

Military Resistance 11C6

“The Fate Of Every Revolution At A Certain Point Is Decided By A Break In The Disposition Of The Army”

“In The Streets And Squares, By The Bridges, At The Barrack-Gates, Is Waged A Ceaseless Struggle Now Dramatic, Now Unnoticeable – But Always A Desperate Struggle, For The Heart Of The Soldier”



Egyptians on top of Egyptian army vehicle as the army takes control of the government police building after several days of fighting between protesters and riot police in Port Said, Egypt, March 8, 2013. (AP Photo/Khalil Hamra)

MORE:

“Some Government Police In Port Said Have Refused To Leave Their Barracks To Move Against Protesters In The Street Amid Clashes Raging For Days”

“Others Have Refused Orders To Deploy To Port Said From Elsewhere To Help In The Fight”



Egyptian army soldiers stand guard as they take control of the state security building in Port Said, Egypt, March 8, 2013. With the country in chaos from weeks of protests against the Islamist president, the police have now joined the fray, launching their own protests. Some security forces in Port Said have refused to leave their barracks to move against protesters in the street amid clashes raging for days. Others have refused orders to deploy to Port Said from elsewhere to help in the fight. (AP Photo/Khalil Hamra)

[Headline quote above from: The History of the Russian Revolution By Leon Trotsky]

MORE:

Mansoura Security Forces Strike Over Violence Against Protesters

0305/2013 Egypt Independent

Members of Central Security Forces in Mansoura went on strike Tuesday and protested in front of the CSF headquarters in al-Mazar district.

They are demanding the dismissal of current Interior Minister Mohamed Ibrahim and a new approach to confronting protesters, according to state-run Al-Ahram newspaper's website.

Other policemen including low-ranking officers joined the CSF soldiers' strike and objected to the Interior Ministry's response to demonstrators, which they say has caused tension between Security Forces and citizens.

Protesters said they no longer want to be involved in political schemes of minister officials and denounced the deaths of police officers in Port Said.

MORE:

Thousands Of Low-Ranking Policemen On Strike Across Egypt On Thursday: “Policemen Say They Are Now Being Forced To Confront Protesters Angry With Mubarak’s Successor” “They Also Are Angry That They Can Be Tried In Military Courts”

Mar 7, 2013 By AYA BATRAWY, Associated Press [Excerpts]

CAIRO — Thousands of low-ranking policemen on strike across Egypt on Thursday refused orders to work and protested what they claim is the politicization of the force in favor of the president's Muslim Brotherhood party.

The strike, in its fourth day, is a rare show of defiance by policemen against their superiors.

It threatens to unravel a security force already weakened by two years of unrest following the ouster of longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

For decades, Egypt's police aggressively targeted the Brotherhood and other Islamist groups that were once outlawed.

Policemen say they are now being forced to confront protesters angry with Mubarak's successor, President Mohammed Morsi, and his Brotherhood supporters.

They also are angry that they can be tried in military courts and complain that current laws do not protect them when they carry out their duties.

The ministry, which oversees police in Egypt, relies on low-ranking policemen to protect government buildings, particularly in the face of angry protests in Suez Canal cities and in areas north of Cairo in the Nile Delta region.

Hundreds of policemen have been wounded in the past six weeks of unrest in those areas, and several have been killed in the anti-government protests.

In Cairo, dozens of policemen blocked the entrance to one of the city's main police stations and expressed anger at Morsi's policies.

Others held a sit-in outside Morsi's house in his hometown of Zagazig, northeast of the capital.

South of the capital, in Assiut and Luxor, policemen protested what they say is new Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim's attempts to use the force to protect the Brotherhood.

Security officials in the Interior Ministry said that the former interior minister refused orders to direct police against anti-Morsi protesters outside the presidential palace in Cairo in December. They say that the Brotherhood was also enraged that police did not protect the group's offices that month from being torched by Egyptians angry with Morsi's handling of the drafting of the constitution.

Anger is also boiling in the Nile Delta province of Dakahliya, where protesters and policemen accuse the new security director there of ordering heavy-handed tactics to suppress anti-Brotherhood protests.

Sami al-Meehy was appointed the province's security chief in recent days, just as anger there was mounting against the Brotherhood and a civil disobedience campaign began.

Police there are accused of intentionally running over and killing a protester last weekend.

A similar strike last month by thousands of low-ranking policemen led to work stoppages for five days. They were demanding better firepower, wages and working conditions.

The ministry said it agreed to purchase 100,000 new 9mm pistols and improve health care facilities for policemen, ending February's strike.

The police force, once a frightening and powerful underpinning of Mubarak's rule, has been accused by rights activists of carrying out the same brutal tactics under Morsi.

Allegations of torture at the hands of police persist, and more than 70 people have been killed in nationwide protests since late January. Rights groups allege that police are still operating with impunity.

The latest allegation took place late Wednesday in the Nile Delta city of Mahalla.

Hundreds of residents took to the streets to protest the killing of Ibrahim el-Kady, his wife, their daughter and their daughter's fiancé. According to Mahalla activist Samuel Adly, police were chasing a suspect when they fired at the wrong car, killing the four.

The family's son told the satellite channel Al-Jazeera Mubashir Misr alleges that policemen were behind the killing. He said he saw men dressed in police uniform firing on his father's car, which was parked outside the family's house.

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MILITARY NEWS

Greeley Vet Faces Jail Time For Using Marijuana To Treat For PTS:

“Marijuana Is The One Treatment That’s Helped”

“He Violates His Probation When He Uses It, Which Puts Him At Risk Of Going Back To Jail”



Jeremy Usher sits with his post-traumatic stress service dog, Rodney, at the Weld County Veterans Memorial Thursday afternoon at Bittersweet Park in Greeley. Usher is prohibited from treating his PTSD with medical marijuana while on probation due to federal laws. JOSHUA POLSON/jpolson@greeleytribune.com

March 2, 2013 by Whitney Phillips, Greeley Tribune [Excerpts]

Former U.S. Navy Corpsman Jeremy Usher came home in 2003 from Iraq and Afghanistan to sleepless nights and panic attacks, with vivid flashbacks of combat, horrifying nightmares, anxiety and depression, all amid memory loss and a severe stutter.

