

The following is a translation of the VOA TV Persian program "NewsTalk," which was broadcasted via satellite on July 11, 2007.

TRANSLATION BEGINS HERE

[Luna Shad]

[Laughter and some small talk transitioning between shows]

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Here, our dear guests have laughed a lot from what you said.

As you noted, there is always something one can do, but at the same time they say that there is always something that one must not do. Anyway, this seems to be an important issue for the public.

[Luna Shad]

Yes we have made the same decision.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

I believe in some places they say that this is good and in others that it is bad. We congratulate whoever has been born into this world, especially those born today. I hope they reach their dreams on this earth...

As we have said in the past, in News Talk we will study the latest news and review the opinions of journalists and other experts. Please stay with VOA.

[Video clip of VOA Late Edition]

[A male announcer]

News Talk, every night, with Voice of America...A more accurate glimpse on news of Iran and the world....

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Greetings to you in Iran and around the world. You are watching News Talk, at 11:00 PM in the evening, Wednesday, 3:30 PM in Washington DC, the 20th of Tir of 1386 or July 11, 2007. We will be together for the next hour until midnight in Iran. Stay with VOA.

[Music]

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

What is going on in the world? Dear Hamideh Aramideh, who has come to the studio, will tell us about that.

Greetings dear Hamideh...

[Hamideh Aramideh]

Greetings to you too Mr. Chaharlengi.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

It is a great opportunity that we have Mr. Nourizadeh in the studio as our official guest for this program. Although before he was able to meet with us, others stole him from me and designated him for other programs...

[Hamideh Aramideh]

They have found you innocent, Mr. Chaharlengi, at VOA.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Well, not really. It is a good opportunity while he is here in Washington, DC, since everybody enjoys his presence. Mr. Sazegara is our permanent guest here... Therefore, I hope you can at least have some good news...

[Hamideh Aramideh]

I'll do my best....

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

We are all waiting for that....

[Hamideh Aramideh]

Please do not mention it. Thanks.

Greetings to you, dear audience, once again.

The US says that the accusations against two Iranian-American citizens who are jailed in Iran are baseless. Sean McCormack, US State Department spokesman, today rejected allegations of the Islamic Republic of Iran [that are] based on new findings against Haleh Esfandiari and Kian Tajbakhsh, and asked officials of the Islamic Republic to free these individuals. Yesterday, Iran announced that judiciary officials have uncovered new findings against these two Iranian-Americans who are accused of espionage. Mrs. Esfandiari is the Middle East Expert at the

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and Mr. Tajbakhsh is an advisor and urban planner at the Open Society Institute. These two entities, which are both located in the US, have rejected Iran's allegations based on new findings against Mrs. Esfandiari and Mr. Tajbakhsh.

Pakistan claims all militants have been expelled from the Red Mosque of Islamabad. The one week blockade that has left 80 people killed was ended. General Vahid Ershad, military spokesman, told reporters that the primary stage of the raid which was to expel the militants from the mosque has been terminated, and soldiers are looking for mines and bombs that militants possibly have set. Hamid Karzai, President of the Republic of Afghanistan, supported Pakistan's decision to raid the Red Mosque of Islamabad. Mr. Karzai also requested Pakistan to take a firm position against militants who cross the border during missions [near it] and may cause the killing of Afghan civilians.

Tens of Palestinian refugees have paved the road for a military invasion against Islamist militants by escaping the camp in northern Lebanon. The remaining group of Palestinian refugees at the Nahrol Bared camp, close to Tripoli, exited from the camp today. The Lebanese military have been fighting with militants called "Fath al-Islam" in this camp since the 20th of May. According to this news, almost all of the 31,000 Palestinian refugees have exited this camp. The mortality count resulting from the clash between the Lebanese military and the Islamist militants of "Fath al-Islam" in this camp has been reported to be about 70.

And finally, one of the officials of the IAEA met in Tehran to resolve a dispute regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Olli Heinonen, Deputy, and other officials of this agency negotiated with a committee of Iranians led by Mr. Javad Vaeidi, Deputy Secretary to Ali Larijani, Tehran's Chief Atomic negotiator. This meeting took place to exchange views on Iran's proposal for the clarification of ambiguities regarding Tehran's nuclear activities. It is expected the conclusion of these meetings will be announced at the end of the second round tomorrow with the presence of Mr. Larijani. At the same time, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran, today said that Tehran will continue its uranium enrichment despite international pressure.

Thanks for being with us.

[Music]

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

In Tehran, as Hamideh Aramideh informed you, a new round of atomic negotiations between the Islamic Republic and representatives from the IAEA have started and will continue tomorrow. According to news agencies, these talks are anticipated to not reach a clear conclusion. Despite talk of more isolation in the international arena in the close future for Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran, has pledged that Iran is at its highest possible political situation at this point.

