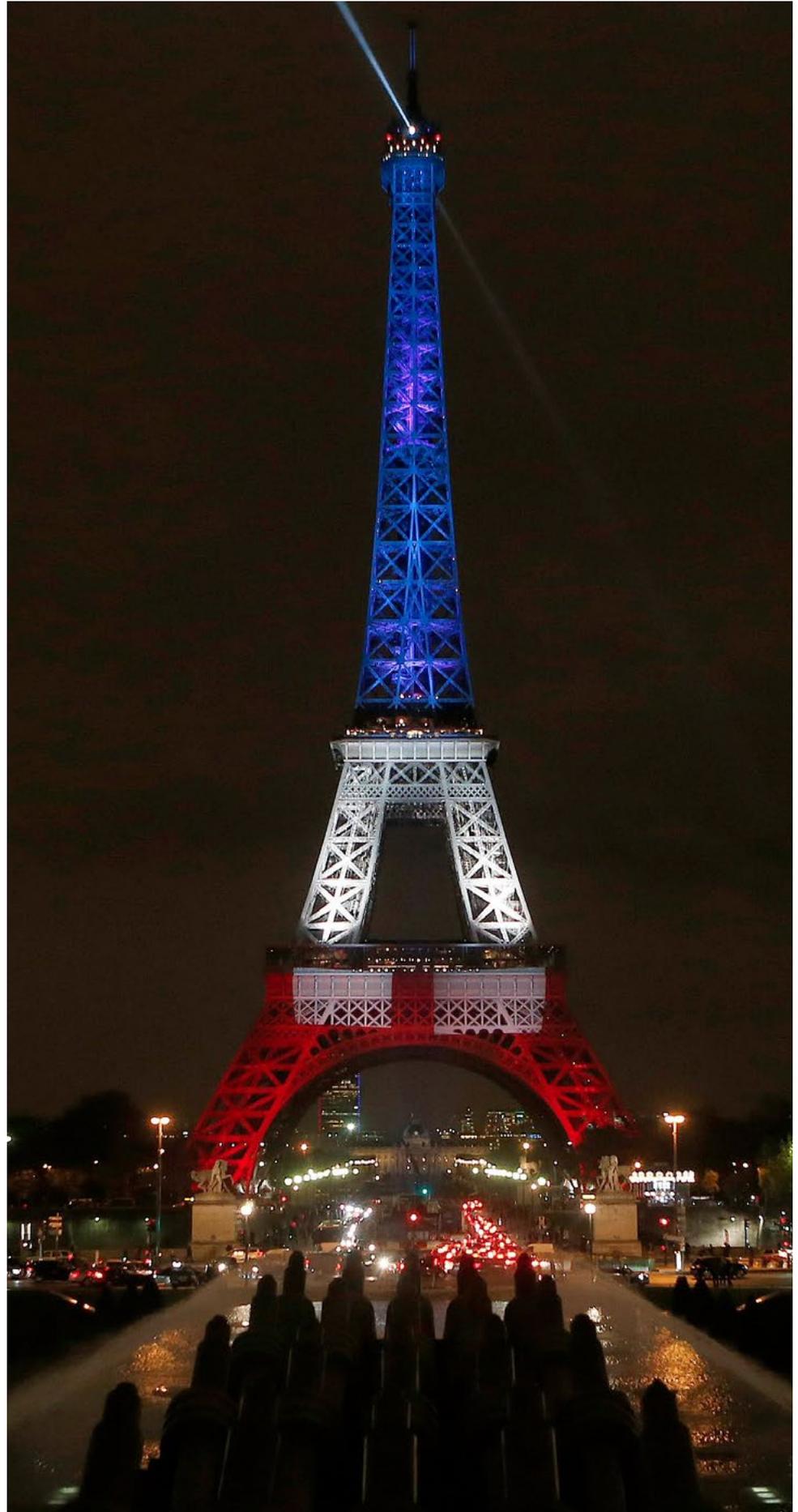
**the refugees?**

The attacks can only increase the opposition of European citizens to the influx of refugees. It is striking that many continental European political leaders, media and business leaders have been speaking out in favor of welcoming refugees, while most ordinary citizens are worried, not only because ISIL agents are certain to be concealed in the mass of refugees, but also because Europe is suffering from serious unemployment. Public hostility to mass immigration was growing even before the attacks. The effort to reassert border controls was inevitable.

**◆ Do you believe there is any resolution to all these tragic events? To the thousands displaced people, the conflicts in ME and the terrorism?**

The situation has become so chaotic that it is hard to see any solution. Such a large number of refugees are not welcomed in Europe and need to be able to return to their homes, and for that there must be peace. Moreover, the war in Syria is no longer a regional catastrophe, but has become part of the United States war against Russia. We are slipping into World War III. This is an insanely dangerous path for Europeans to follow. What European countries need are leaders with the courage to assert independence from US control and work with Russia to try to restore international law and respect for national sovereignty. Even that would not be enough to solve the problems that have been created, but it would be a step in the direction of survival. So far, current political leaders are too submissive to Washington to think clearly and make the necessary changes.

*Diana Johnstone is political commentator and author of "Hillary Clinton: Queen of Chaos", published in the United States and in France |*





*Interview by: Marjohn Sheikhi*

*American author and radio host Stephen Lendman says Putin is becoming a 'world hero' with his engagement in Syria as a major geopolitical shift for the better, while US fosters terrorism as part of 'its dirty game.'*

Russia stepped in with its air campaign against ISIL and other terrorists in Syria on September 30, after a request by the Syrian government; meanwhile, the US and some of its allies have been carrying out airstrikes against what they say are ISIL positions in Syria since last September, without any authorization from Damascus or a UN mandate.

While the Western media is adamant in misrepresenting what Russia is doing in Syria – namely the destruction and dismantling of terrorists' infrastructure such as ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra and the al-Qaeda factions, as confirmed by Syrian authorities – we reached out to American journalist and radio host Stephen Lendman to share his opinions on what really is going on inside the war-ravaged country.

What follows is the text of his interview with Mehr News:

◆ **How do you evaluate the effectiveness of Russia's airstrikes in Syria? How do you compare them with Washington's campaign?**

Putin's intervention in Syria represents a major geopolitical shift - a brilliant move, again showing he's a master chess player, taking the initiative in confronting the scourge of terrorism, what America supports and fosters as part of its dirty game. He's now the preeminent world leader, a peace champion, a geopolitical defender of right over wrong, forthrightly opposing US imperialism, the world's greatest terrorist scourge.

◆ **Why has Russia chosen now to step in with its airstrikes against ISIL in Syria? Why not sooner?**

He has several objectives. Most important is preventing the scourge of ISIL and other Takfiri terrorists from infesting Russia and Central Asia. Better to confront them now than later. He's protecting Syrian sovereignty he respects and is willing to conduct a similar campaign in Iraq if Baghdad requests help, which looks increasingly likely. Key also he's challenging US hegemony, changing the dynamic on the ground and doing it very effectively. I wish he did it much sooner - before Obama's aggression in Libya, ideally before George Bush invaded Iraq.

◆ **Is there any chance that Washington and Moscow would join forces against ISIL? And if not, what are the possible reasons the US-led coalition would not cooperate with Russia's mission in targeting ISIL militants in Syria?**

There is zero chance for Washington and Russia to cooperate because both nations have opposite objectives. Putin wants terrorism eliminated. Obama supports it as part of his imperial strategy, using these elements as proxy foot soldiers.

◆ **Observers say that the US and its allies helped create and train the terrorist organizations to wreak havoc in Muslim countries. What is your take on that?**

Virtually all anti-Assad fighters are terrorists. No so-called "moderates" exist. Terrorists would fade away and disappear if Washington, other Western states and regional ones like Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Jordan stopped supporting them. That's where they're getting their weapons, equipment, funding and training. Absolutely true that CIA operatives and US special forces recruit and train terrorists, instructing them to commit atrocities and other war crimes - using US camps in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar

and Jordan - then deploying these elements cross-border to wage war on Assad.

◆ **What are the possible scenarios for the future of Syria? Can there be any agreements, directly or indirectly, between all parties involved who are leading the campaigns against ISIL in Syria?**

Russian airstrikes have had a devastating effect on ISIL and other terrorists - destroying their weapons, munitions, facilities, command and control centers, as well as their will to fight. Thousands are deserting front line positions, hiding in residential areas or fleeing cross-border to Iraq or Turkey. Washington will do everything possible to continue endless war interminably. Russia is going all-out to defeat terrorism. I'm betting on Putin if he'll stay the course. It could take years, but I'm hoping America will tire of conflict like in Korea and Vietnam, Syria retaining its sovereign independence with considerable help from Russia and maybe China. No one can say for sure what's ahead. Yet Putin made a decisive move intervening in Syria for a just cause. He's becoming a world hero. Why should he quit? If I had his job, I'd fight the good fight for as long as it takes to win. In Putin's case, he has overwhelming public support at home.

*Stephen Lendman received a BA from Harvard University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Supporting progressive causes and organizations, he began writing in summer 2005 on a broad range of issues. Topics regularly addressed include war and peace; social, economic and political equity; and justice for long-suffering peoples globally - notably, victims of America's imperial wars, Occupied Palestinians and Haitians. In early 2007, he began hosting his own radio program. Currently he hosts the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network |*

## *Stephen Lendman:* **Putin 'world hero' by challenging US hegemony in fighting ISIL**

*Abdel-Monem Ahriz:*

# Iran, Algeria actively exchange info on fighting terrorism

*Interview: Javad Heirania /  
Hamidreza Gholamzadeh*

**Algerian ambassador to Tehran has told Mehr News English service Iran and Algeria have taken similar positions in many international issues.**

Abdel-Monem Ahriz, Algerian Ambassador to Tehran answered to Mehr News questions on the occasion of anniversary of Algerian National Day on November 1. The interview has been about Iran-Algeria relations, possible improvements in bilateral trade post-JCPOA, and cooperation in fight against terrorism:

**◆ Algeria and the Islamic Republic of Iran are considered as important countries in North Africa and the Middle East. What are the areas of convergence between the two countries?**

Algeria and Iran have common views on a wide range of international issues and maintain close coordination and dialogue in the bilateral, regional and international forums. Both countries stress the need for international community, to undertake reforms in the United Nations system, stand against the political manipulation of issues related to the human rights, promote an equilibrium between the 3 pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the urgency of establishing Middle East WMD-free zone, refuse the external interference in internal affairs and military interventions, advocate the resolution of internal and external disputes through dialogue and peaceful means, supported the fight of Palestinian people and call for a global strategy to combat terrorism and all forms of extremism. On the economic level, the two countries have a common goal to stabilize the price of oil in the international market and work together inside OPEC to concretize this objective.

**◆ How could Iran and Algeria cooperate on issues including the crises in Syria, Yemen and Libya?**

Iran and Algeria are important countries



in their respective region. Through the mechanism of political consultations, the high officials of the two countries have regular consultations on regional issues, such as the situation in Yemen, Syria and Libya. Throughout these consultations a common vision emerges about the rejecting of the external interference in internal affairs of these countries and the military interventions and the necessity of resolution of these crises through dialogue and peaceful means. Our countries are very active in advocating and researching a political solution to these dramatic issues.

**◆ ISIL presence in North Africa seems to be growing which is a threat to countries in that region. How can Iran and Algeria work together to fight ISIL and other terrorist groups?**

Terrorist groups' new strategy of occupying lands and territories represents a serious challenge to cohesion, stability and security in our region and all over the world. The fighting against the proliferation of terrorist groups and against the various expressions of violent extremism required the presence of a strong state, based on the strength of law, and on a coherent international cooperation. In this regard Iran and Algeria have already been working together through exchange of information, experience and expertise

to tackle this threat. They are also coordinating their efforts, in international fora, aiming to forge a holistic and methodic global strategy of fighting terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization.

**◆ What opportunities does Iran's nuclear deal provide for expansion of ties between Iran and Algeria? How does the deal address opportunities to further expand relations between Iran and Algeria?**

As you know, Algeria has taken a principled stance in international fora to support the Iranian legitimate rights enshrined in NPT. Algeria welcomed the nuclear deal between Iran and the Group 5+1 which it considered as a major victory for Iranian diplomacy and a great achievement of Iranian people. The international sanctions, above all, those related to financial restrictions, have prevented Algerian and Iranian businessmen from extending their partnership, and their removal will surely permit a qualitative and quantitative expansion of our economic relations.

**◆ In his meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif on last September, Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal urged activation of new economic grounds for cooperation between Iran and Algeria. What are those**

### of cooperation?

As M. Javad Zarif is always saying, Iran and Algeria don't set ceiling or limit for cooperation between them, so all areas of common interest can be integrated in the scoop of bilateral cooperation. On the economic level, we can name energy, mining, industry and services as the main fields where a strong mutual interest is expressed by Algerian and Iranian businessmen.

The second bilateral commission, which will take place in Algiers, in mid-December of this year, under the co-chairmanship of Iranian First Vice-president Mr. Ishaq Jahangiri and Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal, provide an excellent opportunity to build renewed momentum and give new impetus to the bilateral relations.

### ◆ Regarding the cultural week underway in Tehran, what potentials of cultural cooperation do you see between the two nations? What are your plans for boosting such ties?

Let me fist congratulate Iran for the resounding and overwhelming success of its cultural week held in Algerian cities of Constantine and Algiers, from 9 to 13 October 2015. The Algerian public was very impressed by the excellent performance of Iranian artists and highly enjoyed the refinement of Iranian culture.

The Algerian Embassy, in the framework of celebrating of the 61st anniversary of the Glorious War of Liberation, took the initiative to organize, in Milad Tower, from 27 to 30 October 2015, cultural days aiming to introduce Algerian culture, history, gastronomy, handicraft, and touristic potentialities to the Iranian public.

These two events is a proof of the existing excellent cultural exchanges between our two countries, which can be further perfected and diversified. I think that the organization of cultural weeks alternatively must be more regular and we have also to privilege direct contacts between our peoples and artists through our respective cultural institutions. Algeria will actively participate in the festivities of "Mashhad Capital of the Islamic Culture" scheduled in 2017, which offer a great opportunity to show the rich Algerian heritage to Iranian public |



***With the hard-pressing issue of ISIL developing terrorist networks in France, the question still lingers on: how French intelligence apparatus failed to see such networks and remained passive.***

The French media have experimented with analysis of security situation in the wake of chain terrorist attacks and explosions in Paris last Friday (November 13); however, the same hard-pressing questions have not been duly formulated by the French media; nor it have been responded by the French authorities; the issue of 'making question' suffers a systematic flaw, and with it a response is desperately needed.

A work division has taken place: the media are busy with the drawing precise outline of the crisis as it happened; intelligence machinery on the other hand, is doing its own job of post-mortem management of the situation; this has created a pandemonium of public opinion which has not yet found a response to its legitimate concerns, on rise in daily basis.

Some media, mainstream and otherwise, wage a laudable attempt to address these concerns in a more superficial way than in a systematically committed manner, which belies its own well-organized and dictated nature as well; for example, France Presse quotes intelligence observers that "ISIL has shown enjoying of a complex network of mercenaries beyond its native lands now ruling in the Middle East during its recent Paris attacks, networks which are well-organized and equipped to prepare strong terrorist onslaught in mainland Europe."

