

A MESSAGE OF TOLERANCE

Maryam Rajavi challenges Iran's
fundamentalist mullahs

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The text of Maryam Rajavi's address
at the Oslo City Hall, Norway,
October 31, 1995

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INTRODUCTION

A “great breakthrough” was how scores of social and political dignitaries who met with Maryam Rajavi described her 12-day visit to Norway. The October trip was her first to a European country since her arrival as the Iranian Resistance’s President-elect in Paris in autumn 1993.

Mrs. Rajavi met with party and church leaders and attended a meeting of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Commission and addressed some 100 dignitaries at the Oslo City Hall. For the first time, Norwegian politicians, intellectuals and scholars had an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the platform and views of the Iranian Resistance through the words of the movement’s leader. Moreover, the importance of Iran in shaping developments in the sensitive Middle East region is not lost on many in Norway, to whom Mrs. Rajavi’s message offered something for which they had been searching in their quest to deal with the ominous specter of Islamic fundamentalism.

Maryam Rajavi’s message was of an Islam that is tolerant, espouses democracy, is civilized, and believes in the equality

of all human beings, women and men. She spoke of an Islam which does not seek to impose a theocracy on society, leaving social affairs up to the people, with their diverse views and outlooks.

Her words were plausible, or as a leading Norwegian daily commented, "created trust among western politicians," because they came from a Muslim woman who represents and leads a resistance movement which accords Islam the highest respect, thereby depriving Khomeini's retinue of their primary weapon, namely the religion with which they try to discredit any opposition to their medieval practices as "un-Islamic."

Rajavi's message was all the more effective because she is a woman, coming from a country where misogyny is the bedrock of the fundamentalists' worldview. In diametric opposition to the medieval mullahs, the sharp edge of whose repression is directed against women, Rajavi challenges the very cultural and ideological underpinning of the retrogressive mindset which de-humanizes and subjugates women.

Following is the text of address by Mrs. Maryam Rajavi at Oslo's City Hall on October 31, 1995.

**Foreign Affairs Committee,
The National Council of Resistance of Iran
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A Message of Tolerance

It is a source of great pleasure to be here among the leading thinkers, intellectuals and representatives of a nation which for many years heroically resisted foreign occupation and the reign of Hitler's fascism, liberated itself and instituted a society which is doubtless one of the most advanced democracies in the contemporary world. It is a society wherein women have a major role in leading and guiding its affairs. This in itself is the most realistic and best hallmark of democracy in any given society.

I am therefore confident that I am speaking to an audience which well understands the suffering of an enchained nation of 70 million, which for the last 16 years has been subjugated by a brutal religious fascism. A fascism that has eliminated all vestiges of democracy, freedom and popular sovereignty.

Norway's stance and policy of distancing herself from the conventional conciliatory approach to the Khomeini regime, and of paying heed to human rights and the resistance in Iran, assures our people that democracy and justice have an adamant advocate among enlightened people in today's world. The formation of the Norwegian

Committee in Defense of Human Rights in Iran best reflects this commitment to, and respect for, the principles of human rights and justice by Norway's political, cultural, social, artistic and literary personalities who yearn for freedom.

What is at stake?

Allow me to use this opportunity to outline the issues which, in my view, must be considered by the international community with respect to the Khomeini regime. What is transpiring in my fettered country, Iran, under the reign of the mullahs' medieval religious dictatorship, not only represents a national catastrophe for all Iranians, but is also the source of a global problem and peril threatening stability and peace the world over.

Firstly, the mullahs have extended their state-sponsored terrorism across Asia, Africa, the United States, and Europe, including Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France and Norway.

Secondly, the clerics are exporting the cultural and political dimensions of fundamentalism, especially to Islamic countries and various Muslim societies. This is followed by an expansion of extremist fundamentalist networks.

Thirdly, they oppose peace and advocate turmoil everywhere, as reflected in their enmity to the Middle East peace process.

Today, everyone is aware of the crimes perpetrated by Khomeini's anti-human regime within and without Iran. The clerics have executed 100,000 of the best youth of my

country purely for political reasons, for opposing the ruling dictatorship, and for defending freedom and democracy. The names and particulars of 16,000 of them have been compiled in a book. The victims include intellectuals, university students and faculty, high school students, teenage girls, pregnant women, elderly mothers, businessmen, merchants and even dissident clerics. In many cases, several members of a single family were executed. Many more have been subjected to the most barbaric, medieval tortures.

Brutalizing women

Nor is the appalling predicament of women under the mullahs' rule a secret. Inconceivable atrocities are committed against women on the pretext of combating improper veiling. Everyday, thousands of women are lashed, sent to prisons or viciously assaulted and insulted for very simple and trivial matters. These crimes are unprecedented in other areas of the globe.

The rulers of Iran carry out these hideous crimes under the banner of Islam. According to Khomeini's *fatwa*, the Revolutionary Guards rape virgin girls prior to execution "to prevent their going to heaven." They also drain the blood of those condemned to death before their execution.

