

# Briefing 207

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## Palestinian people in Gaza: Victims of two terrorist camps New Channel TV's interview with Hamid Taqvae

*Nasser Asqary: Israel continues its mass killings in Gaza. Political Islamic forces, including the regime in Iran, have seized on the opportunity to promote their propaganda and shed crocodile tears for the Palestinian people. What is this war all about? What role is political Islam playing?*

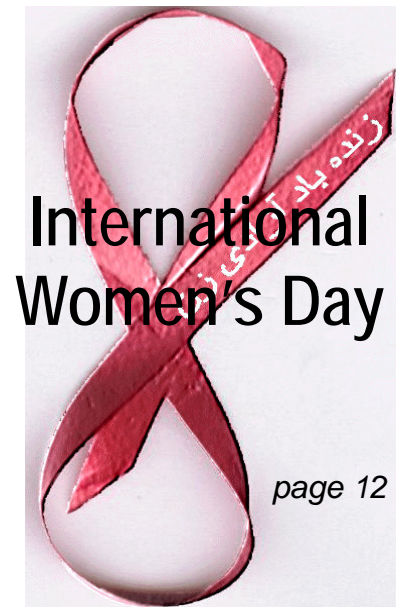
from a humanitarian point of view. I think the scale of the killings of Palestinians by Israel is almost without precedence even in the bloody history of the wars between Arabs and Israelis. As you know, Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Over a million and a half peo-



**Hamid Taqvae:** Well, first of all, as you mentioned, this war has been a total catastrophe

ple, mostly children and teen-

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## International Women's Day

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### A snapshot of WPI's activities

Siyaves Azeri

30 November 2008 marked the seventeenth anniversary of the formation of the Worker-communist Party of Iran. The anniversary of the formation of the party was celebrated by different Party organisations, the largest of which was organised by the Organisation Abroad and German Committee in Köln.

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**Long Live Socialism!**



agers, live in a tiny strip of land. Clearly, any air or ground assault on such an area would be disastrous, resulting in very high human casualties. The lives and livelihoods of thousands of innocent people who do not have the least interest or role in this war will be lost over nothing. The tragedy is that the Palestinian people are the only people in the world who live in refugee camps in their own land; and Israel, the very root cause of that situation, once in a while attacks them from the air and on the ground! Israel has always denied the Palestinians the right to a normal life. It has always responded to the legitimate demand of the Palestinian people with an iron fist. That is the root cause of the current war too. It is not the first time Israel passes through Palestinian towns, villages and refugee camps with the deadly fire of its military might. That is what it has always done. That is its strategy, and this time too it is busy creating another humanitarian catastrophe.

On the other side, Hamas is also an agent in creating this

catastrophe. Its rocket fire and other blind terrorist operations against the people of Israel have resulted in casualties, although not quantitatively comparable with those

caused by Israel. Hamas' rocket fire since the end of the last ceasefire has killed a few people, whereas so far close to a thousand Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. But a crime is a crime. After all, both sides kill as much as they have the power to. Hamas kills tens of people with its rocket fire, and Israel kills hundreds and thousands with the most powerful army in the Middle East, which has been essentially created with the objective of crushing the Palestinian people and their legitimate demands. Two terrorist forces have come face to face, not willing to stop short of any crime against the people. From a humanitarian perspective, this war is a criminal war on both sides and must stop immediately and unconditionally.

The other aspect of this war, which your question raises, is the political causes and motives behind it. From this perspective too this is a reactionary war on both sides. It is being waged over the Palestinian question - in the name of defending the displaced Palestinian people,

on the one hand, and in the name of defending the existence of the state of Israel, on the other. When you scratch beneath the surface, however, you will see that this war is not over the rights of the Palestinian people at all. They are merely its victims, and the two sides have their own political reasons for the continuation of this situation. In my view, as both the 33-day war of Lebanon in 2006 and the current war have shown, it is no longer a question of forces fighting to resolve the Palestinian question and securing the rights of the Palestinian people, be it under a nationalist banner or any other, as was the case with, for example, Al-Fatah or organisations led by left-leaning Palestinian leaders such as Nayef Hawatmeh and George Habash. Those circumstances do not prevail any longer. Today, what you have on the [Palestinian] side of this war is the reactionary political Islamic movement which, ideologically, follows a strategy, a political line, totally irrelevant to the demands and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The formation of a viable Palestinian state on equal footing with Israel and other states is not on the agenda of political Islam. Its proclaimed goal, spelt out time and time again by Hamas' leader Khalid Mish'al and the Islamic regime of Iran's president Ahmadinejad, is to not recognise Israel and to throw all Israelis into the sea! Well, what this means in practical-political terms is that