In the region Iran has also been accused of interfering with the internal affairs of Iraq, Lebanon, and of the Palestinians.

The stoning of an Iranian citizen, Jafar Kiani, by the judiciary branch [of] the religious regime of Iran, has caused increasing international reaction.

The economics publication, the Economist, has forecasts that the inflation rate in Iran will face an unprecedented increase.

We are studying the problems of Iran and the region in an interview with our usual Wednesday night NewsTalk guests: Mr. Alireza Nourizadeh, author and journalist, as I mentioned before, is here with us in the studio during his trip to Washington, and [also with us is] Dr. Mohsen Sazegara, guest professor at Harvard University.

It is a great opportunity to have both of these participants with us in this studio.

Mr. Nourizadeh, you are very welcome.

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Thank you.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

By the way, I have to add that during Mr. Nourizadeh's trip to Washington, we received very nice ties. He is the sponsor for my tie collection, and also Dr. Sazegara, who also has a beautiful tradition of giving gift to friends during travel. I shall wear my new ties in the next week.

Mr. Nourizadeh, Mr. Ahmadinejad says Iran is not isolated and is in a much better situation [and] that in the international arena it is in a superior condition. On the other hand, with this new meeting taking place in Iran, there is little hope for solving the nuclear issue. Another naval warship has entered the Persian Gulf. What is going on?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

See, Mr. Chaharlengi, the meaning of isolation has to be defined for these gentlemen. What does isolation mean in the first place? Having a relationship with Burkina Faso, Venezuela, Syria, and two or three countries from the former Soviet Union, in my opinion, does not mean the isolation has been broken.

Today, the Islamic Republic has no relationship with the US. Their relationship with Canada, that for example, was at its best until a few years ago, in the sense that they could respond well to the basic necessities of even America, is now at the lowest possible level after the murder of Ms. Zahra Kazemi. Their relationship with Europe is full of tension and is difficult. Even [with respect to] Germany and France, with whom they used to have a high level of economic exchange, is not even that high. After that we get to their relationship with Britain, which [is] a relationship without trust and is not steady. With what country do we have good relationships? Does buying weaponry from Russia, which is not even close to Western weapons, mean they have a good relationship with them?

No. I believe the Islamic Republic is absolutely isolated. They are isolated in their region, which is the worst of all. The countries in the region had a very good relationship with Iran before Ahmadinejad. Meaning that since the first two years of Mr. Khatami's presidency where they had very steady relationships with the countries in the region, [those are] now full of tension. Currently, we see that Saudi Arabia is actively taking a position against the Islamic Republic. We were talking to Mr. Sazegara [who says] that Al Jazeera has published allegations that the Islamic Republic says diplomacy should be aggressive instead of defensive, [and this] right after *Kayhan* published that we own Bahrain, [are] reclaiming our rights to it. If we continue doing this, Saudi Arabia will reclaim its rights to Ahvaz, claiming that it was given to Iran by the British. In any case, the Islamic Republic does not even have a calm situation in the region, let alone around the world.

As you pointed out, the USS Enterprise has entered the Persian Gulf, the third US warship, and as always, you, me and Mr. Sazegara are concerned what stew is being brewed for Iran? Which I hope we can discuss in our program.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Most certainly. Mr. Sazegara, Ms. Rice, in America said in one of her recent interviews that diplomacy is still the best option for dealing with Iran. We hear that but we see the new US warship enter the Persian Gulf.

[Mohsen Sazegara]

Yes. Incidentally, in her interview with CNBC, Ms. Rice, as the chief of US diplomacy, emphasizes that the diplomatic option is still open. However, this is a very difficult interview at the same time, and the Secretary of State has stated that the military option is not off the table for this President nor any other president of the United States, as she said Iran is increasingly dangerous.

In another interview, Mr. Chaharlengi, by Mr. Dennis Ross, who was the Middle East Coordinator of [former President] Clinton and an experienced and valuable expert in these issues, says that Israel is now concerned [that we are] about 18 months from the time Iran could possibly have an atomic bomb. Israel is concerned that the missile shield that the Russians are installing for Iran will be completed. This is a very bitter forecast, in my opinion, from Mr. Dennis Ross. I know Dennis Ross personally. He is liberal and well-balanced; he does not have a very high temper. Based on his unfortunate foresight that considering the slow-motion of diplomacy between Iran and America, the horizon of war is looming.

