



Editors: Maryam Namazie and Fariborz Pooya

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*'The basis of socialism is the human being... Socialism is the movement to restore human being's conscious will.'*

**Mansoor Hekmat**  
1951-2002

### Send protest letters like the one below in defence of Tehran bus workers

I/My Organisation am/is outraged to learn of the Islamic Republic of Iran's brutal attack on Tehran bus workers and the arrest of hundreds of workers, including executive committee members of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat e Vahed) as well as some of their wives and children. I/We demand the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. Moreover the bus workers' union (Syndicate) must be recognised and the legitimate demands of the workers met. Signed

Name, organisation, if any, city copy to:  
(b.soroush@ukonline.co.uk)

To contact the WPI Briefing or submit articles and letters:  
BMBox 1919  
London WC1N 3XX  
England  
wpi@ukonline.co.uk  
Tel: +44 (0) 07719166731  
Fax: +44 (0) 870 1351338  
www.wpiran.org/English

## Criticism, violence, and the political Islamic movement

Many Islamists - both those in governments in the Middle East and those that are vying for power and in opposition elsewhere - are openly calling for the heads of the editors of newspapers that have published or republished the caricatures of Mohammad. They are calling for the

murder of anyone who utters a word against Mohammad: "Kill the one who insults the prophet." They want the hard-won freedom of expression in Europe to be curtailed.

Clearly, this movement does not have the capacity to



**Fariborz Pooya**

argue, debate, and convince; the only language that it *continued on page 2*

## Don't be intimidated! Please don't apologise!

**Azar Majedi**

The charade by Islamists over the publication of the cartoons depicting Mohammed (prophet) as a suicide bomber is being taken too seriously by many. Apologies after apologies are being delivered to Islamic governments and

thugs. Any apology makes them more vicious and more daring. The only weapon they have is hostage taking, bullying, intimidating, killing, maiming, and offending any human values and any libertarian rights.

We should not apologise to these reactionary forces that have organised the most sophisticated machinery of oppression and intimidation, which have organised and mobilised an army of *continued on page 3*



## Islam must be criticised!

**Maryam Namazie**

It's interesting how free speech, the right to criticise and ridicule god, prophet or religion, the separation of

religion from the state and secularism as well as the non-right to threaten to kill, suicide bomb and massacre people are not applicable to Islamists and Islam!

I must admit, those of us who

have fled the Islamic Republic of Iran are very familiar with this outlook on things. Cultural relativism's equal opportunity for all values and beliefs has often been shoved down our throats by many of the very same politicians, publishers *continued on page 4*

## Criticism, violence, and the political Islamic movement, from page 1

speaks is that of violence and intimidation. The recent history of the political Islamic movement shows well their capacity for such violence, rights violations, denial of any freedoms and an absolute disregard for anything humane.

Of course, in order to justify their actions, they and their apologists blame the caricatures as the source of the violence and intimidation. But they need no justification as anything from 'immodest' and 'un-Islamic' women, sexual relations outside marriage, criticism of any aspect of Islam, the denial of the existence of god, etc. are all 'offensive' and punishable by violence. This movement is forever irritated, upset and offended. The truth is that the root of violence and intimidation is not the publication and re-publication of the caricatures but the brutal nature of the political Islamic movement with its colossal state and non-state machinery and the huge wealth at its disposal.

The genesis of this brutality is the environment that Islamic states and the associated movement needs to maintain their hold and power over the population of primarily Islam-ridden countries of the Middle East and on certain sections of communities in Europe. It requires the unquestionable

and uncritical acceptance of god, its messenger and its representatives on earth. This caters for total barbarity, which in the final analysis, is shared to some extent by the decadent capitalism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, hence the accommodation and appeasement of the Islamists by proponents of the new world order. Part of this machinery is a system of mind and behaviour control associated with Islamic law. Anything that questions these fundamentals of the system risks loosening the grips on power of the Saudi rulers, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Hezbollah of Lebanon and the hordes of Imams and mosques in the heart of Europe... and hasten their demise. In a 21st century world, with its ease of communication, the ability to control is becoming more and more difficult for Islamists, whilst more and more of the population in the Middle East fed up with their bigotry and inhumanity are turning against this movement. The Islamist reaction to this situation is ever increasing violence and brutality against the population and anyone who dares to question their fundamentals and ever more restrictive laws and regulations in the Middle East.

The reaction to the caricatures serves two purposes; firstly it is an attempt to intimidate the

western population and media and also to gain an upper hand vis-a-vis western governments in their struggle for a bigger share of power world-wide and secondly as a means of consolidating their grip on power in the Middle East.

The response of western and European governments and sections of the media is interesting. Some governments and big business are worried about their trade; others see freedom of expression as harmful to their power and others for purely political reasons follow a strategic policy of accommodation and appeasement of the political Islamic movement. As a result, they all have lost their capacity to defend the unconditional freedom of expression; any reference to this freedom is followed by many ifs and buts.