the formation of an equal Palestinian state is absent from the agenda of political Islam. What Hamas ultimately aspires to achieve is the creation in Palestine of a state similar to that of the Taliban regime or the Islamic Republic in Iran – a state founded on religious and ethnic hate-mongering against Israel and the Jewish people (or ‘belligerent infidels,’ as Iran’s so called supreme spiritual leader Khamenei calls them). That will not resolve the Palestinian question, but turns it into a more deeply rooted chronic, bloodier question.

The political Islamic forces intend to create faith-based states similar to Iran in the Middle East, and that is essentially why the regime in Iran actively supports them. It is common knowledge that if Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah of Lebanon, etc., are in existence today it is basically thanks to the political, military and financial support of the regime in Iran. Political Islamic forces need war. They feed on war. War prepares a fertile ground for their growth. It is through war that they get a chance to tug at the heartstrings of people and beat the drum for Islam against Israel, which they know is hated by the people in the region. They thus provide a platform, a political *raison d’être*, for themselves. In my opinion, although the Israeli assault may weaken political Islam militarily, it will ultimately strengthen it, and secure

a fertile ground for their growth. This is the service the Israeli military assault provides the ultra-reactionary movement of political Islam.

*Nasser Asqary: Doesn’t Israel and the United States know this?*



**Hamid Taqvaei:** I think they do. But they do not have much of a problem with it.

Israel doesn’t mind seeing the Palestinian question, i.e., the statelessness of the Palestinian people, being buried under the rubbles of a religious war. Ever since the Lebanon war in 2006, Israel has claimed it is defending the camp of global democracy, i.e., the state terrorism of the West whose standard bearer is, as we know, the Bush administration, against Islamic terrorism. It is no longer a question of Israel fighting Palestinian forces of independence or defenders of refugee rights or even forces of Arab nationalism. The question has been politically re-moulded into one in which Israel is fighting Islamic terrorism, and this, from a political perspective and within the framework of the reactionary strategic goals pursued by the Israeli ruling class, is of benefit to that government. When, at the time of Yasser Arafat, Al-Fatah had the upper hand [in the Palestinian movement], Israel even helped Hamas to paint the question in

a religious light. Israel itself is an ethnic-religious state drawing, for its legitimacy, on the Old Testament, the Torah, etc., and their promise of land to the Children of Israel. It, therefore, needs, politically and strategically, to have a rank of Muslims lined up against it, that is, to be faced with a fight between Muslims and Jews over Jerusalem, for example, rather than a fight between a force fighting for independence and an oppressive state, that is, between several million displaced people and a state which is a usurper and an aggressor. So, from this strategic standpoint, Israel benefits from tainting the fight as a crusade between Muslims and Jews. This distortion of the Palestinian question by tainting it with ethnicity and religion is common between Israel and the political Islamic forces such as Hamas and the regime in Iran. And it is this fact that puts the current war, like the 33-day war in Lebanon in 2006, in the framework of an opposition between two terrorist camps in the Middle East.

It is for these reasons that I believe this war is, politically and strategically, favourable to both Israel and political Islam, and that therefore neither of them truly wants a ceasefire. So much so that when Hamas is asked about a ceasefire its response is: remove the economic siege and recognise the government of Hamas in Gaza. By making this demand, Hamas is, in fact, proposing its own vic-

tory as the pre-condition for a ceasefire. Israel also claims that the forces it is fighting are Islamic terrorist forces, so they must stop their rocket fire, recognise Israel, and so on. Neither side is, therefore, willing to go for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. Hamas thinks the longer this war drags on, and the higher the death toll rises, at the end it will be enjoying, like Hezbollah at the end of the 33-day war in Lebanon, a more favourable social and political footing. On the other hand, the more this opposition becomes an opposition between Islam and Judaism the more it is, as I said, to Israel's benefit strategically. Israel is aware that in a conflict between forces wanting all Israelis to be thrown into the sea and a state that is defending its very existence, it will no longer appear as usurper and aggressor but as just another country fighting for its survival.

