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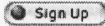
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**November 28, 2003**

**Iran's "Hanging Judge" Dies**

Around the time of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali was a widely known judge - not for his fairness or for his legal philosophy, but because of the quick manner in which he dispatched those who came before him for trial. Not just judge, he was jury and even at times executioner. Many trials lasted mere minutes and hundreds, if not thousands, went to their deaths because of him. Now, he has died as well.

The [San Francisco Chronicle](#) reports:

*As president of the Islamic Revolution Court, Khalkhali was prosecutor, judge and jury for those deemed counterrevolutionaries and for people charged with being drug dealers. ... It was widely reported in Iran that when Nematollah Nasiri, the head of the shah's feared SAVAK secret police, went before Khalkhali, the judge picked up a pistol and shot him dead. ... In his final years, Khalkhali seemed to have a change of heart and supported some of the liberalization ideas promoted by President Mohammad Khatami and other reformers.*

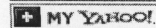
In the end, was Khalkhali really any different from the brutal thugs of the former shah's regime whom he had executed or whom he executed himself? I'm sure he justified his actions as being in the best interests of the new Islamic government, but weren't similar arguments used by people like the shah's henchmen? Weren't they acting on behalf of what they believed to be best for their nation? Leaders of the Islamic revolution were no less murderous thugs than the people they replaces - the brutality and the rationalizations remained the same, only the alleged cause changed. Whichever cause you sympathize with, those are the thugs you try to defend.

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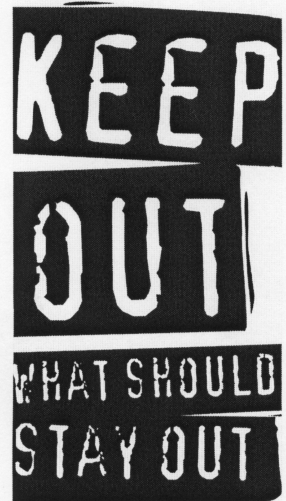
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