What is striking is the rush of all governments involved to impose restrictions on freedom of expression from the spokesperson of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to the newly crowned Pope Benedict XVI, to Kofi Anan of the United Nations, Jack Straw of British Foreign Office, the United States government and the remnants of the pro-Islamist anti-imperialist left. Jack Straw the British Foreign Secretary, after meeting with the

Sudanese Foreign Minister (!?) lashes out at the re-publication of the caricatures by the European Press, but falls silent to the calls of Islamist for murder on the streets of London.

The truth is that the publication of the caricatures ridiculing the most sacred is an undeniable right. It is downright shameful that many governments and some newspaper owners are putting pressure on editors and journalists to refrain from publishing the caricatures, whilst in fact all the focus should be on the Islamists for their violent and inhumane conduct and the unbearable conditions that they have imposed on millions of people.

Freedom of expression should be defended unconditionally as any conditional freedom always gives opportunity to army generals, mullahs, nationalists and so on who are only too happy to point out to the interests of the nation, country, religion, economy, etc. to curtail the freedoms of citizens. Defending unconditional freedom of expression and in particular when it comes to the criticising and ridiculing of religion, with the rise of political Islam is ever more necessary for the liberation of the people in Islam-ridden countries.

To join the campaign in defence of Tehran bus workers, you can also sign a letter on: [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=68](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=68). Also for more information, contact International Labour Solidarity Committee of the Worker-communist Party of Iran, Co-ordinator: Shahla Daneshfar ([shahla\\_daneshfar@yahoo.com](mailto:shahla_daneshfar@yahoo.com)), Public Relations: Bahram Soroush ([b.soroush@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:b.soroush@ukonline.co.uk)).

## Don't be intimidated! Please don't apologise! from page 1

terrorists world wide, that have been terrorizing the citizens of Islam-ridden countries as well as citizens of the world, and that have the worst criminal record.

This is their weapon: resorting to terror whilst appearing as victims. They kill, maim, stone to death people for wanting their rights, for wanting freedom, for wanting a better life. They humiliate women daily, deprive them of their rights, torture them for not observing the rule of Islam, and when someone dares to tell the truth about their

atrocities, they become offended, they cry for their "violated dignities", they become "sacred". This is nothing but blackmail. Just the same way as they take innocent people hostage daily, by crying for their "sacred" beliefs, they take our conscious hostage. This is their method of survival.

The world without unconditional freedom of expression and criticism will be a very dull and scary world to live in. These values are the result of long and hard fought battles. We have to

preserve the right to unconditional expression and criticism. Nothing is sacred for everyone. Thus everyone must have the right to criticise or ridicule any "sacred" concept, object or belief. The only way we can build a better and more humane world is to safeguard with all our power these sacred values. Unconditional freedom of expression and criticism is the sacred value, we should maintain.

Islamists become offended and hysterical too often. They should learn to be more

tolerant, more respectful of libertarian rights that have been won through long struggles by humanity and progressive forces. We should teach them to respect freedom and civil rights. We should teach them to respect women's rights. We should teach them not too readily to resort to terror and intimidation. How? By firmly standing up to them and saying no apologies are due. If any, it is your turn to apologise for all your crimes against humanity.

# Our children want their fathers. Support them.

## Tehran Bus Workers' Protest Update 14, Friday 3 February 2006

*The following is the letter (translated) from the families of the arrested bus workers, who held a protest rally on Wednesday, 1st February, outside the National Assembly (Majles). A second rally has been called for 10am this Saturday, when the families will be joined by bus workers at the end of their night shift.*

To Amnesty International, all human rights organisations, all labour organisations and all conscientious people of the world:

You are certainly aware of Tehran's bus workers' strike on Saturday 28 January and how it was crushed. You have certainly heard that more than 500 of our husbands are in jail for wanting their rights, for going on strike, for building a union

to defend their rights. You have certainly heard that they even took away and beat up the workers' kids. We expect that you will support us, if you haven't done so already; and if you have supported us, to do so even more vigorously so that those in charge feel even greater pressure and release our husbands immediately.

Our husbands have not committed a crime. They say they cannot live with wages three times below the official poverty line and are asking higher pay. Those have committed a crime who beat up our children and threw them in jail; those who do not recognise the slightest rights for us.

Our husbands say we have to organise so as to put an end to dispersion and fight unitedly against the poverty and deprivation that has been

imposed on us.

Our husbands say we need a collective agreement to be able to stand up to employers and the state collectively, to sign contracts collectively, enter negotiations and take strike action collectively, and discuss long hours and work hazards collectively.

