



## Foreign Policy Centre Briefing: Terrorocracy- How Iran Legitimises Its Domestic and Foreign Policies

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The late Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei, the two Supreme Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are among defenders and admirers of the late Navab Safavi. Safavi founded Fadayan-e Islam, a radical organisation established in 1946 in Iran and responsible for a number of key assassinations during the Pahlavi era.

Like other radical Islamists, Safavi wanted to cleanse the society by eliminating those whom he considered as corrupt, a concept not far from the current practice used by the Iranian judicial system: execution based on the charge of *corruption on earth*.<sup>1</sup> For the past three decades, goals and ideals originating with Safavi and his allies have been propagated through the Islamic Republic of Iran--a government that is neither Islamic nor a republic, but one that has rendered Safavi, a radical terrorist, the status of a hero.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic based on ideals and practices espoused by figures such as Safavi, Khomeini and Khamenei, the concept of terrorism is deeply embedded in Iran's post-revolution constitution:

*The Constitution, having regard to the Islamic contents of the Iranian Revolution, which was a movement for the victory of all the oppressed over the arrogant, provides a basis for the continuation of that revolution both inside and outside the country. It particularly tries to do this in developing international relations with other Islamic movements and peoples, so as to prepare the way towards a united single world community ("Your community is one community, and I am your Lord who you are to worship") Quotation from the Arabic and to the continuation of the progressive struggle for the rescue of deprived and oppressed nations throughout the world."*<sup>2</sup>

The above reference coupled with Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary doctrine points to an obvious conclusion: that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran mandates the continuation and export of Iran's regime to the global community through collaboration with like-minded movements. This is the foundation of Iran's policy and its practice of supporting militant terrorist organisations in the Near East such as Hamas and Hezbollah. According to the above, the aim of this collaboration is the all-important notion of creating a "single world community" based on Iran's definition of an Islamic nation.

It is important to note that the methodology employed by the Iranian authorities pivots around *permanent struggle*, a Marxian idea that regards violence as the engine of history. As the records of post-revolutionary Iran show, the Islamic Republic's permanent struggle leads to a future far from peaceful. This is a

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/08/iran-judiciary-military-colour>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution.php>



strong signal to “deprived and oppressed nations” not to follow the example of Iran’s catastrophic revolution.

## Iran’s Brand of Terrorism: A Double-Edged Sword

Since the earliest days of the revolution, Iran’s government made it abundantly clear that it was committed to establishing their version of Islamic rule through war.

On 27 February 2010 the leaders of Hamas (Khaled Mashaal), the Palestine Islamic Jihad (Ramadan Abdullah Mohammad Shallah) and the People’s Front for the Liberation of Palestine-GC (Ahmed Jibril) attended a conference hosted by Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. Such a gathering indicates that the Iranian regime does not consider these—or similar organisations—as being engaged in what the rest of world considers to be terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Rather, they are viewed as mere freedom fighters who are paving the way for a better future for the world.

Such a future, according to the Islamic Republic, is only possible once Israel, the agent of Imperialist Britain and the Great Satan (U.S.A.) no longer exists.

According to Ayatollah Khamenei the leaders of these organisations will ensure that the “spirit of resistance will be strengthened among the population. The only way for Palestine is resistance and armed conflict.”<sup>4</sup> These, as well as his recent statements, echo the words of Ayatollah Khomeini who, during a sermon as far back as February 1979, referred to Israel as a form of cancer.<sup>5</sup>

Iran also continues to misuse the eschatological teachings of Islam.<sup>6</sup> It does so as a means of reinforcing a culture of oppression. In light of the fact that the position of the Vali-e Faqih is one that exists during the occultation of Imam Mahdi, both Khomeini and Khamenei advocate a culture of violence and combat with *Westoxification*<sup>7</sup> as an essential step in preparing the world for the coming of the promised Imam, a concept known as Mahdaviyyat. Twined with Iran’s pursuit of nuclear energy, the concept of Mahdaviyyat in Iranian foreign policy reinforces the self-identity of certain members of the Iranian leadership as harbingers of the Day of Judgement and establishers of Islamic rule throughout the planet.<sup>8</sup> The father of the revolution, Khomeini, in his first book, *Kashf al-Asrar*--a book based on his understanding of Islamic teachings--advocated that all Muslim men (who are not physically challenged) must prepare to conquer