Hamas says it will not recognise Israel, Ahmadinejad wants to wipe it off the face of the earth, and Khamenei issues a Fatwa commanding all Muslims to fight 'the belligerent infidels.' This is the precious service the forces of political Islam are doing for Israel. One may, indeed, say that the Palestinian question has been hijacked by political Islam. And this is a boon for Israel as an aggressor. Two reactionary forces are fighting over their own reactionary agendas, and the people of Palestine are the

innocent victims of their conflict.

*Nasser Asqary: The Islamic regime of Iran's brutal paramilitary force, Basij, has been called to sign up for deployment to Jerusalem. A bounty of \$1 million has been put on Hosni Mubarak's head, and so on. What role is the regime in Iran playing here?*

**Hamid Taqvaei:** Well, I think the role of the regime is a significant one here, from the political perspective, as well as from the point of view of its financial and military backing of Hamas and Hezbollah. You see, this war is transpiring at a time when the regime has been weakened both domestically and regionally. As far as the domestic political conditions are concerned, you can see, on the one hand, that Khamenei is backing Ahmadinejad, forming a bloc with him, in preparation for the upcoming so-called elections. On the other hand, you see the dissenters, who are increasingly standing up to the so-called Supreme Leader [Khamenei]. Even among the hardliners there are now many people who disagree with Khamenei and Ahmadinejad. Division within the regime is on the increase. Kargozaran newspaper has been banned, Rafsanjani is being attacked, and he is, in turn, questioning Khamenei's judgments and decisions, and, generally speaking, nobody thinks very much of the so-called Supreme

Leader anymore! From the regional perspective, during the past several months the United States has pursued a policy of pushing the regime further away from Western states which has led to a certain kind of political isolation. So much so that today even Syria has closer ties to the West than Iran. Western states have taken initiatives to establish closer relations with Arab countries but have excluded Iran. Therefore, under such internal and regional circumstances the regime also needed this war for its short term, transitional, or diplomatic goals. Khamenei has had a chance to, once again, raise the same old banner and issue a Jihad Fatwa addressed to 'Muslims of the world.' The Shariatmadari controlled Keyhan newspaper has declared it 'halal' to shed the blood of all Zionists and Jews, wherever possible. They are dispatching Basijis to the war zone. And all this is, of course, happening in the midst of acute domestic cracks within the regime. It is all happening within the framework of the comic situation the regime finds itself in today. For example, the Basiji's who are all packed up to go to war are expecting to be given a free hand so they can hijack a plane to fly to the belligerent infidels! There are now such ludicrous arguments as this going on between different factions of the regime. It needs this war out of sheer desperation. It needs that whole masquerade to be able to, once

again, seize on such sham causes as defending Palestinian children (while it itself executes children) in the hope of getting out of its muddled condition, and by so doing buy itself some justification.

Nevertheless, as far the Iranian people are concerned I think they are the most conscious people about the Palestinian question. They have experienced the Islamic Republic's regime. They know political Islam perfectly and will not believe the mullah's crocodile tears no matter who they happen to be shed for. They know that the regime's concern is not the people of Palestine, and they know that it is supporting terrorists and organisations such as Hamas and Hezbollah to advance its own agenda. For the Iranian working class, for the great majority of people who have, for the past thirty years, suffered the regime's oppression, torture and mass killings in the name of the 'struggle against the Great Satan,' 'struggle against Israel,' 'conquering Jerusalem by way of Karbala,' and similar nonsensical slogans, the regime's support of the Palestinian people is nothing more than a farce. But, unfortunately, this mentality is not shared, or, at least, not so strongly shared, in the region as a whole. And that is why the regime can count on its own mockery of helping the Palestinian people, hoping to gain a socio-political footing in Arab countries, in Palestine