Our husbands rightly took strike action because none of their demands had been met. They decided to strike to win the release of Mr Mansoor Ossanlou who is in prison and gravely ill. May be in your country you have such rights. We don't.

Our husbands have been in prison for several days. They were badly beaten up when they were being arrested. The wife and two daughters of Yaghoub Salimi, an activist of our union, were beaten up. You can imagine what they

have probably done to our husbands in prison. They are not allowing any visits and the bus company has stopped our wages. Our children want their fathers. We expect the whole world to stand up in our support and put pressure on the authorities to immediately release our husbands so that they may come back to work. Your pressure is important. Please put in all your efforts right now for the sake of humanity, justice and the struggle against injustice, oppression and unfairness.

1 February 2006

Signatures: Gholamreza Mirzaee, member of the Management Board, Public Relations Officer and Spokesperson for the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran Vahed Bus Company and a number of partners of the arrested workers of Tehran Vahed Bus Company

## Islam must be challenged! from page 1

and editors, telling us time and time again to respect 'our' culture and religion though it has been imposed by sheer force.

Now this racism of lower standards and relative rights regarding Islam is being applied to the European press as well! Beware!

From Jack Straw to frightened politicians and editors across the board, in unison with Ahmadinejad and others Islamists and their apologists, we are told that free speech and a free press do not mean the freedom to 'insult', 'offend', be 'inflammatory', 'insensitive' or 'disrespectful' to the 'beliefs of Muslims'.

I ask you, what use is free speech then if it merely deals with the mundane?

In fact, such freedoms only really begin to matter when they protect that which is sacred, uncomfortable and even offensive.

People in Iran have for decades been massacred,

annihilated and beheaded for insulting and offending Islam – whether by improper veiling, for their sexual relations and sexuality, political opposition to god's rule on earth, demands for basic rights, and even for simply dancing, laughing, listening to music and yes, caricaturing and ridiculing. The banners, placards and fatwas threatening to do the same on the streets of Europe are very much business as usual for this movement and not in the least surprising.

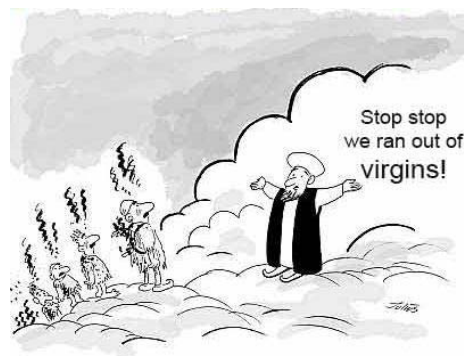
Those who naively assert that the caricatures have encouraged this violence and 'extremism' have not yet recognised or understood this political movement. Or in the case of the likes of the Muslim Council of Britain or the Islamic Human Rights Commission (an oxymoron) and their apologists, are merely making more excuses for their brethren.

But come on, all can see that violence is intrinsic to this reactionary right wing movement, has always been so and hardly needs

'encouragement' from some caricatures. The herds of Hezbollah thugs on the streets of Europe and the Middle East are Islamists organised by Islamic states and groups after self-appointed and parasitic imams from Denmark toured Saudi Arabia and Egypt with a portfolio of the caricatures - and some more - to organise the mayhem on various streets across the world.

This political movement has to be challenged and stopped. One essential component of the battle that is ensuing is the uncomfortable task of criticising, and questioning its banner – Islam.

*'What is clear is that when you come face to face with movements, which threaten freethinkers like Taslima Nasrin with death, you are obliged to once again refer to the Koran and say that this reaction is feeding from a well, which exactly*



*formulates all this backwardness. The Koran could have been a historical book like many other historical books; people could look at it and not show much sensitivity but when a movement makes it the banner of a contemporary political struggle, then people are forced to take its banner from it, review it, look at it and ... discredit it.'* (Iran will be the Scene of a Mass Anti-Islamic Offensive, Interview with Mansoor Hekmat, 13 June 1999.)

For those who are afraid to take this religion head on, don't worry – we are doing it for you here and in Iran...

## Defend free speech and secularism

Sign petition online at: <http://www.petitiononline.com/namazie/petition.html>

We, the undersigned, unequivocally condemn the threats of death and bombings by Islamists to limit, censor and silence any critique of Islam.

Criticism of religion - any religion - including caricaturing religious figures, however offensive, are integral components of unconditional freedom of expression, secularism, and the separation of religion's intervention in the public sphere.

These are rights fought for and gained by the enlightenment and progressive social movements.

We must not allow anyone or any movement to erode these fundamental rights and values.

All states are duty-bound to:

- \* Condemn threats made by religious groups and movements to limit, censor and silence free speech
- \* Unconditionally defend free speech and the separation of religion's intervention in people's lives
- \* Immediately prosecute all those issuing threats against persons and places