I want to say that I agree with Mr. Nourizadeh, and I can feel the kind of concern that he is talking about, which is a common cause for concern among all Iranians for Iran. This is a very serious concern when you live here in Washington, DC, and go to different think tanks and meet with different groups. You feel the atmosphere of threat. I do not know how we should tell those responsible in the Islamic Republic that the aggressive prescription that Mr. Khamenei has ordered, like what *Kayhan* said about Bahrain the other day, is honestly an example of playing with fire. The USS Enterprise Commander has said that here in the Persian Gulf the strait is so tight that we have to coordinate with Iranians to get around. While the

Iranians have treated them politely, they state that the possibility of unprecedented events occurring is high.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Dr. Nourizadeh, the concern that exists in the region and in Israel, on which Mr. Dennis Ross has commented, is that same concern [which is] shared between the Arab States and Israel possibly causing a closer relationship between the two? For example, the foreign ministers of Jordan and Egypt are going to Israel, and similarly the League of Arab States is planning to do the same to resolve these issues as much as possible.

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Once upon a time, the sole danger of Arab countries, at least the ones in the proximity of Israel, was a fear of Israel. At the same time, Israel felt that the Arabs threatened them, since the Arabs do not recognize its existence. Today, in actuality, Arabs have recognized Israel's right to existence, and even those who have not recognized them officially, have at least done so *de facto*, based on the 1967 borders agreement. The peace plan of Malik Abdullah which tells Israel if it leaves the region, 22 Arab states will [then] make relationships with it.

The enemy here has turned into someone else. Who is it? The Islamic Republic of Iran. And this is not only an enemy for Israel, but the Arabs also feel that Israel is no longer their enemy; rather, Iran and its extremism is now their first priority. In other words, now extremism of the Shiite sect is supported from Iran. If Muqtada al-Sadr gets to the borders of Saudi Arabia, he will be either stopped or will continue to the eastern borders. I mean these are questions that people ask in Kuwait, in Saudi Arabia, and in UAE.

I also want to continue with the thoughts of my dear Mr. Sazegara here; we need to discuss this. You know the clergy very well. Honestly, Mr. Khamenei underestimates the enemy. Either he has been brainwashed or he actually believes that there is no danger involved. Sometimes, I lose hope for finding the right answer to this puzzle. You mean that Mr. Khamenei does not watch TV? He does not get the news? Perhaps he thinks these are bluffs or when Israelis or Mr. Dennis Ross, as Mr. Sazegara mentioned, Dennis Ross has been around for a long time. He knows Israel, the region, and is close friend of Benjamin Netanyahu, and Barak. When he says Israelis are concerned about the missile shield or

Tour M-1, does Mr. Khamenei not know about it? Or he has been brainwashed. See, this is dangerous: I mean if they think this danger exists, and they are able to fight back to this danger, that, in my opinion, is very dangerous.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

But, what you are referring to as underestimating the enemy goes back to their political literature.

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Yes....of course I am not determining a friend or enemy here....

[Mohsen Sazegara]

Mr. Nourizadeh emphasized a very important point here. It is actually very important to understand that what is happening in Iran is the crystallization of Mr. Khamenei's will. Therefore, it is very important for me that we understand what kind of policy he has in mind. In my opinion, Mr. Chaharlengi, Mr. Khamenei had three policies. These three policies were fulfilled by Ahmadinejad. Mr. Ahmadinejad does not do anything unless it serves Mr. Khamenei's orders and policies.

Now, the policies of Mr. Khamenei are:

- 1- In the international arena he believed that escaping through aggressive policy is more successful. If we go straight to the heart of the enemy fearlessly, go straight to the heart of America and the US, we will be adored by Muslim nations and, for example, we can obtain the leadership of Muslim nations. Moreover, the enemy will back off as well.
- 2- In internal policies he believed in having an iron fist. People have to be afraid of the state. In the reformist era, even in Mr. Rafsanjani's presidency, Iranians became outspoken. A change of policy came to the mind and they showed people that they have to be afraid. That is the reason they started to arrest students, teachers, laborers.
- 3- In the economic arena, he believed in bringing oil straight to people's tables. Mr. Khamenei was under the impression that with a small amount of imports or a minimal wage increase, as they say, the peasants would praise the lord and they get richer and feel better.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
Or at the end they could just promise them!

[Mohsen Sazegara]
No, they actually wanted to do that. Mr. Chaharlengi, the three above mentioned policies were defeated with the utmost of imprudence, especially if you have an executer like Ahmadinejad.

I mean, in the international arena not only did the world not back off, but also it stayed strong. Americans took advantage of the situation and obtained the leadership of Europe. In addition, two resolutions have been ratified against Iran with unanimous consensus, and a third one with a very harsh sentence is looming. Iranian banks are about to surrender gradually, and the job market is harder for industry and businessmen, and etc.