The question is that when, from where, and how ISIL developed such a complex network of loyal extremists inside France; from this premise, it follows that why French intelligence apparatus systematically failed in detecting the 'networks of terror' which had been taking place under their own control; networking does need round characters and complex expert guys, and is not an amateur undertaking.

If the answer is no, so why the suspects or at least, potential suspects had been freely working in networking and successfully circumvented French intelligence machinery?

What is partially easy for a conjecture is that strong networking which evades native intelligence arrangements in place in France is a demanding task, as Paris attacks clearly indicated, it was professional and complex in choosing methods in achieving objectives; on the end of this chain are suicide bombers and or shooters, which act as mere pawns of the network. The fact that ISIL did establish the network under the eyes of French intelligence and with their tacit agreement is far from being doubted; this is an area where issue rises why French intelligence system failed to keep these networks under their surveillance.

Here the hypothesis comes to explain dark parts of the scene: that ISIL had infiltrated the intelligence system or at least had their consent in freely operating; if the former seems improbable, the latter is not an issue which could be easily ignored or denied; what happened in Paris in Friday evening, was a product of a mid-range planning and coordination after shootings which killed the Charlie Hebdo staff over prophet cartoons case. Here 'randomness' and 'probability' fail to stand as explaining factors; in post-disaster response and management, a sense of intentionality and contrivance shows itself to inquiring eyes; put in other words, Paris attacks should not be taken as a simple plan with obvious components; French government should be taken responsible for the terrorist acts more than any other suspects; this is an issue which would prove quite unpalatable for the French intelligence officials as well. As times go by, the public opinion in France will push questions forward in search of a viable answer.

**Mohammad Ghaderi** is a political and international relations analyst |

# Iran-France ties in course of time

By: Lachin Rezaian

**French journalist said the relations between Iran and France has gone through many ups and down and excessive indulgence of French politicians towards Iran, during Iran-Iraq war in particular, is undeniable.**

“Prior to the nuclear deal, Paris assumed Iran as part of the problem not the solution but now, France describes Iran as a definitive solution to the crisis in the region,” Le Figaro reporter and analyst Georges Malbrunot said.

Malbrunot addressed Tehran-Paris relations and regional issues in the third day of 21st edition of Press and News Agencies Exhibition.

Taking part in the foreign media pavilion, Malbrunot said the recent nuclear deal between Iran and the 5+1, after implementation in the future, will change Iran’s relations with the European countries and will open a new chapter in bilateral cooperation with EU.

He said the relations between Iran and France has gone through many ups and down and underlined the excessive indulgence of French politicians towards Iran, during Iran-Iraq war in particular.

Pointing to the nuclear issue, Iran’s support for Hezbollah and human rights issues as the main obstacles on the way of relations between the two countries, he expressed the hope over the improvement of ties in the shadow of nuclear deal.

He stressed the deal could lead to Iran-Europe cooperation in the field of regional issues, such as the fight against terrorism.

Describing the causes of France’s opposition against Iran’s nuclear program, Malbrunot referred to Israel’s interests, the interests of France’s Arab allies and economic cooperation with them.

In addition to the nuclear program, he said the regional



issues including Yemen and Syrian crises as the reasons of conflict between Iran, Europe and Arab countries, reiterating that to conclude the agreement we have to resolve our differences on the regional issues.

“Relations between France and Saudi Arabia is under question because many of Riyadh’s economic promises have not been fulfilled,” Malbrunot said adding that some French politicians have concluded to replace the Iranian market, as a new market with great potentials, with Arab countries’, including the Saudi Arabia.

He pointed to Syria as one of the differences not only between Iran and France but also between the European countries. “France believes Syrian President Bashar al-Assad must leave the country, but more localized than other European countries, insists for a timeframe to Assad’s removal from power.

Pointing to Iran’s different position regarding the issue, he said Iran believes the region strongly needs Assad to get rid of the terrorist and extremist groups.

The French reporter, however, underlined the softening of France’s position towards Syria and Iran’s presence in resolving the country’s crisis. “Prior to the nuclear deal, Paris assumed Iran as a part of the problem not the solution but now, France describes Iran as a definitive solution to the crisis in Damascus.

Pointing to France’s military presence in the Middle East, Le Figaro’s journalist said Paris was less involved in attacks against ISIL positions since September in Iraq, however, it refused to be present in Syria declaring its position as “Neither ISIL Nor Bashar.”

“President of France François Hollande decided to participate in Syria, after Moscow military launched its air strikes against ISIL in Syria,” he underlined.

Describing the official stance on his country towards Syrian issue, he said France in the end would prevent the return of Frenchmen who are now in Iraq and Syria. “This indicates that Paris has decided to look more realistically to the Syrian issue,” he said.

The French analyst cited the Vienna talks as a noteworthy events which covered the issues including maintaining Syria’s political and military structure, preserving the territorial integrity of Syria and holding elections with the participation of Syrian refugees.

He acknowledged that France differ with many European countries including Germany and Spain that has put priority in the fight against extremism.

Underlining that Paris’s stance on Yemen is the same as Riyadh’s, Malbrunot said, however, France admits that Riyadh has gone too far regarding the issue and is fighting inconclu-

sive wars which even led to the advancement of al-Qaeda in the area.

Answering the question of Mehr News reporter on the consequences of Iran-EU relations in the region, Georges Malbrunot said, “Iran-EU relation is not considered a threat to the regional countries. Some of the countries are fearful about the money which is going to return to Iran after sanctions removal. They say the money will be devoted to the Hezbollah and ‘Shia militia’ in Iraq. I think it is over-estimated, Iran will spend the money for improving its economy which needs new investments and new boom.”

He underlined that the countries which consider Iran’s deal with the world a threat and do not support its relations with EU, “they are afraid of Iran, they worry about their own interests.”

“Having a good relations with Iran is better than a bad one. When you hold good relations with a country you can talk to your partner and convince them not to do or do something,” Malbrunot added.

French journalist reiterated that Iran can play a major role in boosting relations between Europe and the regional countries. “Iran has strong relations with Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and many other countries, therefore, the country can play a positive role in helping European countries or regional countries to make good connections in all-out fields.”

On implementation of JCPOA, he said Iran has proved sincerity and has been so far committed to its obligations. “This is also true about the other side, he said, EU has been committed to its obligations.”

“Iranian lawmakers passed the details of JCPOA implementation bill supporting a nuclear deal with the world. It is a positive step for Iran to prove commitment to the obligations in JCPOA,” he added |

# Asia Pacific: Response to Climate Change

By: Dr. Shamshad Akhtar

**UN under-Secy. Gen. and Executive Secretary of ESCAP in an article with regards to COP21 summit in Paris has urged measures addressing climate change.**

Global leaders are gathered in Paris for the COP21 climate summit. Given Asia-Pacific's size and its contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, its voice and commitment are critical to achieving a comprehensive agreement on climate change. Many Asia Pacific countries are developing and must focus on achieving sustained economic growth and development. Of the 49 regional members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 43 have a light climate footprint, contributing only 10 per cent to global emissions. For these countries, notably the least developed countries, Pacific islands and low-lying states, vulnerability to climate-related natural disasters will grow with climate change. At the other extreme, the region is home to six of the top 10 emitters in the world - China, India, Russia, Japan, Indonesia and Iran - which account for about 43 per cent of global emissions. Of these top six Asian emitters, fossil fuel-based energy is responsible for about 80 per cent of their collective emissions, with emissions from industrial processes, agriculture and waste playing a lesser role. Mitigating the emissions of these countries requires multiple actions, key among which is a switch from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources.

Of the 183 countries that have submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 43 are from the Asia-Pacific region. Countries across the region have indicated both conditional and unconditional reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. These include economy-wide emissions targets or deviation from a business as usual (BAU) scenario to an intensity targets of emissions per unit of GDP. Many INDCs, particularly those from the developing countries, include an overall rise in emissions by 2030.



While this is remarkable in its own right, they still leave a significant gap between the INDCs pledged and the cuts required to keep the temperature increase to below two degrees Celsius warming limit. This gap is close to 16 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> reductions per annum by 2030, roughly equal to the current emissions of China, India, and Russia combined. The only way we can bridge this gap is if we collectively treat the INDCs announced as the floor to be raised by enabling countries to adopt and implement additional measures needed with technical, financial and capacity support.

Despite the present gap between the INDCs and the necessary emission reductions, progress is underway in our region. This not only sets specific economies on course for a low carbon future, but will also alter the global dynamics. China's INDC, for instance, targets emissions to peak by 2030 at the latest, and for emissions intensity of GDP to decline by 60 to 65 per cent. Progress in energy efficiency, switching to gas and the development of hydro, wind and solar energy has now begun to show results, with China's coal consumption having peaked in 2013. India proposes to reduce emissions per unit of GDP by 33 to 35 per cent, and to ensure that 40 per cent of its power generation capacity is from non-fossil sources by 2030. In support of this objective, India plans to install 60 gigawatts of wind power and 100 gigawatts of solar power capacity by 2022, a six-fold increase over the current capacity.

Changes in the energy generation mix, efficiency and conservation of energy use and developing carbon sinks through reforestation and soil carbon will be important strategies to stabilize

emissions in the Asia-Pacific region. There has been some progress on all these fronts in our region, but more needs to be done. With advanced energy efficiency, the region could save 35 per cent of its energy consumption against business as usual by 2035.

As the region's urban population is expected to reach 3.2 billion by 2050, there is an opportunity to pioneer low carbon cities with energy efficient buildings, innovative urban planning and efficient transportation systems. There is also a need to switch from coal to renewables and to promote cleaner coal technologies, as coal still accounts for 55 per cent of electricity generation in the Asia-Pacific. In adopting clean energy alternatives countries are also addressing the scourge of air pollution, which has emerged as a grim reality for many city dwellers across the region. While non-hydro renewables such as wind and solar currently contribute less than 2 per cent of regional electricity generation, growth has been rapid from a small base. The expected shift to renewables will be a net benefit for Asian economies. It will reduce dependence on imported fuels as the region is a net energy importer, enhance energy security and improve the balance of payments. To harness a low carbon future, the region needs to further tap its tax potential, which could be raised by 5 per cent of GDP. This would potentially mobilize \$1.5 trillion while private sector savings in the region are close to \$6 trillion.

The success of the COP21 climate summit is critical for all of us as climate change does not respect boundaries and no one can escape its effects. Country submissions for emission reduction are good starting point but remain non-binding targets. The steep growth in energy demand in the Asia-Pacific means more will need to be done to increase the overall penetration of renewable energy in the coming decades, with collective and concerted actions critical to addressing the problem at its source. The future of our region and indeed of our planet hinges on the Asia-Pacific region mobilizing its skills and resources to find enduring solutions |



# Economy

# Refugee Bank to pay humanitarian aid to refugees

*Interview by Mohammad Hossein Azari*

**A Canadian not-for-profit, Digital Finance Institute, is planning to launch a pilot project dubbed as 'Refugee Bank' in Iran with Tehran-based payment company SanaPay to bring humanitarian aid payments to refugees.**

The banking issues for refugees and migrants have always been a big concern because with no official ID, they are excluded from society and from access to banks. Various solutions offered so far by several banking and financial institutions have suffered from certain shortcomings like stringent identity and anti-money laundering regulations in place and the vouchers given to refugees to exchange with merchants for supplies are expensive and open to abuse not to mention that they are only usable by those refugees who stay in camps.

The Digital Finance Institute, a Canadian not-for-profit, has entered into the first arrangement with an Iranian firm and as the first part of the arrangement is joining forces with SanaPay (Sana Pardakht) to solve financial inclusion for the refugee crisis.

In an interview with Mehr News, Christine Duhaime, a counter-terrorist financing and financial regulatory lawyer and the founder of the Digital Finance Institute, answers the questions on the issue:

## ◆ Where did the impetus come from to initiate the Refugee Bank?

The idea for a refugee bank (and a project to improve financial services for refugees) came from me! I'm a financial regulatory lawyer in Canada with a specialty in counter-terrorist financing, sanctions and anti-money laundering law. As a counter-terrorist financing lawyer, I was witnessing the increase in terrorist financing that was fueling the rise of terrorist groups and resulting in an increase in terrorism in Syria and Iraq. The escalation of terrorism in Syria and Iraq from ISIL caused millions of people to flee to safer countries. Yet, they faced a problem in that they left with nothing and without access to their bank accounts and financing or ability to make payments.

On the other hand, non-governmental



aid organizations that provide humanitarian aid to refugees and internally displaced persons were having more and more problems getting money to people in need of aid. One of the reasons they were having increased problems was because of sanctions in place, even though sanctions do not generally apply to humanitarian aid. So it was the convergence of those problems -- terrorism, increase in refugees who are financially excluded without valid ID, and problems with NGOs getting money to them safely that made me realize that something needed to be done on the banking side, by banking executives and experts, to provide financial services to improve refugee payments.

At first we were focused on just improving refugee payments, except that it requires as much investment and infrastructure as setting up a bank so we graduated to the idea of a Refugee Bank. No one has ever thought of a Refugee Bank before so we are the first ones in the world to focus just on refugee financing but when you think of it, some of our most clever people in the world come from refugee or migration situations such as Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple who was the son of a migrant from Syria. Iran has its own famous refugee from Afghanistan, Fereshteh Forough, who lives in New York City now but who set up an innovation lab in Afghanistan to teach girls how to In-

ternet coding.

Many children of refugees are sent to work because the families do not have enough money to pay for rent and food and water, and school expenses. If we can improve the efficiency of the payments from NGOs and the UN, then more money goes to refugees in need, we can save lives and ensure more children are educated. Just by improving financing, we save lives. It's pretty powerful. And providing more funding for refugees helps with international security in the whole region.

When we started a year ago, at first, people thought the idea of a refugee bank and refugee pay was inconceivable but there are 60 million refugees in the world - they all need financial services. No one will bank them but if we do, we become the biggest bank in the world with 60 million clients. Economically, it makes sense.

## ◆ What then brought your institute and the Iranian institute together?

I was introduced to Iran because the Institute is the only think tank in the world that deals with financial technology (Fin-Tech), both regulation, law and the social aspects which is financial inclusion. We are different that most think tanks because our mandate requires that we have a charitable aspect to our activities and we have a strong social ethic. Our partner in Iran was looking for a way to help Iran →

lead in FinTech and asked us to assist. Iran has the capacity to be a global leader in FinTech overnight. That's because it has a large population of young people who are highly educated and motivated, compared to other regions. And not only that, Iranians are very strong in technology and science, the two areas where FinTech specialties are key.

Another reason Iran can lead in FinTech is because as its banks modernize to join the global financial system, it does not have to adopt expensive, out-dated banking legacy systems that Western and European consultants and companies will try to sell to Iranian banks - instead it can invest in modern FinTech that does the same thing and save billions of dollars using Iranian technology and brains with Canadian FinTech expertise on digital banking, for example. So we see Iran in banking and FinTech as huge potential leaders.

I also wanted to help re-build relations between Canada and Iran and being the first Canadian organization in Iran was an important milestone for us. It's hard for Canadians to visit Iran because of the visa restrictions but normal Canadians want to be able to visit Iran and to re-build relationships.