itself, in Lebanon, even in Iraq, and thus be able to revive itself politically in the region. This is the necessity of war for the regime. As some Western analysts have put it, this war is a proxy war. It is a kind of indirect clash between the Islamic Republic and Israel. It is a confrontation between two terrorist camps. This war, in my view, as I mentioned earlier, in terms of both its substance and the political circumstances that have caused it, is a war within the framework of the international war of terrorists. It is the war of US-led militarism against political Islam, and not a war within the framework of the struggles of the Palestinian people for independence against Israel, the usurper. This is a terrorist war and therefore, from a political standpoint, reactionary, anti-human and deplorable. It is the Palestinian people, as well as the Israeli people, who are its only victims. Their interests are not, by any means, represented in this war.

***Nasser Asqary:** The leaders of some Islamic states, and Islamist and nationalist political currents, claim that Hamas has been elected by the people and is, therefore, their representative. What do think of this representation of the Palestinian people by Hamas?*

**Hamid Taqvaee:** As I alluded earlier, the people of Iran know best the true meaning of this claim. The same is said about

Ahmadinejad having been elected by the people, or that Khomeini or Khatami were elected by the people. We are quite familiar with the mechanism by which, depending on the circumstances, a political current can emerge from the ballot box, especially in countries like Iran or Palestine. Such governments bring someone out of the ballot box at their discretion. In this particular case, even assuming a fair and square election, the policies carried out by Hamas now have no relevance to the interests of the Palestinian people.

In a sense, even Hitler was elected and enjoyed a large social base, but it did not mean that he represented the interests of the working class and the honourable masses of Germany. It was the same in the case of Khomeini. The newly established Islamic Republic initially obtained 90 percent of the votes, and truly so, because the people had illusions about the nature of this regime. But it was obvious from day one that it had nothing to do with the interests of the people. And people know this today. Now, there is even no need to mention later 'elections' such as that of Khamenei's, Khatami's, Ahmadinejad's, and so on. Therefore, one should set aside the argument regarding elections, especially when it comes to countries like Iran and Palestine, as elections do not prove anything whatsoever in the field of veritable politics.

The question is, essentially, about the policy carried out by Hamas which is criminal from the humanitarian perspective, and irrelevant to the interests and legitimate demands of the Palestinian people from the political perspective. Hamas' objective is not the creation of a Palestinian state. Its ideological aspiration is the annihilation of Israel. It does not recognise the existence of Israel. Well, then, with such a banner, the political Islamic movement can, of course, go on retaining the bone of contention forever. Because not recognising Israel means, in fact, that there cannot be any negotiation, any diplomacy. No government will ever negotiate with someone who says 'I do not recognise you!' Well, this becomes a god given gift to Israel, as it too is not willing to negotiate and recognise a Palestinian state. In the best case scenario, Israel is willing to show its iron fist and recognise the existence of some sort of 'self-government' in the refugee camps. That is the maximum Israel is willing to do. It, therefore, needs an opposite camp which raises the banner of Islam against the 'belligerent infidels' saying Israel must be wiped off the map, so it can respond by saying, well, then, here ends negotiation and begins the 'fight to the last breath!' Hamas has created that situation, and it does not bear any relevance whatsoever to the interests of Palestinians who want to live in

peace, have their own country, be recognised and, like any other country in the region, send their ambassador to the United Nations, elect Presidents, and so on.

In the current political atmosphere, and in the wake of the indignation caused by the mass killings perpetrated by Israel, the popularity of Hamas is quite likely to increase. It is clear that under these circumstances the more people Israel kills the more Hamas will benefit, though Hamas is just as criminal as Israel. And if you look closer and heed the conditions in which the people are living and their need for a dignified life, for a Palestinian state, for a measure of normality so they would not have to live under the fire of tanks, fighter jets and cannons on a daily basis, then you will see that Hamas is moving in the opposite direction. War mongering is part and parcel of Hamas' policy; just as much as Ahmadinejad throws the Israelis into the sea once a week. And this is not a stupid mistake. It is not that the regime in Iran does not understand its own rhetoric. It knows very well what it is doing. Similarly, Hamas has raised the banner of the annihilation of Israel because it is under such a banner that it can gather the reactionary movement of political Islam around itself. We [in the Worker-communist party of Iran] have always said that one of the political assets of and