In their internal policies this iron fist policy forces people to react to violence with violence. We see in their simplest form of opposition, like the gas issue where 17 gas stations were burned down throughout the country, and they are talking about executing 15 of the protesters. If I want to sum up my thoughts, unfortunately, I have to forecast one thing. In my opinion, Ahmadinejad's administration's -- and the brains behind it, Mr. Khamenei himself -- next step would be a classic mistake that all these kinds of regimes make. First, they will be confronted with a speedy price increase, much more terrible than what is happening now.

[Crosstalk]

[Mohsen Sazegara]
Excuse me, if you would please let me finish what I was saying. . .

Just wait, the next step is coming and there is talk that they will start price fixing and arresting hoarders, which has terrible consequences.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi, interposing]
Yes, this is important and we will talk about it later.

Mr. Nourizadeh, does the problem start with Mr. Khamenei himself? The problem is the regime itself. In our contemporary history, we see a kind of regime in which the "*velayat-e faghih*," or religious guardianship, is the head of the state. Even in the time of Ayatollah Khomeini, the country was

facing difficulties such as the hostage crisis, the Iran-Iraq war or at least its continuation. Where is the root of this problem? It is in the fact that someone, anyone, comes and dictates his decision for people, or is it in the personality of that person in power?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

I have to say, both. The Islamic Republic is based on a religious regime. This world is not the world of a religious regime, especially one which is governed by an individual called "religious guardian," with unlimited power as the representative of 12th Shiite Imam and the executer of God's will on earth. You are unable to criticize him. He is not there to answer questions; he is untouchable. You cannot take him to the Parliament to impeach him. Therefore, our duty is obvious. Mr. Khamenei officially ordered the Guardian Council to only look for certain candidates for the next election.

Well, these are problems of the regime itself, but personalities also vary. See, like Mr. Khomeini, given all of his flaws, had an advantage compared to them. First of all, Mr. Khomeini never interfered with the daily life matters. If the government existed as the executive branch, at most Mr. Khomeini would have recommended them indirectly. Even in a conflict between Mr. Khomeini and Mr. Mousavi, Mr. Khomeini took the government's side. In other words, he supported the executive branch's side. Or regarding issues discussed in the Parliament, you would never have seen Mr. Khomeini come in the middle, like Khamenei, and issue a religious decree to block a bill. Perhaps once Mr. Khomeini had done so for a trade law where he issued a religious decree, and we even had the war then.

The fact of the matter is that Mr. Khamenei, unfortunately, has a megalomaniac personality, as seen by his attitude towards Mr. Montazeri for a simple criticism on the 13th of Rajab, the birthday of Imam Ali and then by his conduct with everybody else who voiced trivial criticisms, like Mr. Mohajerani and Khatami, *et alia*. He does not accept any competition. He even does not accept advisors or counselors. Solely his opinion counts, his opinion of everybody else. This is why I believe this difference of personality exists, [regarding] which, by the way, the regime also has its own problems, naturally.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

That is true. We do not want to analyze the personalities of Ayatollah Khomeini and Khamenei, because a person willing to accept this position must have a certain personality in the first place.

[Mohsen Sazegara]

See, Mr. Chaharlengi, I have to add this to what Mr. Nourizadeh said: The regime of the Islamic Republic has a strange construction. I mean, when you look at the constitution you see that you cannot even regulate a high school. There are too many individuals who get in the way of the others, and the strangest part is the unlimited authority of a person called the leader who is not accountable to anyone.

Now, this problem exists, but the Islamic Republic suffers from a different problem which is a theoretical problem -- the problem of defining the thoughts behind the constitution and the leaders of this regime. This theoretical problem, which is a broad topic and may cause us to digress, deserves a separate discussion. Nonetheless, we must consider that under this framework and theory close to 80 - 85 percent of what is happening takes place inherently, not superficially. The problem lies not only with the framework of the regime, but also the personality of the leaders. Mr. Khamenei has a security and military mindset. You can even see that with the vocabulary he uses regarding any topic; you feel you are on a battlefield.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Yes, we do not want to discuss the role of personalities in history. Because it will take us to nowhere and especially we have people like Alexander behind us. [Laughter] We should talk about something that will take us somewhere.

Mr. Nourizadeh said that they do not have anybody in the region, but, Mr. Nourizadeh, they do. They have Syria and Hezbollah of Lebanon, which a lot of people believe have practically surrounded Israel. The Housing Minister of Iran is in Syria right now and is starting a huge housing project there.

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Mr. Chaharlengi, please consider, what have we gained in return from Syria? We have to study this as well. Syria, at the time right after the assassination trials of Rafik Hariri and other Lebanese officials, [was to be]

condemned. [Likewise,] the plan for dismantling the Bashar al-Assad regime is quite broad. When Israel offered to return the Golan Heights, Syria [was to agree to yield and separate] themselves from Iran. That is the reason Iran is wasting its money there. Please do not think that Syria is going to stay with Iran.