The export of terrorism, fundamentalism and belligerence of this regime, under the banner of Islam and revolution, is another well-established fact. It was evident in the regime's insistence on perpetuating the unpatriotic war with Iraq, which lasted some eight years and left millions dead or

wounded and \$1000 billion in economic damages on the Iranian side alone. It is also apparent in the regime's formal enmity to the Middle East peace process, in its interference in the affairs of Islamic countries, in its decrees to murder foreign nationals, and in its more than 100 terrorist operations abroad. Regrettably, the echo of these despicable criminals' bullets still lingers in this city. This is truly shameful.

The regime has set up intelligence, propaganda and terrorist networks in other countries, allocated astronomical funds to procure conventional arms, and biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction, and in particular, endeavored to obtain nuclear weapons to back up its worldwide export of terrorism and fundamentalism and to secure the survival of the religious dictatorship.

Challenging fundamentalism

I shall refrain from further elaborating on the regime's crimes and conspiracies. In the time I have at this gathering, however, I wish to address a pivotal issue: How to confront this regime and the fundamentalism and terrorism it fosters.

This is a key issue because, on the international level, all approaches and policies vis-à-vis the mullahs' religious, terrorist dictatorship have unfortunately proven futile. In many cases the regime has taken advantage of these policies and been the only party to benefit from them, utilizing them to buy itself some time.

For many years, particularly following Khomeini's death,

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Western countries indulged in a quest for a moderate current within the regime. They pinned their hopes on improving the regime's behavior through expanding relations, particularly economic ties. Simultaneously, a number of big powers invested in a policy of appeasement in an attempt to ingratiate themselves with Tehran, and prevent the export of terrorism to their own countries. Consistent with this approach, therefore, today, the European Union's official policy toward Iran is one of critical dialogue. The experience of the past 16 years has confirmed, however, that none of these policies has borne fruit. They have failed to have any impact on the conduct of this international outlaw.

A symbolic and quite fitting example is the inhuman and anti-Islamic fatwa against Salman Rushdie which illustrates the nature of this regime. The decree was issued seven years ago. All European efforts to change the regime's conduct through dialogue, discussion and economic and political incentives have failed to change the status quo. Khomeini's successors have time and again reiterated that the decree must be implemented. For seven years, the regime has used the Rushdie affair as a bargaining chip in seeking more concessions from the West. In other words, it has taken advantage of this issue, gaining greater concessions from the Western governments.

Ironically, whereas the Khomeini regime's first prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, acknowledged in an interview with the German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau* (in January 1995) that the mullahs have the support of less than five

percent of the Muslim people of Iran and lack both religious and social legitimacy, the international community allows Tehran to find a footing among Muslims elsewhere and advance its evil anti-Islamic, anti-human objectives. These policies allow the mullahs to turn Western countries into hunting grounds for their opponents.

Indeed, the extensive economic and political ties with a number of countries, coupled with the kowtowing by some of its international interlocutors to terrorist and political blackmail, have been instrumental in prolonging the reign of this regime and delaying the establishment of democracy in Iran by the Iranian people and the Resistance. But, let me address the reasons for such misguided and unprincipled policies?

Source of appeasement

In my view, beyond economic interests or fear of this regime's terrorism - which in many cases justify and give impetus to them - these misguided policies and drastic miscalculations stem from the lack of a correct, objective understanding of the nature of the Khomeini regime, and of the roots and extent of its backward, fundamentalist outlook. Precisely for this reason, some countries lose sight of the regional and international implications of their approach.

Another missing element is an objective appraisal or knowledge of the legitimate, democratic alternative to this regime which can bring democracy to Iran. This, in my view,

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exacerbates the misperception about the regime's durability, particularly among Western countries.

Allow me to give you a historical example. Although there are fundamental differences between the Khomeini regime and Hitler's fascism, in terms of their political, economic and military capabilities, a parallel may nonetheless be drawn with the conciliatory treatment of Germany by some European countries in the years preceding the Second World War. The policy of acquiescence, embodied in the Munich agreement of 1938, or the relations between the Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany until even the first or the second year of the war, stemmed from the notion that certain concessions at the expense of other countries, who were abandoned in their Resistance against fascism, would force Germany into making peace, as if it were possible to stop Hitler's expansionism in this way. Hitler benefited greatly from this policy which enabled him to advance his goals.

Today, due to the experience of the past 16 years, a more profound understanding of the clerical regime's nature has emerged and, in a few cases, a more realistic policy has been adopted. Here, allow me, on behalf of a Resistance movement which has waged a decade-long cultural, ideological and political struggle against this regime, to briefly share with you our own knowledge of this regime. Owing to this understanding and its consequent principled policies we were able to resist the most ruthless dictatorship of contemporary history, remain a viable force, and prevent

the mullahs from casting us aside. Regrettably however, many Iranian political parties and groups failed to stand up to this religious, terrorist dictatorship, surrendered to it, or were eliminated altogether from the Iranian political landscape.

Nature of Iran's theocracy

What we have to understand is the fact that the outlook and conduct of Khomeini and his regime neither belong to our age, nor compare to those of most dictatorships that have emerged in the twentieth century. This regime represents the most retrogressive form of medieval, sectarian dictatorship.