◆ **Who are the target refugees in your project? Will the bank provide services only to refugees in Iran and Canada?**

The target refugees are those who are centered in the Middle East and who migrated to Europe. It will provide payment and banking services to refugees all over the Middle East and the EU and will allow non-refugees around the world to send money and payments to their family members who may be refugees. So it will work both ways in terms of financial flows.

Iran has 1 million refugees. Canada has almost none. Compared to Iran, Canada is not very hospitable with respect to refugees but I am hopeful that things will change and with the Refugee Bank, we can help Canadians make a difference with refugees in a unique way.

◆ **Will the bank offer services to those refugees who reside out of refugee camps as well?**

Yes, the idea is that it will be a digital (online) bank with payments services that will provide services to refugees and to non-refugees who want to send money to refugees. One of the reasons we like the idea of setting up in Iran is that we can help launch Iran's first digital bank in a location where there are real refugees living who

can benefit from it. Iran is not only a safe and stable banking jurisdiction in which to operate but it has the rule of law which is important for finance. We felt that it was important to be in close proximity to the conflict zones to help refugees the most but were looking for a stable economy to operate in.

◆ **Are there any other previous experiences of such initiative particularly in European countries who are now facing the challenge of migrants?**

No, we are the first organization to even look at financial inclusion and refugees and are the only ones who have ever contemplated or put into operation a refugee payments or refugee bank concept.

◆ **Don't you believe that providing banking services and other facilities would encourage more people to embark on illegal immigration?**

We do not support any illegal activity, including immigration that is based on false pretenses or with falsified identity. One of the projects with the bank that we are instituting is to create ID using finger vein technology as we on-board clients so that we have biometric ID on file for all refugee clients, as much as is practical. Eventually, that will help with ID issues that are key in the migration issues facing the EU at the moment. As an anti-money laundering specialist, obviously, I will use my anti-money laundering expertise to ensure we comply with international law on client ID and Know Your Client rules as we take on clients as well.

◆ **What do you think are the prospects of Refugee Bank in 10 years?**

Our vision is that it be a permanent bank that meets the goals of its clients. There will always be refugees in the world and they will always need financial services. The area of refugee services is growing by leaps and bounds and no one in the private sector is in charge of making sure those services are rendered efficiently and effectively. We had a FinTech conference on Kish Island and one of the thoughts we all had driving around the beauty of Kish was how much Kish Island and Tehran would be perfect as refugee finance hubs where all of the refugee finance could be centralized in Iran for every NGO. For example, the UN and every NGO issues different ATM cards for hundreds of different programs - it's inefficient because they use many companies all over the

world from Africa to Greece and re-invent the wheel each time there is a conflict or crisis situation. A company we're associated with is putting into place a card distribution system in Iran for payments - and the idea is that we would connect that to refugee pay and see if we can help Iran become a refugee finance hub with Canada by having operations in both countries to take advantage of the talent and know-how of technology experts in Tehran and Vancouver, which has a large population of Iranians.

◆ **When are you expecting the project to be implemented?**

2016 and its implementation is dependent upon securing more funding to launch the refugee payments side. We would welcome Iranian companies or banks that want to support our refugee bank.

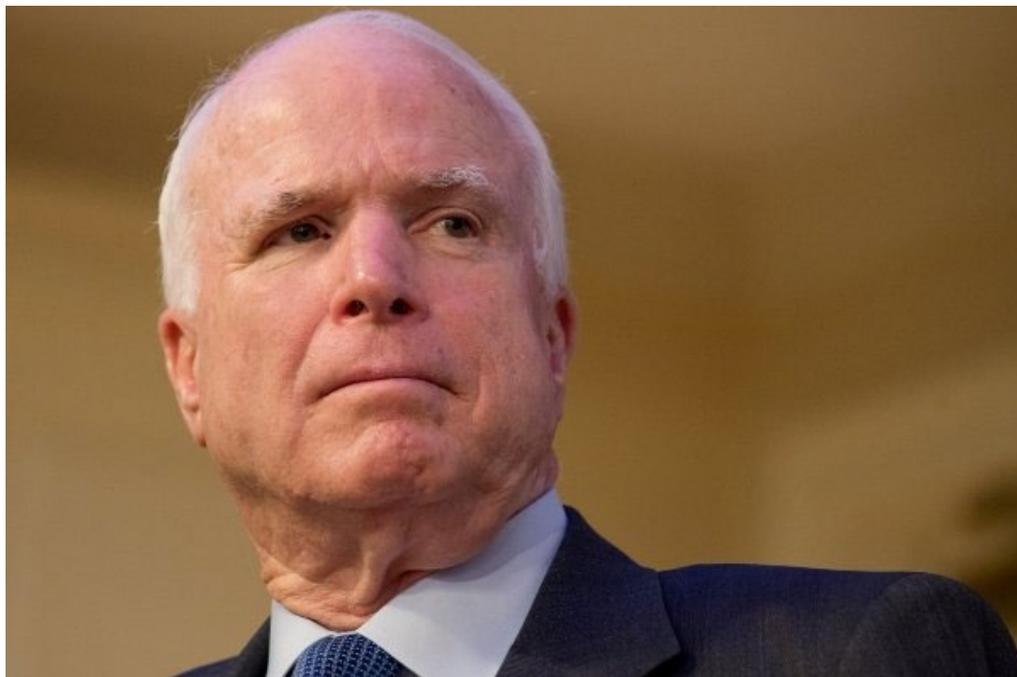
◆ **After the presentation of the idea to at SWIFT's Sibos 2015 Conference, how was it received by global bankers attending the Conference?**

It was very well received and was, from my understanding, one of the best attended sessions of the Conference. Part of the benefit of our refugee bank project for Iran is that, indirectly, it is giving people and bankers comfort about doing business in Iran, especially that we have been to Iran a few times now for FinTech gives them reassurance when we talk about the project because we've been to Iran, talked to Iranians and were able to come back with such positive feedback. Most people do not know that Iran, for example, has 1 million refugees. In fact, it has the 5th largest population of refugees in the world and unlike other countries in the Middle East, Iranians support and educate refugees without the help of hundreds of aid organizations and the help of other countries. You are a country that truly supports refugees in a socially responsible way that most people in the West aren't aware of but are impressed to learn. Having a payments project that involves Iran lets us show the little bit of Iran that we know to the West from our visits to Iran.

*Christine Duhaime, is the Executive Director of the Digital Finance Institute and its co-founder. She is responsible for setting policy direction, fundraising and building partnerships with the private and public sector for digital finance goals and initiatives. She drives the regulatory reform, financial inclusion and women in FinTech policy initiatives for the Institute |*

*Senator McCain to Mehr News:*

## China would dominate 'Pacific' should US fail to compete



*Interview by Javad Heirania*

**Senator John McCain has told Mehr News International Service TPP will 'strengthen important security relationships' in the Pacific.**

Javad Heirannia of Mehr News International Correspondent asked John McCain, US senator, Republican from Arizona, in a brief interview about Transpacific Partnership trade deal. Mr. McCain said he actively supported the deal, as he saw it lifting important trade barriers and which would help create jobs and bring prosperity to the US.

On possible role of China, Mr. McCain believed that the deal did create a strong counterweight to Chinese' 'protectionist policies.' However, Mr. McCain did not provide any response whether China would seek

retaliatory measures against TPP, and possible US countermeasures should China act in response to TPP:

**◆The United States and 11 countries, after 5 years of intensive negotiations, have just reached a consensus over Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal. Some are of the opinion that one of the main objectives behind the newly signed deal is to contain China. How do you think about it?**

As you may know, the TPP is a proposed free trade agreement between the United States and eleven Pacific nations including Australia, Vietnam, Japan, Singapore, and New Zealand. Negotiations were completed on this landmark agreement on October 5, 2015.

I strongly support reducing barriers to trade, which I see as an opportunity for

the American workforce. The global economy is here to stay, and we limit our potential by trying to wall ourselves off to foreign competition. In fact, competition makes us stronger; we can compete and win, as we always have, or we can be left behind. Lowering trade barriers plays an essential role in creating more and better jobs, and higher wages. Free trade also helps to make goods more affordable for low and middle income consumers. For all of these reasons, I am a strong supporter of the TPP and am eager to see it ratified by the Congress.

**◆Is it possible for Russia and China to join the deal?**

I further support the TPP because it is more than just a trade agreement. It is a strategic agreement between the United States

and many countries in the Asia-Pacific region that are integral to the continuing security and prosperity of the United States. Ratifying a high-quality TPP sends an important signal to both our allies and adversaries that the United States remains a strong, committed player in Asia. It will strengthen vitally important security relationships with countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Australia, and provide a strategic counterweight to China, whose protectionist policies will undoubtedly dominate if America fails to compete.

I am aware that some people are concerned about President Obama's request for TPA, also known as fast-track authority, as a way to facilitate passage of the TPP and other trade agreements. However, by granting TPA to the President, the Congress exercises influence on the President, sets parameters for a trade negotiation, and establishes objectives that must be met in a final agreement. I believe TPA was a critical authority that enabled the President to conclude the TPP negotiations in a transparent and accountable manner.

Now that negotiations have concluded, Congress will thoroughly review the final agreement to ensure that the TPP best achieves our economic priorities. While there will likely be months of final drafting and debate to ensure high standards, I look forward to the final conclusion of a strong TPP agreement that reduces trade barriers, opens new markets, promotes made-in-America exports, and keeps American companies competitive in one of the most economically vibrant and fastest-growing regions in the world |



# Tehran holds the Third GECF Summit

**A landmark summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) opened in the Iranian capital Tehran on 23 November with the participation of the heads of nine member states.**

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani opened the third summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) at the Summit Conference Hall in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on 23 November.

Presidents of Iran, Russia, Venezuela, Iraq, Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Turkmenistan as well as the Algerian prime minister were the key participants.

President Rouhani addressed the summit in the opening ceremony where he said that the GECF was definitely the most important event in energy and gas industry; "the summit seeks to find mechanisms to provide support to its member states and help them in discovering, gas production, coordination of policies in energy consumption of the world, and boosting the status of the member states," Rouhani told the meeting.

"An unsustainable use of the fossil fuels poses grave issues of the environment pollution; any use of this energy should be sustainable. During the Sustainable

Development Summit held in New York City where it approved the 17 proposed Sustainable Development Goals, energy was seen as a serious international challenge in the future to come," Mr. Rouhani asserted. "Natural gas, as a clean energy and with ample reservoirs to be extracted in the next decades will contribute the lion's share to world energy consumption; the relative economic and environmental advantage, and technical ease with extraction has set it as topping the list of available fuels."

"Predictably, natural gas will be consumed more and more in upcoming decades; all countries, especially developing countries, believe that natural gas would provide a reliable bridge for a desirable transition from the era of fossil fuels to a different era where renewable energies contribute more to the total consumption," he addressed the meeting. "Energy markets are inherently dynamic and gas markets are no exception to this rule; this dynamism has been fed by technological advances and innovations in gas supply and diversity of gas sources such as conventional gas, shale gas, and alternative fuels, with changes in demand side such as innovations in the way gas is used in electricity generation, transportation, and chemical in-

dustries contributing as well," he added, which he believed was the major driving force behind the necessity of adopting a broader vista on the issue by the GECF, to draw their future roadmap to improve their role in providing the world with energy security.

Rouhani also believed that well-organized cooperation based on mutual understanding by GECF member states about regional gas markets provided the foundations of long-term constructive interaction, and would bring about optimized using of limited energy resources in a more economic manner; "in an environment of interaction of countries with shared direction and interests which was founded by member states 15 years ago, single country's interests are not necessarily to the expense of other member states; rather, collective interest could be met through a unified strategy and dividing the benefits among member states," Rouhani emphasized.

Rouhani then turned to Iran's context; "with rapid developments in gas production in Iranian fields in past two years, exports of gas to our neighbors have been possible through pipelines and LNG as well; the government encourages international investments in Iranian oil and gas as providing attrac-

tions to potential investors," he told the meeting. He also congratulated joining of a new member to GECF, Republic of Azerbaijan as the 19th member of the organization.

At the end of the third summit of Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF), Iran's Hassan Rouhani met and talked with the Russian President Vladimir Putin before attending a press conference during which the two sides expressed their positions with regard to the regional issues.

Rouhani deemed the nuclear issue as one of the common grounds between the two countries adding "for many years, Iran and Russia have had good relations in the field of nuclear energy and today these relations will develop."

"We have also decided to expand the already-existing cooperation on regional issues," Rouhani noted.

The Russian President Vladimir Putin, for his part, said the summit of Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) made it possible to discuss gas issues with the participating countries as well as to negotiate various topics with Iranians.

"Good talks were conducted with ministers, heads of key organizations and institutes after the discussions with Iran's Leader," he added.

Referring to the talks with senior Iranian officials, the Russian president said "various aspects of bilateral relations were discussed at the meetings including economy as well as the fight against terrorism."

He reiterated that some documents were signed between the two countries which can lead to further development



of existing relations.

Putin stressed the intentions to speed up the development of economic cooperation between Russia and Iran asserting "we plan to make a list of goods required by both sides and further to use national currencies in payments between the two countries."

Putin noted the possibility of creating a trade area between the two sides as yet another issue raised at the meeting with Iran's Rouhani and said the same topic will go through further investigation in the future.

"We discussed Russia's plan to allocate a credit line worth five billion dollars to Iran as well," maintained Putin adding "25 priority projects in various fields particularly in energy, construction, manufacturing of marine terminals as well as communications will be carried out by Iran and Russia."

The Russian president stressed that bilateral cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear energy will continue;

"currently, the construction of Bushehr nuclear power plant has been accomplished and we intend to begin phases two and three of the project," he underlined.

"We are planning to design a road map for the Iranian nuclear issue and will help with the conversion of enriched uranium and the production of stable isotopes," reiterated Putin.

On the same day, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree lifting the ban on supplying Iran with uranium enrichment equipment. Under the Kremlin decree published on Monday, in addition to the lifting the ban on supplying Iran with uranium enrichment equipment, technology and related materials, the two countries will extend cooperation on implementing various joint nuclear projects.

The decree which is signed after Tehran struck a deal with the 5+1 group of countries on its nuclear program in July, also includes supporting Iranian efforts to export enriched uranium in exchange for raw uranium supplies as well as agreements on the modernization of Arak heavy water reactor.

GECF is currently comprised of 18 member countries, including 12 main and 6 observer members.

Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela are the forum's main members. Kazakhstan, Iraq, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman and Peru are observer members of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum.

Previous GECF summits were held in Qatar in 2011 and in Moscow in 2013 |





# Culture

# 'Oblivion Season a film for all seasons'

Interview by Pegah Hajian

*Iranian film Oblivion Season, directed and produced by Abbas Rafei has attended several renowned international film festivals around the world garnering several accolades and awards.*

Winning the Gold Bison Award for Best Feature in the 9th Buffalo International Film Festival (BIFF), held from 15-18 October in Buffalo, New York, was its latest achievement.

The Iranian flick has also received several awards at other international festivals including the third Annual Rahway International Film Festival in New Jersey, Hudson Festival in New York, the 39th Montreal World Film Festival, Afghanistan International Women Film Festival as well as Brasov International Film Festival (BRIFF) held in Romania. The Universal Film Festival in US presented its Best Film Award to it while its actress Sareh Bayat bagged the event's Best Actress Award.