one of the sources, which political Islam feeds on, is the Palestinian issue. This crime against the Palestinian people has been historically perpetrated by Israel, backed by the United States and other Western powers, and another reactionary movement has capitalised on it just as much in order to advance its own interests, and does not, therefore, even want the question to be resolved. Who would want to put their own capital assets on sale? It does not want the question resolved because as long as it is there political Islam can remain hopeful to be somebody in the 'who's who?' of politics, a force to be reckoned with, and thus gain a social footing. These are the reasons why Hamas is not willing to see the Palestinian question ever resolved and, as I said, the Islamists, in general, have hijacked this cause to advance their own agenda.

*Nasser Asqary; A number of forces, both Iranian and non, such as Rah-e-Kargar and Tudeh Party in the Iranian opposition, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, and so on, have only condemned Israel as the party responsible for this war. They have thus indirectly sided with Hamas.*

**Hamid Taqvaee:** Well, mind you, they have sided with Hamas directly in some cases! SWP, one of your examples, openly defends Hamas. In the 33-day war in Lebanon, the

SWP raised pictures of Hasan Nasrollah and called him the Che Guevara of Lebanon! And now they are saying Hamas has been elected by the people of Palestine, that it represents their interests, is revolutionary, anti-imperialist, and so on. One can call the likes of the SWP the lunatic Left – a Left that hears voices in its head and is totally irrelevant to the realities of people's political life.

The agenda of these forces has been founded on anti-Americanism. They will back just anyone who happens to be against America for whatever reason. From Ben Laden to Nasrollah, from Moghtada Sadr to Khomeini, from Khamenei to Ahmadinejad, they are all considered 'revolutionary' and supportable in the political lexicon of this lunatic Left. In the case of such groups as SWP and other anti-American Leftists in the West, one may consider mitigating circumstances like the fact that they might not know the true nature of the regime in Iran very well or that, after all, it is not their cause to overthrow it. But, as far as the Iranian lunatic Left is concerned, even that excuse will not apply; in which case taking such a position, i.e., a one-sided condemnation of Israel and silence towards political Islam, signifies, quite directly, indeed, a defence of the regime in practice. The characteristic feature of this Left is that every time there is a row between the regime and the US or Israel, it

sides with the regime. For instance, at the time of occupation of the US embassy in 1979 (at that time the revolution was still alive and the people still pushed forward their radical demands in spite of the new regime. It therefore played the trick of embassy occupation on the people to appear revolutionary, to not lose its socio-political base among the masses, and to stand up to them in the name of revolution.) At the time this same lunatic Left declared the regime to be anti-American and progressive! As a result, it stopped the struggle against the regime, and later some of these groups even fully supported it. A more recent example is that every time the threat of a US attack on Iran is raised, they immediately side with the regime, claiming that it is not the right time for the slogan 'Down with the Islamic Republic!' but the time to stop fighting against it and opposing the US full force. Their slogan was 'No to war,' period. We raised the banner of 'No to war! No to the Islamic Republic of Iran!' But they put aside the 'No to the Islamic Republic' part. Well, you need not be a Marxist, or delve deeply into politics, to understand that taking such a position in the context of Iranian society means de facto support for the regime. The regime has put on this charade of being anti-Great-Satan and anti-Israel essentially with the intention of picking these very political fruits. And then this sectarian, lunatic Left falls

right into the trap and, starting from the intention of opposing the US and Israel, ends up on the side of the Islamic regime in Iran.

We have, from an opposing standpoint to these farcical positions, propounded our policy domestically since the beginning of this regime, and internationally since September 11. We have declared that, in the conflict between the USA and political Islam, we stand with the people, that is, we stand in the camp of civilised humanity against this Islamist vs. New World Order barbarism. We are the standard bearers of a world that has risen up for its humane demands. No one has to choose between Osama Ben Laden and George Bush, between Ariel Sharon and Hasan Nasrollah, between Ehud Olmert and Khalid Mish'al. The people of the world do not have to. The people of the world can and should rise up to defend their rights, and in this case, that is, as far as the Palestinian question is concerned, they should stand up to both political Islam and the Israeli government's bullying and mass killings. The Palestinian question can be truly resolved only by secular, Left forces, and not by Anti-Arab Jews or anti-Palestinian Zionists or anti-Jew and anti-belligerent-infidel Islamists, and so on. Khamenei's recent Fatwa according to which Israelis are 'belligerent infidels' and Muslims across the world must rush to fight them, and so

on, this kind of Islam vs. Judaism Crusade is not only not the solution, but it is itself the root cause of many of the problems.

