

IRAN DAILY ON THE NET

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Magdi Allam is a famed Italian journalist of Egyptian (allegedly Coptic) descent, who claims to be a Muslim. He is presently the vice editor of Italy's daily newspaper 'Corriere della Sera'.

Among non-Muslim Italians, Mr Allam enjoys the reputation of being a 'moderate' and 'reasonable' Muslim. The way he earned such reputation is by means of relentlessly and viciously slandering Islam and its beliefs, a task that he carries out diligently every week—when not every second day—from the pages of Italy's biggest newspaper, usually by splashing shocking headlines on the front page.

The ideas he expresses in his articles and interviews are so outrageously biased and grotesque that the Italian journalists' guild ought to reprimand him, at the very least. Instead, he has been awarded a prize in recognition of his "professional achievements". Among other things, Mr Allam subtly insinuates that most Muslims in Italy are extremists, that Islamic centers and mosques are dens of terrorists and that practicing Muslims are necessarily intolerant and potentially dangerous.

Having become a celebrity, Mr Allam also participates in TV shows, where he is introduced as an "expert on Islam". Since his secular views are radically opposed to Islamic teachings, his opinions are held in high esteem in Italy—particularly so when he scorns traditional Islam and emphasizes the danger posed by the presence of mosques and Qur'anic schools on European territory.

Magdi Allam seems to derive a great deal of personal satisfaction not so much by the lavish praise bestowed on him by the Italian public, as by the bitter response that he receives from the Muslims in Italy. The Muslims' outcry that follows the publication of his articles seems to contribute immensely to boosting his ego and to enhancing his sense of personal achievement. His distorted idea of glory, it seems, consists in being hated and despised by Muslims. So much so that he invented a non-existent death fatwa against himself and made such a fuss of it, that eventually they had to grant him armed protection. He fancies himself to be a wanted man. A persecuted, poor lamb!

It must be made absolutely clear that his vehement tirades do not target only Islamic extremism, but also the very core values of the Islamic faith. It is all too obvious, even to the most moderate and indifferent Muslims in Italy, that Mr Allam is wholeheartedly committed to an ideological crusade against Islam. To achieve this goal, he recently ventured into the field of Islamic theology and jurisprudence (his sole credentials being the knowledge of the Arabic language and his acquaintance with some Arab countries).

Mind you, Mr Allam not only criticized the Muslims' violent reaction to the Danish cartoons; he also described their indignation as unreasonable and unjustified, because it does not consider the right of freedom of speech. According to Magdi Allam, that is, Muslims should passively accept any insults to Islam and to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in the name of secular values. His whole argumentative discourse is interspersed with references to passages, conveniently misquoted and misinterpreted, from traditional works of Islamic theology and Fiqh. So much for his intellectual honesty.

Having said this, it would seem that not much is left to say regarding his moral and ideological standing. Except for one more thing, concerning his latest mission: the attack on the Qur'an itself. Purportedly offering himself as an 'explanatory guide' to the Qur'an, Magdi Allam warns Italians that the Qur'an itself contains "a culture of death", that "in the Qur'an everything is the opposite of everything", and blurs out other willful distortions of Qur'anic teachings. The crowning achievement of his blasphemous criticism of the Qur'an is the coinage of the expression "Qur'anic Nazism" (appeared in a headline on the front page of 'Corriere della Sera' on 16th February 2006). Unmistakably, here the prime target of Mr Allam's venomous attack is the Qur'an itself, which is identified as the very root of what he describes as the Nazi-like ideology of Islamists.

An objective evaluation of Magdi Allam's journalistic career can only confirm a seemingly irreversible pattern of progressive mental degeneration fuelled by his hatred for Islam: first came his vilification of practicing Muslims, then the disapproval of mosques and Qur'anic schools, then the scorn of traditional Islamic beliefs, then the approval of the slanderous attacks on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), then, lastly, the poisonous condemnation of the Qur'an itself.

Muslims should realize this simple truth: powerful anti-Islamic forces in Europe, and especially in Italy, deliberately create and feed monsters like Magdi Allam. When will Muslims understand that, in the name of western secularism, non-Muslims are not only fighting extremism but also trying to destroy Islam?