The movie narrates the story of an Iranian woman, who starts a new life by marrying her loved one, but her dark past chases her and she faces troubles even though she is supported by her husband.

The following is an exclusive interview of Mehr News with the Associate Director of Buffalo International Film Festival Bob Lingle on the occasion of the awards and wrapping up of the event:

◆ **How many films the Buffalo International Film Festival received this year and which countries participated?**

We received over 200 submissions, of those, we chose over 20 feature films and nearly 40 short films to screen at BIFF. Our final selections included films from the US, Iran, Canada, Sweden, France, Turkey, Australia, Serbia, Russia, UK, Norway, Cuba, and Switzerland.

◆ **Does the festival have any specific policies in choosing the films?**

Our policy above all is the overall quality of submissions we receive with an emphasis on screening films that have not



been previously available within our region. Once a film is recommended by our screening committee we make every effort to find a place for it on our schedule.

◆ **Who were the jury members and how the films were picked up?**

Our jury consisted of academics, intellectuals and tastemakers (thought-leaders) in the Buffalo, New York area - while our screening committee and programming committee consists of volunteers including filmmakers, students and cinephiles led by Festival Programmer John J. Fink (a filmmaker and film critic).

More notable jurors were Buffalo Mayor, Byron Brown and recently named Director of Media Arts for the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA), Jax Deluca.

◆ **How many Iranian works were submitted?**

Totally four works were submitted; Oblivion Season and three other short films, namely:

- I You We, directed by Ali Erfan Farhadi which is about a conflict among children playing in a kindergarten classroom presented as a geopolitical allegory.

- Selfie, directed by Ali Erfan Farhadi which is about the motivations of a group of individuals as they prepare to take a 'Selfie.'

- Copper Wire, directed by Hasan Namjabadi is the story of a child who collects

copper wire and sells them in order to achieve his goal of renting a video tape.

◆ **What was your opinion about the Iranian film and Iranian cinema?**

As the Festival Programmer, John Fink said, "we were honored to present three short films from Iran alongside Oblivion Season, which won our Gold Bison Award for Best Feature in our festival." Iranian cinema has always fascinated me and with the availability of high quality cameras on mobile devices like the iPhone as well as high speed internet access - more images of the country will surely be available. It's awful exciting for Iranian filmmakers - as a festival with the goal to present diverse viewpoints from around the world we're honored that Abbas thought of us when submitting Oblivion Season. We're looking forward to providing a platform for filmmakers working in all regions - and thankfully the technology exists for filmmakers to tell their stories and for festivals to present their films.

Given the current geopolitical climate, it's a privilege to be a part of the Buffalo International Film Festival that provides a venue for people from around the World to share their voices, unfiltered, to reach an audience that would otherwise not have the opportunity to experience the diversity and culture of other nations in such an intimate way. We encourage more Iranian filmmakers to submit their films to our festival next year, as we celebrate BIFF's 10th year |



# MNA OANA report highlights mobile world in news media

By: *Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh*

**Iranian Mehr News Agency provided its country report to the 39th Executive Board Meeting of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA).**

Considering the fast-changing nature of media under the influence of new technologies, the news agencies, dealing with time in broadcasting news, are more affected and need more adaptation with the new trends and technologies and improvement of the quality of their content.

In this regard and to this end, Mehr News Agency has launched its Comprehensive Evaluation Model to enhance the performance of each and every one of its journalists as well as their corresponding services which will all in all result in improvement of the news agency as a whole. The model monitors and

assesses the quantity and quality of a journalist's work and provides him or her with guidelines for next quarter to remove shortcomings.

Performance of journalists is measured based on factors including number of exclusive reports and interviews, creativity and quality of news production according to the service editor, organizational behavior, etc. Another criteria for assessment is the number of reflection the news and reports receive on other media outlets. Number of views and comments the audience leave for a news piece are other factors for evaluating a journalist's work.

Meanwhile, an assessment on the performance of each service is also made which is similarly based on number of viewers and republishing on other media outlets. All in all, every quarter, the evaluation reports are provided by the

managers to the people with graphs and charts illustrating the performance from previous periods as his or her profile. The evaluation reports concludes with suggestions for the next quarter to improve the skills of the journalist and performance of the services.

In the country report presented during the last meeting of EBM in Malaysia, Mehr News Agency expressed its emphasis on more use of social media and smartphone capacities to boost its reach to the audience. As a result, encouraging journalists to engage with social media and social applications more and more is among suggestions given to the colleagues in evaluation model; however, Mehr News Agency's approach toward mobile world is not limited to this.

This has gained more momentum as smartphone social networks have been

widely welcomed by Iranians. Different news media in Iran are using such means of communication to reach more audience and enjoy re-sharing of stories by the readers themselves. But Mehr News Agency has not been persuaded by this and stepped forward by creating its own smartphone applications.

Along with an advanced, full-featured application for newsreaders' better and more user-friendly access to news, Mehr News Agency has also launched the test version of its user-based photo sharing and photo contest application MehrGram. The application provides users with the chance to share the photos they take of events and also participate in thematic contests which will be introduced every other while by Mehr News Agency and seek awareness raising among the public by encouraging them to engage with the theme of the contest. The participants send their photos through the application and vote for contestants and the winner would be selected by the user votes.

The last but not the least important development of Mehr News Agency which has been carried out to improve services to the audience is launching of its Kurdish service. Following months of studies and planning, last month, the Kurdish edition of Mehr news was launched to target more closely people in western Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Despite its short life so far, Kurdish edition has been widely received by the target society and many people have left emails or comments appreciating the initiative |

# Iran's Press Exhibition: a chance to get a taste of media life

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

*The 21st edition of Iran's Press and News Agencies Exhibition offers a great opportunity to the general public to get a glimpse into all the hustle and bustle that make up the world of media.*

Iran's Press and News Agencies Exhibition is not just about media outlets' taking advantage of an opportunity to represent themselves in their beautifully-constructed pavilions; it turns into a massive ground of various activities, the wonderful hustle and bustle of journalists, general public, political figures, cinema and music celebrities, athletes, government officials, academics, all gathered in a massive building of 50,000 square meters at Tehran Grand Musalla.

The Press expo offers a unique opportunity for over 700 active news agencies in Iran to invite people of importance to their pavilions and conduct their interviews there. This way, the general public gets front row seats to all the glimmer



and sparkle that make up the world of media as they go from one pavilion to another, poking their heads inside to check out that movie star here or listen live to that famous athlete there. It is a lively, exhilarating event, for all parties involved, and now in its 21st year, Iran's Press and News Agencies Exhibition is

witnessing yet another seven-day phenomenon jam-packed with everything that in the eyes of the general public always standing outside the media hype, perhaps seemed impossible to get a glimpse of.

The pavilions seem to be in some sort of competition with one another: →





who has invited the most number of figures for interviews, who has managed to get their hands on that celebrity that other agencies had been unable to get a hold on first. 'Oh wait, was that man who was rushed into that pavilion the famous pop star whose concert I just went to last week?' And there goes the tidal wave of enthusiastic fans crowding outside of Mehr News Agency pavilion for a chance to take a selfie with the famous pop star.

The expo has a very tight schedule, squeezing a great number of activities in the seven-day event; workshops follow one another. A number of foreign news agencies and newspapers that have offices in Tehran as well as several foreign journalists who have also been invited to the exhibition attend conferences to introduce their agencies and speak about relevant regional topics: AFP, AP, French daily newspaper Le Figaro, Japan's Yomiuri, Rossiya Segodnya and German Federation of Journalists, to name a few. There is also some entertainment planned for school children who have chosen the Press Exhibition as their destination for a school trip. They are loud and energetic, posing for group photos, popping colorful balloons and running

through the halls stacked with news agencies whose newspapers they have most likely seen in the hands of their parents.

Niloofer, a twenty-five year old dentist, standing outside a specially crowded pavilion, seems to have her attention completely drawn to an interview of a government official flocked by photographers and reporters; "I'm not really into politics," she shrugs, "but I always wanted to know how journalists conducts their interviews. Maybe I'll change my career some day!" She laughs.

Of course, if watching journalists in action is not enough, for those who are interested in taking up a career in journalism, there are special seminars planned that can serve as a good introduction. I checked out one in which the lecturer was giving pointers on how a news item should be developed. It was jam-packed.

In Iran, just as anywhere else in the world, the media plays a vital role, as essential as our daily needs. The flow of information is important for the development of communities which is facilitated by the media. Were it not for the wide array of information the media feeds to the public, people's opinions would be limited to their own personal experienc-

es, which isn't really much. The media shoulders a great responsibility in the society and in turn, the government too must abide by its commitments to the press. Attending the inauguration ceremony of the exhibition on Sunday, President Rouhani was especially attentive to this dynamic link between the government and the press, as well as the press and the society. President Rouhani, while advocating the freedom of the press, maintained that "the worst kind of premature death is that of the press which is trampled under baseless criticism even before it has gained the opportunity to introduce itself."

With only 30 minutes left to the end of the fourth day of the exhibition, the hustle and bustle hasn't died down a bit. There seems to be not a moment of respite. The journalists are on a roll, conducting interviews left and right. Everyday till Friday, from 9 in the morning till 8 in the afternoon, the media exhibition is welcoming everyone who is interested to get a taste of the so-called exclusive world of media people. It isn't just about words on a paper you buy from the kiosk every morning to work. It is a whole life all in its own right. Perhaps you would like to join? |



## Fake KFC branch closure sparks gossips

By: Samad Habibi

**Closing of fake KFC branch in Tehran has provided a barometer of the resistance by the government about possibilities of American food brands finding their way to Iranian market.**

The news item is quite simple: on Monday, a branch of KFC has been opened in Tehran's high-brow neighborhood Shahrak-e-Gharb; however, the next news item comes rather too fast: on Tuesday, the same branch has been closed by the authorities, who have been sensitive to an American food brand possible branch in Tehran. The branch closed finally roughly 33 hours after opening for business.

But the major reaction yet comes from KFC; "we are shocked by the news that an illegitimate KFC outlet has opened in Tehran," Yum Brands told CNNMoney. "No franchise rights have been granted to any party in Iran," ending speculations as to the authenticity of the Tehran branch of the fa-

mous brand.

The restaurant owner Abbas Pazouki told reporters on Tuesday that it had nothing to do with the American KFC brand; but his Halal KFC expressly uses the an image of Colonel Sanders to indicate the restaurant location on a map of Tehran. He also told reporters that the branch was affiliated with a Turkish Halal KFC which is a rival to American KFC and its products have as target markets of Muslim countries. A description in the website speculated to be belonged to the closed branch writes that the Halal KFC is acting with a license from Turkish similar brand name, confirming the owner's claims.

Despite the fact that Mr. Pazouki had claimed that he had obtained necessary permits from the authorities, police justified the closure by resorting to claim that the restaurant was using a fake license.

Apart from the simple story and its face value, the issue of infiltration by the US after JCPOA into Iran had been the dominant theme of the

speeches in official and non-official events of the government; notably, the Leader of the Islamic Republic had emphasized in his letter of JCPOA approval to President Rouhani that imports of US consumer goods should be stopped in line with Resistance Economic policies.

The public as well as Mr. Pazouki would have underestimated the level of sensitivity of the government officials to American brand names and generally everything American; this is part of a common concern voiced over past few weeks that the opening country's borders to foreign goods, especially American, would pose the threat of being too American in terms of US influence over culture and economy of a country which severed relations almost 36 years ago. Even a fake American brand sparked immediate response by authorities who felt the threat and reacted out of the same concerns.

In the months post-JCPOA, Iran's economy and the market has attracted European com-

panies who had been banned by the sanctions restricting trade with Iran; now, American companies, including food brand names, see Iranian market as a market with great potentials and young consumers who would welcome famous international brands in food and other industries with improvements on the horizon for country's hard-hit economy.

The government bodies would be equally divided in the issue of whether US famous brand names could come to Iran; opponents fear that such an act would invite a flood of foreign (mainly European and American) products swarming markets. However, the ultimate current consensus is that the economy should keep doors closed to foreign goods to prevent the damaging effects of unregulated imports and that this is crucial for the Islamic Republic of Iran which emphasizes upon an anti-American agenda and mentality, not to haste to a policy which would potentially bring about westernization of the country |

# Stripy; when music gives birth to an animated piece

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

**Passionate admirers of Walt Disney's classic films, Iranian brothers Babak and Behnoud Nekooei crafted a stunning 2D animated piece called 'Stripy' which has garnered international recognition.**

There are a lot of factors that act as inspiration for artistic creations, but perhaps the best kind of such factors is an artistic creation itself serving as a muse to give birth to another, even a completely different form of art. The Hungarian Dance No. 5 composed by the German composer and pianist Johannes Brahms is one such instance, having inspired the creation of a beautiful four-minute animated piece called 'Stripy.'

"We were looking for a classical music that would best fit another animation that we had created as a short, independent work in Gonbad Kabood Studio, but as fortune would have it, while we were listening to the Hungarian Dance No. 5, an idea for a different animation based on this musical piece was formed and we decided to give it a go," said animator and director Babak Nekooei, while explaining the idea behind his creation and how it all came to be.

"The music is full of contrasts," he added, "the fast and slow rhythms, the pauses, and of course the repetitive notes. So the story that came to mind was that of a contrast between two characters which would ultimately result in a conflict; it's a classical narrative."

'Stripy' is significant for its compelling 'classical narrative' driven by a classical music set in motion with modern characters in a modern setting. It is a work of contrast, of conflict, narrated in its most subtle way, following the tradition of Walt Disney's classic films.

"It was important to us to bring Stripy's atmosphere as close to a classic Disney animation as possible," said Behnoud Nekooei, Babak's brother and co-director of Stripy. "We tried to focus the narrative on the idea we wanted to shape and use the minimum amount of colors to serve as a code, as the color

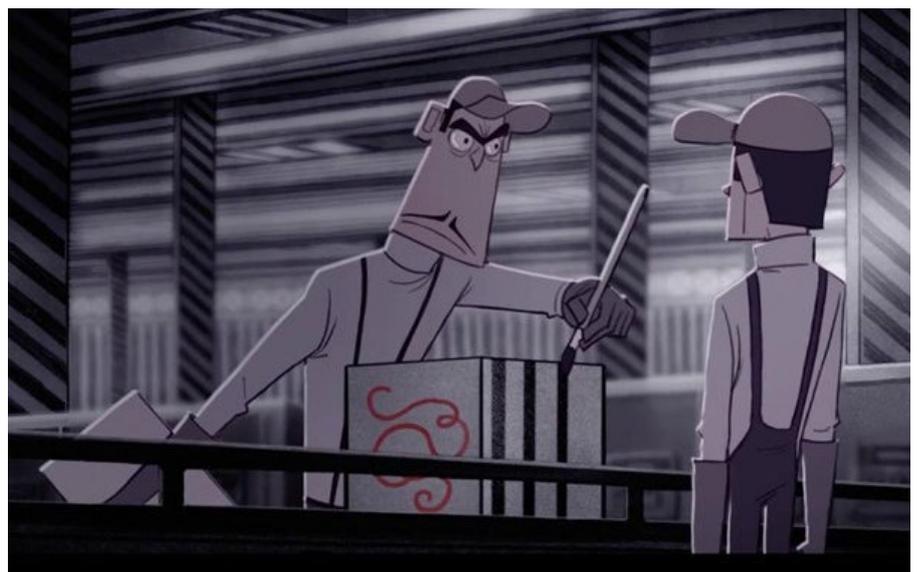
red signified the inherent contrast in the story."

