

Historical and Structural Reasons of the April Intifada And the Disastrous Results of Eight Decades of Racist Policies



Written by Mohammad Nawaseri

Translated by Selma Ahwazi

This Article has been translated from Arabic to English and the original one was published on 12.05.2005. Mohammad Nawaseri, the author of this article, was a political activist who devoted his short life to Ahwaz and her Arab people. He was born in 1969 in Muhammara and lost his father at the age of 12. His father, Sharif, was executed by the hands of the Islamic Iranian Government shortly after his arrest and without having the chance of a trial. Despite the many difficulties Mohammad faced in his childhood he managed to finish his studies at high school and enter Allameh Tabatabaee University of Tehran at the field of Social Science. Meanwhile he was busy doing researches and writing about the humane issue of Ahwaz. For his political activities he was arrested two times for which he was not condemned. However, and due to the pressures from the Iranian Government which made the life difficult for him in Iran he eventually had to leave the country. He went to Holland and remained there to pass away in March 2007, very shortly after getting his residence permission. He passed away after a heart attack while writing another article about Ahwaz. Mohammad's political background and his deep knowledge about Ahwaz and the situation of the Arab people of Ahwaz were very attributing to the progress of introducing Ahwaz case as a humane issue to the world. He was an important member and founder of Ahwazi parties such as Wifagh Party, The house of Arabs in Tehran, Arabic Nationalist Democratic Council in Ahwaz.

Part 1

Introduction

The "Intifada" of the Arab people of Ahwaz in April 2005 proved the validity of what has been held through hundreds of articles, researches, theses, conferences and meetings by most analysts and researchers in the fields of social and political sciences, from the different Iranian nations and from the Arab people of Ahwaz in recent years. Those intellectuals were unanimous on the historical existence of a structural disorder, and they agree that the only way to overcome such disorder is the creation of a new relationship between the centre and the ethnic regions, defining that relationship according to modern scientific basics, and modifying and changing the current disabling structure. As it stands, the existing relationship between the center and the different non-Persian Iranian nations is one which has its intellectual and methodological foundations inspired by the racist heritage (Ethnocentrism) of the Persian people and the Persian political and intellectual elite, including the famous representatives of this racist heritage, Firdausi's Shahnameh and the westernized Persian intellectuals.

This discourse of this racist hostility against all that is non-Persian has been most hostile to the Arab people of Ahwaz to a point that in this country (Iran), an Arab is guilty until proven innocent. The Arabs are being marginalized and segregated in such a systematic and racist way that its prejudicial effect can be clearly seen in the different political, social, cultural and economic levels. For example, the broad geographical spread of the Arabs in Iran is due to the policy of uprooting a large segment of the people from their land and natural and historical roots.

However, there is no formal mention of all of the different nations of Iran, for the Iranian government names them as "tribes and clans" and not "nations" possessing all the elements and characteristics of a nation from history to common historical memory, geographical unity, language and culture. Notwithstanding, the fact is that Iran, due to its historical, geographical, and living composition, consists of religious

communities and several main nations, hence a great ethnic mosaic¹. The population of these peoples consists of twenty-seven million Turks, seven million Kurds, five million Arabs, two million Balouches, a million and half Turkmens, seven million Lors, one million Gilakis, and Taleshi, Hazara, Tatar, Armenian, and Assyrian peoples. The number of Persians as one component of the Iranian state does not exceed seventeen million.

Following up on a relationship that spanned thousands of years, a kind of unwritten local federalism was built which established its roots in the depth of that relationship and its political, social, cultural and economic conditions. But that structure and that relationship changed at the beginning of the twentieth century and were replaced by a particular political format which was a distorted version of the central French experience known as the "nation state". The French experience was separated from its content, and any form of practicing citizenship rights, democracy and participation in various areas was cancelled with the purpose of singling out the Persians as the only decision-makers in the modern government.