After turning to alcohol to treat symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, Jeremy is serving probation in Weld and Larimer counties for his second and third DUIs.

He’s doing well in counseling and school, he says, but he faces jail time for using marijuana medicinally while on probation to manage his PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

Jeremy finds himself in legal limbo.

Medicinal marijuana is the one treatment that's helped him with his PTSD, but he violates his probation when he uses it, which puts him at risk of going back to jail.

"The court systems are very black and white, and PTSD is the definition of gray area," said Jeremy, 31. "They're not acknowledging the gray area."

Jeremy — "Doc" to the Marines he treated as a combat medic — remembers hearing a loud snap when he was shot in the side of his head.

He was on the back of a helicopter sent into a hot zone to rescue wounded Marines, and he was struck as they were lifting off the ground, leaving him brain damage that caused his memory loss and stutter.

"I think the fact that I can't remember what happened is a good thing," Jeremy said.

After a stint in a San Diego hospital and being discharged with an "OK, good luck," Jeremy suffered from extreme paranoia as he wandered San Diego, constantly spinning around while walking to make sure no one was sneaking up on him.

His nightmares of what he'd seen — an armed Iraqi civilian he killed in combat — kept him up at night. Anything that sounded like gunfire or a mortar round would set him into panic mode.

"Fourth of July has always been hell for me," said Jeremy, who is the brother of Tribune employee Jennifer Usher.

During the next few years, Jeremy began drinking heavily and developed for the first time, a criminal history: a DUI in California, a phone harassment charge for calling an ex-girlfriend repeatedly, a protection order violation for drinking, and then two more DUIs within months of each other.

Jeremy served time in jail and was sentenced to probation in Weld and Larimer for the DUIs, and both probation sentences have been extended twice because Jeremy didn't immediately start DUI treatment classes while he was seeking PTSD treatment at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital.

After a judge denied his request to continue using marijuana medicinally while on probation, Jeremy got a prescription for Marinol, a synthetic, highly expensive version of marijuana's active ingredient, THC.

Now, with his service dog Rodney constantly by his side, he's sober, succeeding in counseling for PTSD and alcohol dependency, and he's in his third year of classes at Aims Community College.

"I'm never going to be free of the flashes of the memories; I'm stuck with those for life," he said. "What I'm able to do is manage those in an appropriate manner, without just going out and cracking open a bottle."

Jerry Green, Weld County's Chief Probation Officer, said he can't comment specifically on Jeremy's case because of privacy laws, but he said probation officers work as much as possible with people in special circumstances. He said they have to turn the case over to a judge after repeated violations.

Most of all, though, Jeremy views the idea of being denied the right to use medical marijuana — as opposed to paying about \$18 per pill for Marinol — as the worst example of the way in which the justice system isn't flexible enough for veterans with PTSD.

"It's like I'm being punished for being a little different, and I'm not understanding why," he said. Still, said Small: "The system's not a bad guy in this. Their hands are tied."

Jeremy faces 29 days in jail for failing dozens of drug tests while he was using medical marijuana.

His probation officer has filed a complaint to revoke his probation for those failures.

In Larimer County, a judge placed him on unsupervised probation, which means he no longer has to take those tests.

Jeremy fears that jail time will mean he has no access to Marinol or anxiety medication, and without Rodney to wake him from nightmares and flashbacks, Jeremy says all the progress he's made will go "out the window."

Others, including Small and Jeremy's treatment providers, have the same concern.

His doctors have written letters saying they've seen that marijuana and Marinol help Jeremy. Those treatment providers, including one at the VA, wrote that they want him to continue with his current treatment.

Weld County Jail officials say Jeremy would be evaluated individually for necessary medications.

Small said if Jeremy does serve jail time, he's planning to take Jeremy homework assignments to help "keep his mind focused on his education."

District Attorney Ken Buck didn't comment specifically on Jeremy's case but said that anyone who violates probation by using marijuana has to face consequences.

"They can't violate state or federal law," Buck said. "That's a court ruling. That isn't a Ken Buck rule." Buck said he is concerned about the fact that Jeremy is a veteran, and his office is working on creating a veterans diversion court. They haven't considered how to deal with DUI cases, though, "because they're so dangerous," Buck said.

"We're trying to deal with those who have served their country and who have come back with injuries in a special way," Buck said.

Jeremy hopes to be allowed to complete probation using Marinol, without serving jail time. He said even if that doesn't happen, he hopes officials will find a way in the future to help veterans who get tangled in the legal system.

"I want to raise enough awareness so that this doesn't happen to guys coming out of there," Jeremy said.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



"At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

"For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

"We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake."

"The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose."

Frederick Douglass, 1852

<p>It is a two class world and the wrong class is running it. -- Larry Christensen, Soldiers Of Solidarity & United Auto Workers</p>

Bashar Al-Assad's Regime "Has Sealed Economic And Political Deals With Israel Which Allow For The Direct Transfer Of Syrian Oil"

"Tlass Also Accused The Syrian Regime Of Running Syria Like A Farm"

"Tlass Added That The National Coalition And The National Council Do Not Represent The Syrian Revolution But The Rebels And The People Inside Syria Are The Ones Who Do"



Firas Tlass, son of former defense minister Mustafa Tlass , spoke to Al Arabiya on the alleged deal. (Image courtesy: The Telegraph)

7 March 2013 Al Arabiya

A Syrian business tycoon who opposes Bashar al-Assad's regime has said that the government has sealed economic and political deals with Israel which allow for the direct transfer of Syrian oil.