For only four minutes long, this graceful animation does a remarkable job of keeping you fully-absorbed in your seat, demanding all your attention. It is a complicated story narrated in simple, subtle terms, with 2D character designs and concise movements that create a beautiful balance with Brahms's music. A simple worker who rises in opposition to the monotonous pattern of the modern life leaning heavily toward a capitalist agenda tries to challenge the norm by changing the designs on the factory boxes from repetitive black stripes into exciting red curves. The story comes with a twist at the end, a twist that does not

successful in putting its message across. As the classical notes of the Hungarian Dance bring the story into life, the audience is presented with the still-unfinished critique on capitalism and how such system still manages to take advantage of opposition and turn it into profit. Nothing seems to escape the greedy clutches of the money-loving system, not even the opposition which seeks to undermine it.

"It may be an old topic but it is still relevant. This animation was our attempt to use western tools in order to present the audience with an eastern view," said Babak.

Having been accepted in over 30 foreign events including the 2015 Anancy



choose to resolve the conflict, and in a sense, allows the cycle of repetition to repeat itself.

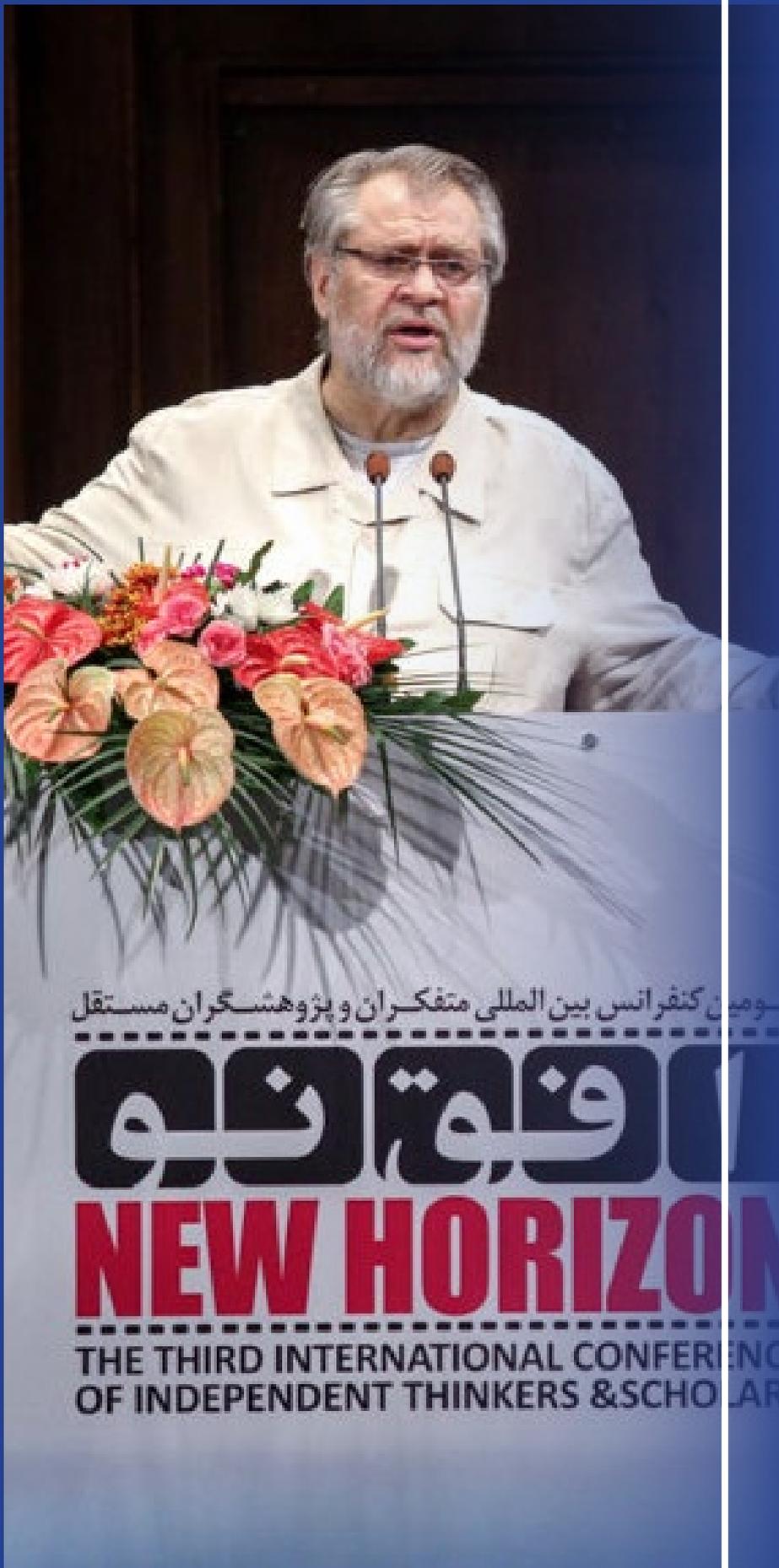
"What is remarkable about this animation is that it is a flawless work of art," said cinema critic Jalil Akbari Sehat. "It is not just a beautiful work of graphics, but a solid cinematic production."

Akbari Sehat added that the animation's subtle use of software and the use of color as little as possible are among its winning qualities, praising 'Stripy' for its minimal depiction of the contemporary world.

While not quite a Kafkaesque Metamorphosis, 'Stripy' is, nonetheless,

International Animated Film Festival in France and Brazil's Anima Mundi International Animation Festival, 'Stripy' has now set its eyes on the 2016 Academy Awards, thanks to its inclusion in the 17th Annual Animation Show of Shows.

Although the Academy Awards for Animated Short Film brings together productions from prominent names which will make the competition especially hard for the Nekooei brothers who are experiencing their first ever chance at such an international recognition, it is still a remarkable step forward for young Iranian animators who wish to introduce their works on a global scale |



*Editor: Lachin Rezaian*

# Dossier



*Nation of Islam official:*

## Anti-Islam movements in US due to fear of Islam

**American Muslim professor said the US fears Islam due to its power in the lives of those former slaves who accepted Islam and become all the different and part of a larger protest movement against racism in the US.**

Minister Abdul Akbar Muhammad asserted that the problem of Islam in the world, at the centre of which lies Iran, is because you turned your nation around on Imam Khomeini. He said everything that Iranian believed in as the sacred, the enemy took piece by piece.

In an interview with Mehr News, Akbar Muhammad answered the questions on the issue:

◆ Since you are Muslim in the US and you know Islamophobia in the country and racism against the African-American; is this discrimination the same for Muslims and African-Americans or there are differences between the two and in what ways?

In one way it is the same and another way, it is different. The anti-Islam movement period in America is because of their fear of Islam, they have watched the power of Islam in the lives of those former slaves who accepted Islam; they become all the different, and we use the life of Malcolm X, he has been known in the world and I can use his life as a clear example. His mind set represented

him as the victim of the American repressive system before he became a Muslim. Once he accepted Islam he changed completely. He became strong against the enemy. And what the American rulers, the white people that ruled land, depended on the fear in us still remaining from the time of slavery. That fear made us all look for safety zone and not the fight for our rights; but now Malcolm represented the difference. Based on it, he represented the new man, a changed man and he had a different idea of the world, and so now you have the problem of Islam in the world, and at the centre, lies your country Iran. You turned your nation around on Imam Khomeini and they

had due victims of cultural imperialism. Everything that you believed in as the sacred, they took of you piece by piece through the puppet they had set up. And when Imam Khomeini came in, he turned the nation around; everybody was not in the happy camp, because you did not know what would be the future, and those who were more western, wanted to be more lenient, more pliant with western ideas that you thought represented modernity, you wanted to be three and shed everything that represented your culture in order to be there; but the change happened and that is the change came with Islam. There is a book written by a group of Jewish authors, Sha—→

ria Come into America; most American people only know what sharia is; that is a kind of (they think) evil creature that wants to capture the America and slave the country; that is their approach and the head of that is the Iranian revolution. A society that they had grips that the leader of a Muslim nation drinking alcohol publicly along Jimmy Carter, you began to accept it, that this was the way of the world; then all of a sudden in 1979 everything changed. This is the fear in the west right now. And Barack Obama is talking now about bringing in 250,000 Syrians, mainly Syrians as refugees to America, because they cannot be hypocrites when refugees are suffering all over the world and they bring a couple of thousand, may be a couple of hundreds, and so Barack is rolling a dice. But the opposition to him say that this is the beginning of an end for America, because they are going to islamicate the world, make America a Muslim state, that we will be in a sharia, will do this and so forth; that is what you face

with. I know, but that is the bottom line of the situation.

**◆ You said a thing very important and very interesting here; every time that there is a new massacre in Gaza [Strip], the right wing in the Israel, especially the Rabbites who train troops, they say we are to perfectly religiously justify this, because this is what our Torah teaches us to do, and there are passages in Torah saying that kill them all, catch women and children, cattle and everything; when I was in college, I took a history course on colonial slavery and one of the things I discovered in the course was the Biblical rules of the African slave trade. It was the story of Noah and Ham. Ham was cursed to be a slave to his brothers Sham and Japheth. Ham is supposed to be father of the African people. Can you talk about it a bit, about the Bible, in particular, the Judaic roots of the African slave?**

You are absolutely right. That is the root of the belief system about us, that our

black skin is bad and dishonour, that we are cursed with the black skin, and that God has cursed us. So, they justify the mistreatment of us, and there is a group of people in America one of them a Mormon, running for the president now, the base of the Mormon teaching is the Bible that says we are cursed

*That is the root of the belief system about us, that our black skin is bad and dishonour, that we are cursed with the black skin, and that God has cursed us. So, they justify the mistreatment of us*

to work in water and woods, and because we left and our father in nakedness, American people who are Christians, think that it is OK with God, because He condemns these people in the Bible, and that is the root of white supremacy and racism, and the outside world, you may not

understand what that represents. But that represents that the two and half million people are locked up in the jails of America, most of them black men and women. The percentage is better than half of them and they do not feel guilty when they torture us and shoot us down, they sell the idea that the God cursed them. And those who read the narrative, I am in the hand of god being executed in the name of the right God has given me. So, you have to look at Christianity, though our Quran teaches us to respect the people of the book; but they abuse Christianity as a tool to establish themselves as privileged class and we are the lower class which should be abused, misused and even enslaved; when you read the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, after they determine that slavery should be free and we should change this and should protest, they say that slavery has ended and so forth; except on committing a crime, they have never finish the whole thing, and when you commit a crime, I can re-enslave you. →



That is exactly what it means, and we see in America right now.

But, would you say that blacks in America who is superficially freed by the 13th Amendment, they have just gone from one form of slavery to another kind, because when you seek the deliberate plans to fill the black neighbourhood with crime, drugs, the garbage on the media that poisons the mind of the young people and destroys the families the communities. This is deliberate, and something to perpetuate the backward religious notion that because of the black skin, God has cursed them to be slaves and we can enslave them like we did before the 13th Amendment, but we should see the more sophisticated forms of slavery now.

Yes. It is call free in the mind. They took chains from our hands and feet, but they keep our minds in chains, and to make ourselves free from that chain, we will always be in their feet.

◆ **You talked about destroying Iran from within, it is a hot topic that Americans are trying to infiltrate into Iranian politics, culture, everything. In your point of view, how such an infiltration would happen?**

How do you destroy Iran? At the time of the Soviet Union, they wanted to start a challenge between the West and the Soviet Union, and the more they boarded outside force against the Soviet Union, the stronger it became. So they devised a plan and the very man that the plan was based on his work is Daniel Pipes. His ideal strategy for breaking the Muslim world into parts came from his father, Richard Pipes by whose theory we can analyse what the West is trying

to do. Richard pipe said that you need to explode them from the inside, you have to get inside and divide them, and this was his strategy. His son employed the same strategy. The one who started the cartoons, was Daniel Pipe's going to the editor of the Danish newspaper and they wanted to put it up but they needed to find what they called 'a soft target' to see how they respond and they did those detestable cartoons of the Prophet (PBUH) and he encouraged them to do it and see the results and see how many Muslims in riots, in streets

*Maybe the sanctions could be lifted but you keep your integrity as a nation and people. 36 years have passed from your Revolution and you are still intact |*

and things that happen. And then inside the Muslims, the intellects, the so-called thinkers and some of our religious leaders thought that this is not the right way to stop this and so forth. But the man who couldn't afford a decent education, who couldn't sit down and respond to this intellectually, from his heart he responded! He rebelled because he couldn't sit at a table to debate about the cartoon; therefore he watched it and he exploded. They didn't stop with the Danish cartoons, they began the challenge of so-called free press to put it in and they angered the sensitivity of the Muslim world.

The last Pope who stepped down was also a part of it because he went to Germany saying that Prophet Muham-

mad (PBUH) didn't say that, but he didn't bring anything new. They offended the sensibilities of the Muslims to see how they reacted with the idea that we must never allow them to unite. So, they created Shiite and Sunni when Imam Khomeini came into power. Being a Muslim, we had never had that kind of argument; we may have had a debate like 'he's a Shiite, he's a Sunni; we never had that kind of fight but they heightened that! So that's one thing that you are faced with.

Then, we have an 80-million-people market, Iran and all you have to do is to look at the history of Vietnam which was a 90-million-people market! So, they sent the man who was the secretary of defense from Macedonia to open a way back into Vietnam after the death of nearly 20 thousand of American soldiers, after they were defeated by Vietnam, they needed a way back in now and the way back in is the so-called technology of the West; they want to use it to get in your country because there is no doubt that what they have got is money.

And, in America when Bush came in, he used Condoleezza Rice and the war he started in Iraq, they wanted to get Hollywood to make pictures so that the people of America would see they would justify them whatever they were doing to Muslims and to Muslim countries across the world. So, you see that and only believe that. Barak Obama wants to leave a legacy, so the first thing was Cuba that the sanctions against it were totally unjustified throughout all these years. A country of 12 million people 90 miles from America like it was some threat to America. So, he lifted the

sanctions. Now, the UN is in the same old kind of position. If you ask me, my personal opinion is that maybe the sanctions could be lifted but you keep your integrity as a nation and people. 36 years have passed from your Revolution and you are still intact. What you said is right. One election that you had recently, they thought they had it! They deployed Shah to your country to turn your society around. So how do you protect yourself? You need to stand and you have to be principled. You're not going to be left behind in the modern world. Did you see Steve Jobs who became famous in America? Did they ever mention that his father was a Muslim? He was Syrian. No one knows that.

One of the questions to me at the University yesterday from one of the Youth was that technology and what we have in the Western world is what we need to advance. And when you think like that you disregard yourself even. You don't think you have the ability of the Europeans or the Americans and you need to their technology to advance.

There was a British lawyer who went to Africa. When the British went to Africa they said how can we conquer so many people? There is just too many of them; we can't put enough soldiers or army into Africa to fight and master these people. They said a rule through counselor would stay sure.

