

Reading into Iran's Quantum of Solace

Written by Reza Molavi

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REZA MOLAVI, JUN 25 2009

The Western-backed Shah, who grandly styled himself as the “King of Kings”, was overthrown by the people power when they took to the streets to call for his removal. The Islamic Republic of Iran was born 30 years ago when every man, woman, young and old expressed their dismay in unison, in their total and utter disgust with the social, economic, and political situation under the Shah. They came from all walks of life: those from the fringes of urban areas to the rural population joined hands with the technocratic, academic, industrialists, students, women and children to shout out that the Shah must go. What they had not thought about was who should replace the one they wanted to see the back of.

Thirty years on, we are witnessing the “people power” at work, once again. People from all social strata, although mainly from the well educated middle classes, are pouring out into the streets, saying they are tired of the current sitting president due to the irregularities which it is now abundantly clear existed before, during and after the June 12th Presidential elections throughout Iran. They are united in wishing that Ahmadinejad should go. But again, as in the original uprising, they do not know what they have bargained for.

The mouthpiece for the hard line dominated Guardian Council, Abbas-Ali Kadhodaei said that, “fortunately, in the recent presidential election we found no witness of major fraud or breach”. The Ayatollah had, in his Friday Prayers speech, come out very clearly in support of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and has not only declared him the legitimate winner in the recent elections, but alluded to the fact that their philosophy and approach to governing is much closer to one another. Indirectly, the Supreme Leader is declaring that Mousavi, the main contender to Ahmadinejad's presidency, is not agreeable to his world view.

Against this backdrop in Iran, and having already seen how ruthlessly the regime's thuggish apparatus go out on their motorcycles in a tandem arrangement fully dressed in riot control gear, and plain clothes Basijis and regime die-hards equipped with clubs, chains and Kalashnikovs to suppress the peaceful marchers, there are western protagonists who wish to cheer the marchers on and challenge them to go out and endure the killing and beating. It is shocking to see the blood in the streets of Tehran and see the security forces of the Islamic Republic shooting innocent people. This deplorable human rights fiasco will not be forgotten by the Iranians.

In a country where people have lived through a revolution, war, and the killings and demonstrations of ten years ago during Mr. Khatami's presidency, and whilst we can all remember the largest demonstrations ever seen in London against the war in Iraq in 2003 and against the nuclear weapons which were to be stationed in the UK, which were totally ineffective, there are some protagonists who feel the marchers in Iran should soldier on, even at the cost of their lives.

As deplorable as vote rigging is, and as disgusting as Mr. Ahmadinejad's policies may be, we need to be very careful how we agitate and cheer the people in Iran into confronting the autocratic regime they are faced with. No matter how much we despise the actions of the security apparatus in Iran and admire the restraint and peaceful protests in the streets of Tehran, we should be conscious of the fact that as long as the Supreme Leader has not backed down from his position, there will be further bloodshed. Change is in the air – if not now, in the foreseeable future.

Lastly, it would be prudent to contemplate the fact that while we are focused on the scapegoat game the Iranian

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government is playing and the human rights abuses which are taking place in the streets of Iranian cities, the nuclear centrifuges are spinning at maximum speed in Natanz and that Mr. Mousavi is as much of an “establishment product” as is Mr. Ahmadinejad.

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