Firas Tlass, son of former defense minister Mustafa Tlass ,spoke to Al Arabiya and linked the aforementioned deal to the “suicide” of former prime minister Mahmoud al-Zuabi - whom some claim was killed because he threatened to reveal the secret agreement.

Tlass added that he did not reveal this information at the time because he was afraid he would be murdered or forced to kill himself like Zuabi.

Zuabi served as Syria’s prime minister from November 1, 1987 until March 7, 2000 under Hafez al-Assad’s rule.

In May 2000, Assad expelled Zuabi from the Baath Party, Syria’s ruling party, following a scandal related to the French aircraft manufacturer Airbus.

While he was under house arrest in May 2000, he reportedly committed suicide by gunshot.

Tlass also accused the Syrian regime of running Syria like a farm saying: “We were (members) of this farm’s guards.”

He added that Mustafa Tlass, his father, was a “complete partner” of the regime at the beginning during the days of Hafez al-Assad.

“My father was an important part of the regime (back then) and therefore he bears responsibility for that period of time,” he also said, adding, however that his father’s partnership with the regime ended during the reign of Bashar al-Assad.

Commenting on a statement attributed to him by a British daily, in which he seems to claim that he wants to put his fortune under the control of the Free Syrian Army, Tlass clarified that what he said was that after the revolution wins, he will transfer the property of his company to another company registered with his late mother’s name. According to him this will be done so the revenues will be spent on developing Syria’s society.

Tlass also acknowledged that his fortune would not have been so large if it had not been for the strong ties between his family and the Syrian regime, adding, however, that the initial stages of making that fortune had nothing to do with the regime.

“Yes. I made use of my father’s name who was defense minister and of his relations both inside and outside Syria.”

He added that exploiting his father’s name falls within corruption on the global level but is considered to be of “little corruption” on the Arab and Syrian level.

Tlass also denied there are any relations between him and wealthy businessman and Assad’s maternal cousin Rami Makhlouf.

He added that it was Rami’s father, and not Rami himself, who monopolized 60 to 80 percent of the Syrian economy represented by oil, tobacco, alcohol, telecommunications and electricity and that Rami worked in the field of industry

On whether Bashar's regime is an extension of his father's Hafez, Tlass said it was not.

"Bashar has killed 120,000 Syrians whilst Hafez killed around 30,000 in Hama. (looking at it this way,) Hafez al-Assad looks (peaceful) when compared with his son (Bashar)."

He also said that the struggle in the 80's between the regime and the Muslim Brotherhood was over authority. "The regime however was criminally destructive," he added.

Tlass added that the National Coalition and the National Council do not represent the Syrian revolution but the rebels and the people inside Syria are the ones who do.

"Until now no one has been able to achieve the aspirations of the revolution," he claims.

Repression And Resistance In Iran:

**The Dictatorship Has "No Social
Base Amongst The Poor, Shanty
Town Dwellers, Peasants And
They Never Had A Social Base
Amongst Workers"**

**"Women Who Do Not Adhere To
Strict Monogamy Are Considered
Criminal And May Be Brutally And
Savagely Stoned To Death In Public"**

**"The Corruption Scandals And
Accusations Of The Involvement Of
Senior Clerics In Prostitution And Drug**

Rockets Made A Mockery Of The ‘Pious, Moral’ Shia Ayatollahs”

PF: What do you think progressive people in the West can do that would be of most assistance to the working class and oppressed of Iran?

YM: They should show solidarity with the Iranian working class by promoting their demands, while campaigning against war and sanctions.

Sanctions have caused mass unemployment, spiralling cost of living. The current conditions of poverty and destitution make it difficult for workers to mobilise and organise against the regime.

8 March, 2013 Philip Ferguson interviews Yassamine Mather, Redline [Excerpts]

Redline’s Philip Ferguson recently interviewed Yassamine Mather, chair of the British-based Hands Off the People of Iran (HOPI) movement. Yassamine is a long-time Iranian Marxist, former activist in the Fedayeen (Minority). She is also deputy editor of the academic journal Critique.

PF: Could you tell us a bit about your political background and how you came to get involved in revolutionary politics in Iran?

YM: I come from a privileged background and I was unaware of the inequalities in Iranian society until I reached my teenage years. It was the shooting to death of a school friend Catherine Adl (the daughter of the Shahs’ physician and close ally, Professor Adl) by security forces in 1971 that made me politically active.

When I started university in the UK, I joined the Confederation of Iranian Students Abroad, a leftwing student organisation opposed to the Shah’s dictatorship and it was through them that I came in contact with left-wing organisations inside Iran. Membership of the Confederation was illegal and I was on the regime’s blacklist.

PF: So how did you come to join the Fedayeen, as opposed to some other group? Could you tell us a bit about its politics and activities?

YM: I only joined the Fedayeen after the Majority-Minority split. Before that time Fedayeen had a centrist position regarding the Iranian regime and it was only after the split with reformist, pro-Soviet Majority that I joined the Fedayeen.

They organised workers’ groups in factories, amongst oil workers, they had student supporters on campuses and a women’s organisation . All this in Iranian cities (until repression made it impossible); they also organised peasants in Kurdistan and Torkman Sahra.

The organisation had a history of being an armed guerrilla organisation, however post-1979 it was mainly a Marxist political group with the exception of Kurdistan where a civil war was going on and the Fedayeen used liberated areas in the mountainous regions for publications, a radio station and political organisation. As repression in Iranian cities got worse, from 1980 onwards, members and cadres of the organisation were sent to stay in Kurdistan.

PF: How do you think the Islamists were able to outmaneuver the radical, secular forces in the anti-shah struggle?

YM: The Islamists were powerful before the uprising. Left-wing activists were the last prisoners to be released.