The mullahs' religious dictatorship is based on the philosophy of *Velayat-e Faqih* (or the guardianship of the supreme religious authority), first introduced in its present form by Khomeini in his book, "Islamic Rule" or "Velayat-e Faqih," written in the 1960s. Khomeini's theory is based on the one hand upon imposing absolute authority over the populace, and on the other upon expanding this authority to all Muslims, or as it is formulated today, "exporting revolution."

Khomeini states: "The Velayat-e Faqih is like appointing a guardian for a minor. In terms of responsibility and status, the guardian of a nation is no different from the guardian of a minor." During his reign, he repeatedly said that if the entire population advocated something to which he was opposed, he would nevertheless do as he saw fit.

In this respect, he went as far as to write: “The idea that the Prophet had more authority as a ruler than His Holiness Imam Ali [the first Shi’ite Imam], or that the latter’s authority exceeded that of the Vali (Guardian) is incorrect.”

Khomeini thus granted himself the same authority as the Prophet of God. Yet, he did not stop there! Twenty some years later, in 1988, in an open letter published in the regime’s dailies, he wrote, “... The Velayat takes precedence over all secondary commandments, even prayer, fasting, and the hajj... The government is empowered to unilaterally abrogate the religious commitments it has undertaken with the people... The [erroneous] statements made or being made, derive from a lack of knowledge of the divinely ordained absolute rule...”

With these words, Khomeini propagated the notion of the *Velayat-e Motlaqeh Faqih* (or the absolute rule of the jurist), something which his heirs, and the theoreticians within the regime, went to extremes to stress and perpetuate. Mullah Ahmad Azari-Qomi, one of the most authoritative theoreticians of the Velayat-e Faqih notion, wrote: “The Velayat-e Faqih means absolute religious and legal guardianship of the people by the Faqih. This guardianship applies to the entire world and all that exist in it, whether earthbound or flying creatures, inanimate objects, plants, animals, and anything in any way related to collective or individual human life, affairs, belongings, or assets...”

This worldview, as practiced by Khomeini and his regime, culminates in absolute ruthlessness and oppression

especially when dealing with the issue of women. On the marriage of virgin girls, Azari-Qomi writes thus: "Islam prohibits the marriage of a virgin girl without the permission of her father and her own consent. Both of them must agree. But the Vali-e Faqih is authorized to overrule the father or the girl," meaning that "the Vali-e Faqih can counter the views of the father and the girl and forcibly marry her." In this way, the regime interferes in the most personal affairs of life, from compulsory veiling to varied forms of discrimination against women, to banning women from smiling in public and stoning them to death. In fact, misogyny is the most fundamental feature of the Velayat-e Faqih, and the structure of the clerical regime's system rests upon de-humanizing women.

In Iran today, women's employment opportunities are less than 10% of men's. This ratio decreases as the quality of the job or its political nature increases. No women manage the affairs of the society, particularly its political leadership. The regime's constitution absolutely and unequivocally bans women from judgeship, the presidency and leadership.

All laws, evaluations and practices within this regime are based on the precept that women are weak, and the property and chattels of men, for which reason they have no place in leading or managing the society. A woman must stay at home, cook and rear children, the tasks for which she has been created.

The legalized deprivations and restrictions, and even the official statistics, represent but a small part of the mullahs'

gender apartheid. The more significant aspect lies in the spirit of the anti-human relationships emanating from this regime which, as one woman wrote in a state-controlled daily, makes women regret their having been created as women in the first place. Indeed, it is these relationships which force women, especially young women, to set themselves on fire in utter despair under the mullahs' reign.

The mullahs' misogyny has also given rise to horrifying crimes and anti-human impositions. The wholesale execution of thousands of women, even while pregnant, is unprecedented in history and unique to this regime. The flogging of women in public on bogus and petty charges, their execution with methods such as firing bullets into their wombs, imprisoning them in "residential quarters" designed to totally destroy these enchained and defenseless women, and inventing multitudes of torture methods and other atrocities, demonstrate the unparalleled savagery of the mullahs' enmity toward women at every level and in every sphere of life.

Foreign Policy

As far as the regime's foreign policy and the export of terrorism are concerned, the specific goals of both Khomeini and his successors pursue are unequivocally defined. Following Khomeini's death, Rafsanjani stressed: "Islamic Iran is the base for all Muslims the world over," adding that Khomeini "truly and deeply hated the idea that we be limited by nationalism, by race, or by our own territory."

Elsewhere he says: "Iran is the base of the new movements of the world of Islam... The eyes of Muslims worldwide are focused here..."

The book entitled, *Principles of Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, by the Iranian regime's Foreign Ministry, formally states: "Islam recognizes only one boundary, purely ideological in nature. Other boundaries, including geographic borders, are rejected and condemned." After Khomeini's death, his son Ahmad said: "Islam recognizes no borders... The objective of the Islamic Republic and its officials is none other than to establish a global Islamic rule..."