The factors that had an important and essential influence in the birth of the modern Iranian state might be listed as international variables and the new geostrategic conditions after the Bolshevik revolution, Zoroastrians of India and Iran, and the historical alliance between Shiite clerics, merchants, westernized intellectuals, and the Persian political and intellectual elites. The impact of this new format of the concept "Government" produced a new relationship that brought multiple problems for the non-Persian nations. Citizenship, language of the government, and the official rhetoric, cultural heritage, history, etc. were confined to the Persians, and no one was allowed to object to it. Accordingly, the newly established government adopted an oppressive systematized nationalistic policy, called the "people-making process", to create a new concept of citizenship, and to found the tragic phenomenon of apartheid.

¹ Dr. Ali Al-Taei, The National Identity Crisis in Iran, Shadegan publication

Under the impact of those oppressive and chauvinistic policies, comprehensive ethnic crises started and lasted for eight decades. They were initiated with the birth of the modern government in its uneven pace. However, with the development of the national feeling and awareness of the Iranian nations during the recent years, the crisis (national uprisings) adopted an upward movement and the nature and pattern of those comprehensive nationalist uprisings changed from positive struggle (armed) to negative (peaceful and civil).

Moreover, the demands of the Iranian nation and the Arab nation of Ahwaz evolved in recent decades, and a struggle was started for the restoration of their denied historical and human rights which had been usurped by one of the components of the Iranian government (Persians). A common perception was reached by most of the people and the intellectual and political elite of these nations, and it was the necessity of self-determination right away from the political, historical, social and cultural conditions which have been founded during those dark decades of the history of modern Iranian state. Self-determination is a right upon which what all international charters and treaties and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are based.

During the most of the historical stages, the Arab people of Ahwaz were particularly distinct with regard to the relationship which links the components of the Iranian state. Before the birth of modern Iran, that relationship for Ahwaz and its people was always in a fluctuating state in a way that over thousands of years, Ahwaz did not witness but short periods of political unity with governments and successive strains which gained the rule of Iran. Considering this point, among the rest of the components of the Iranian state, the region of Ahwaz is unique in this characteristic.

The policy applied by the Iranian government against those uprisings and ethnic crises, and against the demands that were raised as a natural consequence of those uprisings, was a racist and barbaric one, as the Iranian Government always and excessively used brutal force to suppress the uprisings of the Iranian nations and the Arab people of Ahwaz. There has always been unanimity between the Persian politicians and the intellectual and political elite, and between the government and the opposition that rises from one standard and one interpretation, that of protecting national security and preserving the unity of Iranian territory. This has been their

excuse for using all those brutal and barbaric tactics in smashing the insulated peoples, thousands of whom were killed and wounded, and millions of whom were displaced forcibly during those eight dark decades.

In this context, and in order to address the ethnic crisis in Iran while ignoring all the international norms and laws, people like "Masha Allah Shamsolvaezin", the opposition journalist, and "Mosayeb Naimi" speak to Al-Jazeera satellite channel to argue and uncover the realities about the ethnic crisis in Ahwaz. At the same time, Mohsen Rezaee, who is known for his anti-Arab chauvinist inclinations, writes in his website "Bazatab" that the participants in this uprising (Intifada) were a group of gypsies who came from Iraq.

To prevent the recurrence of such massacres against the Iranian nations in general and the Arab people of Ahwaz in particular and to find solutions for the ethnic crisis one should interpret and analyze the uprisings of these nations² in their historical and structural context, in order to define priorities for solving these ethnic contradictions. The onus is on the intellectual and political elites of the Iranian nations and the Arab nation of Ahwaz to enrich the theoretical and methodological foundations of the solutions to these paradoxes.

The most important reasons for cancelling the decentralization experiment in Iran and replacing it with a "nation state"

1. The idea of establishing a new nation-state in Iran, one which is based on the Persian race and draws its strength and political, economic and cultural merits from it, began with the historic defeat of the Qajarite government by Czarist Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and the disastrous results of those defeats that ended with the humiliating treaties of "Golestan" and "Turkmenchay." The pioneers of Persian chauvinist thought began presenting the contradictions of Qajarite (Azeri) government and the reasons behind its historic defeats and wrote prescriptions for solving those contradictions, and

² the latest Intifada of the Arab people of Ahwaz in 2005 can be brought as an example

the outcome was books, articles and research which were all products of the imagination of those westernized educated people.