Islamists had faced far less repression during the Shah than the left. Holding meetings in mosques and other religious institutions had been tolerated. They were also much better off financially, benefiting from donations from the bazaar. That is why the religious movement was far better organised than the left and other secular forces.

However the left was politically confused, made many mistakes and allowed the Islamists to out-manoeuvre them even further; it would be a mistake to think the left was in a position of dual power. At that time the majority of the population had illusions about Islamists.

PF: What remains of the left forces from that era?

YM: Very little of any significance. The Trotskyist Fourth international had some presence in 1979 but split as a considerable section of this organisation supported the Islamists' "anti-imperialism".

Some have no more than a handful of members and supporters, a name and out-of-date website, others are more active.

PF: These days it seems more possible for different currents to speak to each other, people who in the past would have been totally hostile to each other. What sort of discussions go on among the various Marxist currents in Iran and/or in exile? What sort of collaborative work is possible between what is left over from the groups of the 1960s and 1970s?

PF: Why do you think the theocratic regime has been able to last so long?

YM: The regime had a huge income at its disposal and managed to buy sections of the population, impose repression and wage wars on national minorities. It also benefited from inept opposition. Royalists and the right were clearly discredited long before they became part of the US regime change plans.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not led to the coming to power of democratic, stable governments and this has helped; the Islamic regime has benefited from this, not only because of the failure of US-style regime change from above but also because two of its worst enemies (Saddam's Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan) were removed from power.

The reformist factions of the regime have also helped it survive, in that every few years a new candidate for presidency or a campaign by ‘reformists’ has created the illusion that the regime can be ‘reformed’.

While the reality is that in power the ‘reformists’ have done very little to challenge the religious state, repression etc.

On economic issues there is little difference between the various factions.

PF: Could you tell us about the state of the economy in Iran at present and the state of the class struggle there?

YM: The economy is in free fall.

In the first three years of Ahmadinejad’s presidency, between 2005 and 2008, Iran experienced a period of growth. Since then the rate of GDP growth has fallen considerably and this was before the latest round of sanctions in 2011.

1999	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
1	3	6.5	6.1	6.3	6.9	4.3	6.2	6.5	1.5	1	2

In 2012 the real GDP growth rate was -0.9%.

High oil prices in early-mid 2000s had enabled Iran to amass US\$97 billion in foreign exchange reserves.

In recent years capitalists in Iran – and defenders of finance capital everywhere – have complained about the Revolutionary Guards’ accumulation of vast fortunes through the acquisition of privatised capital, precisely the pattern seen in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere.

Those in power, often with direct connections to military and security forces, are in a position to purchase the newly-privatised industries. That is the case with many US allies in the region and an inevitable consequence of this type of ‘economic restructuring’.

According to the theocratic government’s own statistics, by 2009 one third of the state assets had been privatised (US\$37 billion out of US\$110 billion), 78 per cent of which occurred under Ahmadinejad’s presidency following the IMF model for structural adjustment, while the Iranian president is eager for Iran to join the World Trade Organization.

In many ways, this dismantling of the public sector resembles Russia and other East European privatisation plans in the 1990s, which turned over vast sections of the economy to oligarchs at bargain-basement prices.

In Iran it is the Revolutionary Guards Corps of Iran (RGCI) and its subsidiaries followed by individuals associated with the Supreme Leader who have benefited from relentless privatisations.

In the last year alone, tens of billions of dollars in state assets were handed out to the RGCI in no-bid secret deals.

Before the sanctions hit in 2010, in the stock market's largest transaction ever, an \$8 billion purchase was made of the country's telecommunication industry in a deal that is costing the RGCI next to nothing.

The sanctions are supposed to hurt the Revolutionary Guards or close associates of the Supreme Leader and senior clerics but these people own everything as I explained earlier so the so-called 'targeted' sanctions haven't affected them.

The current sanctions have impacted oil export (down by 46%), banking, finance, insurance – including insurance of oil tankers – gold bullion. The US has now also imposed heavy penalties on sanction-busting.

The goal is to create “a chilling effect on all non-humanitarian commercial trade with Iran,” noted Mark Dubowitz of the Foundation for the Defence of Democracy, who added that trying to target only parts of the Iranian economy was a “game of whack-a-mole that the United States could never win.”

“The Annual Rate Of Inflation Was Estimated At 30% In 2012; Current Month To Month Inflation Is About 70%”

The annual rate of inflation was estimated at 30% in 2012; current month to month inflation is about 70%.

Beef, which used to cost 120,000 rials a kilo a year ago, is now more than 200,000. A bag of rice has nearly doubled to 70,000 rials. A can of beans more than twice what it was last January.

Unemployment amongst the young (15 to 35 years old) is estimated at around 60 per cent.

In recent years, the cost of housing in most major Iranian cities rose by 1000 per cent.

According to Mohammad Reza Shalgouni: “Contrary to the illusions of some leftist groups outside Iran, Ahmadinejad's so-called 'pro-disinherited' policies played an important role in worsening the structural crisis of Iran's economy.

It is sufficient to remember that in the first three years of his presidency, cash reserves trebled, rising from 60,000 billion tomans (around US\$60 billion) to 180 thousand billion tomans.”

Although a relatively large part of the population engages in farming, agricultural production has fallen consistently since the 1960s. By the late 1990s, Iran was a major food importer, and economic hardship in the countryside had driven vast numbers of people to migrate to cities.

Of the labour force of 27.05 million, 25% are in agriculture, 31% are in industry and 45% in services. (These are June 2007 figures.)

Every year the Iranian government announces what the new minimum wage rate would be: 21 March 2010 – 21 March 2011, US\$303 per month. Yet for that year the government's official poverty line was an income of US\$800 per month!

Most workers know that US\$303 did not even pay for accommodation for a family of three or four people.

However, we also have to remember that Iranian capitalists use non-payment of wages as a systematic method of increasing profits.