The policies of Israeli and Western governments are the root, the cause and the source of the plight of several million Palestinians, which has existed for 60 years, and must come to an end. However, political Islam is an immense obstacle and is part of the problem. It is only the secular, Left and communist forces that are capable of resolving the Palestinian question based on the creation of an independent, secular state.

As far as the situation in Iran is concerned, the Left-leaning revolution that is taking shape can, in my view, be of decisive help to the resolution of that question. As I have already said, Iranian society is unique in that it is totally indifferent towards the anti-Americanism of the regime's sort or anti-Israelism of Nasrollah's sort. It is, in fact, not only indifferent towards them, but has been completely immunised against them. The people in Iran are deeply cognizant of the inhuman content of such anti-American and Anti-Great-Satan charades. At the same time, the Left movement, the movement for freedom, and especially the

secularist movement against political Islam, is more powerful in Iran than anywhere else in the world. The revolutionary movement of the Iranian people against the regime is diagonally opposite the positions taken by the lunatic Left. The overthrow of the regime in Iran will liberate the Palestinian people as well. This Left, anti-religious, secularist movement does have a footing in Iran. It is represented by the Worker-communist Party. And we believe in the present conditions – as we also said in the past when, with the rise of the chance of US attack on Iran as a result of which the lunatic Left sided with the regime again – the only fundamental solution of the problem lies in mobilising the ranks of the people, helping them to rise up, and organising them to overthrow the regime. It is also true of this very day. The plight of the Palestinian people will persist as long as the influence of political Islam exists in Palestine as well as in the region at large. The Palestinian people must be rid of political Islam. To achieve that, its backbone must be broken, that is, the regime in Iran must be given the boot. This can be achieved in Iran with the force of the revolution of the workers, women and the youth. And we are rep-

resenting this movement...

Political Islam is taking advantage of the Israeli government's bullying, of US militarism, of the situation in Iraq, of the situation in Afghanistan, and of the current situation in Palestine. It has hijacked the Palestinian question. My advice to the lunatic Left that thinks it is defending the Palestinian people by raising the banner of 'Down with Israel!' alone, on the one hand, and raising the banner of remaining silent or even supporting Islamist forces, on the other, is that our fundamental slogan must be 'Down with both terrorist poles!', i.e., it must be against both Israel and political Islam. It is only with slogans such as 'Long live the people,' 'Long live secularism,' 'Long live freedom,' 'Long live equality' and 'Long live socialism' that we can, and should, wage our war against both terrorist camps, put an end to this war and its mass killings, and prepare the ground for the foundation of an independent Palestinian state on equal footing with the state of Israel.

*The original Farsi version of this interview has been transcribed and typed by Hadi Vaqfi. The English version was translated by Jamshid Hadian.*

***Down with the Islamic regime of Iran***

## WPI snapshot

from page 1

The celebration started with a concert by the band Tapesh 2012, and a welcoming address in Farsi and English by Sima Bahari and Maryam Nazmie. The WPI leader Hamid Taqvaee also made a speech during this event. He emphasised the unique role of Mansoor Hekmat in the WPI's formation and maintained that the formation of the party was the communist answer to capitalism in the post-Berlin wall era. He also pointed to the Party's progression and expansion in recent years and stressed the importance of the party in the struggle against the Islamic Republic. Issam Shukri, General Secretary of the Left Worker-communist Party of Iraq, also delivered a speech. He pointed to the importance of the continuation of the WPI's activities and struggles in order to lead the revolutionary movement of the people in Iran against the Islamic Republic. Shukri also emphasised the importance of strengthening the relationship between the two parties. Abdulqadir Peyman from the leadership of Worker-socialists Organisation of Afghanistan, and Basir Nasibi, Iranian film director and critique in exile, were among the guests that delivered speeches. Messages of con-

gratulations were also read during the event.