Regarding Hezbollah, let me tell you that they have paralyzed the government of Lebanon for a year and a half, yet they were unable to overthrow the government. Therefore, Hezbollah has put itself in a very bad situation, which is a very dangerous situation, because its popularity is melting away like a candle, and hatred is taking its place instead.

These are the reasons I believe the friends of the Islamic Republic are unstable friends. In the long term the Islamic Republic cannot count on these friends. They may be good for throwing some rockets at Israel, or maybe they would help with attacking US soldiers in Iraq, but are they going to be a reliable source of help in a time of war for Iran? I do not think so.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Mr. Sazegara, if we look at the internal publications.... [Interrupted]

Mohsen Sazegara]

Let me add something here. A new problem that has recently occurred because Iran's diplomacy does not act in a vacuum, is that [opposition of] Arab States and opposition of Islamic groups are working too. This has caused sectarian violence between Shiite and Sunnis that has disrupted the balance of power in the region. In Iraq, it could be the best place for Iranian diplomacy to be successful. An atmosphere has been created in which everything is ruined. The government of Mr. Maliki is based on nothing. Now a few of his ministers (so as to not participate in the cabinet), and Mr. Talebani are trying to create a group of moderate politicians.

In Muqtada al-Sadr's group division has occurred. And unfortunately these politics of Iran have caused all the Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, which is the most powerful and has a kind of leadership role among the Arab states, to stand firm against Iran. At times they have even strongly warned Iran. There is also the danger that -- despite what you said earlier regarding Mr. Ahmadinejad making many jokes [and being] instead a joke himself in the international arena [and] especially in the region -- we are at

risk of being stuck in muddy water and may not be able to come out from it as early as we think.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
What do you mean by we?

[Mohsen Sazegara]
The Islamic Republic...

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
So, you think this border at one point will be divided and the danger that is threatening is the religious regime of Iran and not the Iranian people.

[Mohsen Sazegara]
Not the national interest and the Islamic Republic itself. But at the national interest will harm too. In other words, if we get stuck in Iraq the one paying the cost will be our nation.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
They have threatened, Mr. Nourizadeh, the Sunni group of Iraq has threatened that even the businessmen who deal with Iran would not be immune from their attacks. They have given them a deadline of two months. In other words, a war between Shiites and Sunnis? Considering what Mr. Hashemi, Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq [said], who called on Iraqis [to] arm themselves -- is there a war coming outside of Iraq?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]
Yes. But I do not think the threat of Iraqi al-Qaeda means that they have problems with al-Qaeda in general. I think the Islamic Republic knows ways to go inside of al-Qaeda and have a relationship with them. This relationship is spreading day by day. But in Iraq the group, which I called the remnants of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, are the ones who are fighting daily in Iraq on the ground and have clashes with Shiites, and naturally will have clashes with Iranians too.

My concerns are, mainly, that here and there I hear rumors that the sectarian war is rapidly nearing our borders. In Baluchestan, based on the clashes between tribes in Zahedan and Zabol, between Baluchis and Sistanis, Shiite Sistanis, is what some people have invested in. At the same time, in Iranian Kurdistan, which is mainly Sunnis, and Kermanshah,

which is Shiite, and even interestingly in Shiite Khuzestan, between Shiite Arabs and Salafis, they have started propaganda. These are very concerning, Mr. Chaharlengi, and we have to be afraid of days that Iran is tied up with sectarian wars. Once we had this experience at the beginning of Safavid Dynasty with Ishmael and the massacre. Also during the Safavid, there were a lot of these fights, but later we were freed from the Shiite-Sunni wars. However, now its shadow is looming over our country.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

What would be the consequences? Can that be [the basis] for unity of other countries in the region against the Iranian government, where the Iranian people will become the victims?

[Mohsen Sazegara]

So far, the region's governments have been lining up their troops against Iran, especially the Arabs. Now, this recent summit of six countries of the Persian Gulf have lined up troops against Iran, and even in other areas they are starting such battles against us. In addition, do not forget that the US and British, who have a good influence in the region, are still there, and they apply the necessary pressure for this.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

We are having an interview with Dr. Alireza Nourizadeh and Dr. Mohsen Sazegara at News Talk on VOA. We will be with you momentarily at VOA. Stay with us, awake and aware, as Tehran approaches midnight. Stay with VOA.

[Music]

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

You know better than I that you are the audience of News Talk at VOA, so I do not see the reason to repeat this again.

