

Informative Panel, or Simply Another Missed Opportunity for a REAL Dialogue with the Iranian Government?

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On Friday, May 8, 2009, Professor Seyed Mohammad Marandi, from Tehran University, was invited to participate in a panel discussion on *Translation in Performance: Iran in Question* as part of “Politics and Ethics of Translation,” a workshop sponsored by UCI’s Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture and UCI’s Department of Comparative Literature.

Professor Marandi, who heads the North American Studies at Tehran University, is a spokesman for the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) regime.

Regardless of the topic, Professor Marandi has an “expert” opinion for you! And similar to the rest of the IRI’s spokesmen, he is highly trained in the art of “complete denial of the IRI’s wrongdoings” as well as the art of “justification of the IRI’s human rights violations and the IRI’s support of international terrorism.”

An Internet search of Professor Marandi yields, not scholarly and literary work, but Professor Marandi’s quotes justifying the IRI’s human rights violations, his explanation for having political prisoners, or his critical opinion on movies and books.

However, despite his worldly wisdom, he claims, in a room full of people, that there are absolutely no public executions in Iran! Furthermore, the harmless and innocent IRI regime would never do such a horrible thing!

Mike Shuster (NPR), in an article on Feb. 18, 2009² (*Iran Cracks Down on Human Rights Activists*), reports that in December 2008 Shirin Ebadi, Iran's foremost human rights activist and the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, organized a celebration marking the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. An hour before the ceremony was due to begin; police arrived, broke up the gathering and shuttered her Human Rights Defenders Center. In the same article, Mike Shuster mentions that Arash and Kamiar Alaei, both doctors who treat AIDS cases and have attended medical conferences around the world, were arrested and charged with espionage by the IRI regime when they went to Iran to help AIDS patients.

In the same article, Professor Marandi was again quoted justifying the IRI regime’s illegal conduct and blaming the U.S. for the current crackdown in Iran. "Basically, ever since the United States has officially started funding organizations and groups in Iran, it has created an atmosphere of suspicion," he said. "When the American government says that we are going to spend almost \$100 million a year for a regime change, people in Iran become more suspicious of people who come from the United States, academics who come from the United States."



¹ <http://iranhr.net/spip.php?article485>

² <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100780499>

Basically, once again, Professor Marandi, without any shame or fear of humiliation, presents the Iranian people, not the IRI, as the responsible party! And as always, he covers up for the totalitarian IRI regime's conduct!

During his panel talk, Professor Marandi was very critical of the US behavior toward the IRI. He blamed the American government for not translating Ayatollah Khomeini's so-called "better books" and used this as an example of how the US has continuously tried to stop the dissemination of his great master's ideas and messages. As if it is the responsibility of the US to translate and promote Khomeini's antediluvian messages in the Western world. With a sarcastic and cynical tone (common among IRI spokesmen), he criticized recent Iranian writers living outside of Iran who have written about their personal experiences in Iran or have written in their memoirs references to the Iran-Iraq war. He calls their comments false and a bunch of lies. And of course, Professor Marandi claims that he is a veteran of that war and he knows better! As if all the videos and reports that support those claims are lies (or potentially created by the great Satan, the US)!

In that same panel talk, Professor Marandi said he considers Mr. Ahmadinejad a scholar and a great university professor who is saying everything that the IRI regime actually believes in and agrees with. Professor Marandi adds, "Ahmadinejad, Khatami, etc., have the same exact policy toward Israel, which is the official policy of the IRI regime toward the State of Israel; however, they differ only in the way that they are communicating these policies to their constituents and to the world!"

Part of Professor Marandi's statement is actually correct, since former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani has also made similar statements regarding the destruction of Israel. "If one day ... the world of Islam is mutually equipped with the kind of weapons which Israel presently possesses, the world's arrogant [colonialist] strategy will then come to a dead end, because the use of an atomic bomb on Israel won't leave anything; however, in the world of Islam [use of a bomb] will just cause harm, and this scenario is not far-fetched."³

All this confirms what I have been saying all these years, that both the so-called IRI moderates (e.g., Khatami) and the IRI hardliners (e.g., Ahmadinejad) are basically two wings of the same vulture, called the IRI! This is a dictatorship that lives by constantly creating "chaos" (both internally and internationally) in its constant struggle to (1) divert Iranians' attention from their most important and critical issues (i.e., Iran's dismal situation) and (2) to promote their Islamic Shiaism internationally.

