



MEI MEDIA WATCH

(A Survey of Editorials)

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Re-election of Ahmadinejad: A Year later

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[The outcome of the Iranian presidential election held on 12 June 2009 was highly contested. Many Iranians disputed the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and for weeks the streets of Tehran witnessed large-scale public protests. A year later the Green Movement appeared to have lost of its stream and this is reflected by the scant attention paid by the international media to the first anniversary. **Editor, MEI Media Watch.**]

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Editorial, 12 June 2010, Saturday

1. Iran's pain goes on

For one brief shining moment on the streets of Tehran everything seemed possible. It was just a year ago (2009) today.

With the hope and the spirit and, yes, the naiveté of youth hundreds of thousands of Iran's young people openly protested the fraudulent election that would keep Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in power.

But they did more than that. The Green revolutionaries - with their bright green scarves and headbands and painted hands - wanted the kind of freedoms all young people want and they wanted total access to the world around them in the myriad ways we so take for granted. What they wanted was to be part of a nation that could once again be respected in the world community, not the isolated pariah its fool of a leader has made it.

But what they got was the cold back hand of a ruthless dictator, enforced by his Revolutionary Guard. And blood ran in the streets of Tehran, the blood of its young people, brought to the world via their own videos and social networks and at great personal risk.

What they got from our own nation's leader, sad to say, was - belatedly - the usual empty rhetoric.

Even today the detentions, the arrests, the executions in Iran for the "crime" of disagreeing with the government continue.

"The Iranian government is determined to silence all dissenting voices, while at the same time trying to avoid all scrutiny by the international community into the violations connected to the post-election unrest," said Claudio Cordone of Amnesty International upon the release of the organization's latest report on repression within Iran.

The stories of prisoners held incommunicado, tortured, raped are enough to fill some 71 pages - and enough to break the hearts of peace-loving people everywhere.

Today (12 June) this sad anniversary will be marked around the world with interfaith rallies aimed at supporting human rights and free elections in Iran. One of 82 such rallies will take place today (12 June) near the Copley Square branch of the Boston Public Library. It is one small way to say that the people of our own nation have not forgotten and today stand in solidarity with the democracy-loving people of Iran

Source: <http://bostonherald.com/news/opinion/editorials/view.bg?articleid=1260991>



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2. What if the Obama administration fully sided with Iran's Green Movement?

A YEAR ago (2009) on Saturday, a movement was born that offers the best chance of ending the threat posed by Iran's support for terrorism and pursuit of nuclear weapons. Millions of Iranians turned out to vote against the extremist government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a presidential election -- and were outraged when the regime announced an improbable landslide victory for the incumbent. Since then, what is now known as the Green Movement has swelled into the most consequential challenge ever mounted to Iran's Islamic theocracy. Through sheer brutality -- shootings, mass arrests, tortures, rapes and executions -- the regime has mostly driven it off the streets; leaders called off demonstrations that had been planned for Saturday. But the popular revulsion with Iran's rulers that drives the opposition has not faded.

To a large extent, the Green Movement is leaderless. The opposition presidential candidates it initially rallied behind are aging adherents of clerical rule who have little in common with Iran's huge ranks of frustrated young people. Yet it seems likely that a victory by the opposition would mean a shift toward democracy and liberal reforms. The White House was slow to embrace the movement -- so much so that protesters held up signs last year (2000) asking President Obama, "Are you with them or with us?" Lately, Mr. Obama has made some stronger statements, including one on Thursday (10 June 2010) that was delivered in his name by an aide before the National Endowment for Democracy, which gave its annual award to the Green Movement.

But as Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) pointed out in a powerful speech before the group also on Thursday (10 June 2010), the president has hesitated to "unleash America's full moral power to support the Iranian people." Mr. Obama clings to the hope that the radical clique in Tehran will eventually agree to negotiate in good faith -- "an assumption," Mr. McCain noted, that "seems totally at odds with the character of this Iranian regime."

The senator proposed "a different goal: to mobilize our friends and allies in like-minded countries, both in the public sphere and the private sector, to challenge the legitimacy of this Iranian regime, and to support Iran's people in changing the character of their government -- peacefully, politically, on their own terms and in their own ways."

In fact, the administration has been inching in this direction. It has taken some small steps to help Iranians overcome the regime's Internet censorship. Many of the new sanctions are focused on companies controlled by the Revolutionary Guard, which is the regime's backbone and prime instrument of repression. But the policy could be much more aggressive: The State Department, for example, is still sitting on tens of millions of dollars appropriated by Congress for Internet firewall-busting.

Mr. Obama's strategy hasn't slowed Iran's nuclear program or its aggressions toward Iraq, Lebanon or Israel. The popular discontent reflected in the Green Movement offers another avenue for action, one that is more in keeping with America's ideals. It's time for the president to fully embrace it.

Source: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/11/AR2010061106014.html>

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*The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views/positions of the MEI@ND. Editor, **MEI Media Watch**: P R Kumaraswamy*