In the second half of our program we will discuss domestic issues in Iran. Mr. Nourizadeh, I have asked this from other guests as well. In Iran a stoning has occurred again. After a very long time it happened again, and they did it secretly. This is happening along with a new attack on the remaining publications and continuing repression; [what do you conclude about] these events?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Firstly, this stoning is evidence of the absolute disorder of the judiciary branch in this country. Consider the fact that, in a judicial branch in which at least one million of our people work, there is such confusion that the head of the branch says he suspended the stoning sentence. At the same time, the head of judiciary branch in Qazvin says that he is not aware of this case. Meanwhile, the judge says he has not ordered this. Then who has done this?

If you are facing such chaos that a sentence in which someone's life is at risk is dealt with so carelessly, that the head of that region comes and puts the detainee in his car and with.... the people are not even prepared to participate in this. It is interesting that people do not accept participation, or have anything to do with this. Some of their officials go and stone him with only two witnesses. This is an antiquated and savage punishment which destroys the name of Islam and the name of Iran and destroys our credibility. Where do they do that anymore? Do we not have other Muslim nations? Saudi Arabia's constitution is the Quran, and they cut hands too; but they have stopped stoning. In other words, they have replaced stoning with other punishments.

This, in my opinion, shows how extreme our judiciary system is. Mr. Khomeini, when he was alive and came to power, the first thing he did was to take revenge on Reza Shah and Davar. This revenge was aimed at taking the judiciary system that Davar created and submitting it to the religious courts to revive the Islamic system, which he did. To apply law to... they established the laws of punishment which raised a lot of criticism. Critics argued: how can one take an eye for an eye and an arm for an arm? They said that these laws of punishment are part of our dear Islam and must be established. But in our dear Islam there are thousands of conditions which must be met. For example, how should adultery be proven, who are appropriate witnesses, how to deal with witnesses, and doubts about testimony can nullify it. How could they stone a person who has been in jail in Qazvin for 14 years and has been living with that woman for 4 years?

This was so regrettably sad. I have nothing to say except for Mr. Seyed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi said he received such a worthless judiciary from Mr. Yazdi that he made a desert out of it.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

But, Mr. Sazegara, these things still happen in Iran. I mean, in Qazvin, Takistan, Mr. Jafar Kiani was stoned. Well, there are individuals in the Islamic Republic, like Mr. Mohammad Khatami, who heads the Center for the Dialogue among Civilizations. . . This is happening in an ancient country like Iran with an old civilization. They are about to have dialogue with other countries. Why we do not see any reaction from clergies like Mr. Khatami or other gentlemen who believe these sorts of event destroys Islam's image and Iran's as well.

Let me add this, that actually all this repression and suffocation, with the military-like atmosphere in the country, [and] as the "Mosharekat" party has stated -- the people cannot even say a thing?

[Mohsen Sazegara]

A part of it maybe, that, Mr. Chaharlengi, but some of it is more, that intellectual mullahs, like Mr. Khatami, face a theoretical problem too. These gentlemen are unable to pass this stage mentally. When the definition of modern man has changed, the definition of man has to be re-defined as well. In other words, the religious laws have to be modernized, accommodated to today's world.

Fundamentally, religious law is not law. Lawmaking needs other instruments. Even more seriously, governing a country does not need a *religious* leader. Religious laws are method that you approach after the occurrence of an incident. Religious interpreters are men after actions. A bank or goodwill has to be created, then a religious interpreter has to come and make a ruling. Conversely, governing a country needs a scientific formula. Science is planning. Science also comes out of the universities. As a result, in the most primary of definitions, these gentlemen have to be ready to reconsider these laws.

Unfortunately, a lot of our spiritual leaders, and by "a lot of" I mean the absolute majority of them, do not dare engage in a serious argument to modernize Islam to accommodate today's humanity and the modern world. As a result you see this very easily, that when intellectual mullahs get to a certain point, that a particular religious law is [declared] God's law, therefore it is untouchable and [they] stop. Even though they know themselves that these laws are not suitable for today's world. It does not

suit the definition of [modern man]and [it] contradicts their own fundamental definition of government and the governing of society. That is the reason, in my opinion, that they may have some fears too, but they do not what to say this [is a] theoretical crisis.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Is that why when they cannot modernize the law, they try to get rid of the law? Like what they did to the Budget and Planning Agency....

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Yes. We have to continue the issue of this agency. I want to point out something. This morning I was watching something in *Jaam-e-Jam* TV. In *Jaam-e-Jam* of the Islamic Republic, a showman who just moved back to Iran from abroad was talking to a mullah and someone else saying that "Iran has eight thousands years of civilization." We do have 2,500 years, or at the most as some say 4,000 years, but he made [it] 8,000 years. I mean he went way back. If Iran has 8000 years of civilization, what [more explanation is needed]for this many geniuses in various areas, [for advancement], [for starting uranium enrichment, and [for being first in universities. That mullah looked at him and said yes, most certainly Iranians have God-given genius and are way ahead of other nations. What he was saying is a fascist thought and racist. Imagine these words are coming out of a mullah's mouth, [out] of a person who decided to destroy Persepolis and the graves of Ferdowsi, and you know about the Syvand Damn. . .