On December 6, 2009, in solidarity with Iranian students and in support of their struggle on Iranian Student's Day the WPI organised rallies in Frankfurt, Germany and Malmo, Sweden. The protest in Frankfurt took place in front of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mina Ahadi spoke in Farsi and German in support of the students and the people's struggle against the Islamic regime. In Malmo, Navid Minaee, head of the Young Communists Organisation spoke. WPI members in Iran distributed leaflets in Tehran University and Allameh University amongst other activities.

December 10 marked another victory for WPI. Maximilian University had invited three representatives of the Islamic regime – Mohammad Langhausen, Shahram Pazouki, and Seyd Mohammad Abtahi—to deliver speeches about Islam's role within the framework of a 'dialogue of religions' but the event was cancelled due to the pressure exerted by the WPI German Committee. Several human right organisations supported the campaign against Maximilian University.

The most important event in

the past period was the 31<sup>st</sup> Plenum of the WPI's Central Committee that was held between November 28 and 30, 2008. Most of Central Committee members and its consulting members and many WPI cadres attended this three-day plenum. Hamid Taqvaee made the opening speech of the Plenum in which he explained the all-encompassing crisis of the Islamic regime and the role of party organisation in leading the movement of the people in Iran against the Islamic Republic toward success. He maintained that the Party should become aware of its role in order to emerge as an all-embracing alternative against the Islamic regime and to impose itself onto the regime as a dual force. Asqar Karimi, head of the Executive Council, gave a briefing about party activities both in Iran and abroad in the period between the two plenums. He also stressed the role of the party and party media, especially New Channel TV, and emphasised the immediacy of finding solutions to funding the TV. The Plenum also discussed and ratified two declarations, one concerning the ongoing international capitalist economic crisis and the other about the role and importance of party organisation. A seminar concerning religion took place at a fringe meeting of the Plenum where

worker-communist policies against religion as a political force and as an ideological framework were introduced and discussed. The opening speech of Hamid Taqvaei and the seminar on religion were broadcast via New Channel TV during the plenum.

On January 9, 2009, the WPI's Abroad Committee held a meeting. The agenda of the meeting included an evaluation of activities of the Abroad Committee in the period since the Second Congress of the Organisation Abroad. The meeting discussed the policies and activities in the aforementioned period and decided on the policies and directions for the coming period. Nazanin

Boroumand, Mohammad Shokouhi, Khalil Keyvan, and Hassan Salehi were elected as members of its Executive Committee. Khalil Keyvan was also elected as the Secretary of the Organisation Abroad.

On January 15, 2009 WPI-Organisation Abroad launched a campaign in defence of students of Shiraz University. WPI's communiqué in this regard calls upon all human rights and labour organisations around the world to protest the attacks of the Islamic regime against students of Shiraz University. Following the protests organised by students in December 2008, 37 of the students became subject to disciplinary

prosecution; 18 students were suspended from studies for different periods; 10 students were arrested by police forces and were charged with 'acting against national security.' Some of the students were temporarily released through large bails; seven of them are still under arrest. Students of Shiraz University continue their struggle and have declared that they won't stop until their demands are met: immediate release of arrested students; abrogating disciplinary verdicts; abrogating any form of prosecution against students; cancelling the bails; removing police and security forces from the university. WPI calls for immediate solidarity with students of Shiraz University and in support of their demands.

## IWD, from page 12

gime. The Islamic Republic of Iran can and must meet the same condemnation and expulsion. Any appeasement toward this regime only helps it at the expense of the rights and lives of people in Iran.

The WPI calls for solidarity on March 8 with the egalitarian struggle in Iran. Over the last 30 years, the movement against sexual apartheid has been taking shape in universities and schools, in factories and workplaces, in the family

and on the streets. This movement is becoming increasingly expansive and is intensifying. According to official statistics, in Iran, hundreds of thousands of youth and women are arrested and punished annually for not observing the hijab. They are sometimes lashed. This shows not only the regime's injustice and oppression but also the massive scale of resistance and struggle. The appeal against the situation of women in Iran under the Islamic regime in Iran is an appeal against a reactionary regime and the political Islamic

movement that is resorting to terror and medievalism. The emancipation of women in Iran is a call for the emancipation of women in countries and communities ruled by political Islam and Sharia and will strengthen the women's liberation movement internationally.

