

Siavash Rahbari

From: Renee Redman
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2009 10:18 AM
To: Siavash Rahbari
Subject: FW: Letter from Tehran (Khajehpour)

Bizarre

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-----Original Message-----

From: owner-gulf2000-list@columbia.edu [mailto:owner-gulf2000-list@columbia.edu] On Behalf Of Gary G Sick
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2009 9:33 AM
To: Gary G Sick
Subject: Letter from Tehran (Khajehpour)

Date: Tue, 20 Oct 2009 16:38:49 +0330
From: Bijan Khajehpour <bijan@khajehpour.com>

Dear Friends across the World,

As most of you know, I was released on 30 September after 96 days of detention in Evin prison by the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence. I was accused of "actions against national security" and have now been freed on bail. I will have to fight my case in court, while now trying to regain "normalcy" in my personal and professional life. It has been a difficult and challenging period, but it is over and it is time to get over the pain and to focus on positive thoughts.

Well, yes, there are some positive aspects about Evin, for example that one develops a new relationship with time - busy work schedules lose their significance in life and one has all the time in the world to think, to read and to debate. I managed to read the Holy Quran back-to-back twice and the Nahjul-Balagheh (Imam Ali's sermons) as well as many other books, including a couple of my own English books which my interrogators allowed me to take into the cell. Having studied the Quran, it is appropriate to share the following verse with you:

"O my Lord! Cause me to enter [upon whatever I may do] in a manner, true and sincere, and cause me to leave [it] in a manner true and sincere, and grant me, out of Thy grace, sustaining strength!" (17-80 Quran)

Now, in truth and sincerity, I would like to share the following thoughts with you:

1) First and foremost, I want to thank those friends who contributed courageously to the international campaign for my release. I was touched to learn about the many individuals and organizations who campaigned on my behalf. All your initiatives, prayers, energy and friendship gave my family and me the strength we needed to go through the ordeal;

2) Despite all the sadness, I believe that we should not promote hatred and bitterness. Iran and Iranians need positive energies and constructive ideas to move forward and it is my personal determination to contribute to new ideas and actions that could reduce the potential of pain in future events. In the end, all actors in crises like this are human beings.

Politicians, intelligence officers, intellectuals, protestors and all other actors have

acted based on their best judgments in a crisis situation. In these situations, some panic, some remain calm and the majority act in all the grey shades between the two - this time, we had too many actors who panicked. I have tried to remain calm and it is the best way to go through such an ordeal with a degree of sanity;

3) As most of you would probably ask, let me also tell you this: I am fine. The conditions in detention were much better than imagined; in my case, there was no physical pressure and all basic needs were provided for - the real problems in detention are the concerns that one has about the people outside (especially immediate family) and also the fact that one does not know how long the process will take. Leaving me in the dark about the process was the main instrument of pressure against me, but very early in detention I promised myself not to allow the ordeal to break me and not to come out of detention a weaker person. Time will tell whether I have succeeded or not, though it may not be the end of the story for me.

4) The intellectually intense encounters with my interrogators gave me the opportunity to familiarize myself with their worldview, their sensitivities and to see for myself the clashes that exist. In fact, my case is a microcosm of the Iranian story: A country of clashes in cultural values and intellectual perceptions. The well-intentioned acts of an independent citizen could in some cases be interpreted as complete opposites - this is how a patriot becomes a traitor. A cultural contribution to a conference or a book can be seen as espionage etc. etc. One learns in these interrogations that nothing is innocent - not even a virtual network among international experts. One could agree or disagree with that worldview, but I can tell you that it exists and that it is very powerful in the minds of many decision-makers.

5) One of the good things about detention is that one finds the time and space to think and to identify one's priorities in life. In Evin, I realized how important my immediate family is to me and how crucial it is to dedicate more time and attention to them. I also had a chance to review all my cultural and business activities and to set priorities. All these priorities will influence my future decisions and behavior - hopefully leading to a more balanced life and one that is viewed with less suspicion by the Ministry of Intelligence.

The first priority for now is to get back to a new balance in my life. I will fight the court case with truth and sincerity and will move on. I know that I can count on your friendship in the future and I look forward to future communication with all of you.

Thank you once again!

Very warm wishes,

Bijan Khajehpour
Tehran