I want to get to the point that these people on one hand believe this is a nation with history and with great cultural and social background, and on the other hand start our history from 1300 years ago. They negate all of the laws prior to Islam, but if [it] seems necessary, they use these sorts of nationalism as propaganda on TV and claim they are Iran-lovers.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi, interposing]

The movie 300. . .

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

They criticize movie 300 and you see how they embarrassed themselves with that. But to stone an innocent Iranian in the 21st century based on a law that has been revoked during the years through development and transformation of humanity, That Iranian individual is useless for them

since he has done a sin. And in my opinion these laws have to be challenged very seriously, as our friend Dr. Sazegara mentioned as well, with mullahs such as Mr. Khatami and others. Mr. Kadivar must announce now what he thinks of laws of punishment. Does he recognize laws of punishment [as established] law as Mr. Khamenei recognizes, [does] he believe in change in these laws?

About the Budget and Planning Agency, I was truly amazed when I heard the government itself has to draft the budget, and to omit this agency that has done a great job in the past 50 years. Perhaps we should ask Mr. Sazegara, who has been in the government and knows about this. Why is that, Mr. Sazegara? What are their goals?

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
What are the consequences?

[Mohsen Sazegara]

This is one of Mr. Ahmadinejad's doings. He announced by a bill by the supreme administrative justice office of the country that the Budget and Planning Agency from now on will be one of the offices in the executive branch and would not remain an independent agency.

This reminds me of when one of my friends who was the head of this agency and resigned once, and they wanted to me to replace him there. I went and begged him to return to his position and to leave me alone on this one. I asked him why he resigned. He said something based on his experience, from which I concluded that these gentlemen do not need an agency for budget planning. They need agencies who, like during the Qajar dynasty, put coins in different bags and allocate them to different groups.

This is clearly different from the regime of budgetary planning for which this agency was primarily designed. While I do not want to get into the details of this agency's structure, in my opinion, since Mr. Ahmadinejad started taking back authority from these agencies in the provinces and giving it to the ministry of interior, and [since] he has seen that in practice Budget and Planning Agency is one of those rare agencies with expertise in the country and [since he] feels that the experts in this agency will obstruct his path the same way the central bank of Iran stands in front of him, in my opinion, he does not like the agency. Most probably, what will happen next is that especially the technical offices of the agency, which aim to categorize the

advisors and experts and contractors, etc., will be demolished. Then they will replace them with their own from the revolutionary guards, Basij, other entities and foundations which belong to them, in order to take possession of general projects of the country. For example if it needs grade 7, they will give it to these companies with a grade 2-3 that they give to anybody who incorporates a new company.

In my opinion, the immediate consequence would be to paralyze the executive branch of the country, because the government is a government that is absolutely sick and weak. It will bring more chaos. I believe if it succumbs to Mr. Ahmadinejad's will, as the next step they will go after the central bank. Even right now the independence of the central bank is under question and is getting crushed under the feet of this administration. Most probably they will change the laws of the central bank or make it even more dependent on the government.

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Let me add something here regarding the story of the planning agency: it was a very important issue that when Mr. Farhad Rahbar resigned Mr. Khamenei took Mr. Ahmadinejad's side. This had a very significant message because Farhad Rahbar, first of all, was the Economics Deputy of the Intelligence Ministry, who moved to the office of the leadership and was one of the loyalists of Mr. Khamenei himself. There Mr. Khamenei showed that, no, Ahmadinejad is the man for whom he has spent years looking and finally has found.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
Ahmadinejad?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Yes, him. He sent everybody else aside, even he moved on from Farhad Rahbar.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]
You mean with the word "man" you meant...

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

The "man" who obeys his orders.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Okay, Mr. Nourizadeh, my question to you is that, in any case, someone benefits from the chaos of the planning agency; otherwise, if no one benefits from this, they would never have done this. Who are they?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

See, now as we look at it, Mr. Ahmadinejad has brought a collection with him. We can see this collection everywhere, such as the one in the planning agency or their foundations, which pop up all over the place.

Another collection is the team of the revolutionary guard. They are trying to slip through too; I anticipate there will be a clash at one point between the collection of the revolutionary guard and the Ahmadinejad team. These are the beneficiaries. As Mr. Sazegara said, similar to the Qajar dynasty, Mr. Khamenei looks in the same direction, to give the budget in bags as fief to someone, and at the end of the month or the year despite the account of companies, foundations and ministries. And then they put an accountant there to calculate that they have 60 billion dollars in oil revenue and not to think about the future generations, and not the currency safe box and, as he said, to take the oil revenue to people's table.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

So, Mr. Sazegara, the report of the Economist magazine was not off at all, which says more inflation is on its way in Iran?

