

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In 1979 the Iranian people in their millions overthrew the Shah of Iran. The Shah had been put in power by a U S-led coup against the nationalist Mossadegh government in 1953, and this brutal government was one of the most important puppet regimes the U S had in the Middle East. The Shah's CIA-trained secret police, SAVAK, was a bloodthirsty gang of murderers and torturers. In one day during the popular uprising that led to the overthrow of the Shah's regime, his military and police murdered thousands of people. For a brief period after the overthrow of the Shah, Iran saw a flowering of revolutionary enthusiasm, creativity, debate, and hope. It was during this time that Iranian students seized the U S embassy in Tehran and exposed the role of the U S warlords and their CIA in propping up the Shah's regime from the beginning.

Soon after the overthrow of the Shah, Islamic fundamentalist forces, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, fought to gain power, and as they began to consolidate their power, people resisted. The Amol uprising in northern Iran, led by the Union of Iranian Communists (Sarbedaran), was the first attempt by Maoists to launch an armed revolutionary struggle in Iran. It was defeated, and it became the last serious resistance to the moves by the Islamic fundamentalist regime to consolidate their state power. A nationwide crackdown against revolutionary and other opposition forces was launched, and by the end of 1982 the Islamic fundamentalist regime was firmly in place. They slaughtered many thousands of revolutionaries, including much of the revolutionary leadership at that time. Many thousands more were arrested, tortured and imprisoned.

Anahita, a revolutionary who suffered horribly at the hands of the Khomeini regime, was tortured and spent eight years in prison. Today Ana is a courageous revolutionary opponent of both the Islamic fundamentalist regime and the U S Government. She was recently in Los Angeles with other women from Iran who participated in the International Women's Day demonstration, in solidarity with the IWD march in Brussels organized by *Karzar* (Women's Campaign for the Abolition of all Misogynist and Gender-based Legislations and Islamic Punitive Laws against Women in Iran.)

A Reader, Los Angeles

THE BILKIS JUDGEMENT

The judgment in case of Bilkis Bano comes as a great relief in the times when justice is being denied to a large section of society, more so to the victims of communal violence. A pregnant woman who was gang raped, who witnessed the brutal killing of her family members, stood firm with grit and determination to seek justice with the help of civil rights groups of Gujarat. Bilkis herself deserves a lot of praise for her courage. The civil rights group based in Gujarat, which took up the battle, needs to be appreciated for the yeomen service it has done in the cause of justice in Gujarat.

While the Bilkis case shows justice is possible it also shows how difficult it is to get. While it shows that elements of democracy are still alive, it also shows how much compromised they are becoming with the ascendance of communal

mind set of a section of people and with the communalization of the state apparatus, police, bureaucracy, judiciary and polity. In a way the whole episode is a mirror to what is happening in Gujarat. The state sponsored pogrom in Gujarat has left the civic society fractured along religious lines. The person and party who led the carnage have got approval from a section of society, as the victory of Modi in 2007 elections has shown. This erosion of democratic norms and justice delivery system is a matter of grave concern to all.

While Modi-BJP have already pushed their divisive politics deep down, in the society, it is imperative that sensible citizens restore back the values, the values of democracy, pluralism, and diversity, the ones which are the base of Indian freedom movement. It is necessary that the norms of Indian Constitution, which seem to have been damaged severely in different parts of the country, more so in Gujarat, are restored back and justice be done to innumerable victims.

The victims of Gujarat carnage are feeling helpless and are crying out for help for getting them justice, for getting them rehabilitated, for getting them the equal citizenship rights.

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FATWA

The fatwa issued by Darul Uloom Deoband (Feb 26, 2008), at the end of the convention of delegates from Madrasas and other Islamic schools is not only very apt, it is also very timely. It says that Terrorism is Un-Islamic and adds that Mischief, Rioting, Murder are amongst severest of crimes. This is as per the teachings of Koran, and has been emphasized by various Islamic scholars. In current times Muslims and terrorism have become synonymous due to the intense propaganda at global level by the US and at local level by the communal forces here in India. This fatwa should also set to rest the perception that Madrasas are the dens of terrorism. One knows that terrorism in the name of religion has come to be in the post-Al Qaeda phase. This Al Qaeda was funded and supported by US to fight the proxy battle against the Russians who were occupying Afghanistan. Some Madrasas were misused by the US strategy, which used some of these in Pakistan to distort the teachings of Islam to indoctrinate the Asian Muslim youth to join Al Qaeda. It is here that the terms *jihad* and *kafir* were given a twisted meaning for a political goal. Today major causes of terrorism are the lust for control over oil resources, unresolved ethnic-national problems (Kashmir, North East, Ireland, and

LTTE) and a reaction to communal violence/genocide. This fatwa will give a good message to some of the misguided youth who due to being pushed to the wall may have regarded it as a way to get justice.

All India Secular Forum

CRIME BY BSF

MASUM recently conducted fact finding on a complaint of sexual abuse and torture by two constables of border security force (BSF) and subsequent police inaction.

Renuka Mondal (40 years), wife of Late Shambhu Mondal, resident of village Char Rajapur Paschim Colony, Post Office Mohan Ganj Police station Raninagar, District Murshidabad, West Bengal became the latest victim of torture and sexual abuse by BSF personnel. The incident took place when Renuka was engaged in agricultural job in her own land at near IB Pillar no. 162.

The perpetrators tried to uncloth her and attempted to commit rape on her. Renuka shouted for help. Then one Ms Belu Rani W/o Lakshindar Mondal who was also engaged in farming in the nearby land, rushed to the spot hearing the victim's cry for help. But seeing the aggressive attitude of BSF men Belu Rani retreated from the spot.

After few minutes Belu Rani came back to the spot with other persons and on seeing them the said two BSF personnel fled away. Then all of them namely Ms Belu Rani Mondal, Mr Krishna Mondal, Mr Jaideb Mondal all of village Char Rajnagar Ganj, Police station Raninagar, District Murshidabad, West Bengal and Ms Renuka decided to go to BSF camp for lodging complaint against the perpetrators. When they were on the way to the BSF camp, they met with officer in charge of Char Moirosi BSF Camp. Listening to complaint Officer-in-charge himself went to BSF camp along with the villagers and called the accused persons. The entire matter was exposed in front of the accused BSF personnel but suddenly the said constables tried to beat Renuka and Belu Rani with sticks in order to shut their mouths. Then Renuka and others came back home getting no justice from the higher official.

Next day (11-02-2008) Renuka went to lodge a complaint to Raninagar Police Station and the police instead of starting a criminal case against the perpetrators of crime only recorded her complaint as General Diary Entry in a book. The police neither initiated investigation nor took any action against the said BSF men.

Kiriti Roy,

President, Masum