The mullahs ruling Iran dream of a global Islamic caliphate, much like the Ottoman Empire. They say the Islamic revolution will suffocate if confined within Iran's borders and cannot be preserved without the export of revolution. Mohammad Khatami, Rafsanjani's former Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance, who is also known as a moderate within the regime, writes: "Where do we look when drawing up our strategy? Do we look to *bast* (expansion) or to *hefz* (preservation)?" Referring to the split between Trotsky and Stalin in the 1930s, the mullahs note that developments in the former Soviet Union proved the validity of Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution," and that the only way to preserve the Islamic regime is to foment Islamic revolutions in other countries. The slogan of "liberating Qods (Jerusalem) via Karbala (in Iraq)," with which Khomeini continued the Iran-Iraq war for eight years,

reflected the strategy of “expansion.”

Ali-Mohammad Besharati, the current Interior Minister and former Deputy Foreign Minister, stresses that “the third millennium belongs to Islam and the rule of Muslims over the world.” By Muslims, of course, he means none other than the mullahs. Mohammad-Javad Larijani, a key foreign policy advisor to Rafsanjani, said: “The genuine Velayat-e Faqih exists only in Iran. This guardianship is responsible for all Muslims the worldover... One of its objectives is expansion...” Larijani is one of the regime’s roving ambassadors who engages in a great deal of posturing for the Europeans. Rafsanjani recently sent him to Europe for some deceitful maneuvers concerning the Rushdie case. But, as you saw, ultimately the regime was unwilling to put even one step forward to resolve the problem. Khamenei’s latest emphasis that the Jews must be expelled from Israel and Israel annihilated are also an extension of the same foreign policy.

I must emphasize here that the mullahs’ theories about government and Velayat-e Faqih cannot in any way be viewed as an interpretation of Islam. They are the first to offer such a criminal reading of Islam, unprecedented in Islamic history. I should say, a criminal reading of the religion in all its dimensions. Even many traditional clerics in Qom and Najaf seminaries, either more senior than or on par with Khomeini, strongly opposed the Velayat-e Faqih perspective. In reality, therefore, Khomeini and his heirs interpret Islam solely in terms of the needs and interests of

their own dictatorship.

The fact is that Khomeini and his clique lack any historical or political ability to govern a big nation which enjoys several thousand years of history and a rich culture. To stay in power, they see themselves as increasingly compelled to employ repression and religious tyranny inside the country, and export terrorism and fundamentalism abroad in an effort to expand the geographic sphere of their influence. For this reason, after Khomeini's death, contrary to all expectations that his heirs would pursue a "moderate" path, they were compelled to fill the void of Khomeini's charisma, the unifying element which gave the regime religious legitimacy, with greater suppression and export of fundamentalism. The Rafsanjani regime's record of terrorist activities abroad and interference in the affairs of Muslims and Muslim countries is far worse than when Khomeini was alive.

A national & global threat

Allow me to also refer to how the regime is taking advantage of Iran's cultural, political, human and geo-strategic potential in pursuing its evil objectives:

Since the advent of Islam 14 centuries ago, Iran and Iranians have always played a key role in shaping and advancing the policies and cultural identity of the Islamic world. Most books on Shi'ite and Sunni *Fiqh* and *Hadith*, on Arabic grammar, and on interpreting the Quran were written by Iranians. In philosophy, logic, mathematics,

medicine, chemistry and other sciences of the era, Iranian scientists led the Islamic world. The books of Aviceenna, the renowned 11th century philosopher and physician, were translated into many languages and taught in Western universities until recently.

With an eye to Iran's vast land mass, geo-political position, population and many other factors, the country enjoys an exceptional position in the Islamic world. In the last 14 centuries, it has had a tremendous impact on Islamic countries. The mullahs have made maximum use of this potential to export their fundamentalism and advance their objectives. In other words, if a regime much like Khomeini's had assumed power in any other Islamic country, it would not have enjoyed such stature. It is not without reason that Larijani says Iran is the only country capable of leading the Islamic world. This explains why the clerical regime in Tehran serves as the heart of fundamentalism throughout the world, just as Moscow did for Communism. In fact, many fundamentalist currents did exist in Iran and elsewhere before Khomeini's ascension to power, but they were nothing more than isolated religious sects. It was the establishment of an Islamic reign in Tehran that transformed them into political and social movements, and into serious threats to peace, democracy and tranquillity, the world over.

The Khomeini regime uses propaganda, political, financial, military and ideological assistance, and beyond all these, its status as a role model and as a regional and international source of support, to direct Muslims' religious

sentiments toward extremist, fundamentalist and undemocratic trends. The mullahs exploit Islam's spirit of liberation and its call for the establishment of justice and freedom, to further their medieval rule. This, despite the fact that consistent with the experience of the Resistance, the sentiments of Muslims and Islam's freedom-seeking spirit could have been and can be translated into a modern and democratic movement which, while respectful of Islam, aspires to a secularist, pluralist form of government.