<sup>3</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:151:0014:0016:DE:PDF>

<sup>4</sup> [http://europeandemocracy.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=13679&catid=4&Itemid=22](http://europeandemocracy.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=13679&catid=4&Itemid=22)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.islamicecenter.com/ketaabkhaaneh/sahifeh\\_noor/sahifeh\\_noor\\_jeld\\_9\\_khomeini\\_12.html#link2](http://www.islamicecenter.com/ketaabkhaaneh/sahifeh_noor/sahifeh_noor_jeld_9_khomeini_12.html#link2)

<sup>6</sup> Eschatology is the field of study concerned with Islamic teachings regarding the end of the world and the promised coming of the Twelfth Imam, Mahdi, in Shia Islam. For further details see *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* by John S. Esposito, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> A term coined by Jalal Al-e Ahmad in 1960, became an important expression representing revolutionary ideology in 1979 when Khomeini advocated neither westoxification nor eastoxification, only an Islamic Republic is the way to save the nation..

<sup>8</sup> See Ahmadinejad’s speech delivered on 24/5/1387 (2009) at a Mahdaviyyat conference regarding the importance of Mahdaviyyat in establishing a world government at: <http://www.president.ir/fa/?search=rapid&querystring=%D9%85%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%8A&LangID=fa&SearchType=0&MediaType=0&SearchInTitle=1&SearchInLead=1&SearchInBody=1&ResultsPerPage=10&Category=0&start=7>. For an indepth look at Ahmadinejad’s foreign policies and Mahdaviyyat, please see: *Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy in Ahmadinejad Government* by S. Hamid Mowlana and Dr. Manouchehr Mohammadi published by Dadgostar in 2008, pp. 178-186.



other countries. He emphasised: "there are hundreds of other *ayat* [Qur'anic verses] and *hadith* urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all that mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such a claim."<sup>9</sup>

In parallel with this process is an invasive Iranian strategy employing modern instruments to eliminate a culture of human rights, freedom and democracy among Iranians. In addition to the recent acts of injustice carried out against Iran's citizens, including the execution of five human rights activists (including Farzad Kamangar) under unknown circumstances; the repeated attacks on women's rights and student rights activists and the government's inexcusable failure in observing the due process of law in the case of the seven Baha'i Yaran, the Iranian officials are taking unimaginable steps to suffocate those in favour of rights and democracy. While Iran packages itself as a *theocracy* based on the Vali-e Faqih's interpretation of Islamic Sharia, the fact remains that the very foundation of the state is based on pursuing a culture of terror, resulting in a state more appropriately termed a *terrorocracy*.

Within Iran's borders, the Islamic Republic has imprisoned, tortured and executed thousands of innocent Iranians.<sup>10</sup> With complete disrespect for its citizens' rights, the Iranian judicial system operates based on a wide range of fabricated rules far removed from the due process of law. Over the past 31 years thousands of Iranians whose beliefs and ideas are dissimilar to those in charge of the state are considered criminal, are forced to face imprisonment, torture and even execution based on vague charges including "corruption on earth"<sup>11</sup>--an offence punishable by death according to the Supreme Leader's interpretation of Sharia laws. Additionally, outside of Iran's borders key dissidents or their family members have been threatened, terrorised and assassinated on the same basis of spreading corruption on earth.<sup>12</sup>

In the online world, a special unit of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps is mandated to block Iranian democratic movements abroad. In 2008 Iran considered introducing the death penalty for what was termed "internet crimes" which included blogging. A year later, following Iran's Twitter revolution, hundreds of bloggers and journalists were placed in prison.<sup>13</sup> An increasing number of those who use the Internet to voice their support for democracy and human rights in Iran face interrogations and are charged as criminals. In March 2010 alone, the IRGC admitted it had defaced or attacked 29 websites run by the Iranian Diaspora.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a number of human rights activists and

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<sup>9</sup> Amir Taheri, from: *Holy Terror*, 1987, p.226-7.

<sup>10</sup> According to Amnesty International records, by 1982 Iran executed more than 4000 of its citizens. See: *Iran executions send a chilling message* available on-line at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iran-executions-send-chilling-message-2010-03-30>.

