

# USADI Dispatch

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## USADI Commentary

### Despite Appalling Rights Abuse, EU Let's Iran off the Hook in Geneva

Once again, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has let Iran off the hook. As the UN body is holding its annual session in Geneva, the EU-led Western block chose not to table a resolution censuring flagrant human rights violations by Iran's ruling theocracy.

True, the 53-member Commission is made of up countries with deplorable human rights records. But that does not make Europe's ambivalence towards Iran appalling rights record any less reprehensible. The decision came despite the fact that last fall the UN General Assembly condemned Iran in 50<sup>th</sup> censure document adopted by the world body in the past two decades.

After visiting Iran late last year, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression Ambeyi Ligabo painted an alarming picture of the rights situation in Iran. "[There was a] 'climate of fear induced by the systematic repression of people expressing critical views against the authorized political and religious doctrine and the functioning of institutions,'" wrote the human rights investigator in a report to the Human Rights Commission.

The State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for year 2003 was even more damning. "The [Iran] Government's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses... Continuing serious abuses included: summary executions; disappearances; torture and other degrading treatment, reportedly including severe punishments such as beheading and flogging; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention..." it warned.

Iran's Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi denounced the EU's "silence and complicity" describing it as "an insult for democrats and human rights defenders in Iran who struggle for basic rights in spite of risks to their freedom."

The EU's approach is particularly disturbing since it always took the initiative in drafting resolutions on rights abuses in Iran. This time, however, in the context of the futile policy of "constructive engagement", it chose to remain silent despite the clerics' continuing brutality at home. The so-called human rights dialogue with the Tehran has turned out to be nothing more than a monologue. The EU recently acknowledged that it had seen little progress in Iran's human rights dossier and that its policy of constructive engagement was flagging.

The twin pillars of Iran's theocracy - repression at home and export of revolution - have kept this regime in power for twenty five years. The mullahs shield their tyrannical house of cards behind tall, thick and ubiquitous walls of suppression. It seems they have the silent approval of the EU to do so.

Safeguarding the human rights of Iranians is a critical element of any policy to support Iran's democracy movement. We must not let the tyrannical mullahs of Iran get off the hook so easily.

### UN Human Rights Body Inaction Condemned

GENEVA - Nobel Peace prize winner and Iranian rights campaigner Shirin Ebadi criticised the failure of the United Nations' top human rights body to examine events in Iran, saying it was an insult to fellow democrats in her home country.

None of the UN Human Rights Commission's 53 member states, who are currently meeting in Geneva, has lodged a resolution on the human rights situation in Iran this year. In previous years Canada, backed by European countries and the United States, has sought to target the Islamic regime's record.

"The commission's silence would be an insult for democrats and human rights defenders in Iran, who struggle for fundamental rights in spite of the risks for their freedom," Ebadi said in a statement Wednesday.

Ebadi said the commission's assessment of countries "should be based on violations established by independent organizations and institutions, and not according to subjective political criteria".

During a press conference, she called on the Iranian government to "respect its international engagements", underlining that Tehran has signed up to two key covenants guaranteeing civil and political rights as well as economic and social rights.

The 2003 Nobel peace laureate said she was aware of the risks she was taking with her criticism of Iranian authorities, although she admitted that the prize had given her "a certain immunity".

"Being in danger on my return home is nothing new," she commented.

The European Union also warned Iran at the commission that there had been little progress in its human rights record.

*Agence France Presse, April 14, 2004*

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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**Dangerous Liaisons**

... Sitting in Washington, London, or the oasis of Baghdad's Green Zone, it is easy for officials to advocate engagement. Muqtada al-Sadr's "concession" has ignited calls for compromise by television pundits and politicians who, while well-meaning, will snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. The British government, with tacit U.S. approval, has initiated discussions with the Iranian foreign ministry. A team led by top Iranian diplomat Hossein Sadeghi visited Iraq in recent days, but his talks went nowhere. The Iranian regime used Washington and London's outreach not to promote dialogue, but to humiliate the United States at a time our soldiers sacrifice to preserve Iraq's freedom. Leaking news of the talks on Iranian television, the Islamic Republic's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi demonstrated to his domestic audience that the United States was not in control and had run to Iran for assistance. Moving in for the propaganda kill, Kharrazi stated, "The solution is for occupiers to leave Iraq."