The solution

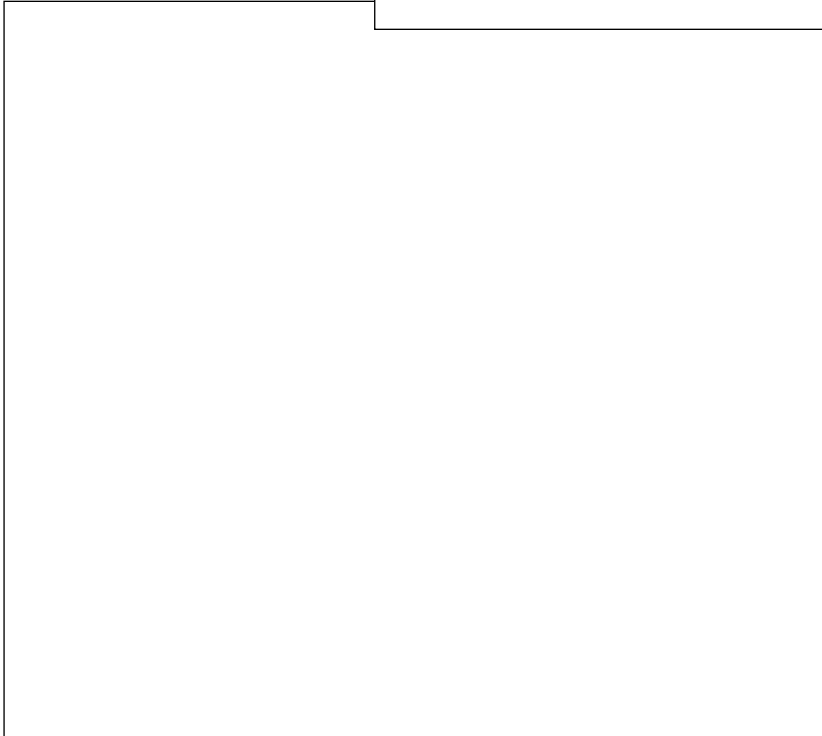
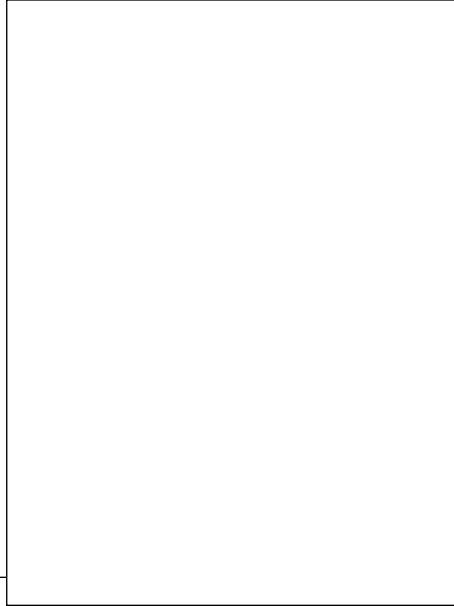
So far, I have referred to the internal and international conduct of the Khomeini regime. But the fundamental question is: what is the solution?

Our 16 years of struggle for democracy tell us that the only solution is to offer a political and cultural alternative to the Khomeini regime. I say political because this alternative must overthrow the regime and replace it with a democratic, secular government. The head of the viper is in Tehran and unless crushed there, there is no hope of uprooting fundamentalism.

I say cultural because to confront the mullahs' Velayat-e Faqih theory, this alternative must present a democratic Islam, with a peaceful, tolerant culture compatible with science and civilization. Only thus can it prevent the mullahs from imposing themselves as the representatives of Islam in the minds of the people of Muslim countries.

Even before Khomeini's rule, we understood the danger

Any notion that would equate the Khomeini regime's conduct with Islam is a dangerous mistake. Supporting the NCR, which has the greatest respect for Islam, is the only way to deny the mullahs the means to characterize firmness against them as enmity to Islam



of the Velayat-e Faqih, because we knew Khomeini and the mullahs intimately. While still in prison in the final months before the shah's fall, the Mojahedin leader, Massoud Rajavi, repeatedly warned about backward religious currents and the danger of religious fascism as the main threat to the Iranian people's democratic movement. In 1979, Khomeini succeeded in usurping the leadership of the Iranian people's anti-dictatorial revolution. Enjoying the religious legitimacy of *marja'iat* (religious leadership), Khomeini relied on deceit and took advantage of the people's lack of experience and awareness. The shah's widespread clampdown on democratic organizations, including the arrest and execution of their leaders, assisted Khomeini along the way to become a dangerous force, destroying everything in his path.

From the onset, the Mojahedin, a democratic Muslim force, saw it incumbent upon themselves to expose Khomeini's demagoguery and false portrayal of Islam. They thus represented a cultural, ideological and political challenge to the ruling mullahs, by embarking upon a relentless information campaign. What we knew of Islam, the Quran and the life of Muhammed, the Prophet of Islam, was totally contrary to the behavior of the new rulers.

Like all great religions, Islam is a religion of compassion, tolerance, emancipation and equality. The Holy Quran often states that there is no compulsion in religion. In so far as political and social life are concerned, it stresses consultation, democracy and respect for other people's views. Islam seeks social progress, and economic, social and

political evolution.

Fourteen centuries ago, when people in the Arabian peninsula were burying their girl children alive, Islam accorded women equal political, social and economic identities and independence. The Prophet of Islam profoundly respected women. The first Muslim was a woman, and four out of the ten original Muslims were women.