During this Iranian year (ending 21 March 2013) millions of workers faced delays of six months to a year waiting for the payment of the official minimum wage. Most workers' protests in the last few months have focused on the single slogan "we are hungry".

Corruption across the regime has contributed to the economic crisis.

In 2012, the Islamic Republic was perceived as one of the most corrupt in the world, according to Transparency International. It ranked 133rd, tied with Russia, Kazakhstan, Honduras and Guyana, out of the 176 countries and territories that were ranked from least corrupt to most corrupt.

The sanctions have also had consequences for people's health.

Patients with cancer, muscular dystrophy and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as motor neurone disease) are among those most at risk. The death of a 15-year-old with hemophilia last November was the first to be directly attributed to sanctions.

But hundreds of thousands of Iranians with life-threatening illnesses are unable to get the treatment they need.

The rich are travelling abroad for any basic health issue but medics warn of an impending health crisis unless essential drugs become available.

"Since The Establishment Of The Islamic Republic In 1979, However, The Plight Of Iranian Women Has Worsened"

PF: What is the position of women's rights and the rights of national minorities in Iran?

YM: On March 8, 1979, tens of thousands of Iranian women took part in the first major demonstration against the newly-established Islamic Republic of Iran, following the forced imposition of the hijab. The women's slogans were: "I say it every moment, I say it under torture: either death or freedom!" "Freedom is neither eastern nor western: it is universal!" "Death to censorship!" "In the dawn of freedom, the place of women is empty: revolution is meaningless without women's freedom – we do not want the hijab!"

Since that day and for over 30 years, hard-line fundamentalists have tried to impose their rules on Iranian women and youth.

However, even these clerics agree that they face a cultural crisis.

The majority of the youth and the women's movement openly reject fundamentalist Islam, and the generation born after the Islamic regime came to power is amongst the most secular sections of Middle Eastern society, campaigning for the separation of religion from the state.

With the exception of a minority of the middle and upper classes, Iranian women have traditionally suffered from patriarchal laws and practices both within the family and at work.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, however, the plight of Iranian women has worsened, the rigid imposition of the veil (hijab) has reinforced discrimination and prejudice against women.

Many families refuse to send their daughters to high school. In higher education girls are discouraged or prevented by the state from studying or working in fields and activities considered 'masculine', such as engineering, mining, the judiciary. . It is in opposition to the state that many women pursue such studies.

There is discrimination against women in sport and recreation. Participation in some sports is discouraged, and in recreation most facilities are rigidly segregated and rarely available to women.

Many have called this a system of apartheid against women.

The Ministry of Education in the Iranian government recently reported that 94% of schoolgirls were unfit, as they did not participate in sport or physical education.

The combination of enforced hijab-wearing and segregation is used to limit women's access to state education, sports and other facilities.

In other words, the system is geared to institutionalise women's confinement to the home. These policies facilitate the objective of turning women into second-class citizens.

“The Legal Age Of Marriage For Girls Is Nine”

As they become teenagers, girls are driven more and more into a world dominated and manipulated by their male relatives.

They can be given away in legal marriage without their knowledge or consent while still in their childhood. The legal age of marriage for girls is nine.

Discriminatory Islamic laws govern the private and public life of women: they have to follow a very specific and restrictive set of dress codes – a full veil or complete headscarf and long overcoat are the only accepted forms of dress.

The law discriminates against women in inheritance, giving them at most half of the share of their male counterparts.

According to the laws of Hodud and Qessas, the life of a woman is worth half that of a man, with the implication that a man killing a woman and sentenced to death may only be executed if the victim's family pays the murderer half of his death dues.

Article 6 of this law states that the bereaved family has to pay the murderer's family to get "Islamic justice" (a life for a life).

Article 33 of the Hodud and Qessas states that women's testimony is not valid in homicide cases unless it is supported by at least one male witness.

According to Iran's Islamic laws, women are considered generally unfit to be witnesses; their power of observation is considered half that of a man.

And women have officially been considered too emotional and irrational to be judges.

"Women Who Do Not Adhere To Strict Monogamy Are Considered Criminal And May Be Brutally And Savagely Stoned To Death In Public"

Of course, in other religions equally anti-women rules and regulations are to be found. What differentiates Iran or US-occupied Iraq from other Islamic states, however, is that the Qur'an dictates civil and judicial law. In other words the basic democratic demand of separation of state and religion does not apply – quite the opposite.

Additionally, Islamic marriage laws as applied in Iran are amongst the most repressive in the world in terms of discrimination against women.

While men are allowed to marry up to four wives at a time in permanent marriage, plus an unlimited number of women in what is known as "temporary marriage" (siqeh), women who do not adhere to strict monogamy are considered criminal and may be brutally and savagely stoned to death in public.

This legal Islamic punishment for extra-marital affairs is carried out regularly in Iran.

Men control the lives of their wives, their daughters and their unmarried sisters. In Islamic societies women need a male guardian throughout their lives, to give them legal permission to travel, to study, to marry, etc.

As no consent is required for sexual relations inside marriage, wife-rape is common and even wife-beating is tolerated in the process (with a Qur'anic verse that legitimises wife-beating in the case of "disobedient women").

Abortion is illegal, but the rising number of terminations is testimony to its use as a form of contraception.

Until 1996, as far as divorce was concerned, the man had almost a free hand to divorce his wife, while the woman had only a limited recourse to the legal system. Even after

reform of the laws regulating separation, a woman can only file for divorce in exceptional circumstances.

The extent of this discrimination was best exemplified by reports recorded by the Iran Human Rights Working Group: a court had taken 14 years to approve a divorce request from a woman who complained she was tortured by her husband. She was reporting new incidents of abuse every year. She had agreed to drop all financial demands against her husband, and finally had to contact Iran's prosecutor-general directly (who reported that she "shivered violently" whenever her husband was mentioned) to get her divorce. In another case, the process took eight years.