Ashraf G. Lo Bianco
 Freelance journalist based in Italy

Foreign Students Graduate as Judges



QOM, May 28--The first batch of foreign students graduated as judge on Sunday from the School for Islamic Jurisprudence and Principles, affiliated to the Qom-based International Center for Islamic Sciences.

Speaking in the graduation ceremony, dean of the school, Abbas Ka'bi,

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said 125 Afghan students graduated in the first batch, IRNA reported.

"The graduates will be inducted in Afghanistan's judicial and legal system," he said.

Referring to two years of activities at the school, Kabi noted that 300 students are presently studying in the school, 200 of whom are at BA and 100 at MA levels.

"In the new course, about 60 students from Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan will be accepted," he said.

The head of International Center for Islamic Sciences, Alireza Araf, stressed the need for educating top Iraqi students in the judicial field, adding that the center is ready to hold educational courses for Iraqi students.

Lanka Cooperation Welcome Europeans Losing Reputation

TEHRAN, May 28--President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Sunday Iran is pursuing enhancement of ties with friendly countries.

In a meeting with Sri Lankan Commerce Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle in Tehran, Ahmadinejad asserted that Iran is ready to use all potentials to improve its relations with its allies, IRNA reported.

Describing Iran-Lanka relations as friendly, the president opined that Tehran-Colombo ties should extend beyond cooperation in the fields of oil and tea.

"Iran is ready to hold talks with Sri Lanka in the fields of industry, energy, tourism, trade and engineering services," he said.

Ahmadinejad said Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse's stances with regard to supporting the oppressed Palestinians provide a sound basis for sustainable interactions throughout the Muslim world.

"Iran is willing to see Sri Lanka as a powerful and developed country," he said.

Fernandopulle, for his part, said since Sri Lanka considers Iran as its ally and brother country, it will oppose any threat or sanction against Iran.



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (r) in talks with Sri Lankan Commerce Minister Jeyaraj Fernandopulle in Tehran, Sunday. (IRNA Photo)

Fernandopulle also submitted Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse's message to President Ahmadinejad.

Meanwhile, Ahmadinejad in an interview with Der Spiegel magazine said an "active worldwide network of Zionists" was trying to prevent his possible trip to Germany for the World Cup and expressed new doubts over whether the Holocaust happened.

Ahmadinejad also said he doubted Germans were allowed to write "the truth" about the Holocaust and said if Nazi murder of European Jews really happened, Jews should be moved from Israel back to Europe, Reuters reported.

"We say if the Holocaust happened, then the Europeans must accept the consequences and the price should not be paid by Palestine," he said in a rare interview with Western media that was

published on Sunday.

"If it did not happen, then the Jews must return to where they came from. I believe the German people are prisoners of the Holocaust. More than 60 million were killed in World War Two ... The question is: Why is it that only Jews are at the center of attention?"

In another part of interview, Ahmadinejad added that Europe should "side with Iran" on nuclear policy or "suffer the consequences".

Ahmadinejad said the Europeans were "losing their reputation".

European powers are backing the United States in trying to persuade Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

The Iranian president left open whether he would visit Germany to support the Iran national soccer team during the World Cup that begins on June 9.

Karzai Sees Bright Future

TEHRAN, May 28--Visiting Afghan President Hamid Karzai on Sunday welcomed Iran's initiative to hold a tripartite meeting between the foreign ministers of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Afghan president, who arrived in Tehran on Saturday at the head of a high-ranking political delegation, met with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, IRNA reported.

During the meeting, Karzai and Mottaki explored possible avenues for bolstering bilateral relations and discussed key regional developments.

Mottaki pointed to the growing trend of bilateral ties and assessed the outcome of negotiations between the Afghan delegation and Iranian officials as "constructive and fruitful".

Stressing that Iran's policy is based on promotion of ties with Kabul, he said mutual understanding has always been the basis of the two countries' policy.

Referring to ongoing

consultations between senior officials of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, he said, "Ongoing consultations between the presidents of Iran and Pakistan Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Pervez Musharraf respectively, and consultations between First Vice President Parviz Davoudi and foreign ministers of Iran and Pakistan paved the way for tripartite talks to improve the situation in Afghanistan".

Karzai, for his part, said ties between the two nations have always been based on mutual respect and friendship, and praised regular consultations between the two

countries.

He added that connecting routes, trade, energy and participation in Afghanistan's reconstruction projects have prepared the grounds for bolstering mutual relations.

