

# National Movement of Iranian Resistance

NAMIR

Founded by Shapour Bakhtiar

## Iranian Terrorism

By Ladan Boroumand

As analyses and commentaries of experts on Iran fill the air, it is much to the credit of the United States Congress to have spared a few moments to hear the voice of the victims of Iranian terrorism. For that, I am grateful to Human Rights Alliance and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

On April 18, 1991, agents of the Islamic Republic of Iran assassinated my father, Abdorrahman Boroumand, in Paris. Three months later, my father's friend, the man with whom he had fought for over 40 years to establish democracy in Iran, Shapour Bakhtiar, was also assassinated in similar conditions. Together, they had founded the National Movement of Iranian Resistance (NAMIR, 1980), the first political movement to oppose Tehran's Theocracy and to fight for the respect of fundamental human rights. Their deaths were an irreparable loss for NAMIR and for the Iranian opposition.

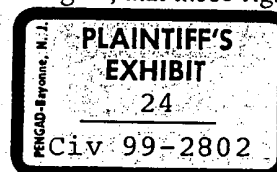
Their names were added to the already long list of Iranian and foreign victims of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A list which, alas, has grown longer ever since. Today, I speak to you as a human rights activist as well as a victim of terrorism. I would like to talk about the efficiency of Terror as an instrument of the Regime's survival.

What the relatives of the victims endure in these terrorist attempts is impossible to describe. This is an experience one does not wish to share and hates to see happen to anyone else, including to those responsible for it. It is an encounter with evil. The day after the crime we find ourselves with a mutilated soul; and this is precisely where lies the effectiveness of Terror. It is not so much for the life it takes but for the faith in human being that it shatters. How then is it possible to find the strength to believe again and to fight for the human being that is capable of such an act? Doesn't the crime committed by a few soil all of humanity? Don't we, relatives of the victims, share this feeling of guilt?

To understand the Islamic Republic and the profound reasons behind its crimes is the first battle of a philosophic, if not theological war that promises to be long. Why did the Islamic Republic eliminate Bakhtiar and Boroumand? How threatening for the Regime could these two elderly men have been, living thousands of kilometers away from their homeland, without means, arms or army, and deprived of international support. Why kill them at a time when Europe was beginning a 'critical dialogue' with Iran and France was negotiating the return of Iran's financial assets?

These crimes, no matter how absurd they appear, aimed at and hit specific and important objectives for the Islamic Republic. Bakhtiar was a man who had predicted early on the disaster that was to be the Islamic Republic. For Iranians, he embodied the validity and the universality of human rights. He belonged to Iran's democratic tradition, and it is in the language of the poets Hafez and Saadi that he addressed his people and defended human rights and dignity. He was the proof *par excellence* that one could be Iranian and yet support human rights; that those rights

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were not the monopoly of the West. Thus, eliminating Bakhtiar was not suppressing an immediate and objective danger, but suppressing an idea. It was an attempt to destroy opposition to the guardianship of the theologian, and a strike against the universality of human rights. Ladies and Gentlemen, there was no personal enmity between Bakhtiar, Boroumand, and the mullahs of Tehran. Indeed, through Bakhtiar's body they hit principles, but there does not lie their victory. For mullahs know, as we do, that ideas and ideals transcend men. The reaction of the French government whose territory, laws, and principles were violated by a terrorist state was a triumph for the Islamic Republic.

Bakhtiar and his secretary were discovered more than 36 hours following their assassination. During this time, delivered grocery had remained untouched at the front door, the lights and television had not been switched off, the residence was supposedly under heavy police surveillance, and the French police was supposed to have been in continuous contact with them. It took Bakhtiar's son forty-eight hours to convince the authorities to release photographs of the assassins. The three murderers had enough time to escape. Swiss customs officers, doubting the authenticity of the three criminals' Turkish passports, turned them back to France. Arrested for a short time by French customs officers, they were released. The French authorities investigated none of these police irregularities. The State protected its employees and took full responsibility. French officials stressed that this 'incident' should not have any impact on Franco-Iranian *rapprochement*. It took a strong public reaction to deter, belatedly, president Mitterand from undertaking his scheduled state visit to Iran. And to crown it all, France returned the Iranian people's financial assets to the Mullahs.

Perhaps Western statesmen are not aware of the long-term consequences of their decisions. Perhaps they do not grasp the full meaning of their actions. For the Islamist ideologists, including President Khatami, western civilization is a materialistic one, one that lacks spiritual values. Everything, says Khatami, is based on money. No matter its strength, no matter its valuable contribution to human history, this civilization, asserts Khatami, is declining. There, human dignity is a chimera. The West, particularly France and Germany, by tolerating violation of their sovereignty, and by tolerating abolition of the asylum right that underlies the universality of rights, give substance to the Islamist assumption in return for a few lucrative contracts.

When asked to define their regime, the Islamist leaders portray it as opposed to the west; a west embodied in the universal values that dictated the American Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of 1789 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. If we ask them to give us a positive definition, they have no reply. They do not know it themselves. In sum, the denial of rights and modernity is the essence of the Islamic Republic. That is probably why this regime can not give up international terrorism, the only means of affirming its negative essence. When Western democracies implicitly approve, on their own territory, this denial, they do more than business with Iran, they reinforce the foundation of this regime and betray the principles of their own body politic. This betrayal is the biggest victory for the Islamic Republic. The lives of the exiled Iranians then become a battlefield where the Islamic Republic transforms the contradictions and inconsistencies of the West into effective weapons against democracy and human rights.

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What then is the appropriate policy to adopt towards Tehran's theocracy? I do not speak as a victim of terrorism anymore; for her it is too late; nor do I speak as a private person who can live here securely or give up the fight and return to Iran. Let me speak as a human rights activist.

We have the tragic privilege to witness a great historic era. The ancient nation-states, which were in a permanent state of war, are progressively changing into states of rights, profoundly transforming the international order. At the same time, the Islamic world is challenged by democracy. Nationalism is an outdated response. Thus, the Islamic culture must answer questions about the human being and his political existence. So far, Islamic fundamentalism has been a reaction of fear, a No without content. Today, the Islamic Republic finds itself in an impasse. The pressure from the disenchanted and resentful Iranian youth is a constant reminder to the mullahs of the inadequacy of their Regime. Our generation must face the heavy burden of conceptualizing modernity in the Irano-Islamic context, to strive for a cultural renaissance. To accomplish this task, we ask neither for arms nor for money. We ask only that you remain loyal to your principles, overcome your contradictions, and be coherent and consistent. We ask you to firmly defend human rights, while remaining open and ready for dialogue. In doing so, you will enhance the prestige of democracy and the Declaration of Human Rights. No longer shall incredulity and cynicism be obstacles to the adherence of Iranian youth to this declaration. No doubt, the tyranny that draws its force from the paradoxes of democracy will collapse like a house of cards.

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