[Mohsen Sazegara]

Certainly not, the Economist is one of the most reliable magazines in the world. Even a fraction of economists forecast an even bigger danger than the regular increase of inflation. I talked to one of my economist friends here who is a university professor; interestingly, he teaches Macroeconomics. The biggest concern that economists have now is that Iran affected with hyperinflation, an uncontrollable inflation caused [by] mistakes made by Mr. Ahmadinejad in monetary and financial sectors of the country; [this] is just the beginning and more severe consequences will come. This is just the beginning, and it will dictate a negative influence of inflation.

In addition, as I mentioned at the beginning of my talks, [there are] three factors that are resonating and aggravating each other here: defeat in international politics, defeat in domestic politics, and defeat in economics. These factors are influencing each other, aggravating each other. I mean

the international crises, disputes and even entrance of the US warship, and tens of other issues have decreased investment, made [for] crisis in the economic environment, increased unemployment.

In [the] economic crisis, they just touched the gas problem, the unrest remains still. This led them to a political crisis. They just arrested students, the preliminary members of the Office to Foster Unity and the Office of Periodical Unity which resonates the economic crisis and vice versa. As I have anticipated before, this administration, like any other government, for the next step will go to TV and show that the price increase is caused by some hoarders, and there were American spies, and they will show big stashes of goods and they might even execute some, exactly the same things that Saddam Hussein did in Iraq.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

So, we have to be worried for Mr. Ali Daryani, our grocery store owner in our neighborhood in Tehran? [Laughter]

Probably they will say he is a [tool] of international Zionism.

[Laughter]

[Mohsen Sazegara]

If the oil money was not there to cover up for the flaws, we would be in the same situation as Zimbabwe, which last week, even with 2700% inflation, all the goods were gone off the shelves, because the government could hardly subsidize some goods. Then, the people attacked to buy more which subsequently worsened the situation.

In my opinion, if such thing even happens, this fall we will face a turning point with tremendous consequences from these three defeats.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Mr. Nourizadeh, what are the ways to avoid these defeats or this situation that will affect Iranian people with no doubt?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

Firstly, I call it awakening of the Iranian regime to understand the story of enrichment, and its suspension is not a joke. War is a reality that approaching Iran. They should let this go, and instead of proceeding in this

manner and with these games, they should pay attention to their own people to take care of the domestic issues: the youth, students, and the addicts. Mr. Chaharlengi, Mr. Sazegara, I say this again from here that the reports [I'm] receiving from Iran regarding drugs such as crack, heroin, drugs that are highly addictive and transform bodies so badly,,,I think they have return to these issues and otherwise unfortunately will go toward war.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

You mean even with the regime, if the responsible parties wake up, we can terminate these problems inherently?

[Mohsen Sazegara]

If that's what you mean, I have to say, of course not. Definitely, the experience of the reformist movement showed that until we have changed the structure of this regime and the fundamental theories behind it, there is no hope for progress.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Is that so, Mr. Nourizadeh?

[Alireza Nourizadeh]

I agree with that opinion, but I say we have to cease some functions at this point until we reach the issue of structures.

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

Very well. It was a very good opportunity to have you here, Mr. Nourizadeh, in the studio, and I know others are waiting for you for other programs. I do not guarantee how they are going to treat you, you remained healthy in my program...[Laughter]....

[Mohsen Sazegara, Interposing]

....and you are giving him back to them as healthy as he was....

[Host Jamshid Chaharlengi]

I am pretty sure they are waiting behind the doors of our studio and going to sleep is a personal matter... Also thanks to you, Dr. Sazegara, for participating in our program.

Now, we spend a few moments on your emails, dear audience.

We have received too many emails during the last few days. Unfortunately, we did not have a chance to review them. We will do our best to do this from now on.

Mr. Shahram S. has sent greetings to the VOA crew. He says that we can certainly say that in Iran the audience of your programs is the Iranian youth and has [asked us] to invite political activists to our programs.

We thank Mr. Mohammad Gh., from whom we have received his email and also Ms. Artemis A., which I think is an alias. Anyways, we have Masoud S. who has offered some names for us to bring here as guests. Also, we have a lot emails that commented on our guest--some to welcome and some have asked for them to participate more in our program; we will do that if possible.

We have received an email from a human rights activist from Iran who has written that Mr. Mostafa Daryanavard is in jail in his sixth day of a hunger strike. And there other emails that the last one is from Said in suburban area.

We have reached the end of this program and I want to say that the comments of the participants of this program are their own personal views and do not necessarily represent VOA views.

Have a wonderful day and life.

TRANSLATION ENDS HERE