On Iran's constructive role in Afghanistan, Karzai expressed his country's support for Iran's positive role in improving the situation in Afghanistan by holding tripartite talks among Tehran, Kabul and Islamabad.

Karzai and his entourage on Sunday paid tribute to the late Father of Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini.

76 Killed in Road Accidents

TEHRAN, May 28--Seventy-six people were killed and 674 injured in 512 road accidents last week, deputy of the Islamic Republic of Iran Police's (IRIP) Traffic Department for executive affairs said.

Talking to IRNA on Saturday, Colonel Hossein Nourizadeh added that 54 of these accidents resulted in death while 458 caused injuries.

Earlier, deputy chief of IRIP's Traffic Department, Brigadier Mohammad Rouyanian, said 72 people die daily across the country in road accidents—highest in the world in proportion to population and number of vehicles.

Persian Press Watch

Need

HAMBASTEGI: There is a Chinese proverb which says if you want profit for one whole year, you should plant wheat. It further says that if you want profit for ten years, you should plant trees and if you want profit for one hundred years, you should educate people. This last connotation indeed applies to today's Iran. Iran is presently in dire need of people who are skilled in the managerial domain and who could satisfactorily administer different sectors. Iran also needs people who are sufficiently trained in subjects such as computer engineering, telecommunications, biotechnology, metallurgy and microelectronics. The bottom line is that if we want skilled people in these fields, students should be sent abroad for further studies. Isn't it more appropriate that instead of importing fruits, talented students are sent to foreign lands to learn the necessary technical skills?

New Chapter

ABRAR: Recent visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki to Iraq and his talks with the newly-appointed Iraqi statesmen opened a new venue in Tehran-Baghdad relations. Mottaki is the first diplomat from one of Iraq's neighboring countries to have visited Iraq after Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki introduced his new cabinet. It is interesting to know that none of the regional leaders have yet congratulated al-Maliki for his new cabinet, which can help promulgate democracy in Iraq in the post-Saddam era. The importance of Mottaki's visit is attributed to the fact that both Iran and Iraq have had many commonalities regarding Iraq's future. Mottaki's visit showed that both countries are willing to reinforce their old cultural bonds.

Overhaul

ASR-E EQTESAD: Under the present circumstances, Iranian officials of communications and information technology reason that the more the number of cellular phone users, the more the country will be regarded as approaching the global industrial standards. Hence, these people advocate expansion of the national mobile phone network. Of course, common sense is not against advancement in the field of telecommunications technology. However, it must be understood that making technological breakthroughs needs certain prerequisites. One such prerequisite is having sufficient number of manufacturers of cellular phone sets. Although the government has increased the import tariff on cellular phones to 60 percent, there is currently only one local manufacturer of cellular phones. All angles considered, it seems that the national telecommunications industry needs a rapid overhaul.

Policy

SHARQ: One is bound to assume that the government's policy pertaining to appointing young people to sensitive posts is being implemented at the universities. For example, the early retirement of six professors of political science and law of Tehran University marks a new wave of changes at the academic circles. Although there is nothing wrong with appointing young people to sensitive posts, the parameter of experience should not be overlooked. All the professors who were retired recently have invaluable experiences in the domains of politics and law. It would have been better if the government had thought more before retiring these highly experienced professors. Let us not forget that it takes a lot of time and budget to train professors similar to the retired ones.

Perspective

Accountability

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 Almost 10 months into office President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has demonstrated that he remains true to his campaign promises.

Among the important measures of his government are deep cuts in current expenditures and lavish protocol costs, insisting on frugality in state visits and ceremonies, putting an end to unwanted, unhelpful and expensive local and international conferences, and visiting the provinces at regular intervals to assess the problems and needs firsthand.

So far the president and his aides seem dedicated to their work and in the process make the government more responsible for its decisions or the lack of it.

For the same reason it is important that a special office follow up the timely implementation of the Majlis ratifications and closely supervise the downsizing of government. Membered by the best minds of the land and with no political strings attached, this office report directly and at regular basis to the president.

For its part, the parliament apart from its regular supervision of the proper functioning of state affairs, should establish a special supervisory directorate. This body should monitor the implementation of laws and report its findings to speaker and relevant Majlis commissions.