And the king, sends people from far provinces to bring him information and the counselor would be best to handle the people. "what if we become the king's advisors?! Gathering all our advisors around him making him powerful and we could rule him," they thought. The →

same case was with the Shah. They put him in but they put their people around him not to decide for the people but they became his advisors. And through that, they were able to master and rule the African culture. A British man started that. They introduce you to the Western form of democracy and think it's the greatest thing and you want to be a part of it to be a part of the modern world.

They tell you in order for us to help you must open the door for foreign entities to come in and own things that you should own, your roads, your hospitals, your schools; so, your people have to be smart enough because those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat it. Just as the Revolution turned this country around, they say we are going to have our revolution. We want to get in from the inside; we are going to feed the children and make them feel that they really have the desire that they are not really free and that they need to go to West and get rid of the Mullahs and the religious leader.

I was sitting in a hotel in Syria and there was a man named Patrick, a British man who wrote biographies, more secular than religious, and he said to me I'm going to make my prayers and he said it sometimes bothers my knees because I've been praying for so long and I listened to him, as a black American I was a real novelty to him sitting in a hotel in Syria.

And he said something about his culture; that their culture was being taken away but they had found the way back to their culture which was to have faith. But they had given up having faith in order to be a part of the modern world. And they tried every way to get it back. You

have the family structure and the Muslim world is a part of your culture and your faith. But the break-up of your family, the introduction of abortions to make it a part of the system; in America they argue about it saying that it's a part of my freedom, it's the right of a woman to abort a child if she wants to; not asking: how does God look at it? God is out of the window. So, all the things that you are challenged with are the moralities of your society. Some people come here and feel that the women are imprisoned, but I saw the wom-

around you, they have all targeted your society and what they want is a victory.

They want to break the Muslim society. We turned those Iranians around. Now, you have orange juice and some biscuits on the table and they want to turn the table so that you will have beer and wine and you drink it and you feel that you are a part of the modern world. And that's your fight. And the fight is not with guns but with ideas. You have to claim your victory. You have to blow your horn because nobody else is going to blow it for you.

**a while and you have seen different types of people like the people in the universities, on the streets as well as different officials; all of you talked about the plots and the ways the US has used to penetrate Iranian society; two main factors that can block their trying are the wisdom of people and the role of the leadership; how did you find the wisdom of people and how would you assess the role of the Iranian Leader in this regard?**

The spiritual strength is a must, because it produces morality in the people. The



en smile; the outside world shapes it that they are poor women, they have to put on this to go on the street, they wish they could get rid of it and dress like we dress in the West, is that freedom?!! That's the enslavement of the West the end of the society that you are trying to build for the benefit of your people.

All that you see happening

Whatever accomplishments that Iran has made in these 36 years, the world needs to know and understand that because it has been your success. And if you find something as successful, you don't throw it away because somebody has influenced you to make your success look like nothing.

◆ You have been in Iran for

Supreme Leader didn't say he had descended from Heaven with a halo on his head. He is a human being that is trying to do what is right by God for the benefit of these people who look to him. Do you think that America is looking to make people free and respect the human rights? No, that's not on their agenda, but they have to look the part, like they are actually →

concerned about what is going on with Iranian people; whether it's human rights violations, whether people have been jailed. I know for a fact that they don't care. Look at how they treat us after we worked for them for nearly 500 years and gave them our sweat and blood and fought in every war that they were involved in. My father fought in WWII, came home and couldn't get a job. He was segregated against.

Capitalism is organized greed and they will do anything necessary to gain capital and use that capital as a tool to control the world. But Iran took the right path by rejecting capitalism for 36 years. You made an example of the Trojan horse. The Americans pretended that they were giving you a gift, but on the other side it's something that would destroy you. I look at our black community and see how it was destroyed by crack cocaine, as young people became like zombies and are locked up in jail right now. They make it appear to the world that these black people just got involved in drugs, that they are no good, when they started it by using drugs to target young black people to make money to support their contras.

US also used opium to exploit China by drugging the whole nation to get in. So this history repeats itself. That's what they would like to turn Iranian society into. People wish to migrate to America because America offers higher education but you have to ask yourself in exchange for what? So that they can rob you of your soul.

Iran has a lot of thinking to do on where to draw a line in order to resist American influence. Your people must learn about the history of

your struggles so that they would not choose the wrong path. That's your responsibility to educate them on your history; you may think let's leave behind that ancient history but that history is what will make your tomorrow.

◆ **Although the United States has come a long way since the days of slavery, and steps were made towards granting equal rights on the basis of race in the 1960s, racism is still a very pressing problem in the US today, why the racism remains alive and well in America?**

Mistreatment always continues, but it moves to different levels. There was one of the slave masters speaking in 1600 and 1700; he made a statement that can be found in a message to the Black man. He said we have closed every avenue of light coming to the slaves.

That means we live in a complete darkness and darkness is the lack of education, the ability to think and the ability to move freely; so, anyone who says that they have made progress, they have not made progress, they have just switched gears. And they try to make impression unseen by the average person; but the people who suffered the most of the pain they realized that they are being kept in complete darkness and have been abused in that darkness and not find the door out, it is bad; but now they're coming to a-bulling it because the world has become smaller, they can see what they have done in other societies, thus, for me, this means dismantling that kind of mentality; and you have to dismantle racism and privilege, and white supremacy. That is what happens in America.

◆ **Have the African-Americans ever did any movements to fight discriminations and if so, why they have not been so successful?**

Of course, there has been many movements, and the struggle is not new but very old; from the day they brought back our parents from Africa to America, we have been struggling since that time and in few cases that slaves revolt, because we are human beings, we realize that it was not a kind of capturing slavery that was known in Africa; slavery has always existed, but the kind of slavery which you rub the soul of the man, that was new to Africans, they knew nothing about it. They captured people, they held people if you want to say it slavery, but they did not rob them of their soul, they did not brutalize them, and tried to make them less than the man, and they exchanged them as prisoners which went on for years; but what they did in the west was based on the idea of Capitalism, that destroyed the human being. A book I read when I was a young man, Capitalism and Slavery, by Eric Williams, in the Caribbean from Trinidad and Tobago [the prime minister of the country] and he got the right to know the root cause what slavery represented.

My brother comes from Africa, from Benin, he has the name that represents him and his people and his culture; they had their own language, they have been seen themselves less than other people because of the colour of their skin.

This is the white supremacy has done in America, and now the America has begun to pay the price, we have agonized, but when you try to agonize people with the loss

of identity and have been taught to feel they as formal enemy, who made them hate themselves, it is hard for us to move forward, but I think that we have crossed that bridge now.

◆ **Americans are not as political as people in Iran are, people in Iran are all political and you can talk to everyone about politics on the streets, on train, everywhere. But it's not like that in United States, Americans as far as I have seen are not much familiar with the politics and developments around the world, is it just cultural or the system wants the people to be like that?**

Americans are dumb in politics. There are many distractions to keep them away from political dynamics that shape their life, from the football, baseball, to music. They would rather hear Beyoncé, in both communities, than to sit down and look at news analysis on Sunday morning. So it's dumb down in America and that's what you do to the people, to keep the masses dumb. 5000 Americans lost their lives based on a lie told by the leaders of the country. Killed, wounded, come back home, all minds messed up!

*Akbar Muhammad is an associate professor of history and African studies at Binghamton University in New York. He specializes in African history, as well as the study of Islam in Africa and the Americas. He is the co-editor of Racism, Sexism, and the World-System. His own writings have been focused on slavery in Muslim Africa, Muslims in the United States, and integration in Nigeria through the use of education. He holds a notable role in the history of the Nation of Islam |*

*Cecile Johnson:*

# 'Black life not secure in America'

**American TV Host, public speaker, organizer and researcher says militarization of the police in the US makes the situation more insecure for black community.**

Cicile Johnson says many people imagine the US is a heaven, however, what America is good at, is giving the impression that the country is a place for equality and freedom.

She says American government creates the situation and destroys the people to claim African Americans are wild, corrupt and criminal.

In an interview with Mehr News on the sidelines of the third edition of International New Horizon Independent Conference, Johnson answered the questions on the issue:

**◆ Is the US becoming a Police State? How do you predict the future of police brutality in the US?**

The America has an oppressive police force, especially towards black people. You can have a black president and it does not preclude you from having someone to do something to you. Where have you ever heard people break into White House before, but only with a black president? Militarization of the police roots from Israeli tactics, why? Police are supposed to be peace officers in a community, but they are not. People fear police in the US. In America a traffic stop can turn into death. You may walk on the street and it can turn into a death. When children leave the home every day, the parents have to give



them special instructions to be safe when confronting with police. I tell my son when police stops you put your hands on your head and always make sure they can see your hands so that never suspect you have a gun. You can see white people who hold guns in their hands and still police is having conversation with them, smiling and doing nothing. And you see black people who does not have ANY weapon and police shoots them. They shot a 12 year old child. Black life is not secure in America and the police are instruments of the state. It is unholy.

**◆ What are some of the rules which are against blacks in the US?**

What America is good at is giving the impression that the country is a place for equality and freedom. People quote the constitution. When the constitution was written it did not include women, blacks and it did ignore Native Americans whose land they were in. So when you talk about rules, we have a kind of criminal injustice system because in reality when you go to the courts, lots of times all staff are against you.

People will be accused of crimes and they tell them to take a plea bargain and because they don't have a proper legal advice, they take the plea bargain and accept the crime they have never committed. The rules and laws affect their housing, work, education, so they are setting them up. So, when it comes to the rules, there is a whole of rules interconnected that keep the people oppressed.

**◆ Regarding the statistics showing high number of blacks inside the US jails, do you think this is because they commit crime more than whites, or it indicates discrimination against them?**

We are 15% of the population as black people, and make up 15 plus something percent of the prison population. Does that mean that black people are more criminal? No, it means the system is unjust. When you have a criminal background now, you have been incarcerated, whether you did a crime or not, that is a way used against you in the states you cannot even vote. It means you do not have a right to choose your

leadership.

What you see happening is actually when crime was going down, black incarceration was going up. You know crack epidemic, which crack is brought into communities. We don't own planes, we did not bring the cocaine from Colombia. We believe people within the government did that. When you see our history, black community were suppressed by the FBI and the government. They were infiltrating our community, our movement and killing our leaders and putting some of them in jail. A lot of our people were political prisoners. Then all of a sudden you see heroin, drugs was in the community. They [government] brought that into our community. Crack came into black community and it killed people, killed moms. What other drugs like heroine did not do, crack did. Crack destroyed the black family. Black does not use drugs more than any other group, in fact white Americans use more drugs than anybody else. We know that it's a set-up. You know they create a situation and destroy the people and then they say, oh look, they [blacks] are wild, corrupt, angry, whatever. Yes, yes, because you [government] have set it up that way.

When you look at the education system in major cities, you will see that the schools in majority consist of people in color, black and Hispanic or Latino people. But the graduation rate shows something different. Many black students never graduate. There is unequal education system.

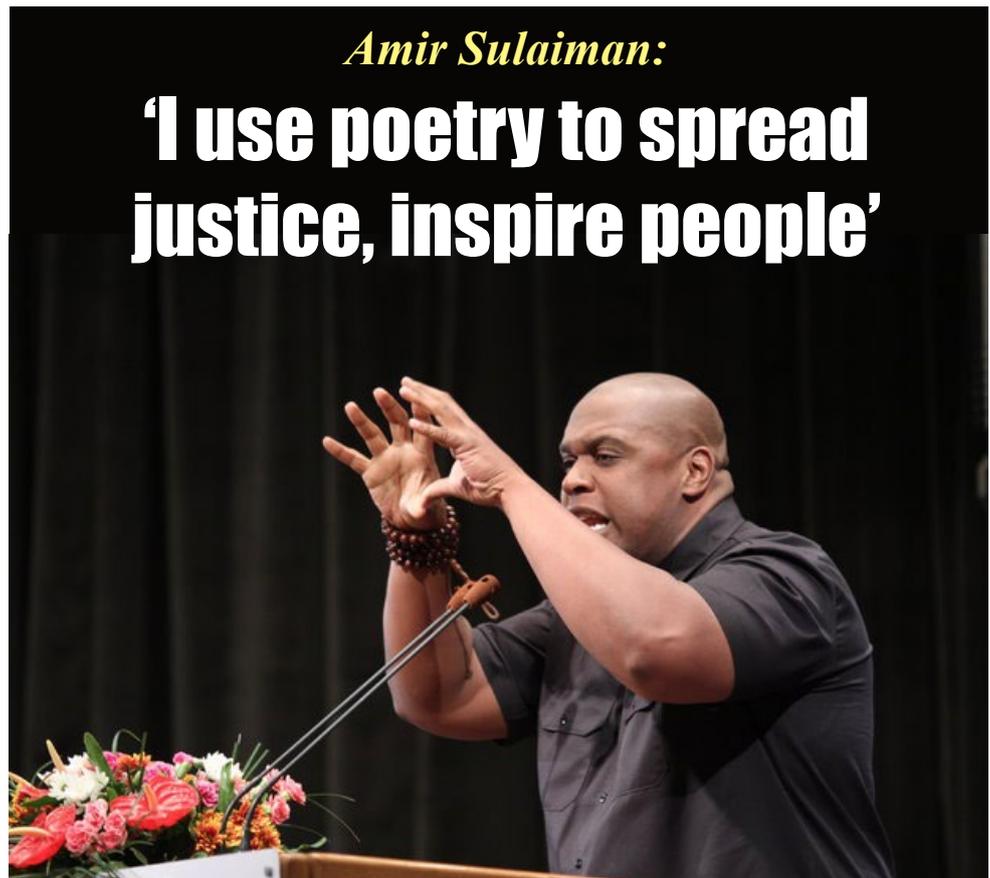


◆ **What do you think about the approaches and mottos by US presidential election candidates towards blacks in the US?**

A friend of mine once said sometimes our enemies are within. Because you have black face, doesn't mean he is a friend. Ben Carson is a black candidate, however, he is not with us. And that's the issue. Because of the 400 years of oppression, because of the westernization of the thought process, because of unequal educational system where you are educated to hate yourself, and the constant bombardment, you have people who will come up, who look black and will put that face up and say oh look, we are black candidates and we can save you!

We are not happy with Obama, because what that person brought us was a few things, however, we will not know his legacy until he leaves office. I, as an activist, have not been happy with him. He is the president of black people but has done nothing to us. He has done many things for gays, but not us! You know he is only a part of a system, only a puppet.

*Cecile Johnson is the CEO of African Development Plan which calls for the creation and implementation of a 50 year plan for development for global African communities. She is also a Board Member of the National Black Agenda Consortium (Chicago) who focuses on the state of African Americans in the USA. She is a project Manager, researcher and presenter on Development issues impacting the Global African Community with a special focus on the African American community in the USA and Sub-Saharan Africa |*



*Amir Sulaiman:*

**'I use poetry to spread justice, inspire people'**

***American poet, activist and artist believes any people with any talent should work to spread justice and equality in the world.***

Amir Sulaiman, who attends the New Horizon Conference in Tehran for the second time, says the US is not a heaven for all races, as they claim.