The divorce law is also designed to punish recalcitrant women, bringing them poverty and destitution, and leading them to resort to unusual tactics in order to obtain minimum maintenance for their children.

In most cases women have to forfeit financial claims in order to obtain divorce, even if the proceedings were initiated by the man. Iranian law states that a male child above the age of two and a female child over the age of seven must live with their father. Even the father's father is given priority over the mother in custody matters.

In marriage, discrimination against women goes still further.

A virgin woman (whatever her age) has no right to marry without her father's consent (or her paternal grandfather's, in the absence of the former).

A Muslim woman has no right to marry a non-Muslim (a right her male counterparts have – with some limitations). And a divorced woman has to wait for a set period before remarriage (but there is no waiting period for a divorced male).

These Islamic practices and laws have created a suitable environment for widespread abuses and atrocities against women.

Most women do not report incidents of rape outside marriage because the victim has more to lose. First she will be accused of bringing dishonour to her own family and in some cases might even be killed by family members.

Second, she fears prosecution under the morality laws: the punishment for "unIslamic" behaviour is to be flogged or stoned to death, especially if a woman is judged by the court as being a willing partner.

While the laws of Hodud and Qessas prescribe "equal" punishments for men and women, it is women who suffer from these barbaric measures.

A married man having an affair with an unmarried women can always claim they were "temporarily married". But a woman in a parallel position has no such defence and would face the horror of death by stoning.

The discriminatory laws regarding women's rights cover a wide range of areas in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, in addition to the anti-women labour laws and social policies. These have had devastating results, causing economic

deprivation and the social isolation of women and their children. Iranian women have been fighting hard against these injustices, but have had very limited success in the face of the overwhelming power of the religious state and its many institutions.

Whatever interpretation of Islam we take, the Qur'an is quite specific that women who disobey their men may be beaten.

Should we accept this on the pretext of respecting Islamic values, and in order to combat racism?

To do so would be to ignore what has been done to secular women in Islamic societies – to women who choose not to obey the rules.

In Tehran teenagers who do not abide by the full Islamic dress code (showing a fringe under their headscarf, for example) are regularly arrested, flogged and made to sign a statement saying they will cease to “behave as a prostitute”.

Iranian women have fought against every one of these policies and it is to their credit that they have forced the regime to retreat from some of the worst.

PF: Iranians I have spoken to have mentioned different strands within the regime. Can you tell us about what internal conflicts there are in the Iranian establishment?

YM: The reformist leaders of the 2009 presidential elections, Moussavi and Karoubi are, as you know, under house arrest and that ‘faction’ of the regime is very much in retreat. I have always argued that they never wanted to challenge the Islamic regime and we would not have seen any genuine ‘reforms’ even if Moussavi had come to power. In many ways, as I said before, the existence of factions and the illusions they create help the regime’s survival.

As we predicted in HOPI’s interventions, once the reformist faction was marginalised in terms of government executive power, conflict between Ahmadinejad’s government and the parliament, or majlis, deepened.

The main parliamentary group, known as the principlist faction, is headed by the speaker, Ali Larijani. The conflict has paralysed the state, with Ahmadinejad angrily withdrawing a number of bills presented by his government, claiming that they had been changed beyond recognition as they passed through various majlis committees.

Ahmadinejad and Larijani are currently involved in a major battle.

One can also talk of another faction – the ‘pragmatists’ led by former Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander Mohsen Rezai – has also been critical of the government.

The majlis is accusing Ahmadinejad supporters in banks and a major industry of being involved in multi-billion tomans corruption and Ahmadinejad is making counter-accusations against the Larijani brothers. The Revolutionary Guards, which control large parts of the economy, are also reportedly corrupt.

The most powerful military organisation in Iran has charitable foundations (bonyads) that are tax-exempt and largely free of government scrutiny. The Guards have also been linked to illicit smuggling and narcotics trafficking. Some veteran officers have reportedly amassed significant wealth as the factional fighting intensifies and various factions are keen to expose their rivals.

The Dictatorship “Have No Social Base Amongst The Poor, Shanty Town Dwellers, Peasants And They Never Had A Social Base Amongst Workers”

PF: What sort of social base and popular support does the regime still have?

YM: The regime has a base mainly amongst those whose survival depends on payment from the regime, a vast religious militia (the Bassij) and the Islamic guards. Probably 3-5 million, including families of members of these forces.

They have no social base amongst the poor, shanty town dwellers, peasants and they never had a social base amongst workers.

PF: Can you also tell us about what different strands there are in the opposition, especially in the democratic movement itself? Also, the democratic movement of several years ago seemed to run into the problem that the regime was prepared to unleash violence on it and the movement had no means of dealing with that. How do you think a mass progressive democratic movement can deal with this?

YM: It is true that the regime unleashed repression on the democratic opposition, however the mass movement was betrayed by the leadership of the Green movement who were more interested in negotiations with the leaders of the regime and kept calling for restraint and retreat.

They called on demonstrators to “remain silent” during some of the largest protests and they refused to address workers’ demands for better wages. They distanced themselves from the more radical demands put forward on the demonstrations, yet that did not save them from house arrest.

A mass movement can defeat this if it is a truly revolutionary movement with no illusions about sections of the regime and if it addresses workers’ demands.

PF: My impression is that younger opponents of the regime tend towards left-liberal politics. Are Marxist ideas making any headway among them?

YM: That was true in the 1990s and early 2000s. An inevitable consequence of the triumphalism of the West at that period. The economic crisis not just in Iran but throughout the world, US wars in the region has change dtaht considerably.

In more recent years we have seen a radicalisation of the student movement and many would describe themselves as Marxist. In addition the defeat of the reformist movement (the Green movement) has also led to a situation where young Iranians have begun to challenge the entire regime from a leftwing point of view .

PF: HOPI has campaigned strongly against US measures against Iran and the threat of an American military assault on the country. Do you think a US attack on Iran is really likely given the quagmire Washington found itself in both in Iraq and Afghanistan?