<sup>11</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini politicised the notion of corruption on earth--a traditionally religious concept related to commission of sin by non-believers and unjust individuals--by using it as a tool to categorize those whom he identified as enemies of the Islamic Republic. In his first book published in 1942 he stated that mofseeds or those who promote corruption on earth should be uprooted. Their disobedience to the state, he affirmed, represents disobedience to God.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Shapour Bakhtiar and Abdolrahman Boroumand were among those whose assassination are known to have been carried out by agents of the Islamic Republic.

<sup>13</sup> According to an Amnesty report released on 30 April 2010 more than 70 journalists are currently in prison. See: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/iran-journalists-under-siege-2010-04-30>

<sup>14</sup> For original Persian please see: <http://www.qerdab.ir/fa/pages/?cid=639> and for an English version please see: <http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8812231183>



members of minority groups residing overseas have received threatening messages on Facebook advising them to keep quiet or face the consequences.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, pro-IRI sites engaged in spreading propaganda and their brand of intellectualism are on the rise. Coupled with Iran's plans to launch its own email network,<sup>16</sup> this points to the fact that the Islamic Republic is not anti-Internet but rather that it views the Internet as a tool for exporting its brand of justice outside Iran's borders. In April 2010, for instance, Justice Minister Morteza Bakhtiari announced plans to set up a court for Iranians living abroad. According to Radio Farda, this would serve as a threat "against Iranian expats for their show of solidarity with the opposition street protests in Tehran" following the June 2009 presidential elections.<sup>17</sup>

Since the inception of the Islamic Republic, state-sponsored propaganda and defamation campaigns have continued to smear the name and reputation of leading Iranians. Media outlets such as Kayhan Newspaper and Press TV regularly engage in character assassination by spreading false information against leading dissidents and human rights figures. In addition, the Iranian intelligence forces have harassed, abducted, detained, tortured and murdered Iranians, their colleagues, or family members.

According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, interviews with dozens of average Iranians living abroad revealed consistent patterns of threats and harassment among those who criticise the Islamic Republic—whether online or in traditional media and both inside and outside the country.<sup>18</sup> Another article quotes an anonymous source in Iran pointing to the government's efforts to monitor email as portrayed in an intimidating television series called "Black Wisdom."<sup>19</sup>

Former detainees report that during interrogations they were shown pictures and reports of activities of their family members living overseas, a move most likely intended to demonstrate the long arm of Iran's judicial system abroad. Furthermore, many former detainees refuse to speak of their experiences while in custody, a sign that they have been threatened with a return to prison, or worse, should they speak about these experiences. Others who do speak up confirm this suspicion. Just prior to his release, Islamic Republic agents reassured Maziar Bahari "we can get you anywhere. And bring you back in a bag."<sup>20</sup>

Increasing numbers of Iranians face difficulties while travelling to or from Iran. Many are asked to reveal their Facebook password or log into their account as part of security checks. Difficulties do not end there. Records show that the

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<sup>15</sup> Reports indicate that some of those Iranians who use Facebook as a means of supporting the post-election uprisings in Iran, have received messages indicating that their families in Iran are in danger.

<sup>16</sup> [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704140104575057621649270154.html?mod=rss\\_Today's\\_Most\\_Popular](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704140104575057621649270154.html?mod=rss_Today's_Most_Popular)

<sup>17</sup> The report published on 5 April 2010 is available at:

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Special\\_Court\\_To\\_Be\\_Established\\_for\\_Iranians\\_Abroad\\_/2003235.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Special_Court_To_Be_Established_for_Iranians_Abroad_/2003235.html)

<sup>18</sup> [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125978649644673331.html?mod=WSJ\\_hp\\_mostpop\\_read](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125978649644673331.html?mod=WSJ_hp_mostpop_read)

<sup>19</sup> See: *Iran Executes Five Activists, Sending Message to Critics* at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/10/world/middleeast/10iran.html>

<sup>20</sup> Threats against Maziar Bahari continue. See: <http://www.cpi.org/2010/04/cpi-denounces-iranian-threats-against-maziar-bahar.php>



Islamic Republic's culture of paranoia is not limited to individuals and extends to institutions. Iran spends millions to influence Western academic institutions by funding academic chairs and sending students to study—and influence—Western academic circles. Iran has also placed sixty international organisations—including councils, think tanks, institutes, foundations and even Yale University—on a black list<sup>21</sup> in an effort to further terrorise and intimidate students and academics. This black list may be the basis for imposing travel restrictions, interrogations and even detention of Iranians or Westerners who may have any involvement with the listed organisations. Threatening students of outspoken academics outside of Iran and imprisoning scholars such as Emadodin Baghi and Kian Tajbakhsh further discourages others from travelling to Iran.

