

Iran\222s Islamic Justice Is a Message to the World
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Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, convicted in 2006 for having an \223illicit relationship\224 with two men after her husband was murdered (by someone) the year before has become a cause c\3511\350bre in the western world.

This woman was accused, arrested, tortured for a confession, and was scheduled to be stoned to death for adultery this summer. However, the outcry from the US and Europe got her a little extra time. The Iranian Islamic government, very annoyed at the uproar, then decided that she had something to do with the murder of her husband\227a crime she had not been connected with before\227nor tried for. This may get her a hanging. They will find a reason, even if there is none.

Her punishment serves an increasingly detested Iranian government who want to send a message to other women, uppity women (of the educated class). Sakineh is from a village in Azerbaijan, western Iran, with a Turkic-speaking population. Had she been educated, she would be speaking Persian too; but she does not. She was tortured, compelled to confess, and charged in a language she could not understand. This passes for Islamic Justice in Iran.

Unknown yet if she was really given 99 lashes because a picture of an activist in London was mistaken for her. Why not beat her a little and then stone her, eh? And the Iranian government is particularly stubborn. They have arrested two foreign journalists who came to Iran to interview Sakineh\222s sons\227trying to halt any more international publicity about this shameful issue.

There have been other cases like this one\227cases in which barbaric Islamic punishment was to be meted out to women for supposed sexual offenses (rarely to the men also involved), such as a notorious case in Nigeria. International outrage compelled them to spare the woman. Lashings do go on\227although stonings are usually halted.

We are told by Muslim apologists that tribal customs, not Islam, are to blame. This may be so in benighted Afghanistan, but how can that be in Iran, a country on the cusp of modernity before the catastrophe of the Islamic Revolution took over? Iran insists that these laws are justified by religion and custom, and if they say so, how can we excuse Islam?

When Muslims live in the secular west, they can practice the more benign aspects of their religion without the more draconian. Islam when practiced voluntarily is different from Islam politically enforced. When Muslims in the west murder daughters or wives, they go to prison and their community shuns them. Not so in Pakistan, a country that was supposed to be secular, that is probably the world capital of lynching of women (honor killing), according to Robert Fisk, \223Relatives with Blood on their Hands,\224 The Independent, London, September 8, 2010.

A brave woman lawyer, Hina Jilani, who runs a battered women\222s shelter, keeps losing her clients. When relatives (usually brothers) come to murder their sisters, all they need to do is report to the police, get their father\222s forgiveness, and they are let off. Ms. Jilani needs armed guards to protect her from daily death threats. The state has enough money (and will) to be a nuclear power, but not enough to protect its miserable women.

I have not yet, in any such notorious cases, heard protests from any Muslim states, not even from the Muslim communities living abroad. Do they really support (or fear not supporting) such barbaric laws?

However, three brave Iranian diplomats have just defected to Finland, telling the world that Iran\222s Islamic justice is not Justice. Will Iranian thugs attempt to silence these diplomats? They have done it before. The Iranian government is obviously embarrassed by last summer\222s fraudulent election and the increasing persecution of the public\227particularly targeting women. All justice systems are not equal\227and lynching women is not justice.

Iran seems to be coming apart, and its medieval and Machiavellian leadership may not die in bed, as they hoped. Who will take them in if they need to run? Gaza or southern Lebanon? Or will they die fighting?

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