

**Remarks by Caspian Makan, Fiancé of
Slain Iranian Icon Neda Agha-Soltan**

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To watch the video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtisEU8i-k>

Living under the Islamic regime: We had to hide our bodies

I was born in 1972 in Tehran, and when I started school, it was 1979. That coincided with the religious revolution under Khomeini. At that time, schools had to close their doors. Everything had to stop in the country.

Even though Islam was present at the time, no one had really realized what this had implied when Islamic authority took power. And people were receptive to the promises made. They thought they would be more well-being, they thought that they would be better off. They thought they would have more political freedoms and that would be added to further freedoms. Therefore, they supported the guide of the revolution.

The first thing that was done was to have the preceding government official, to have them step down, to have them either tortured or killed without trial.

My parents were civil servants under the preceding regime and their lives were put into danger. But my father was able to convince them that they were wrong and he saved our lives.

People had to line up in a very harsh winter to be able to buy staples. But they took to the streets to demonstrate and our life was turned topsy-turvy. After a few months, schools had opened again but everything had changed.

I had never seen such things before. The girls who had been part of our class before had been separated. They had been sent to a special school. Our teachers had to change strangely, strange attire, they had to hide their hair, hide their bodies.

A lot of the books changed as well, for example how they taught history. We had to learn Arabic and the Quran and other Islamic subjects. And the life of Khomeini became compulsory as well. There was a very big change that the population had been subjected to, and slowly, pressure built up to control people's opinion. If there was an ideology that anyone held that ran counter to Islam, that person was imprisoned or murdered.

Speaking up

Now, I remember, I had been eight years old and I had started a discussion with my music teacher. And I was expelled from my music class but I was not discouraged. I felt I had a role to play in society. I tried to understand what was going on socially and politically in Iran. I would attend public events; I visited hospitals, conferences; I would talk to the mullahs, the basiji and different supporters of the regime. I was not afraid, I started a conversation up.

I studied architecture and film, and I continued my work as a writer and a poet. I was a journalist and a photographer. But due to the pressure that was placed on people, and on society, I wanted to reflect what was happening politically, and socially, through my poems, in my films, in everything I wrote.

Now I was threatened, I was censored and I was arrested for short periods of time. And I realized that I wouldn't be able to continue my activities, so I focused on nature and history. But I still

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keep trying to take a short glance at politics. I studied different religions secretly and then I decided to change religions.

Meeting Neda

Now we're in 1983 in Iran, when we talk about Neda Agha-Soltan, when she was born. Her father was in the civil service and he was a musician. She was very intelligent, she was very honest. She was very sincere. She had a very sharp mind. She was an intellectual. She was well ahead of the times and she was precocious for her age intellectually. I was impressed by her and she never got angry when people behaved badly. She was saddened by this. She was a deep thinker and she was really a source of joy for all of those around her.

We met on a trip, we struck up a conversation and we talked about the beauty of creation and nature that God had made. We talked for a bit and little by little things continued, and finally we decided to marry. She was an artist at heart.

She was very curious about different religions and the different visions people had about religions. And she decided to study for this reason theology and after a while she realized that the surface matters counted more at university than the reasons for wanting to study. And she spent a lot of time talking with the management of the university about the dress code and superficial matters like this and so she decided to drop her studies at university and decided to study art as she wished.

She always enjoyed talking about the different pressures that were being placed now on Iranian society, above all, young people. She suffered a great deal from these useless restrictions and she thought they were part of superstitions, that they were something from the Middle Ages.

First protests during election campaigns

She suffered from the lack of freedom in society that wondered why this happened. She wondered why no one would react, why people didn't speak up and didn't complain. She explained her dissatisfaction. She wondered what would be the end result and what would happen.

What marked her as being different from other people was that she tried to find solutions, not only did she raise questions. And then the presidential elections arrived, and at that point, there was a campaign by the different candidates, and she rejected the regime.

She felt it wasn't a matter of individuals, she felt that all the candidates were more or less the same. She thought it was always a show, always a charade. The regime had already designated its candidate. The people's vote didn't matter. And the die was already to some cast. She had never voted and I agreed with her. And that's why I have never participated in the elections, because we thought that if we did, we would be participating in the regime to some extent.

And that's what the regime had said, that the people had voted in a block to support the government. She felt they were fooling people, had exploited their naivete. They used fraud.

And that's why before the campaign had began, the authorities had given instructions to the police to ease up on the population, to stop pressuring the population. Coupons were given out at the time so that people could buy food. So, the pressure had eased up.

A lot of the young people didn't know who was Mousavi, one of the candidates. They didn't know that he had been a prime minister and had contributed to the extermination of thousands of political prisoners. They had only heard about him when he had been transformed, reborn, and they were fascinated by what he was saying. Young people above all else wanted to get rid of Mr. Ahmadinejad. We have to choose the lesser evil.

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People took to the streets to express their joy. But, no one bothered them. The situation was less tense.

You didn't see the militia in the streets. Now people thought this was because of Mousavi's participation. There had been a debate between the two candidates and these discussions allowed us to see what was happening behind the scene, to see the truths that emerged after thirty years of oppression, and this was truly unprecedented. Now, more and more people were supporting Mousavi. And after the election when it had become clear that the election had been rigged, millions of people demonstrated and demanded their rights, once they could see that Mr. Ahmadinejad was no longer supporting him.