On March 8, we call on public opinion to support the women's liberation movement in Iran by demanding an end to political relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and an end to sexual apartheid.

# Shiraz University students in Iran need your urgent support!

Khalil Keyvan

In mid-January the students of the University of Shiraz in Iran have been subjected to heavy and wholesale persecution by the Islamic regime in Iran. Scores of students have been suspended from their studies and/or arrested by the security forces for taking part in Student Day (Dec 7) rallies and for protesting against the regime for its repression and imposition of economic austerity.

37 students have been summoned by the University's Disciplinary Committee, of whom 18 have been suspended for a period of 28 terms in total. However, this is not the end of the story. Ten students were called to report to the Intelligence Ministry's headquarters in the city of Shiraz, upon which they were all arrested and detained. Some of those students have been released on heavy bail; however, seven are still in jail.

Despite these attacks, students of the University of Shiraz have not remained silent and are continuing to hold protest rallies to demand the

release of those imprisoned. In their gatherings, students have been vehemently speaking out against the Islamic regime's leaders, Ayatollah Khamenei, President Ahmadinejad and the Islamic Assembly leader, Larijani. Alarmed by the protests, the regime has launched a brutal suppression of the students.

Students' demands include the immediate and unconditional release of all detained students; revoking of all disciplinary orders; revoking of



all detention and summons orders; revoking of all bail orders; and the dismantling of the University's draconian Disciplinary Committee and Security.

The Worker-communist Party of Iran calls on student groups, rights organisations, and public opinion to condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran; support the Shiraz students and their just demands; and to call for the immediate and unconditional acceptance of the students' demands.

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## Let's turn International Women's Day into a day of protest against the regime of sexual apartheid in Iran!

8 March, International Women's Day, is approaching. This day is the international day of protest against all forms of oppression and discrimination against women. To mark this day, the Worker-communist Party of Iran calls for the condemnation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its systematic misogyny and sexual apartheid. We also call for the political isolation of the regime as a solidarity measure with the women's liberation movement and the people in Iran.

Today, apartheid is no longer identifiable with racial apartheid but with the sexual apartheid of regimes like the Islamic Republic of Iran. This regime has intensified, legitimised and strengthened the subjugation of women with its laws and legal system. From the outset, it has enforced compulsory veiling as a physical barrier to isolate and segregate women from men and has done so with brute force, including by throwing acid on unveiled women's faces and imprisoning and flogging those deemed to be transgressors. Like the former racial apartheid of South Africa, it has

also segregated women in buses, workplaces and all other public places.

In addition to segregation, sexual apartheid aims to push back women into the home. Women are barred from many occupations. They don't even have the right to enter sport stadiums. According to Sharia law, women are the property of men and have no duty but to serve their male 'guardian' and take care of their husbands and children. Women's right to inheritance is half that of men's. Women's testimony is worth half of that of men's. Women can hardly get a divorce without their husband's permission yet men can divorce their wives without reason and even without their being present. Women don't have the right to travel, work, study and more without their male 'guardian's' permission. The marriage of an adult woman is not valid and cannot be registered without her father's consent. Sexual relations outside of marriage are punishable with death by stoning, the most brutal form of execution. Any protest against sexual apartheid and women's enslaved position is met with brute force. More-

over, the regime's propaganda machinery and its officials have made the humiliation and enslavement of women business as usual.

In light of this stark reality, the Islamic Republic of Iran must face the same public outrage and condemnation as did Apartheid South Africa. The institutionalised and legalised misogyny against women in Iran is sufficient reason for public opinion to demand the political isolation of this medieval regime internationally. The organised and brutal oppression and suppression of women in Iran is enough to demand that the heads of this regime be tried in an international tribunal for crimes against humanity. The abysmal status of women is sufficient reason to demand an end to this situation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran must be condemned and isolated by 21st century humanity. The political isolation of Apartheid South Africa in the early 90's is a successful example of the shared efforts of people across the world in getting rid of an inhuman re-

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