



**The Meir Amit Intelligence
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Spotlight on Iran

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Confusion in Iran over Palestinian UN bid

The Iranian media reactions to the Palestinian UN bid exemplified the confusion in Tehran over the Palestinian appeal for international recognition of independent statehood within the June 1967 borders.

Earlier this week the Asr-e Iran website discussed the complexity of the Iranian stance on the Palestinian UN bid and the contradictory positions of top Iranian officials on the issue. Support for the Palestinian appeal for recognition could be interpreted as dropping the demand for the liberation of the entire Palestine and reinforce Abu Mazen's status. On the other hand, by opposing the Palestinian bid, Iran can be seen as siding with the United States and Israel.

According to Asr-e Iran, the complexity of the Iranian stance was reflected in the statement made by President Ahmadinejad in New York, saying that Iran recognizes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state as a first step towards the complete liberation of Palestinian territory.

Earlier this week two members of the Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee voiced reservations about the Palestinian UN bid. Majles member Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh branded the Palestinian UN bid as an American-Israeli conspiracy designed to divert the attention of the region's nations from the anti-American and anti-Zionist uprisings in the Arab world. Majles member Parviz Sarvari argued that, with the Palestinian UN bid, Israel seeks to transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into one that is purely domestic (Palestinian) and reinforce the position of Mahmoud Abbas.

The conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami was also critically opposed to the potential recognition of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. Abu Mazen's plan is tantamount to recognition of Israel's existence and it serves the purpose of the Zionists to gain recognition from the Palestinian people.

According to the daily, the Palestinian UN bid is an American-Zionist conspiracy to free Israel from the threat posed to its existence by the developments in the Arab world, and the ostensible opposition of the United States and Israel to the Palestinian appeal is just a tactic for the furtherance of that conspiracy. The daily said that the struggle against Israel must continue until the complete liberation of Palestine.

A different approach to the Palestinian UN bid could be seen in an editorial published by the daily Shargh. The reformist newspaper argued for unconditional support for the Palestinians' rights on the international scene, saying that support for the independence of Palestine also serves Iran's national interests.

Strong criticism for decision to release two Americans

This week government critics strongly criticized the decision to release Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, the two Americans imprisoned in Iran on charges of espionage for the United States. They were released from a Tehran prison last Wednesday on \$1 million bail after more than two years in custody.

Majles Research Center chairman Ahmad Tavakoli criticized the fact that the release of the two Americans coincided with President Ahmadinejad's visit to New York for the UN General Assembly meeting. The timing, Tavakoli said, was chosen to let the president portray himself as the "champion of the foreign policy scene" even at the cost of dishonoring Iran and compromising the country's interests. Tavakoli also found fault with the Foreign Ministry for not using the mediation services of such countries as Oman and Venezuela, which mediated the release of the Americans, to secure the release of the Iranians held by the United States.

The criticism surrounding the release of the two Americans intensified as a result of the statements they made after being released. Speaking at a press conference in Oman, Bauer and Fattal described the harsh conditions of imprisonment throughout their custody, and said they had heard the screams of other detainees held in the same prison. According to the daily Resalat, the statements made by the two Americans show that they did not deserve the generosity and compassion of the Iranian government. The indecency and derision shown by the two "American spies" towards the Iranian people and government are proof that the humanitarian considerations of Iranian politicians always receive barbaric reactions.

Iran and the cyber challenge: second Cyber Hezbollah conference held in Tehran

Last weekend the second conference of the Cyber Hezbollah organization was held in Tehran. Established in June 2011, the organization's objectives include coordinating between pro-regime activists operating in cyberspace, providing them with instruction on cyber warfare, and organizing various online activities.

The conference was held on the occasion of the Holy Defense Week, marking the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, and was titled "Clicks of Resistance". Fars News Agency reported that the aim of the conference was to show appreciation for jihad and resistance activists operating in cyberspace as well as bloggers whose blogs are dedicated to jihad and sacrifice.