The Iranian government's offer of assistance in Iraq is akin to an arsonist offering his help put out a fire. Even if the Iranian foreign ministry were sincere, it has no more power over Iranian policy than Washington's Department of Motor Vehicles has over U.S. policy. Nevertheless, can engagement with the Iranians — or negotiations with Muqtada al-Sadr — do any harm? They already have. Diplomats and pundits now suggest that U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi might co-opt Muqtada al-Sadr or his proxies into an interim Iraqi government. The lesson for potential populist leaders? Violence works.

Washington's decision to engage the Islamic Republic has undercut liberty and freedom in Iran. Ahmed Batebi, made famous by an Economist cover photograph showing him holding a bloodied shirt during 1999 student demonstrations, remains locked up in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. He and hundreds of other dissidents will see on Iranian state television that, despite Bush's call for freedom, Foggy Bottom and the National Security Council continue to lend legitimacy to an unrepresentative and dictatorial regime. Pundits and diplomats alike argue that engagement encourages reform within Iran's governing clique. But, the Islamic Republic's main concern is not the dichotomy between hardliners and reformers, but rather the challenge a free Iraq poses to the religious legitimacy of the Iranian regime...

*Excerpts from an article by Michael Rubin, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.*

American Outlook Today (Hudson Institute)  
April 14, 2004

**Iran's Covert Actions in Iraq**

On April 4 a pro-Iranian, radical Iraqi cleric called on his followers to "terrorize your enemy" meaning the U.S... This is a preview of the violence and turmoil that Iranian covert action could inflict in the coming months, a threat that has not yet been fully understood by the Bush Administration and which could be called today's 9-11.

Following the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the Iranian clerical dictatorship has mounted a covert effort to establish an allied Shi'a Islamist extremist regime in Iraq (60 percent of Iraq is Shi'a). Iran has been preparing to do this for many years and has recruited political, military, and covert agent assets among the hundreds of thousands of Shi'a Iraqis who fled Iraq and have lived in Iran for years. The dictatorship in Iran is acting to bring about a "second Iran" in Iraq in five ways:

(1) Iran is using those Iraqi Shi'ite clerics who agree that the clergy should rule to build a power base from the mosques and their associated social services. (2) Iran established the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq as a political movement that could win elections or take power, town by town, with the help of covert Iranian funds and propaganda... (3) Iran is working covertly with Iraqi extremist Muqtada al-Sadr to use political and coercive means, including murder, to intimidate and take over Shi'ite leadership in Iraq... (4) Hezbollah, the Iran-supported and often directed terrorist organization, has moved hundreds of its cadres into Iraq. They, along with Hamas, have opened offices in Iraq and are now recruiting Iraqis to be foot soldiers and suicide killers in massive terrorist attacks on U.S. and Coalition forces... (5) Iran has spent heavily seeking to dominate radio and television broadcasting in Iraq...

The Bush Administration must immediately act to counter Iran's covert assets and action plans or risk major setbacks to its goals for Iraq... The best defense against the Iranian destabilization of Iraq is to help the people of Iran use political means to liberate themselves from their dictatorship. Polls and partially open elections reveal that more than 80 percent of Iranians completely reject the extremist Shi'ite clerical regime.

Ironically, while the United States may have difficulty defending against Iranian covert political action, it does have the symbolic credibility of its democratic institutions and the knowledge and experience needed to provide discreet assistance to help the people of Iran free themselves.

*Excerpts from an article by Dr. Constantine Menges, a scholar at the Hudson Institute*