In the Q&A portion of the panel discussion, I challenged Professor Marandi by asking him: "Aren't the IRI's human rights violations against the Iranian people and its support for international terrorism actually fueling the US propaganda machinery against the IRI? For example, didn't Ahmadinejad say that the State of the Israel must be removed from the face of the earth? What do you say about the latest human rights report that lists Iran #2 (after China) for the number of prisoner executions and hangings? Of course, if we consider executions as a percentage of the total population, then Iran would be #1 and China would be #2. What do you say about the inhuman conduct of the IRI regime for carrying out these hangings in public, using construction trucks and cranes? What do you say about the condition of Iranian women in Iran? What about the lack of freedom of speech in Iran? And so on . . ."

You guessed it right: Professor Marandi, specialized in the art of denial, denied everything and considered all my statements as lies, and again, using himself as the official witness, claimed that "There were absolutely NO public executions"⁴ in Iran and the Islamic Republic of Iran would NEVER do such a horrible thing!" He added,

³ Rafsanjani, an atomic bomb on Israel won't leave anything!

<http://www.spectrum.ieee.org/print/3947>

⁴ Examples of Public Executions in Iran (please search online for more disturbing examples and please share them with our professor):

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/aug/19/humanrights.iran>

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/18/20090506/img/pwl-an-official-prepares-fo-1-a9c57a555c53.html>

“Ahmadinejad is simply misquoted by the US propaganda, and he has never said anything about the destruction of the State of Israel.”⁵ Again, our highly capable professor denied everything with a huge phony smile on his face.

I decided not to come back with a follow-up question since the organizers of the program appeared visibly upset that someone actually questioned their distinguished IRI guest. The organizers then wrapped up the panel without allowing any further serious discussions.

Many of the people in the small audience who were extremely frustrated by Professor Marandi's deceptive conduct and this one-sided panel came to me and thanked me for standing up against the IRI's dog-and-pony presentation at this UCI event.

So, why is he invited to UCI? Why does UCI invite an IRI spokesperson without providing an opportunity for a panelist who is capable of challenging Professor Marandi's systematic lies and fabricated stories? Is this considered to be an informative educational event by UCI's standards?

“Dialogue” means a conversation between two or more persons. I believe if UCI wants to invite IRI spokesmen for a dialogue on US-Iran relations and similar topics, then UCI should also invite Independent True Iranian Scholars (who can't travel to Iran due to their political views) so that we all can enjoy a fair debate and exchange.

For those who are interested in reading about Iran's depressing conditions, please download the latest HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH report (2009 – Events of 2008, pages 460-464) by visiting the following pages:

<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2009> or <http://www.hrw.org/en/node/79223>

And finally, please don't allow your hate for or your dislike of the Bush Administration (or of the US overall policy in the Middle East) to prevent you from supporting human rights and freedom for ALL Iranians in Iran as well as support for Iranians' struggle in establishing a secular and democratic system in Iran (without any help or force from any foreign government). Any time people invite you to compare the wrongdoings of the IRI with those of the US, they are simply trying to divert your attention from Iran's serious political, economic, and social issues.

Iran and Iranians deserve much, much more than what the IRI is capable of offering . . .

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http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4355029.stm
http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article546754.ece
<http://www.iranian.com/main/singlepage/2007/public-hanging>
http://mehr.org/index_HR_news.htm

⁵ Ahmadinejad and Israel (. . . Israel as a "disgraceful blot" that should be "wiped off the face of the earth". . .).

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/oct/27/israel.iran>
<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1154525799132&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>
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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahmoud_Ahmadinejad_and_Israel#.22Wiped_off_the_map.22_or_.22Vanish_from_the_pages_of_time.22_translation