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USADI Commentary

Iran's 1999 Student Uprising Still Resonates

Saturday, July 9, marks the sixth anniversary of the six days of student-led uprising against the ruling tyranny in Iran in 1999. The uprising, which shook the regime to its foundations, has deservedly been viewed as a milestone in the history of Iranian people's two decades of struggle to unseat the theocracy ruling Iran.

With the blessing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the outgoing President Mohammad Khatami, uniformed and plainclothes security forces brutally cracked down on students and thousands of other Iranians who had joined them. Several thousands were arrested and hundreds killed or wounded.

If not suppressed, the uprising, which quickly spread to nearly two dozen other cities, could have had dire consequences and if sustained might have triggered a chain of events that would have possibly threatened the mullahs' survival. In a cover-page story, *The Economist* magazine billed the uprising as "Iran's Second Revolution" and a commentary in the CBS News said "a sense of revolution has returned to Iran."

After nearly two decades of relentless struggle, the movement for democracy and popular sovereignty - the unfulfilled aspirations of the 1979 anti-monarchic revolution - burst out in the open six years ago on July 9 for the world to see. The student movement, always a vanguard in Iranians' century-long struggle against despotism, linked up with nationwide resistance of Iranian people in demanding the overthrow of the clerical state in its totality. The students, chanting "Death to despotism, Death to dictators," stormed out of university campuses and into various neighborhoods where they were joined by thousands of citizens, particularly younger Iranians.

This year, the ruling mullahs are still reeling from political and diplomatic fall-out of the June presidential election sham where a reported hostage-taker, interrogator, assassin and former commander of the notorious Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps was declared the winner. And since January, uprisings in several Iranian cities as well as a number of strikes, sit-ins and sporadic clashes have kept the security forces busy.

Reports from Iran however indicate that the regime, already fearing a wave of anti-government protests on the anniversary of 1999 uprising, has embarked on taking some pre-emptive measures by attacking dissidents' homes or bludgeoning political prisoners in their cells in Tehran's infamous Evin prison.

The July 9 uprising gave Iranians self-confidence and a sense of power and legitimacy in their demands for democracy and justice. It unmasked the bogus reformer, such as Khatami. More importantly, it strengthened the historic ties between the student movement and the nationwide struggle for democracy.

Outright crackdown, however, has utterly failed to weaken the resolve of the democracy movement against the clerical state and diminish the yearning for democracy in Iran.

Since 1999, Tehran has continued to muzzle dissidents while the West, particularly Europe, has expanded trade with Iran. Thanks to advanced anti-riot gear they sold to Iran, the mullahs are better equipped to crackdown now than they were in 1999.

Alarmed by the storm on the horizon, Iran's rulers closed ranks by giving the Revolutionary Guards, the loyal servants of the Supreme Leader, control over all levers of power.

The move, culminating in the presidency of former Guards' commander Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, promises stepped-up repression at home and a more defiant attitude in the nuclear talks with Europe.

The free world has arrived at a crossroads: To continue to shamelessly appease the mullahs' rogue regime or to side with Iranian people and their struggle to establish an Iran free of tyranny, terror, and weapons of mass destruction.

This is our chance to be on the right side of history by supporting Iranians and anti-fundamentalist democratic opposition forces who are the real actors of change in Iran. **(USADI)**

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

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US agents probe past of Iran's leader

The murders started in the 1980s. Kazem Sami, who was the first Iranian health minister after the 1979 Islamic revolution but fell out with the ayatollahs, was one of the first of dozens of dissidents to die. He was working in a Tehran clinic in November 1988 when an assailant posing as a patient stabbed him repeatedly.

The following July, three gunmen burst into a Vienna flat and opened fire on a meeting of Iranian Kurdish exiles. Among three people killed was Abdul Rahman Qassemilou, the leader of Kurdish opposition to the ayatollahs in Tehran. The murders have never been solved.

Almost a decade later, a clandestine group of Iranian militants began plotting the murder of Salman Rushdie, the victim of a fatwa sentencing him to death for supposed blasphemy in his book *The Satanic Verses*.

For years there had been only the vaguest allegations of a link between those events. All that has changed with the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the hardline former mayor of Tehran, as Iran's new president.

Ahmadinejad's surprise victory in last month's poll has unleashed a flood of accusation, innuendo and investigation of his militant pedigree. Accused by his enemies of orchestrating a string of murders in the 1980s and 1990s, Ahmadinejad, 49, is also being scrutinised by US intelligence agencies over claims that he participated in the student takeover of the US embassy in Tehran in 1979.

Opposition websites are buzzing with reports of a leaked document that purportedly proves Ahmadinejad led a team of would-be assassins that plotted to murder Rushdie.

The document remained untraceable last week but a prominent opposition figure, Maryam Rajavi, of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, denounced Ahmadinejad as a "terrorist, torturer and executioner".

In a further twist, an Austrian newspaper claimed yesterday that the country's authorities were studying classified documents suggesting he played a key role in the Vienna killings.

Iranian officials have dismissed many such allegations as "absurd" and motivated by political malice. Asked by *The New York Times* whether he was among the hostage takers in 1979, Ahmadinejad replied: "It is not true. It is only rumours."

But a senior Washington official said "a lot of filing cabinets are rattling" as intelligence and law enforcement agencies search for clues to the Iranian strongman's past.

There was also concern in Europe that whatever the truth, a process of American-led "demonisation" has begun that will damage European efforts to solve the crisis over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"If he has got that sort of [militant] form, it's going to be easy for the Americans to demonise him and the prospects for doing business with him becomes that much more difficult." said one European official...

World Net Daily

July 7, 2005

Iran has 40,000 human 'time bombs'

An Iranian movement says it now has recruited 40,000 human "time bombs" to carry out suicide attacks against Americans in Iraq and Israel.

The movement -- called the World Islamic Organization's Headquarters for Remembering the Shahids [Martyrs] -- says the volunteers want to carry out "martyrdom operations to liberate Islamic lands," according to a report broadcast by Al-Arabiya TV and translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute, or MEMRI.

Last year, *Insight Online* magazine reported the movement, which at the time claimed 10,000 recruits, was signing up members on the Internet.

In the July 2 television feature, spokesman Mohammad 'Ali Samedi said that since the movement's beginning a year and a half ago, he has been busy signing up recruits, organizing conventions and training members for martyrdom operations.

Supporters of the movement include members of parliament and Revolutionary Guards officers, but Samedi insists it is not a government organization and is not supported by the Iranian regime.

As MEMRI reported last year, however, Iranian political leader Ali Khamenei and Revolutionary Guards Gen. Shabani praised the culture of martyrdom and jihad in speeches to students, urging them to become martyrs themselves in order to resist enemies, particularly the United States. The July 2 program includes an interview with a female member named Vesaly.

"We are first and foremost Muslims and it is our duty to defend our brothers and sisters throughout the world," she says. "We don't need permission from anybody. This has to do with our religious duty and responsibilities. This is our choice, and we have no fear. We adhere to the legacy of our late leader, Imam Khomeini."...