

The Rubber Cement Index

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Unity of Contradictions

Iranian-Americans that value peace in the Middle East are taking no chances with the Bush administration and its policies toward Iran, even though the Democratic Party took control of Congress last week.

Two members of Iranians for Peace & Justice joined representatives of the Crawford Peace House on Election Day in Crawford to express their alarm at four major U.S. carrier forces playing war games near the Iranian coast line in the Persian Gulf.

For months leading up to the mid-term election, the Bush administration's spin machine went into high gear, painting the Islamic Republic of Iran into a threat to U.S. national security. Though he has tried to backpeddle some, President George W. Bush is still haunted by his inclusion of Iran in the so-called "Axis of Evil" in his State of the Union Address on Jan. 29, 2002.

But while the administration claims that Iran is seeking to create nuclear weapons, Iran has maintained that its nuclear ambitions are centered around civilian use only. At the same time, both Mehri Cornett and Bijan Abadi, members of Iranians for Peace and Justice, said that although the current Iranian regime is awful, they fear that the administration is lying to the American people and the approval of the U.S. media as they had leading up to the Iraq War three years ago.

"It was weapon of mass destruction in Iraq then, and it is the mushroom cloud for Iran now," said Cornett, a small-business owner living in Irving. "No U.N. reports suggest that Iran has weapons of mass destruction, and no U.N. report is suggesting that Iran is in the midst of building an atomic bomb now."

Hadi Jawad, co-founder of the Crawford Peace House, pointed out that the change in U.S. policy toward nuclear weapons, which allows the U.S. military to use so-called "usable nukes" in case a direct threat occurs to U.S. interests in the region, should be the real cause for alarm.

"We are very afraid that this regime will seek to redefine even the term 'lame-duck presidency,'" said Jawad. "We don't take this regime for granted. We think this is a radical regime bent on death and destruction, doing as much damage as they possibly can in the term they have in office."

The use of nuclear weapons on Iran would not only be devastating to Iran but also its neighboring countries, they said.

"We want a nuclear-free planet, especially in the Middle East, and have the same standard in all the countries including the nuclear issue," said Abadi, 48, a computer scientist living in Plano.

The effect of U.S. aggression on Iran, as Cornett explained, would be a setback for the fledgling pro-democracy movement already underway in Iran because the majority of the Iranians there would come together to defend their nation from foreign occupation or economic sanctions — not unlike how Americans rallied after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

This scenario would happen even though Iranians have suffered under the current Islamic regime, Abadi added, noting that a course in which the Iranian people were free to choose their own fate would be a better policy.

If not, a U.S. occupation of Iran would be far worse than what has been seen in Iraq for the last three years since Iran is more populated than Iraq. Before the war, Iraq's population was at 26 million. The last Iranian census found 60 million people living in the republic in 1996.

Cornett, who initially came to the United States in 1975 as a college student, said that it is difficult for foreign forces to split the Iranian people along religious and ethnic lines because the culture as a whole there has valued its diversity for over 2,000 years. She blames the country's current internal conflicts on a small faction of religious fundamentalists running the Iranian government.

"After the revolution in 1980, I thought everything was going to be fine. I lived in Iran for five years, and things got really bad. It really wasn't what we revolutioned for. It was a very hard time for women, for intellectuals, for anyone who was of different thinking from Islamic Republic," she said.

Cornett said that she participated in the revolution to remove the Iranian monarchy in the late 1970s, but after her sister was killed in a peaceful demonstration in front of an Iranian university in 1986, she "couldn't take it any more" and returned to America. Most of her immediate relatives live in North America now, and she operates two businesses in Grand Prairie, she said.

Abadi said he came to the United States almost 30 years ago also as a student and decided to become a U.S. citizen after reading the U.S. Constitution.

"The Constitution is something that we really ought to start using again," said the father of two teenagers. "As a citizen of the United States, I have a Constitutional obligation to correct my government."

Abadi said that because of their relative security, the majority of the Iranian-born U.S. citizens residing here have stayed quiet about the tension between the U.S. and Iranian

governments. But more of them like him are speaking out since their relatives in Iran are caught in the middle.

Iranians for Peace and Justice is experiencing more growth with chapters opening around the country, Abadi said, but the truth is, organizations like it are at least a decade-behind in their efforts to organize with the peace groups already established in the United States. Drowning out the horns of war beginning to blow through the corporate U.S. media also remains difficult, he said.

As Abadi explained:

"Being against the regime in Iran and the current administration in the U.S. really puts us in IPJ in a really hard position because as soon as you start talking about the freedom, then 'Oh, you are pro-Bush.' No, no, no. We're talking about the real freedom. We're talking about the self-determination. We're talking about the freedom of religion. We're talking about the suppression of church in politics. 'Oh, so you're pro-Iranian government.' No, no, no. It's extremely hard for us to communicate, and we are trying to make people understand that we are independent and we really care about the people."

Cornett added that she believes that sooner or later the people of Iran — most of whom are under the age of 25 and prefer the Western-style culture and beliefs — will remove their leaders from power because they will refuse to abide by the strict Islamic laws imposed on them from the government.

"I don't remember America going to any country and made it good. Iraq neither. Yeah, Islamic Republic is not good, but if you're America going over there, it's going to be much, much worse," she said.

Abadi said that the people of Iran are wise to the myriad of foreign strategies working hand-in-hand to divide their country and dissolve their sovereign government.

No clear plan, such as one for Iraq, has been hatched by the Americans, Israelis, nor other countries and non-governmental organizations. Though one may turn up in the near future, it will be hard to implement since even the ethnic groups such as the Turkish want to remain loyal to the Iranian nation, they noted.

"I don't think any country can do this separation. This policy is dead from the first place," said Cornett. "Maybe there are some people who want separation, but those are in the minority. It's not the majority of the Turkish. With the Kurdish, it's the same thing. When you talk to these people, they say, 'No, we don't want to be separated from Iran.' They want to stay in Iran, but they want their own freedom."

"Iran is the unity of contradictions, which makes it really beautiful, because for more than 2,000 years they stick to each other just because of this contradiction," said Abadi. "We are really proud that our race is not pure, honestly. Everybody who came learned from us, and we also learned from them. This is the whole beauty of the society."

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Iranians For Peace & Justice
www.iranians4pj.org