2. Westernized intellectuals and the Pioneers of the Persian Chauvinist thought:

Among those intellectuals are: Jalal e Din Mirza, the author of the book "Nameye Khosrovan"³, Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh, author of "Maktoobate Kamal e Doleh"⁴, in which he seeks the establishment of a new phase for the concept of "Government" and cancellation of all the historical pillars of the Iranian state, as well as the abolition of Islam through a comprehensive Iranian renaissance along the lines of European Renaissance, and a return to the history of Iran at the time of Sasanian and Achaemenid empire and the reproduction of the political and cultural structures of those empires.⁵



Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh

³ The Book of Kings

⁴ The Writings of Kamale Doleh

⁵ Fereidun Adamiyat, "Andishe Haya (Ideas of) Mirza Fathali Akhundzadeh", Kharazmi Publication, Tehran 1349, p. 121

Mirza Aghakhan Kermani is the one who, in his book "Aeeneye Sekandari" or "The History of Iran", gives guidelines on the development of the Persian nationalization plan, and creates a historical illusion for the Persian nationalists and chauvinists, deriving all of those historical illusions and errors from the Orientalists and the book "The History of Iran" written by the British diplomat "Sir John Malcolm". In his book, he seeks to blame Arabs, Islam and the Islamic invasion of Iran for all those contradictions and problems of the Qajarite government, and incite the Persian community to revolt against Arabs and Islam, and take revenge from the Muslim Arab conquerors of Iran, and return to their clean Zoroastrian roots and restore the glory of Achaemenid kings.

There were also political and intellectual circles, which were established at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the circle of Kazem Zadeh Iranshahr and Iranshahr Magazine in which racists like Taghi Zadeh and Poor Davood wrote. The magazine worked on promoting the ideas of the German philosopher Fichte and the French aristocrat Arthur De Gobineau of the pioneers of Nazism and Fascism in Europe. There was also the circle of "Anjoman Iran Javan" and Ayandeh magazine, which was led by Mahmoud Afshar who is known for his Persian chauvinist inclinations and was the godfather of the racist nationalist policies after Reza Shah gained the power in Iran. Those racist policies had a great impact on the Iranian nations in general and the Arab people of Ahwaz in particular. These two circles worked on promoting Hegel's idea of "the historical nation" and emphasizing on the originality of the Persian people and their being a historical nation and, therefore, regarding the Persian nation as the only one that deserves life and evolution and that the other Iranian nations are spurious and non-historic and must be melted in the crucible of Persian culture through systematic racist policies like process of cultural alienation, ethnic cleansing, ethnocide, genocide, ethnic displacement, and etc. Consequently, research centers were founded to focus on the Arab people of Ahwaz and on other Iranian nations.

3. **Bolshevik revolution and its geostrategic implications:**

The Bolshevik revolution and the collapse of the czarist rule had a deep impact on the geostrategic situation of the Iranian state in 1917. Prior to that resounding collapse, oil was discovered in Ahwaz, which led to an increasing

importance of this region and the Iranian State, and was the initiation of a new level of relationship between the Ahwaz region and the central state. This new relationship which has been through many ups and downs throughout the history took its initiatory step in the Second Treaty of “Arz Rum” between Qajarite government and the Ottoman government. The relationship was strengthened by the Treaty of Sykes-Picot, which was menacing to the peoples of the Middle East. Considering the colonial interests of the great powers, especially after the collapse of the Ottoman government, these powers started forming a new geostrategic tendency, and so they planned to create a belt around the Bolshevik state to be expanded southward including Turkey and Iran, and eventually get access to the oil fields and the warm waters. That new geostrategic tendency was to establish two new similar central governments in Iran and Turkey serving the interests of the colonial powers at the expense of the constituent peoples of these two states. The two newly formed governments were similar in political format and orientations, and were the product of copying the Jacobean experiment of the French government. However, this experience has been distorted in such a way that the concepts of political participation, comprehensive citizenship, and democracy were abolished from the French version and were replaced by oppression, marginalization and abusive methods against the peoples living in these two states.