"It hasn't been a heaven for the people from my race (Afro-Americans) for sure, it is a place that requires a lot of work to be done for the races to be able to live with freedom and justice and equality. So, that is what should be done in the US," he says.

Acclaimed poet Sulaiman believes any person with any talent must do something to show protest against racial discrimination in the US. "Any person gifted with something, it could be economic, political or cultural or whatever, can show protest, even a mother or a wife who stays at home."

"They can do anything to show hatred against black discrimination and racism. Mothers can raise children who think different, who may work against racism. Some people are good with money, they can provide economic freedom. People like me, can resort to poetry, language, culture, so I use that to spread justice and inspire the people and give people courage, but this is just one part to bring freedom and justice.

There are many other ways every person can do to have a role in spreading justice in the world."

Answering the questions of Mehr News reporter on the sidelines of the third edition of Iran's International New Horizon Independent Conference, African American poet Sulaiman expressed happiness he is in Iran for the second time describing it a wonderful place.

He said, "Racism is a problem that affects everyone so the solution has to come from everyone and it begins in the hearts."

He said Afro-Americans in the US are treated as if they are immigrants, "it's like we are not American, they consider us the most dangerous people."

"It is our place, we have made our place. There is no origin for us to go back, here is our origin," he underlined.

He expressed gratitude over the holding of such an event in Iran calling it a unique event among Muslim countries.

"It is a strange, wonderful, beautiful occasion where the people can come together with mutual respect."

During his presentation on the first day of the conference, he read an inspiring poem on Afro-Americans' deplorable situation in the heart of racism in the US, which was released on October 15, 2013 |

*Wilmer J. Leon:*

## 'Black community put unrealistic trust in Obama'



**American political scientist said Obama is a functionary of the United States government upon whom the African-American community placed unrealistic expectations.**

Dr. Wilmer Leon underlined that President Obama has never been an African-American leader, 'he is a president who is African-American.'

Criticizing the justice system in the US, Leon said the laws on the surface don't say that are targeting African-Americans but they have disproportionate impacts on African-Americans.

In an interview with Mehr News on the sidelines of the third edition of International New Horizon Independent Conference in Tehran, Wilmer Leon answered the questions on the issue:

**◆ Is the US becoming a Police State? How do you predict the future of police brutality in the US?**

Unfortunately I think that the United States is quickly becoming a Police State. The created threat of domestic terror is perpetuated and is going to get much worse before it gets better. There is no real counternarrative being provided that would offset this boogie

man effect in that people are coming from all globe to destroy the country. And also the narrative that black people are dangerous, black people are aggressive and that they must be controlled. So events such as the New Horizon conference can help articulate programs until they can become more popular.

**◆ What are some of the rules which are against African Americans in the US?**

There are unwritten rules which have been in existence in the country since the first slaves disembarked from that Dutch ship in 1619, then you also have rules such as mandatory minimum sentencing, the disparity between the crack cocaine and powder cocaine drug laws. So you have a number of laws that are on the books which on the surface don't say that are targeting African-Americans but they have disproportionate impacts on African-Americans. Slowly some of those rules are being challenged and are starting to be overturned. But unfortunately the damage has already been done. We are two generations now into this mass incarceration movement and so you

have two generations of people that for all purposes, have been lost and now some of their children have been lost and this is going to take a tremendous effort in order to get the trend back.

**◆ Regarding the statistics showing high number of blacks inside the US jails, do you think this is because they commit crime more than whites, or it indicates discrimination against them?**

There are about 2.5 million people incarcerated in the country and African-Americans make up about 53% of those prisoners. The data clearly shows that African-Americans are no more inclined to make crimes than anybody else in the country. What that massive incarceration number demonstrates is the difference between how people are charged, prosecuted, and the differences in the nuances in the system that wind up in many instances allowing white individuals to be charged with lesser offences, if they are charged at all, where African-Americans tend to get harsher sentences, longer penalties and are charged with higher crimes than their white counterparts.

**◆ How do you evaluate the role of media in raising brutality against blacks?**

The Media plays a significant role in a number of things. One, the Media has a tendency to perpetuate a narrative and that narrative is that white Americans need to be afraid of black Americans and started with the film back in the 1930s where the white America had to be protected from the black threat. That has been perpetuated in television, in the news, in movies as well.

**◆ What do you think about the approaches and mottos by US presidential election candidates towards blacks in the US?**

Both parties, the Republicans and Democrats, to a great degree, have written the African American community off. The Republican Party figures they are not going to have enough vote of African-Americans so they don't really speak about our issues. The Democratic Party, since African Americans have voted for them for over the last 50 years, take African-American vote for granted and unfortunately the leadership within the African-American com- →

munity is not doing enough to place demands upon those that are seeking political office in forcing them to articulate expected policies and programs that would address our issues.

President Obama has never been an African-American leader, to this day he has not been an African-American leader. I have wrote a piece saying that President Obama is not a black president. He is not an African-American president, he is a president who is African-American. He is a functionary of the United States government and the greatest disappointments come from unrealistic expectations and I think the African-American community placed unrealistic expectations upon him as a candidate and placed unrealistic expectations upon him as a president. And there are great number of people in African-American community to put expectations on him.

**Wilmer J. Leon III, Ph.D.** is a Political Scientist whose primary areas of expertise are American Government, Black Politics, and Public Policy. For 11 years he was a Lecturer/Teaching Associate in the Political Science Department at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Currently, Dr. Leon is the producer and host of the nationally broadcast call-in talk radio program, "Inside the Issues with Wilmer Leon," nationally syndicated columnist and regular political commentator on national and international news programs. Dr. Leon earned a BS degree in Political Science from Hampton Institute, a Masters in Public Administration (MPA) from Howard University and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Howard University |



*American journalist:*

## November 4 Iran's independence day

**An American writer, journalist and political analyst said the November 4 is the same as what Americans did on July 4 to declare our independence from the Great Britain.**

"All the things Iranians did in 1979 is the same as our declaration of independence from Great Britain on July 4, in 1776," Mark Glenn said. "If they were honest to picture what happened on November 4, then the American people would say, 'Wow! November 4th, July 4th, two dates the same thing happened, the Iranian people declared independence from America and Americans from Great Britain.'"

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

◆ **There is a hot topic currently in Iran that Americans are trying to infiltrate into Iranian politics, culture, everything. In your point of view, how such an infiltration would happen?**

Right now, the way they could use is of course money; the lifting of sanctions and removal of Iran's possession as a country that is isolated in the world and even though they don't talk about it publicly, I'm sure that the discussions come up where the Americans have said your young people are getting ready to explode and we are going to help them explode if you don't give us what we want. In one

section of the ancient story written by Latin poet Vergil called 'The Aeneid,' they're talking about this war between Troy and Greece. And the Trojans leave behind this walled city named Troy and the Greeks have been trying to get through the walls for ten years and it's become an embarrassment to the Greeks that they can't get through the walls, it's costing them a lot of money, so they devise this strategy of getting through the walls by building this large horse and pretending that it's a gift of surrender, but inside the horse are Greek soldiers. So their plan was to pretend to retreat and then the Trojans would bring the horse into the city and then the Greek soldiers inside wait for the nightfall and they come out and they open the gate to the Greek army. This is exactly what the Americans are trying to do. They're using the sanctions relief as bait. They will first attack the Iranian financial system and then say bring your banking system in line with the America's banking system so that any time they want they can bring chaos to the streets of all Iranian cities just by pushing a button. And they can do 50 percent of all this job in a week's time. People are out of work, they are unable to buy food and now you have chaos in the streets. As for their infiltration through the media, they want Hollywood been brought into the living rooms of every Iranian home, so that they can turn them, especially the young people, into Persian versions of American kids with →

violence, sex and drugs always on their minds. Iran's intelligence services will be completely defanged and the political system will be attacked so that puppets can be elected to the parliament and to the highest office in the land that will do America's bidding. And then finally, I think, their real goal here is they want to remove entirely the Supreme Leader and his council of people; to get them completely out of the way to get them completely out of the way so that it is a political system that can be completely controlled by putting in corrupt leaders and it all begins with dangling that bait of sanctions relief.

◆ **You have been in Iran for a while and you have seen different types of people like the people in the universities, on the streets as well as different officials; all of you talked about the plots and the ways the US has used to penetrate Iranian society; two main factors that can block their trying are the wisdom of people and the role of the leadership; how did you find the wisdom of people and how would you assess the role of the Iranian Leader in this regard?**

I think, what frightens America and the Israeli regime more than anything else is that 1979 represents something that has not taken place anywhere except in Iran; you look at all these uprisings that all have been western-created plots utilizing all the genuine frustration that people of those countries have stirred from the plot; Iran's situation is entirely different because obviously Iranians are very rational people, they are deep thinkers and wonderful chess players and what the Americans and plot designers are terrified of is that the fruits of 1979 are spread not only throughout the Middle East but also throughout the whole world and it is for this reason that they have adopted this new strategy of trying to negotiate with Iran.

Even despite all the differences that exist in the Iranian society between young and old, between modernity and tradition, between man and woman, once the missiles start flying into Iran, all those differences start to evaporate and the Iranian people will come together again to fight the attack. So, the wisdom of the Leader in this I think is something that goes from the top down and something that goes from the bottom up; I think that it is like a family where they have a very wise father and he has children who un-

derstand that the father knows what he is doing; because you don't see the kinds of upheavals in Iran that you see in other places of the world.

Therefore, I think the Iranians, because of their Shiite background – and I am not saying that's anyway to denigrate Sunnis – but there is a different philosophical approach between Shiite Islam and Sunni Islam in much the same way that there is a difference between the Catholics and the Protestants; you look at America and you see it is mainly the protestants who are infected with these Christian lines whereas the Catholics are not affected by them. This is why I said in my earlier comment that ultimately the enemy's bold aim and target is to get rid of the Leader and the Clerics because without that wisdom anything goes in the political system; they can get anybody elected to the parliament and then on to the president who is in their pocket but as long as that institution of the Leader and those who are advising him remains up there and as long as the Leader has the final say on things, they would never be able to undue the 1979 revolution which is what they are really worried about; they need to take an eraser to that and as the minister said they want to create a counter-revolution to 1979 and basically put the monarchy system back in power.

◆ **November 4 and the capturing of US "Den of Espionage" indicates Iranian anger towards the US government not the people because of their mistreatment with all the people around the world, especially Iranians. Why don't the Western and American mainstream media deal with the real roots of the hostility of people around the world toward the US government?**

Because, if the American people really understood what happened especially in 1953 with the overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddegh, if they understood, then they would understand why the Iranian students did in 1979, it makes perfect sense. All the things Iranians did in 1979 is what we celebrate our ancestors having done July 4th that we declare our independence from the Great Britain. If they were honest to picture what happened on November 4, then the American people would say, "Wow November the 4th, July the 4th, two dates the same thing happened, the Iranian people declared independent from America and Great

Britain. The Jews who control the American media really cannot have this happen because they have bigger designs than simply some tiny slice of land on the eastern shores in Mediterranean Sea. The one thing standing on their way not to get their goals is Iran. Iran now is in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and these Zionists understand that if Iran is free to continue on with what she (Iran) is doing, soon it is conceivable that 1979 would be the year when Iran got independency from the US. When you are trying to harness the energies of the American people, in the form of their tax money, their political support, sending their young people for fighting and dying, how are you going to convince them to make sacrifice just like this. If they knew the fact, they won't give you their money, their political support, they certainly won't give you the blood of their children. So this is the reason why they don't tell the truth to them.

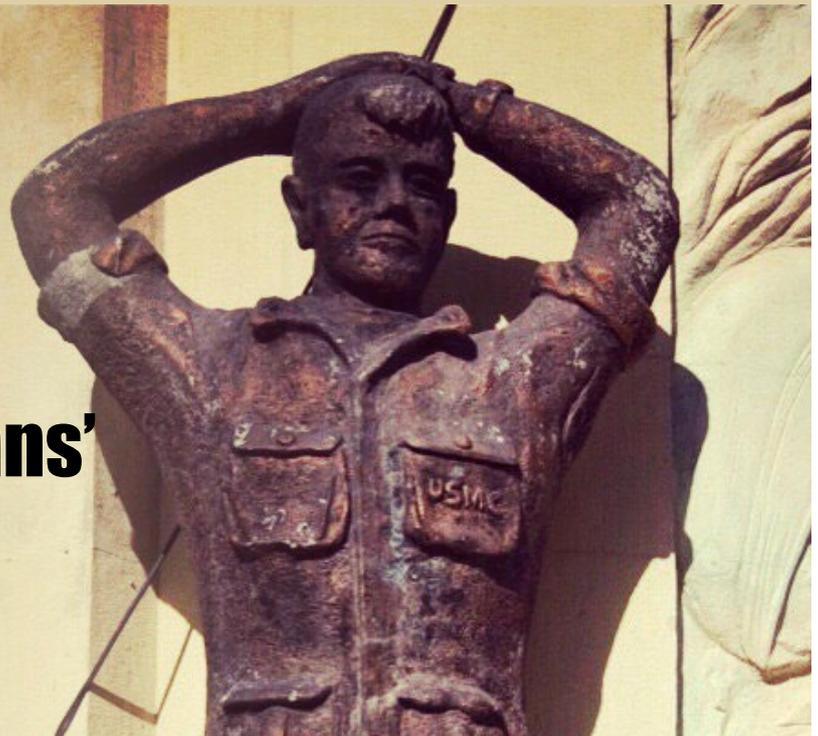
◆ **As an American, how did you feel when the Iranian students captured the US embassy, and how do you feel when the Iranians chant the slogans of "Down with US"?**

When I hear the chant, "Down with US", I understand that it is no different than what the Americans said, "Down with Great Britain". It is not that we hated the British people, but we hated the British system at that time. I do remember when the embassy was taken. I don't say they were captured or were hostages, I say they were arrested because they were engaged in a criminal behavior. A hostage is an innocent person who is taken captive by kidnappers and this clearly was not what happened and Americans were engaging in criminal activities in Iran.

On that time, I was under the influence of mind altering substance known as 'Americanism'. I thought that my country was the greatest thing in the world and they never do wrong, but now when I think about what the Iranians did on November 4, 1979, I think back to what the Americans did in July 4th 1776, when they declared their independence and freedom.

**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](#) |

# Symbol of Iranians' deep mistrust towards US



By: Eva

**November 4th, 1979 is one of those few days in global historic memory that could not cause more opposite sentiments in countries all around the world.**

In Iran, this day is a day of national celebration, marking the seizing of the American Embassy in Tehran in November 1979. Less than a year after the revolution had ousted Shah Mohammad Reza, Iranian University students stormed the embassy and took its American staff hostage. For Iranians, this day is a day of bravery, of showing courage and stepping up to one of the great powers, the United States; in an attempt to prevent the course of events that taken place almost 30 years earlier: When the democratic election of President Mossadeq in 1953 forced the very same Shah Mohammad Reza to flee the country, the American intelligence, seeing Western interest at stake, staged a coup to overthrow the democratic Mossadeq government and putting the autocratic Shah back into power. The Iranian collective memory 30 years later had not forgotten what had taken place in 1953, fearing history to repeat itself – and consequently, storming the American embassy; in their opinion a center for American and Western espionage

which was just about to plan another coup to topple yet another revolutionary Iranian movement.

