

Woe to a Nation That Does Not Have a Hero

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ABSTRACT

Brecht wrote his famous play, "The Life of Galileo," in 1938. His apparent motivation in this work was the news of the splitting of the atom by German physicists, but in this piece, he wanted to answer two essential questions of the 20th century. Firstly, is it possible to violate all human principles for the advancement of science, and secondly, in a society where an inhuman government rules it, how can one tell the truth? The Islamic regime ruling Iranian society nowadays is in the same state of mind as Galileo's time, the 16 and 17th centuries. In dictatorial societies, intellectuals and athletes are praised as long as they can be helpful regarding material benefits. The religious clergy will lose power and their businesses if society has heroes. Therefore, during the recent protests and executions, athletes have been targeted. Actors and producers were arrested. This article seeks to answer the central question of what is the responsibility of the intellectual class and the international community in the era of tyranny and an authoritarian regime.

Keywords: Death Penalty, Galileo, Heroes, Human Rights, Iran, Justice, National Hero, Revolution.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Brecht's play content is as follows: Galileo, the great Italian physicist and the founder of the experimental method in the new sciences, decided to test Copernicus' hypothesis about the earth's rotation. Galileo discovered that the planet is not motionless and that the stars travel like ships. Galileo was in search of truth. He wanted to break down the large fence of old traditions and crude beliefs and discover the world's secret. At first, he recklessly unveiled his discovery and spoke fearlessly about the truth he had achieved, but the church, which adheres to ancient traditions, could not accept Galileo's claim. Therefore, they fought with him (Allan-Olney, 1870). What could Galileo do in such a situation? Should he have stood up to the church, defended his hypothesis, or hidden the truth and survived death?

Galileo lived in a society that, although constantly talked about "freedom of thought" and "freedom of research," basically believed that science should serve businesses. In other words, knowledge that does not benefit traders could not be accepted and used. In such a society, thinkers were praiseworthy as long as they could be helpful regarding material benefits.

Galileo was thirsty for the truth, but to reach the truth, to discover the secrets of the world, one must have had freedom of research and freedom of speech. One must have had time and leisure. Galileo could do scientific research only when his material life was secured. Therefore, if he completed the telescope he had just built in the Netherlands and presented it to the Senate of the Republic as the result of his research, it was not to gain honor but for five hundred coins a month. Galileo did not think this honor was fleeting, nor was he afraid of future scandal. He disregarded moral traditions to have the opportunity to investigate and complete his research (Brodrick, 1965). Galileo had a wonderful personality. Although he spent all his time exploring the unknown lands of science, he was also surprisingly attached to carnal temptations and worldly pleasures.

According to his belief, new knowledge needed new ethics and character. Galileo was a fun-loving creature who enjoyed good food, wine, and new ideas. He also said, "When I eat greasy and soft food, good thoughts come to me!" Galileo is a clear example of a natural and living character. He is not a fake hero. He was a man who adhered to spirituality on the one hand and was caught by "this artless twisting stomach" on the other hand. Galileo was a mixture of contradictions; he was skeptical and quick to believe, cunning and simple-minded, clairvoyant and blind. He had a dual personality; on the one hand, he breathed the truth, and on the other hand, he was a cautious person who was afraid to act. As a hero of his time, he was denied the truth he had achieved (Chalmers, 1999).

II. THE SHADOW OF MURDER, TORTURE, AND INTIMIDATION ON IRANIAN ATHLETES AND CELEBRITIES SUPPORTING THE PROTESTERS

According to Brecht, the intellectual class is responsible for spreading the truth in the era of tyranny and an authoritarian regime. However, how can one spread the truth in an era of fear? Brecht answered: in any possible way, even in an illegal way. The protest movement of the Iranian people began in the last week of September after the death of Mahsa Amin, a Kurdish girl who died while in the custody of the morality police. This movement is unprecedented in terms of its breadth and depth of anti-government and the range of its participants and supporters among artists, celebrities, and athletes in Iran and overseas (STP Reporter, 2022).

In the past 200 days, more than five hundred protestors have been killed. Tens of thousands of people have been arrested. Some have been issued death sentences, and four people have been executed. On Tuesday, January 3, a list of athletes killed, imprisoned, and tortured during this period was published by Human Rights Watch. There are well-known figures from the world of sports, culture, and art among all these people. Several of them were sentenced to death or in danger of being sentenced (ICHRI, 2022).