4. The Historic alliance between the Persian merchants, Shiite clerics and Persian nationalists:

After the establishment of Safawi government which employed Shiite denomination for political purposes, a historic relationship between Shiite clerics and merchants and the Iranian government was formed. Iranian government gained its legitimacy from the clergy and was a supporter of their religion school⁶, and in contrast, the clergymen had a high position among the Iranian politicians. Moreover, the money coming from “khoms and zakat”⁷ paid by the traders had an important role in the independence and strength of the clerics and their religion school. This mutual relationship between these

⁶ Howzeye Elmiyye

⁷ Kinds of Tax in Islamic rule

parties continued until the beginning of the twentieth century. The Persian merchants had a dangerous role in that period, as, given their limited trading chances and their growing greed, they began expanding their trade towards other ethnic areas and employed this historic relationship to the disadvantage of the markets and the traders of the Iranian nations. Moreover, some of the clergymen alleged that Reza Shah is evangelical of the arrival of Imam Mahdi, and that his policies are in the service of the goals of the Supreme Shiite State, and therefore he must be absolutely free in the implementation of his new policies and orientations.

However, the relationship between the clergy and the Persian nationalists was tense at the beginning, but that relationship changed and soon improved to coordination between these parties in the formation of which Persian traders played an important role.

5. Zoroastrian men of policy and religion:

Persia and Iran's historic past are of special consequence to the Zoroastrians in general and Iranian Zoroastrians in particular, as they consider that historic state as theirs and as the only place where they were able to establish their religious Government and its importance to them is similar to that of Palestine to the Jews.

Accordingly, they consider Islam as having been a barrier to achieving their ambitions after the collapse of the Sasanian at the hands of Arabs and Muslims; therefore and after that the Qajarite Government became weak, specifically in the days of Nasser e Din Shah, they started planning to recreate their alleged historical roots and to quest for the restoration and revival of Zoroastrian Achaemenian and Sasanian empires.

There was coordination between the Zoroastrian Iranians and Zoroastrian institutions in India. Among those institutions which played an important role in the subsequent

developments in Iran are: "The institute of improving Zoroastrian's situation in Iran"⁸, headed by Sardinshah Petit Baronet, "The Persians of Iran Charity Institution" and "The Persian Amelioration Fund"⁹.

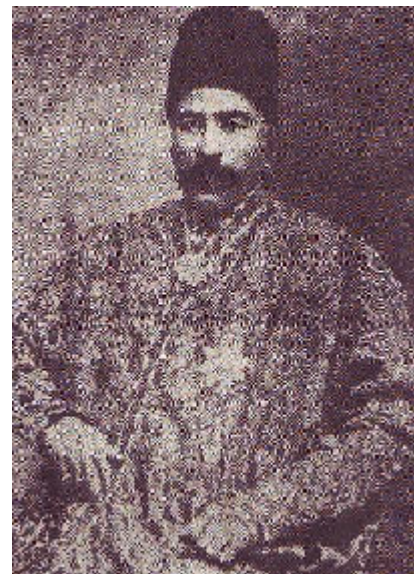
Amongst the Indian Zoroastrian people who played an important role in those developments are the representative of the Indian Zoroastrians in Iran and the diplomat of the East India Company Government, "Mankji Limji Hushang Hatria", known as Mankji, and Ardeshir Jei and Arbab Gio who were employees of the diplomatic service in the Government of East India Company. Ardeshir Jei had a special position for the British government, as well as for the French ambassador then, Comte De Gobineau¹⁰. Two of the most important Iranian Zoroastrians are Arbab Jamshid and Arbab Kei Khosrow Shahrokh; the latter was the author of several books including "Aeene Mazdisti" and "Foroughe Mazdisti" which played an important role in the political developments in Iran at the beginning of the twentieth century.