Threatening Iranians as part of Iran's official state policy to eliminate dissent is not a new phenomenon. In the early 1990s the international community learned of a secret document known as the "Golpayegani Memorandum". This memo recorded the views of top officials of the regime and was co-signed by the Supreme Leader.<sup>22</sup> The document outlined the general, educational, cultural, legal and social 'status' of Baha'is as second-class citizens. It indicated that Baha'is—rather than having rights—were subject to a large set of restrictions, going so far as outlining the necessity of planning "to fight and to destroy their cultural roots abroad."<sup>23</sup>

Experts familiar with other state policies designed to eliminate specific populations have referred to Iran's policies on Baha'is as genocidal.<sup>24</sup> Iran's Golpayegani Memorandum cites a number of government policies, which are identified in the Rome Statute<sup>25</sup> as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, Iranian officials view themselves as the saviour of the global community and the 'standard bearers of human rights'<sup>27</sup> while they continue to make moves that undermine the authority of the United Nations and relevant international mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review of February 2010. Iran circumvents covenants to which it has committed, seeks membership in key bodies<sup>28</sup> as a means of infiltration and routinely ignores objections and appeals from the global community. President Ahmadinejad has gone so far as referred to the UN veto power as a 'satanic' mechanism employed by the West for the sole purpose of 'oppressing' the global community.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The list is available on-line at: <http://www.yaledailynews.com/media/2010/01/21/organizations-irans-list/>

<sup>22</sup> The memorandum is available in English at:

[http://news.bahai.org/sites/news.bahai.org/files/documentlibrary/NRC\\_Handelsblad\\_Netherlands.pdf](http://news.bahai.org/sites/news.bahai.org/files/documentlibrary/NRC_Handelsblad_Netherlands.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Section B.6. of the memorandum.

<sup>24</sup> The Sentinel project released a study in 2009 outlining the situation of the Baha'is in Iran. It stated: "The Iranian government appears bent on destroying the Baha'i religion itself and coercing its followers to convert to Islam but it is also highly likely that, under certain circumstances, they may turn to even more violent means and seek to physically exterminate the Baha'i population." See the report at:

[http://thesentinelproject.org/?page\\_id=35](http://thesentinelproject.org/?page_id=35)

<sup>25</sup> Iran has not ratified the Rome Statutes.

<sup>26</sup> Article 6 of the Statute available on-line at [http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/99\\_corr/cstatute.htm](http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/99_corr/cstatute.htm)

<sup>27</sup> Statement by Javad Larijani during an interview with IRNA:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/04/100423\\_l39\\_javadlarijani\\_humanrights.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2010/04/100423_l39_javadlarijani_humanrights.shtml)

<sup>28</sup> Iran won a seat by acclamation at the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE63P41R20100426>



Finally, Iran's efforts to influence other countries' foreign policies must not be overlooked. Contrary to popular belief, Iran is not seeking to become a regional power alone. Its umbrella of foreign influence reaches much further. Vietnam, Brazil, Venezuela, Kazakhstan, Russia, Armenia, China, Bangladesh, Bolivia and Algeria are among countries whose voice at the UN in other international fora have changed because of Iran's influence.<sup>30</sup>

Such instances and others can signal Iran's tendency to legitimise its policies by pursuing terror; it uses terror as the means of "salvation"—wanted or unwanted—for "all the oppressed... both inside and outside the country." The use of terror was, is, and will continue to be the founding principle of what Iranian officials have chosen to falsely call a theocracy.

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<sup>30</sup> Summary of the interactive dialogue on Iran's Universal Periodic Review in February 2010 is an example. Please see: [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session7/IR/A\\_HRC\\_14\\_12\\_Iran.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session7/IR/A_HRC_14_12_Iran.pdf)