After two and a half years, the Resistance's campaign paid off. Cracks appeared in Khomeini's religious legitimacy, and his use of the weapon of Islam began to lose its effect. No longer did the people view Khomeini and the ruling mullahs as infallible. Everyone knew that the Mojahedin, the largest opposition force seeking freedom, were Muslim themselves and that Khomeini's quarrel with them was not over Islam, but over preserving his dictatorial rule.

The Mojahedin defended political freedoms and the people's individual and social rights, and opposed dictatorship and the regime's abuse of Islam. Mr. Rajavi lectured on Islamic teachings in one of Tehran's largest universities in 1980. Some 10,000 students and intellectuals took part every week, and tapes and transcripts were distributed in their hundreds of thousands. The discourses disclosed Khomeini's reactionary views promulgated under the banner of Islam, discrediting him among the religious youth. In a ruthless onslaught to curb the extensive influence of the Mojahedin in all universities, in spring 1980 Khomeini closed down all universities for the years to come on the

pretext of a cultural revolution.

Another of the fundamental aspects of this cultural struggle has been to target the heart of the clerics' Velayat-e Faqih culture, namely the issues of women and the mullahs' ultra-reactionary, misogynous treatment of them. In this regard, we did not stop at simply exposing the clerics. In diametric opposition to Khomeini's culture, our women advanced through unprecedented effort and assumed heavy responsibilities at the highest levels of the Resistance to render as false Khomeini's utterly erroneous view. Owing to the misogynous nature of the mullahs' regime, realization of freedoms in Iran is, no doubt, contingent upon giving consideration to the freedom and equality of women in the course of the struggle to overthrow this regime.

With its unique perspective on this issue, the Iranian Resistance succeeded in incorporating women in the front lines of the movement and in the highest levels of military command, as acknowledged by most observers. In the political arena as well, we are witnessing the ascension of women to important political positions. At the organizational and management levels, the highest positions are occupied by women. They have shown that, when given the opportunity, they can excel in assuming responsibility. Women comprise more than half the members of the Resistance's Parliament. Women fill the majority of positions within the National Liberation Army's high command. The leadership of the Mojahedin consists of a 24-member, all-woman council. The women of the Resistance have thus

proven that, just like men, before all else, it is their human qualities and consequent social and political abilities which count. They have righteously overcome all obstacles in performing their duties.

Hence, a glance at the regime and the Resistance quickly reveals two distinctly opposite cultures. Diametrically opposed to the Khomeini regime, whose very existence depends on the suppression and elimination of women, the victory and advancement of the Resistance would have been impossible without women and their role in the leadership and command. The first to attest to this fact are the male activists, combatants, and commanders, who are best aware of the glorious path that has been traversed.

It is also significant that the Resistance's elimination of the most persistent and profound form of discrimination against the most oppressed sector of society, namely women, and its fostering of relationships which allow equal legal and social rights for women, offer the best guarantee for democracy and pluralism in the future Iran.

A just Resistance

Obviously, we did not stop at introducing a cultural alternative. We also gradually established a political alternative. In 1980, during the first presidential elections, Mr. Massoud Rajavi ran as a candidate. All religious and ethnic minorities, the youth, women, and opposition groups and parties supported his candidacy. Sensing the danger, however, Khomeini issued a decree just a few days before

the election, banning Rajavi as a candidate because he had not voted for the Velayat-e Faqih constitution.

Several months later, during the parliamentary elections, the Mojahedin and other democratic forces announced a joint slate. Hundreds of thousands took part in the Mojahedin's election rallies in Tehran and elsewhere. This time, despite the many votes cast for them, the regime resorted to widespread rigging and prevented even one of the Mojahedin candidates from taking office.

Khomeini and other regime officials had realized early on, even before the overthrow of the shah, that the Mojahedin could stand against both a religious and political dictatorship, due to their freedom-seeking and tolerant interpretation of Islam and their popularity and social base. In other words, the Mojahedin were the antithesis to the clerics. In summer 1980, several days after Mr. Rajavi spoke to 200,000 Tehran residents in Amjadih sports stadium, condemning the slaughter of the Mojahedin and dissidents in other cities, Khomeini immediately reacted by saying that the enemy was “neither in the Soviet Union, nor in the United States, nor in Iranian Kurdistan, but in Tehran, right here in our midst.”

In fact, the religious dictatorship was trying to portray democracy and popular sovereignty as contrary to Islam. In consequence, it could suppress any democratic initiative on the charge of being anti-Islamic. Khomeini was, however, well aware that the Mojahedin would thwart his pretenses about Islam and religious legitimacy. Thus, he spared no

effort against the Iranian Resistance. Khomeini knew that if he were to eliminate us, he could overcome his other problems and stabilize his rule for many years to come.

In the first two and a half years of Khomeini's rule, the *Pasdaran* or Revolutionary Guards killed 50 supporters and members of the Mojahedin in the streets. They arrested several thousand, subjecting them to brutal torture. The regime also dispatched gangs of club-wielders into the streets to clamp down on dissidents. To prevent more violence and bloodshed, the Mojahedin did not fire a single bullet, relinquishing their legitimate right to self-defense. The Mojahedin's goal was to resolve the political problems through peaceful means.