Mankji



Ardeshir Jei



Arbab Jamshid

These Zoroastrian politicians had a certain strategy to revive Zoroastrianism and they were influenced by the works of the Zionist leaders who held their meetings under the

⁸ Ebrahim Por Davud, *Iranshah (The History of Immigration of Zoroastrians to India)*, Bi Na, Bambi, 1926, p. 25

⁹ Arbab Kei Khosrow Shahrokh, *The Notes of Arbab Kei Khosrow*, edited by Jahangir Ushpedari, Bi Ta, Bi Na, 1335 Hijri, p. 37

¹⁰ Rashid Shahmardan, *Farzanegan e Zartoshti*, Rasti Publication (Periodical of Zoroastrian Youths Organization in Bambi), Tehran, 1330 Hijri, p.619

chairmanship of "Theodor Herzl" in the city of Basel in Switzerland, which came to fruition in the "Balfour Declaration" in 1917, which led to the establishment of the Jewish entity. Most of these Zoroastrians were working for the British government of East India and, therefore, had a strong relationship with the colonial Britain. Their first step was persuading Nasser e Din Shah in order to give the Ahwaz region to these Zoroastrians for the purpose of establishing their desired historical entity, and the proposal of this plan was submitted by Mirza Aghakhan Kermani in his famous letter "Omran e Khuzestan" to Nasser e Din Shah¹¹. Those plans were continued in coordination with the British colonizers in order to achieve this historical dream of the Zoroastrians.



Mirza Aghakhan Kermani

The compilation of all these historical factors at the beginning of the twentieth century produced disastrous results for Iran as a state, as well as for the nations of Iran as Azeri Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmens, and Balouches, etc. The outcome was the abolition of the experiment which was a result of the historical substantive evolution of the concept of Iranian state, replacing it with a distorted imitation of the French Jacobean State, to ensure the dominance of the Persian ethnic through political, economic, social and cultural structures. Therefore, the meaning of Iranian citizenship became Persian citizenship, the State Language became Persian, and the official culture became the Persian culture; anything against it meant rebellion, breach of the law, and a threat to the national security, for which a person, a group, or a nation may be punished equally. To ensure the continuation of this situation, the

¹¹ Yahya Dolat Abadi, Hayate Yahya, first volume, 6th edition, Attar & Firdausi publication, Tehran, 1371 Hijri, p. 160

necessary axioms and mechanisms have been identified and further codification of laws has been done. Under the influence of European "Oriental" attitude, plans and strategies were developed that were essential to create a united Iranian nation on the scale of Persian nationalism. That is classifying the Iranian nations as linguistic minorities whose language and culture have changed due to geographical proximity and that the Iranian nations, as Azeri Turks, Kurds, Arabs, and others, are in the primary stages of social development and by the completion of these evolutionary phases will become Persians and will return to their ethnic and historical roots.

This discourse took a form of an axiom and an indisputable reality that can not be compromised or objected to and is the essential basis for the nationalist policies today. To distort the historical facts about the Iranian nations, a systematic process was followed which worked through school textbooks (the Turks and Arabs introduced as invaders) and academic education; moreover, there has been a strong effort to create a new situation for the composition of those nations through ethnic cleansing, ethnocide, genocide, confiscation of the lands and the displacement of Iranian nations of Kurds, Turks, Arabs, Turkmen and Balouches to the neighboring countries. The outcome of those policies was the displacement of millions of people, and killing and injuring of thousands. Due to the nature and objectives of the discourse components of this new racist central government which is against anything Arabic, these nationalist policies adopted a fascist and racist attitude towards anything that has to do with Arabism. Therefore, the results of these policies was the displacement of thousands of Arabs of Ahwaz to Iraq and other neighboring Arab countries, in addition to the confiscation of their lands and depriving them of their political, cultural and economic rights.