Over the past few months, we have seen in Iran that certain horrible crimes perpetrated by the regime have come out. The electoral fraud that appeared, has appeared. We have seen hate expressed by the people against Mr. Ahmadinejad. We have seen oppression by the regime that dates back the thirty-one years of the revolution, we have seen the acts taken by the regime, taken by the regime when the results of the election were announced.

Neda's fight

A great pressure had built up again which recalls the situation of the revolution at the beginning.

Neda followed the campaign, and when the results of the election were announced, she realized it had been rigged, and she joined the demonstrators. She had voted, and saw that circumstances had appeared where she saw she had the right to demand her rights. She saw that the mistakes had been made by the regime and that it should be revealed to the world at large. She felt that this should be told.

People had been arrested and tortured, murdered even. The regime had struck with a strong hand. There was a groundswell of sentiment with the people. Now there was a new element. There was new technology, there were mobile phones, there was satellite, there were all sorts of new technology that would be harnessed to broadcast all the terrible news coming from Iran. The news of the revolution openly threatened the population and the government gave the order that people should be taken down.

Nonetheless, people took the streets. And the mercenaries of the regime reacted against them and caused bloodshed. I was an eye witness to this, I was doing my job. I was trying to collect information. I saw firsthand that the army of the revolution was shooting and killing the demonstrators from a helicopter. Now four days before the event I had talked to Neda and I had tried to dissuade her from demonstrating. I was in love with her. I didn't want her to be hurt. I knew the regime was fighting for survival and that nothing would stop it.

And I said to Neda, "Why do you want to go demonstrate, she said we have a responsibility to defend our rights." She said, "You know Caspian, I love you, I love being with you, but what is most important to me is the freedom of our people. And I said to her and what if you are arrested, what will happen, and she said nothing. And I said what if you are shot at? And she said to me, Even if a bullet hits my heart, it doesn't matter, because everyone will be marked."

And on that great day, I left ahead, and I heard her have a conversation with her mother, and her mother wasn't able to turn her back and talk her out of this.

And at 6:00 on Saturday, the mercenaries of the regime did indeed shoot her to death, and put a bullet in her heart.

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She gave herself for freedom

There was footage of her last moments and so the whole world had a first hand account of the tyranny of Iran. They saw an inhuman and painful and horrible act that showed the black face of an innocent woman of 26 years was killed by a bullet in her heart. She was losing her blood but she remained conscious and she was calm even at the end. Perhaps she was thinking at the end perhaps of her final objective. She did not fight to stay alive. She gave herself up to death.

We have seen many people who have been wounded and killed but this struck the world particularly hard. We were able to see on the footage how good and kind she was and admire her attitude when faced with death, to admire her courage as a symbol of liberty, as she died hoping for a better life of the millions of Iranians who remained behind, and her wish for the gift of freedom for her people. Now the world has experienced a great deal of progress.

We have made great headway in science and technology. And this has improved humanity. But we can wonder if our spiritual depth has grown to the same extent as technology and science. And there is a clear answer, and that is no.

And in human rights, our progress has been very feeble. After a thousand years of history, we can still see that mankind treats each other in a very cruel way. We can see that scientists spend colossal amounts of money to make progress to save lives.

At the same time we see that other authorities use their intelligence to create increasingly deadly weapons to kill, rapidly, on a large scale and more efficiently.

Now I'd like to make an appeal. I would like to appeal to the authorities of the United Nations and human rights representatives.

I would like to urge that we respect human rights and that in this way, we help to put an end to the murder and the death of the man inflicts on his fellow man, that we put an end to murders, to wars, to extermination.

I hope on the 20th of June when we mark the anniversary of death, that we think of her. She is a person who thought of freedom. I hope this day will mark a day when we end to man killing of mankind.

Iran undermines credibility of the United Nations

I have a comment to make.

I would like to thank my dear friend who has just spoken about the Iranian regime and has rightly brought up a number of points, two of which I consider to be very important, and not only considers the Iranian regime but also has a worldwide validity. And I would like to mention, concerning the clear and fragrant infringement of human rights by the Iranian government, that they'd like to be a member of the Human Rights Council.

If the Iranian regime does become a member of the Human Rights Council, then it will be a slap in the face of the other members of the Council.

Flouting such rights would be an encouragement of other countries who have a tendency to do so and that would undermine the entire credibility of the Human Rights Council.

I feel furthermore that if the Iranian regime became a member, then that would legitimize the regime and its inhuman and cruel acts. Giving it legitimacy would encourage it to go further still.

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A call to action

I think that no activity should be considered a right for the regime, which is a dictatorship, nor any terrorist or dictatorship in the world. Now the regime is lacking confidence and we should not endow them. However, armed with its nuclear technology, it is a peril for world security.

The Iranian regime is very strong in terms of its army and weaponry. It also has allies. Well, I won't mention them by name. But there are allies that protect Iran.

Nuclear technology under any form is a danger. And although they claim that it is used for peaceful ends to produce electricity, this power, in the hands of such an inhuman regime, would become extremely dangerous. Given the countries that are protecting this, this could even lead to a world war, I feel.

This is my message to the international community, to the United Nations, to world authorities. They should declare this regime to be illegitimate and work for its disappearance.