On June 20, 1981, in protest against the repression, the Mojahedin organized a peaceful demonstration. In a short span of time, some 500,000 Tehran residents joined the march. Khomeini issued a fatwa to suppress the demonstration. Guards opened fire indiscriminately, and hundreds were killed or wounded. Thousands were arrested and executed the same night in groups of several hundred.

Among the crimes the Khomeini regime perpetrated to destroy its main enemy, I can mention his order for the mass execution of all members and supporters of this Resistance, purely for being affiliated with the movement, his declaration that their lives and properties are fair game, and the assassinations of the Resistance's activists abroad.

In this way, Khomeini, who in 1979 was welcomed as a religious and political leader by millions in Tehran,

continued after June 20, detested, only through the force of the bayonet, torture and execution. The people, meanwhile, were chanting death to Khomeini. As such, the only avenues which remained for the freedom-seeking and patriotic people and forces was to rid themselves of the mullahs to establish democracy.

The democratic alternative

For our struggle against the mullahs to achieve maturity, a political alternative - a vast coalition of democratic opposition groups - was needed. Although the basis for such a coalition had taken shape in the first presidential and parliamentary elections, after the start of the extensive, all-embracing suppression, this coalition had to be formalized and transformed into a political alternative. Thus, on July 21, 1981, the National Council of Resistance was formed with the objective of establishing freedom and democracy in Iran.

After 14 years, the Council, the longest lasting democratic, political coalition in Iran's contemporary era, has 560 members today. More than half of them are women. The council encompasses the Iranian democratic opposition: political parties, nationalist figures, Muslim, secular and socialist leaders, liberals and the representatives of ethnic and religious minorities. It acts as the Resistance's Parliament-in-exile.

The Council's 25 committees will serve as the basis for the future coalition government and are carrying out their tasks now. Following the mullahs' overthrow, the

Provisional Government will be in office for no more than six months. Its primary task is to hold free elections for a Legislative and Constituent Assembly. According to the Council's ratified decisions, elections and the general vote will constitute the basis for the legitimacy of the country's future government. Freedom of belief, press, of parties and political assemblies is guaranteed. Legal security of all citizens and the rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are also guaranteed. All privileges based on gender, creed, and faith will be abolished and any discrimination against the followers of different religions and denominations will be banned. No one will be granted any privilege, or discriminated against, on the basis of belief or non-belief in a particular religion or denomination.

In tomorrow's Iran, the national bazaar and capitalism, personal and private ownership toward the advancement of the national economy will be guaranteed. As for foreign policy, Iran will advocate peace, peaceful coexistence, and regional and international cooperation.

According to the Council's ratified plans, in tomorrow's Iran, women will enjoy equal social, political, cultural and economic rights with men. They will have the right to elect and be elected in all elections, and the right to freely choose their occupation, education, political activity, travel, and spouse. Equal rights to divorce and freedom of choice in apparel will be guaranteed for them.

The status quo

Sixteen years past the mullahs' rule, the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people, from women to workers, to employees to university faculty, intellectuals and even the bazaar merchants and clergy, who were hitherto considered the traditional basis of the regime, are deeply disaffected. Unemployment grips 50% of the labor force. With an inflation rate of over 100%, some 80% of the people live below the poverty line. Corruption and astronomical embezzlement by the regime's officials have eliminated any credibility the regime might have had.

In a word, the abysmal economic, social and ethical record of the regime and 16 years of resistance by a democratic alternative against it, have left no legitimacy or popular base for this regime. In the eyes of the Iranian people, the regime and its leaders are a bunch of criminals, thieves and corrupt individuals. Khomeini's death and the death of the last remaining grand ayatollahs; the lack of the minimum qualifications in Khamenei as the regime's religious leader; and the absence of an acceptable *Marja'-e Taqlid* (source of emulation) who would prop up the regime have either eliminated or seriously undermined the last vestiges of the regime's religious legitimacy among the most retrogressive sectors of the society and the most traditional forces supporting it.

Today, religious fundamentalism does not exist as a social issue or problem in Iran. We are, rather, facing a form of fascism under the guise of religion which holds the reigns

of power. It is not without reason that, whereas at the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988 and Khomeini's death in 1989, more than 70% of the regime's Revolutionary Guards - its main suppressive arm - were volunteers ideologically loyal to the regime, today only 30% are volunteers. Even those remaining are receiving greater material incentives, and continue essentially because it is a well-paid job. In short, they have been transformed from a volunteer army to a suppressive mercenary force which fights against the people for its own survival.

On the international scene, however, the situation is very different. Although word of the regime's difficulties and internal crises and crimes against the people has inevitably reached the outside world, the policies of other countries toward the regime have prevented the Iranian people's all-out Resistance and, more importantly, that Resistance's cultural and ideological challenge to the mullahs from extending beyond Iran's borders.