In the United States, this is a day of tragedy; a day that marked the beginning of an ordeal that would last 444 days. For 444 days, American citizens worried about the lives of their fellow citizens who had been taken hostage in Tehran.

For global history, this day marks a pivotal event in Western-Iranian relations, as this is the event that would lead the United States to cut off all diplomatic relations with Iran and to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran.

Today, the ground of the American embassy in Tehran is home to a museum which is rarely open to the public. Only on very special occasions, visitors are allowed into the premises of the former embassy. When I was allowed to visit the embassy with other fellow foreign students a few years ago, I was obviously very excited. In the entrance hall, graffiti depicts the nasty side of Western influence and imperialistic attempts in the region. Moving on to the main offices of the Embassy, documents and photos show the takeover of the embassy and the espionage instruments the embassy staff supposedly used to communicate with their headquarters in the United States. In another room, visitors can find a memorial to the civil passenger flight 655 that was shot down by American

military over the Persian Gulf in 1988, taking the life of all 290 passengers.

In short, the museum visualizes the deep mistrust that Iranians have toward Western politics.

Obviously, nobody can turn back time. Nobody can undo or change the event that strained the relations between Iran and the West and negatively impacted Iran's image in the West for decades to come. However, in my opinion, the events of the past should not continue to overshadow the future. Particularly after the nuclear talks between Iran and the 5+1 finally reached an agreement in April this year, the time has come for a new beginning. The numbers of foreign tourists to Iran are increasing day by day, finally seeing an image of Iran that has been hidden for too long: A country full of history and culture, beautiful countryside and amazing food, and, above all, friendly and hospitable people. And maybe the American embassy in Tehran, a place that has been the symbol of cutting contact and dialogue in Iranian-Western relations can once more become a place for Iranians and foreigners to come together and engage in dialogue.

**Eva** grew up in Germany and is a former student of the University of Tehran. She currently lives and works as a consultant in Kabul, Afghanistan |

By: Shirley Han Ying

**On the occasion Nov. 4, the date US embassy was captured in Iran, one of the first foreign nationals allowed into the former embassy decades after the historic event, Shirley Han Ying has shared her experience with Mehr News.**

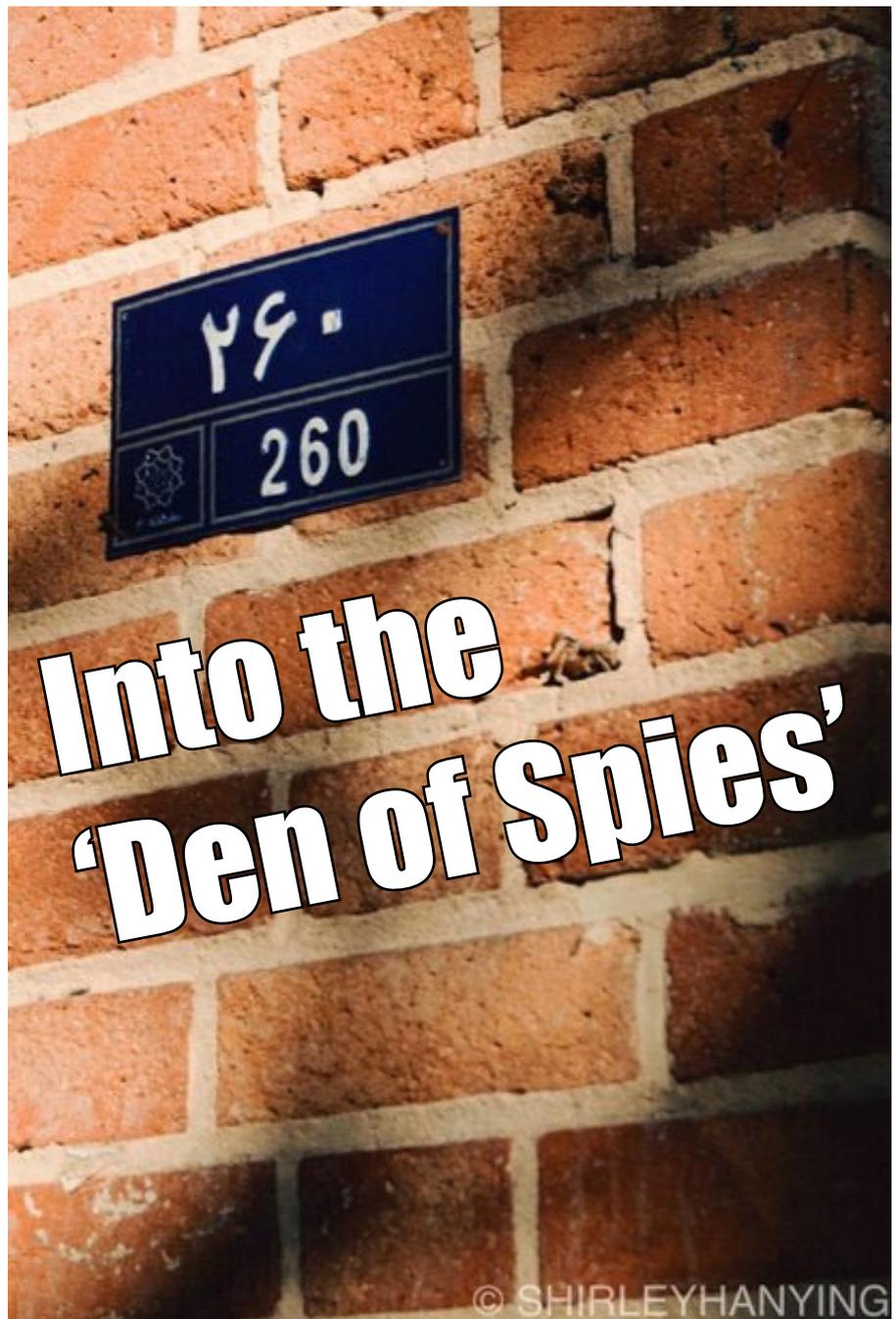
260 Taleghani Avenue in Tehran, this location is viewed by many as the centerpiece of the Iran-US relations, witnessing a diplomatic incident which has since set the two countries on opposite paths. The complex is known as the former US Embassy in Tehran where in 1979 a group of Iranian students stormed the building and held 52 American diplomats hostage for 444 days.

Given the historical significance of this place, my late husband, a British national, and myself a Chinese citizen were extremely fortunate to be invited by a colleague of ours at that time, Hamid Reza, to tour the defunct diplomatic mission. Hamid had also obtained permissions from the Iranian authorities for us to take photos inside the embassy which I could not appreciate enough as a journalist.

It was in the morning of 15 November 2007, days after the 28th anniversary of the diplomatic crisis, when we stood on the Taleghani Avenue awaiting the rest of our group with excitement. We would be among the first foreign nationals, if not the first, to visit and photograph the interior of the embassy.

To be honest, I didn't know what to expect until we spotted the anti-US government murals covering an enclosure wall of the compound. One slogan read "the Nest for Espionage (former US embassy)" while another claimed "the United States is regarded as the most hated government in the world". Without a doubt, we were at the right place.

Joined by Hamid and a group of Iranian students, we entered the compound and arrived at the entrance of the main building. A replica Statue of Liberty welcomed us at the door. Contrary to its original version, the abdominal part of this statue was turned into a cage of doves. We were told part of the embassy had been converted into a museum while the rest remained as they were in



the days before the students' takeover.

Once inside, we met our official guide who led us up the stairway. The high walls of the staircase were dominated by giant murals themed with atrocities allegedly committed by the US government. As we walked across a number of mini-galleries on the first floor, we were surrounded by posters, sculptures and installation art. They all appeared to carry one unifying message that "the governments of the United States and Israel are fundamentally evil and the world is suffering as a consequence".

The highlight of the entire visit was inevitably the alleged former CIA sec-

tion. A lot of the original equipment and features were still kept here. The guide told us the double-glazed "glassy room" was once used by the embassy personnel for secret conversations as the plexiglass walls made the room impossible to eavesdrop on. Another fortified chamber at the end of the corridor was known as the ultra-secure communications vault where classified documents and some of the most sensitive communications equipment were stored.

The next we were shown to the room where fake passports and documents were allegedly forged. There was →

also a giant paper shredder on display, which was used by the embassy staff to reduce paper pages to strips. The guide demonstrated a book of documents which was reconstituted by Iranian students and carpet weavers after the takeover. He even joked that reconstituting these shredded messages was nothing more complicated than hand weaving a Persian carpet. These documents supposedly outlined how the CIA agents had been plotting the counter-coup to topple the Revolutionary government and reinstall the Shah of Iran.

The tour ended with another exhibit of artworks portraying the 1979 takeover and lampooning the alleged crimes against humanity by the United States and Israel. As we were walking towards the exit of the building, I felt as if I were getting off a time machine which had taken

me back into the 1970's. On one hand it was extremely interesting to gain insight of the official Iranian account of the 1979 incident, on the other hand I was extremely surprised to see the extent of discontent and hatred represented throughout the exhibit at the former embassy, which subsequently would be passed on to the next generations of Iranians.

Of course the views expressed in the artworks here was not a representative of what all Iranians think. Especially with a majority of Iranians supporting the nuclear agreement reached in July this year, most people expect a wider rapprochement between Tehran and Washington would eventually take place.

I've always believed art is emancipation if used correctly. It can help us create a dialogue with ourselves and with others. It can snap

people out of their normal state of mind even just for a few minutes. It can serve as a tool to bridge individuals from different cultures and backgrounds and introduce positive changes in our society. Perhaps it's time to let some of the emotions fade a little. Not necessarily we have to forget the past in order to move on, but with more dialogues and mutual understanding we could have the chance to invoke a new future to benefit the people on both sides.

There has already been reports of a group of Iranian men removing anti-US murals on the wall of the former US Embassy. Would this be a sign of reconciliation and the beginning of a new era in the relationship between Iran and the United States? At this moment, I can't help wondering what lies in the future for this embassy, as well as for one of the world's

oldest civilizations.

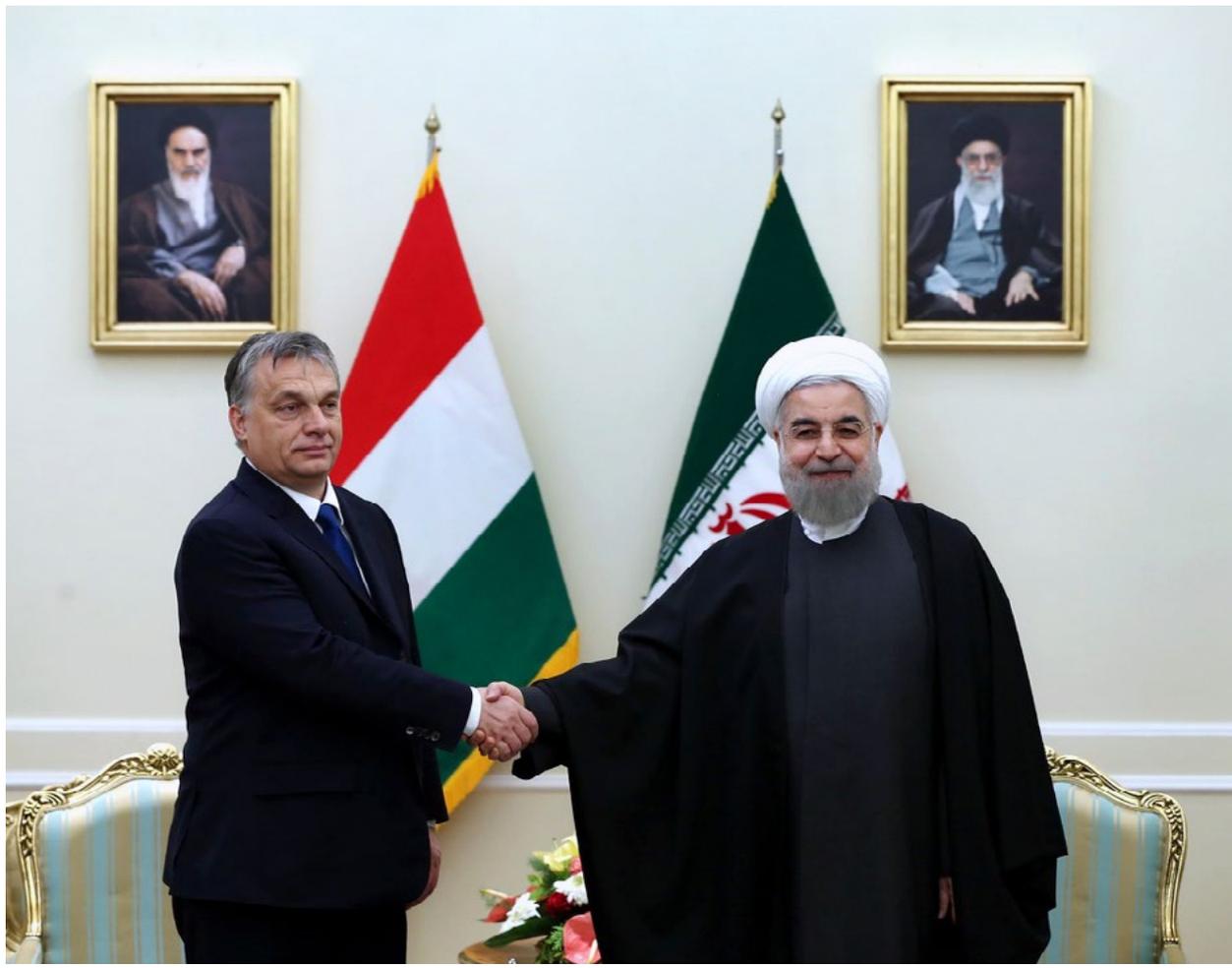
You can see Shirley Han Ying's photos from the former embassy here.

**Shirley HAN Ying** is a documentary filmmaker, videographer and video editor based in France. She specializes in visual storytelling, camera operating and creative editing. With more than 6 years of experience in media, Shirley has produced daily news, video features and documentaries for major news networks, including CNN and The Guardian. In her spare time, she volunteers to produce, film and edit promotional videos for charities and nonprofit organizations. Shirley has previously lived and worked in mainland China, South Korea, Iran and Hong Kong. Her work has also taken her to many other countries around the world |





**Russian President Vladimir Putin, visiting Tehran for the first time after 8 years, met with Iran's Leader Ayatollah Khamenei on Nov. 23.**



**Iranian President Hassan Rouhani met with the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán here on Dec. 1. During the visit which came after 27 years, the two countries signed 8 MoUs on economic, cultural, scientific and tourism cooperation.**



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani opened the third summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) at the Summit Conference Hall in Tehran on Nov. 23. Leaders of Russia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Equatorial Guinea, Turkmenistan, Nigeria, Iraq, and Algeria took part in the event.

The body of Iran's former ambassador to Lebanon Ghazanfar Roknabadi who went missing during the September 24 Mina tragedy in Saudi Arabia was transferred to Iran on Nov. 27.



**Developed by researchers at University of Tehran, Iranian humanoid robot 'Surena III' was unveiled on November 16.**



**Millions of pilgrims across the globe marked the 40th day after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (SA) in Karbala, Iraq on Dec. 2.**