The Iran Human Rights Campaign stated that between August 23 and January 5, five athletes named, Ali Mozaffari, Mohammad Ghasemifar, and Ehsan Ghasemifar, were killed. Mohammad Hosseini and Mohammed Karami were executed. According to this report, Mozaffari was killed by a direct shot from security agents in Qochan. Mohammad Ghasemifar was shot in the back of the head in Dezful. According to the campaign's report, Ehsan Ghasemifar was one of the bodybuilding athletes killed in protest movements in Karaj, a city close to Tehran, the capital. "His family was under pressure from the security agencies and the government to declare his death due to a heart attack." Mohammad Mehdi Karmi, a karate athlete, is one of the five people who were sentenced to death after the death of a revolutionary guard during the protests on the 40th anniversary of the death of Hadis Najafi in Karaj. The 22-year-old boy was executed on Saturday morning, January 8, without having the right to a lawyer or see his family for a last time. Within four weeks of arrest, Mohammed Mehdi Karami and Mohammed Hosseini were tortured and executed by the Islamic regime. Mohammad Hosseini was a martial athlete visiting his parents' grave when he was arrested (Iranintl, 2023). Sahand Noor Mohammadzadeh, one of the other bodybuilding athletes, was arrested on October 4 during the protest movements in Tehran. His lawyer announced his arrest two months after the death sentence was announced on the charge of "moharebeh," a person resorting to arms to frighten people. While it is well known that the protesters do not carry weapons (Kullab, 2022).

Parham Parori, a native of Saqqez, Kurdistan, a swimmer, and coach, was arrested in Tehran and initially sentenced to "moharebeh" as well. According to his lawyer, on November 22, the "moharebeh" charge was removed from his client's file; however, he is still in jail. A relative of Parori told the Human Rights Campaign: "When he returned from work, he was arrested and beaten by the special forces just because his car's license plate number belonged to the city of Saqqez, the hometown of Mehsa Amini." (DW.com, 2023).

III. THE WIDESPREAD REACTION OF WESTERN AUTHORITIES, CELEBRITIES, AND PEOPLE TO THE EXECUTIONS AND VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

In an interview with Fox News in December 2022, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of the State of Israel, stated that Iran's brave men and women showed the world that the Islamic Republic is a cruel and terrorist regime (Blitzer, 2022).

Iranian intellectuals, celebrities, and Iranians worldwide have come together to condemn the actions of this regime. Iranian celebrities, football players, actors, and singers in Iran have been arrested and are under pressure. In Canada, where Iranian activists are very active, they have pressured the Canadian government to sanction more than ten thousand Iranian authorities, leaders of the IRGC, members of the IRGC, and several institutions (Robertson, 2022). At the ceremony marking the third anniversary of the downing of Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 by the IRGC, killing 176 passengers in 2020, Justine Trudeau stated that Canada has "permanently and forever" banned leaders from Iran from taking safe haven in the country (Iranintl, 2023).

Ned Price, the US Department of State spokesperson, tweeted: *"We condemn Iran's sham trials & execution of Mohammad Mehdi Karami & Mohammad Hosseini in the strongest terms. These executions are key to the regime's effort to suppress protests. We continue to work with partners to pursue accountability for Iran's brutal crackdown"* (Price, 2023).

Robert Malley, the US special representative for Iran affairs, tweeted in response to the execution on Saturday, January 7: *"Appalled by the regime's execution of two more young Iranians after sham trials. These executions must stop. We and others across the globe will continue to hold Iran's leadership accountable"* (Malley, 2023).

Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly also tweeted: *"The Iranian regime must answer for its brutal repression of brave Iranian voices."*

British Foreign Secretary James Cleverley wrote in a tweet. "*Iran must immediately end the violence against its people. The execution of Mohammad Mahdi Karami and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini by the Iranian regime is abhorrent. The UK is vehemently opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances*" (Cleverly, 2023).

German Foreign Minister Analena Baerbock wrote in a tweet in response to the execution of Karami and Hosseini: "*#MohammadMehdiKarami & #MohammadHosseini - more than two names. Hanged by the regime in #Iran because they did not want to submit to the brutal & inhuman actions. 2 more terrible fates encourage us further to increase the pressure on Tehran with the EU*" (Baerbock, 2023).

The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Iran tweeted in 2022, "*Ethnic minority groups like Baluchs and Kurds have paid the heaviest price in the state violence. Prisons are now bursting with all those who dreamed of a better future for Iran. At least six people have been sentenced to death in summary trials*". (IranIntl, 2022). With the recent execution, Javad Rahman tweeted: "*These executions must be condemned most severely.*" He emphasized that "*Mohammed Mehdi Karmi and Mohammad Hosseini were tortured into confessing and were executed without a fair trial following a sham trial.*"

He said that he was "*shocked, horrified, and angry*" by this action of the authorities of the Islamic Republic (VOA, 2023).

The violation of Human Rights in Iran is not recent. However, with the widespread protestation and what the Iranian people are calling an "ongoing" revolution, these executions, arrests, pressure on the families of those killed or arrested, and the pressure of the Iranians abroad on the foreign governments have changed the way the international community sees the Iranian regime nowadays.