In the meantime, the regime has done its utmost to tarnish the image of the Resistance on the international level and forestall its advances, through dirty deals and agreements. This is one of the primary issues of discussion between the regime and its foreign interlocutors. The regime pursues its policies and prevarication against the Resistance in international arenas and foreign countries through its own operatives and through persons who have acquiesced but pose as oppositionists. The regime's hysterical reaction to the Resistance's international successes and its demands

from other countries to curtail the Resistance's presence and political activities abroad, confirm that this is its Achilles' heel.

By the same token, the economic relationship between Western countries and Tehran's rulers and the resultant petro-dollars are used only for domestic suppression, weapon purchases, the quest to obtain nuclear arms, and the export of terrorism and fundamentalism. A significant portion of the revenue has also been diverted into the mullahs' foreign bank accounts. For their part, the Iranian people have received nothing but suppression and greater destitution. The extensive economic ties with this regime have not only failed to contain fundamentalism, but have also emboldened the regime to continue these policies. As a matter of fact, the clerics use such connections as a cover to undertake more terrorist and fundamentalist activities abroad.

What is to be done?

The Iranian Resistance's experience in dealing with Iran's fundamentalist rulers and of the international community regarding the mullahs demonstrate that:

- Any policy based on appeasing this regime is doomed to failure. Laws governing a religious dictatorship are different from the laws applying to the world community as we approach the end of the 20th century. They emanate from the Middle Ages. Decisiveness is the only language with which one can and must communicate with this

regime.

- Any notion that would equate the conduct of the Khomeini regime with Islam is a strategic and dangerous mistake from which only the mullahs benefit. Publicizing, supporting and recognizing the democratic alternative, which has the greatest respect for Islam as the religion of the majority of the Iranian people, and which at its core encompasses a Muslim democratic movement, is the only way to deny the mullahs the means of characterizing and exploiting any international opposition, hostility and decisiveness toward them as enmity to Islam.

In this way, the world community and Western countries would not have to surrender to the blackmail of Khomeini's regime and its double-talk on the cultural and religious distinctions of Iran and Islamic countries, or to tarnish the universal principles of human rights by giving concessions to this outlaw regime.

Furthermore, the people of different countries and especially the Muslims, will acquire a more objective insight into the Khomeini regime. Like the people of Iran, few will be beguiled by the regime's Islamic posturing and demagogic slogans.

In other words, exercising decisiveness against the regime and giving support to the Iranian Resistance constitute two fronts against fundamentalism. Doing so will expedite the pace of change inside Iran toward democracy and peace. Thus, the material and spiritual source of support for fundamentalism will be eliminated and its heart will stop

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beating. Exposing the anti-Islamic nature of the mullahs in Western and Islamic countries and introducing the democratic alternative to this regime, would also dry up the fertile grounds for the growth of fundamentalism. We have gained this experience with 100,000 martyrs.

Ladies, gentlemen, dear friends,

Norway has more than once demonstrated that on the international level, it does not yield to routine political and economic considerations in defending democracy and human rights. Your country's courageous actions in assisting liberation movements and its pioneering role in resolving international issues, have given Norway a special stature among the people of different countries. In the same way, your firm stance vis-à-vis the mullahs' religious, terrorist dictatorship has aroused enormous friendship and respect among the people of Iran.

On behalf of the Iranian people and their just Resistance for peace and freedom, I see it incumbent upon myself to call on the Government and people of Norway to boycott the regime, to sever all diplomatic ties with the mullahs, and to include the issue of Iran and the Iranian Resistance on the agenda of their foreign policy. I especially call on you to convince the European countries to adopt a decisive policy against the mullahs' regime and recognize the right of the Iranian people to resist this anti-human regime.

I would also like to address Norwegian women in general and those supremely qualified women who have held

positions of enormous political and social responsibility in your country for many years. I call upon you to come to the aid of your sisters in Iran who have ably resisted against the misogynous clerical regime and for their part have demonstrated that a woman is equally a human being. Of course, to this end, they have made great sacrifices and endured intolerable imprisonment and torture.

I call upon the Norwegian youth to rush to the aid of the Iranian youth who are suffering from the most extreme pressures, and to convey their outcries for freedom and peace to governments and peoples around the world. I have especially seen during my stay that Norwegian youth is playing a decisive role in the political life of their country, something which is extremely valuable.

The Iranian people are determined to bring democracy and peace to their homeland. Doubtless, a democratic Iran is indispensable to the return of tranquillity and lasting peace to the Middle East region and the uprooting of terrorism throughout the globe.

I would like to use this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all the people of Norway who have given me and my delegation profound joy through their enormous affection and outstanding hospitality. Of course, the message of this reception is none other than support for the Iranian people and their just Resistance for the establishment of freedom and democracy in Iran. The Iranian people and their Resistance cherish such humanity because through the darkest period of their history, the freedom-seeking people

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of Norway have accorded them greatest moral support through their unsparing kindness and solidarity. It is this human essence among the mankind and the resultant actions which remain in history and in the hearts of human beings and are passed on through generations. Truly, what would be left if you took away this human essence, this jewel, which constitutes the bedrock of man's social life?

I again thank our dear friends, particularly the members of the Committee in Defense of Human Rights in Iran... I hope to be your host soon in the democratic Iran of tomorrow and welcome you to Freedom Square in Tehran.

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