YM: I don't think the quagmire will stop Washington; in the midst of a serious economic crisis war can present a way out. However, right now, the US and its allies seem to be confident that they can bring down the Iranian regime and judging by the devastating effects of the escalated sanctions they might be right.

PF: Some people on the left in the West argue that defence of Iran against threats and various measures by the US and other Western powers means defence of the existing regime in the Iran.

Some even argue that the regime is a product of a revolution and so is at least partly progressive. What is your view of these things?

YM: The coming to power of the Islamic government signalled the defeat of the Iranian revolution, there was nothing progressive about it in 1979 and there is nothing progressive about it now. It is a ruthless, religious dictatorship with misogynist ideology, it tried to impose Islamic behaviour in the private and public life of a population who refused to accept this.

Hence the duplicity and the reality of Iranians living two separate lives: one pretending to be religious outside the house with increasing disillusionment with religion in private.

All this was before the corruption scandals and accusations of the involvement of senior clerics in prostitution and drug rackets made a mockery of the "pious, moral" Shia Ayatollahs.

PF: One major reason for the rise of so-called political Islam, or Islamic fundamentalism, appears to be the compromises made by secular nationalism with imperialism, for instance the case of the PLO and others.

How would you analyse the current state of political Islam, in terms of its popular support, and what prospects do you see for either rebuilding, or creating a new, secular left in the Middle East? Have the Arab Spring movements strengthened secular progressive forces?

YM: Political Islam is popular in the counties where pro-Western, secular forces are in power, so with the exception of Iran that is true of most of the Middle East and North Africa.

However this is partly because the population still have illusions about political Islam, partly because even under repressive circumstances, religious groups had more room to maneuver than left-wing or secular-nationalist forces and partly because the religious groups benefit directly or indirectly from extensive funds originating in Saudi Arabia or other Gulf countries.

PF: What do you think progressive people in the West can do that would be of most assistance to the working class and oppressed of Iran?

YM: They should show solidarity with the Iranian working class by promoting their demands, while campaigning against war and sanctions.

Sanctions have caused mass unemployment, spiralling cost of living. The current conditions of poverty and destitution make it difficult for workers to mobilise and organise against the regime.

U.S. To Cancel Regular Saturday Drone Strikes On U.S. Citizens

February 7, 2013 The Borowitz Report

WASHINGTON — Citing budgetary concerns, the United States announced today that it would discontinue regular Saturday drone strikes on U.S. citizens, beginning in 2014.

In announcing the decision, the White House spokesman Jay Carney acknowledged that the cutback in drone service was “bound to be controversial.”

“In the United States, we’ve always prided ourselves on our ability to target our citizens with drone strikes, Monday through Saturday, regardless of the weather,” he said. “We know that losing Saturday drone service is going to take some getting used to.”

But the move to cut back drone service drew sharp criticism from a longtime defender of the program, the former Vice-President Dick Cheney. “Like most Americans, I thought I’d never see the day when drones just up and take Saturdays off,” he said. “This would never be happening if I were still President.”

As if to silence critics, Mr. Carney assured reporters that drones could “still get the job done” Monday through Friday, and reminded U.S. citizens to update the government on any change of address so the drones would know where to reach them.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

**“If I Could Leave Everything,
Every House That I Stayed In
Since, Everything I Have, I Would
Leave It All”**

“The Future Of My Nine Children And My 42 Grandchildren Depends On Our Return To Our Home In Palestine”

“I Hope I Will Be Buried In My Home, Isdod”



Mohammed (85) shows his ID card which was issued by the Municipality of Isdod in 1947

February 27, 2013 Palestinian Centre for Human Rights [Excerpts]

Mohammed Mohammed Mohammed Tuman (85) was 19 years old when, on 20 December 1948, he and his family were forced to flee their home in Isdod, now known as Ashdod.

Victims of the Nakba (meaning ‘catastrophe’), they fled along with their entire village of around 8,500 people.

For some time before, inhabitants of other villages had been arriving in Isdod in their hundreds, bringing with them terrible accounts of the massacres they had witnessed in places such as Qibya, Basheet, Deir Yassin, and the Dahmash mosque.

[W]ith the Egyptian army withdrawing from the area, some 30,000 people set out on foot and walked for days until they reached relative safety.



Mohammed sitting before a map of Palestine which hangs in his home

Mohammed recounts his memories of the day his family was displaced from their home:

“We were so afraid that we would be killed. Already, 48 villagers had been killed, including my brother, Ahmed, who was killed by Jewish settlers as he took part in the resistance. 15 more had been taken prisoner.

“I kept a note of the name of every person who was killed or imprisoned. I have that record still. On that day, my father sent me to speak with the Egyptian commander, to ask him what they would do. I could not meet him, but I spoke to an Egyptian soldier. I asked him, ‘Are you going to stay and defend us, or withdraw?’

“He answered that he did not know, but said that he would ask someone. By 4 o’clock that afternoon, there were no soldiers left. The Jewish groups from the nearby settlement of Nizanim were well-armed. They had weapons, tanks, and warplanes. We had nothing. We had to leave.”

The journey south was arduous: “The whole village left, men, women and children. My family and I were only able to bring a small amount of flour to make bread and the clothes on our backs.

“We spent one night in Hamama, another in Al-Majdal ([now known as Ashkelon), and the third night in Herbiya. We slept under trees, but we were scared of being attacked.

“We had no food. Finally, on the fourth day of our journey, we reached Khan Younis, where some friends of ours lived. Some of my family had been scattered during the

chaos, but eventually we gathered together in Khan Younis. Our friends had a shelter made of straw that we were able to live in. After some years, I built a house on the site. In all, we lived there for fifteen years.”

Mohammed was newly-married, and struggled to start a new life with his wife, Basima.