IV. INTERNATIONAL POLITICIANS AND THE *POLITICAL SPONSORSHIP* OF IRANIAN PRISONERS

Since the execution in Iran started, news has been published about *political sponsorship* acceptance by some European politicians of several individuals recently arrested in Iran and who have received death sentences.

The *political sponsorship* issue in Iran dates back to 2018 when two European politicians accepted the political bail for one of the defendants in the protests of 2018. However, at that time, the issue of "political bail" was raised only in this one case and was not analyzed or taken into deep consideration.

Political sponsorship has been created as an administrative-parliamentary concept for about two decades. It first entered the field of political and then legal literature through the German government and Parliament. This concept, in its new and developed meaning, includes a kind of political support to attract public opinion and some international institutions and organizations to the activities of criminal proceedings and sentencing judgments regarding individuals who have been prosecuted in their own country.

People who are responsible for the *political sponsorship* of the accused or the convicted one, in terms of their influence in the political and diplomatic arena, can use the pressure to summon the ambassador or other political representatives in their respective countries to express their concerns or get an explanation about the process of a trial.

By requesting a report on the trial process and the right of the accused or convicted individual to lawyers and investigators regarding the realization or non-realization of a fair trial through diplomatic channels from the judiciary or the Ministry of Justice of the relevant country, they indirectly affect the issue and the process of the trial.

In addition, the role of a *political sponsor*, according to the position and role he enjoys in the political arena, is to provide information on behalf of a person who is considered at risk in terms of the type of prosecution and trial and does not have a forum at his disposal. This process attracts public opinion to his/her situation, and he/she can pursue his/her rights in international forums.

The concept of political sponsorship is not recognized in Iranian Constitutional Law. It mostly has a symbolic aspect, but it is considered to have effects in the international arena in terms of attracting the attention of international assemblies to the process of a criminal trial, which sometimes affects its results. In domestic Law, there is no specific mutual legal obligation for the political sponsor or the country's judicial system regarding the defendants or convicts whose political surety is accepted by one or more members of the European parliaments.

Enrico Santiago, a member of the Spanish Parliament, accepted the *political sponsorship* of Javad Rouhi, a protester sentenced to death three times. According to published reports, Rouhi was tortured and sexually abused in prison. He called for the immediate release of this 35-year-old protester.

Harald Troch, a member of the Austrian Parliament, accepted the *political sponsorship* of Mohammad Hosseini, a protester sentenced to death. Mohammad Hosseini was sentenced to death in connection with the case of the murder of a Basiji member during the 40th day of Hadis Najafi's death ceremony in Karaj. Mohammad Hosseini was tortured and hanged on January 7, 2023, although he stated several times that he was at the graveyard to visit, as every Thursday, his parent's graves.

V. CONCLUSION

In Brecht's play's third and last scene, the subject primarily revolves around Galileo's denial of his findings. Brecht wanted to show that the great Italian scientist's action was not hypocritical; more than anything, it resulted from his fear of death.

For the first time in this play, Brecht talked about the new era, which he thought was the era of humankind's flourishing of knowledge and intellectual progress.

In the 21st century, in an era of atomic bombs and nuclear weapons, still talking truth and asking for the separation of religion and politics brings one's life in danger. The Western states are still willing to negotiate with the JCPOA with a regime that finances the terrorist organizations in the region.

According to Iranian constitutional Law, peaceful demonstrations without carrying weapons are allowed, but people are still brutally arrested, tortured, and executed. Thus, in an authoritarian regime, legally or illegally, it is hard to speak the truth.

When a country does not have heroes, athletes, or role models for youth, they stop having hope. When Andrea, Galileo's student, exclaimed impatiently and angrily, "Woe to the nation that has no hero," the master gently corrected him by saying, "Woe to the nation that needs a hero." (Allan-Olney, 1870). The Islamic regime is killing athletes for people not having any role models, but the danger is that people look for a new role model when there is no hero in society. In the dictatorial regime, the role model becomes the Leader, just like Stalin, Putin, or Khamenei.

The danger the Iranian people are in today is that after four months of protestation,

1- The government would find an alternative such that the Islamic regime will remain in power without the Supreme Leader or the so-called "Velayat-e- Faghih".

2- The government will ease hijab and alcohol

3- The regime will sign a new deal with the JCPOA members and regain international recognition.

Suppose the Western States will not expel Iranian diplomats, recall their ambassadors, cut their international relations with Iran, and continue the negotiation on the JCPOA. In that case, the Islamic regime will continue its brutal crackdown and execute more young people in Iran. Is condemning the action of the mullahs enough?

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