

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the United Nations

Hon. David Kilgour, co-chair of Canadian Friends of a Democratic Iran and hon. chair,
NEDA for a Free Iran.

Rally of Iranian Diaspora communities

Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

Manhattan, New York

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The thousands of us protesting here today clearly distinguish the 70 million long-suffering and much-admired Iranian people from the regime in Tehran. We oppose any invasion of Iran, but seek effective sanctions that will effectively discourage its government from developing nuclear bombs. Iran has vast amounts of natural gas and oil; no-one can doubt that the only reason Ahmedinejad seeks nuclear energy is to build nuclear weapons.

There are many reasons why people of good will in every UN member country should oppose Ahmadinejad's annual visit to the General Assembly. Here are some:

Human Dignity

1. Ahmadinejad's Iran has the highest number of executions per capita in the world, where more than 2000 death sentences have been handed down during this year alone, including continuing execution of minors (despite its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child), with more than 160 children now on death row; where more than 3000 Afghan refugees are awaiting execution; where more than 32 people are waiting to be stoned to death; where the highest number of journalist in detention exists; where human rights activists and defense attorneys face daily intimidation; where Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi was forced into exile...Ahmadinejad should bow his head in shame for what happens in one of the worst governed countries on earth.

Holocaust

2. Ahmadinejad denies the Holocaust, yet it was the catalyst for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Criminal Court, the Genocide and Refugee Conventions and the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. By denying the Holocaust, he is denying the legitimacy of the entire human rights superstructure that was built upon the lessons drawn from it. He also calls for a member of the United Nations, Israel, to be wiped off the map. The anti-Semitism of the Nazis led to World War II and the killing of sixty two million people. The anti-Semitism of the Iranian regime threatens the entire world order.

Legislated Gender Inequality

3. Ahmadinejad presents Iran as a place where “no discrimination exists”. In fact, Iranian women are heavily subjugated by domestic laws. Under Iranian law, a woman is worth half a man.

Victims of Religion

4. The Iranian government is intensifying the persecution of its own people for their faiths. The Iranian parliament adopted a mandatory death penalty for "apostasy." Among its primary targets is the Baha'i minority.

Most of those prosecuted for apostasy are Muslims. Prominent Shiite Hashem Aghajari was arrested originally for saying "Muslims are not monkeys to blindly follow the clerics." At his trial, he said his punishment was for "the sin of thinking."

Ahmedinejad is the antithesis of what the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stood for (See, for example, Karen Armstrong's book, Muhammad-A Biography of the Prophet). He is in the tradition of Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot.

Responsibility to Prevent

5. This summer, the International Report on the Danger of a Nuclear, Genocidal and Rights-Violating Iran was released. The Responsibility to Prevent petition with it seeks “smart sanctions” against Tehran, and to persuade the U N Security Council to implement its resolutions already passed. It accuses the Revolutionary Guard of illegal nuclear proliferation, state-sponsored international terrorism (with Hezbollah and Hamas on their list of beneficiaries), state-sponsored incitement to genocide, and massive domestic human rights violations.

Attack on Camp Ashraf

On July 28th, 2009, in order to strike a blow at the democracy movement in Iran, Iraqi forces attacked Camp Ashraf, home to 3500 Iranian dissidents, killing 11 unarmed residents and wounding several hundred. Ashraf residents are recognized as protected persons under the Fourth Geneva Convention. More than 2000 parliamentarians from across the world insisted that the rights of Ashraf residents must be protected. Iran's supreme leader made it clear that he wanted to annihilate his opponents in Camp Ashraf through an agreement with Iraq's then government.

PMOI/MEK

The inclusion of the Iranian opposition group, the PMOI/MEK on the terrorism list was one result of a misguided appeasement policy in many capitals and a misinformation campaign by Iranian lobbyists in the West. The label also provided an excuse for Tehran to increase suppression on the Iranian opposition. Now that seven courts in Europe have ordered its removal from EU lists, and the US court of appeal

has referred the designation back to the U.S. Secretary of State, no more time should pass before its removal from the Canadian and U.S. lists.

Conclusion

Iranian dissidents in Camp Ashraf who seek democratic change in Iran must be protected and the UN must have a lasting presence there to prevent further attack on them. The PMOI/MEK must be removed from terrorist lists in the U.S. and Canada. In short, Ahmedinejad should be indicted by the International Criminal Court for his crimes against humanity to his fellow citizens of Iran.

Thank you.