“I found some agricultural work, but I only earned 10 piasters per day. At the time, that was the price of a kilo of sugar.

“Our eldest daughter, Turkiyya, was born in 1949. My wife wasn’t well enough to breastfeed her so we had to buy milk to feed her from a neighbour who had a cow.

“My mother died the following year, when we were still living in that straw hut. It was a hard and bitter life. Poverty was widespread. I struggled to make enough money to provide for my family through agricultural labour and selling some of the produce. My hands were rough and cracked from using tools to work the land.

“We lived in suffering for fifteen years, until UNRWA provided us with a shelter in Khan Younis refugee camp in 1963, where we live still. The following year, I began to work for a local family, who had a clothing business.”

Mohammed and his family were forced to flee the refugee camp for a brief time during the Six-Day War of 1967: “We were very afraid. We moved to the El Mowasi area near the sea and hid under the trees. After seven days, Israeli army planes dropped leaflets instructing us to go back to the camp, carrying white flags. We went back. However, I became jobless after the war. Our standard of living was below zero. My wife’s sister and brother were living in Lud, in Israel. They sent me a permit to join them and found me a job as a labourer.”

After 20 years, Mohammed travelled north to the place of his birth: “When I arrived in Lud, I asked if they could bring me to see my village. When I saw Isdod, I was laughing and weeping – laughing because I was seeing my village once more, weeping because it was occupied. It was a mixture of feelings.”

The Tuman family had been farmers and landowners, owning 120 dunums of land near the village before they were forcibly displaced. Mohammed had worked the land with his four brothers and their father.

“As I wandered around, I found an old key on the ground. I recognised it as the key for starting the engine of the water well, which had since been stolen. I brought the key back with me to Khan Younis.”

Mohammed continued working in Israel until 1978:

“At the time it was very easy for Palestinians to travel to and from Gaza to work in Israel. When my son, Turkiy, was old enough, he joined me there. Every two weeks or every month, we came back to Khan Younis for a few days. I couldn’t stay in Gaza where there was no work. I had a big family – four sons and five daughters – and I had to provide for them.

“During that time, I returned to visit my village, Isdod, many times. Finally, after 20 years, I returned to Khan Younis and started a shop.”

It is painful for Mohammed to speak of the more recent Israeli offensives on the Gaza Strip, ‘Operation Cast Lead’ in 2008/9 and ‘Operation Pillar of Defence’ in November 2012: “All of Gaza was in danger during those times and we were even more afraid than in previous wars. Israel has a strong military force with modern weapons, shells, and fighter jets. There was no safe place in Gaza. And I am an old man now. I have been in this wheelchair for three years. I can do nothing to resist the occupation.”

More than 64 years after Mohammed was forced to leave his home, he longs to return to Isdod.

“I still wish I could return. If I could leave everything, every house that I stayed in since, everything I have, I would leave it all. I was born there and I am so attached to that place. The future of my nine children and my 42 grandchildren depends on our return to our home in Palestine. I hope I will be buried in my home, Isdod.”

It is estimated that at least 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes during the Nakba of 1948. As of 1 January 2012, there were 4,797,723 Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA [United Nations Relief Works Agency]. 1,167,572 of them live in the Gaza Strip.

Under international law, all individuals have a fundamental right to return to their homes whenever they have become displaced due to reasons out of their control.

The obligation of states to respect the individual’s right of return is a customary norm of international law.

The right of return for Palestinian refugees specifically is affirmed in UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of 1948, which “(r)esolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.”

The resolution also provides that refugees who choose not to return, or who suffered damage or loss to their property, should be compensated by the responsible authorities.

**Zionist Terror Gang Attacks As-Sawiya Olive Trees:
“They Are Doing So To Make Villagers Leave Their Lands”
“The Settlers Also Wrote Racist Slogans In Hebrew Over Water Barrels In The**

Village, And Sprayed The Word ‘Punishment’”

03/08/2013 Ma'an

NABLUS -- Settlers uprooted over 100 olive trees south of Nablus on Friday, a Palestinian Authority official said.

Settler-monitoring official Ghassan Daghlis told Ma'an that settlers from Rechalim destroyed at least 120 olive trees in the nearby Palestinian village of As-Sawiya.

The trees belonged to Muhammad Jazi and Hamdi Jazi.

"This is the second time that settlers uproot my olive trees in the last two years," Muhammad told Ma'an.

The settlers also wrote racist slogans in Hebrew over water barrels in the village, and sprayed the word "punishment," he added.

Senior DFLP leader Qais Abdel Karim, or Abu Leila, condemned the attack.

"We need to stand by our people before they demolish all their land and plants. They don't have the right to do this and they are doing so to make villagers leave their lands," he told Ma'an.

Settler violence against Palestinians and their property is routine and rarely prosecuted by Israel's legal system.

MORE:

**Zionists Terror Gang Attacks
Nahhalin Olive Trees:
“Farmers Told Ma'an TV That They
Have Been Suffering From Attacks
For 10 Years”
“Whenever They Uproot A Tree, We Plant
Another”**

March 5, 2013 Ma'an

BETHLEHEM -- Israeli settlers on Monday uprooted nearly 100 olive and almond trees in a village southwest of Bethlehem, a local official told Ma'an TV.

The head of the Nahhalin village council said a large group of settlers, guarded by Israeli forces, uprooted nearly 100 trees aged around 30 years old.

The fields, in an area known locally as al-Jamjum, belong to members of the Fanoun family.

"Yesterday, around 3 p.m., I passed by and there was nothing wrong. I always check on the trees. This morning I came here around 8 a.m. and a massacre had been committed. Seemingly they did it overnight," says the mayor.

Farmers told Ma'an TV that they have been suffering from attacks for 10 years.

"They uproot trees, and we plant new trees.

"Whenever they uproot a tree, we plant another as we are determined to remain firm on our land," says a young resident of the village.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



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