The main lecture of the conference was given by Dr. Hassan Abbasi, head of the Center for Doctrinal Analysis for Security without Borders and one of the major theoreticians of the radical faction in the conservative camp and the Revolutionary Guards. Abbasi warned about the close monitoring of Iranians' web traffic by Western intelligence services, particularly the American National Security Agency (NSA). The Iranian online presence, according to Abbasi, is like

an operation in enemy territory. He called for the use of existing online tools against the enemy, based on the principles of asymmetrical warfare.

Abbasi added that the United States intends to carry out a massive September 11-like cyber attack on Iran, and that Cyber Hezbollah activists must act cautiously to foil the plot of the enemies and not give them any pretext to take action against Iran.

Meanwhile, Passive Resistance Organization chief Gholam-Reza Jalali announced this week that cyberspace is one of the key focus areas of his organization in dealing with enemy threats. He specified the actions taken this past year to improve cyber preparation, including the establishment of a Cyber Defense Headquarters under the Armed Forces General Staff and the launch of a cyber defense study program in Tehran's Imam Hossein University. In addition, 500 cyber defense drills are expected to take place this week to identify weak spots in the country's executive systems.

The first national cyber defense conference is scheduled to take place in Iran in late January 2012.

Barbie doll continues to anger conservatives as school year begins

As the school year begins in Iran, the popularity of Western characters, particularly the Barbie doll, with Iranian children is once again cause for concern among the country's conservative circles.

Last weekend the website Eqtesad-e Penhan ("Hidden Economy") strongly condemned the extensive use of Western culture characters on school bags and stationery used by school children. The website reported that most Iranian pupils now purchase schoolbags and stationery with such characters as Barbie, Spiderman, Shrek, Tom and Jerry, Cinderella, and so forth, even though they are usually expensive.

The website criticized the culture and education authorities for not taking the necessary steps to encourage local manufacturers to produce stationery carrying original Iranian prints. According to the website's editors, the Barbie doll is taking over the souls of Iranian children and promoting the objectives of the country's enemies.

Confusion in Iran over Palestinian UN bid

The Iranian media reactions to the Palestinian UN bid exemplified the confusion in Tehran over the Palestinian appeal for international recognition of independent statehood within the June 1967 borders.

Earlier this week the Asr-e Iran website discussed the complexity of the Iranian stance on the Palestinian UN bid and the contradictory positions of top Iranian officials on the issue. According to the website, this complexity was reflected in the statement made by President Ahmadinejad to journalists in New York, saying that Iran recognizes the establishment of an independent Palestinian state as a first step towards the complete liberation of Palestinian territory.

On one hand, Iran has always stressed the need to liberate all of Palestine, and it is not willing to accept most of historic Palestine remaining in Israel's possession. Support for the Palestinian appeal for recognition, Asr-e Iran said, could be interpreted as dropping the demand for the liberation of the entire Palestine and being willing to settle for a smaller Palestine within the 1967 borders. Such support may also reinforce the status of Abu Mazen vis-à-vis Hamas, Iran's partner. On the other hand, by opposing the Palestinian bid, Iran can be seen as siding with the United States and Israel, two countries that oppose the Palestinian demand (Asr-e Iran, September 24).

The reformist daily E'temad also argued that the Palestinian UN bid poses a problem for Iran, since supporting it means recognizing the existence of the State of Israel. Iranian officials must make a decision about Iran's stance on the issue and address the implications stemming from it with regard to UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. If Iran recognizes a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, it may be perceived as a change in its regional policy. On the other hand, opposing the Palestinian UN bid may weaken Iran's political position among the nations of the region.

The government of Iran hopes, according to E'temad, that the United States will veto the Palestinian appeal. Such a veto will derail what is for Iran a problematic plan and weaken the position of the United States in the Middle East. The daily argued that recognition of a Palestinian state by the UN will signal a new age for the region, whose significance will outweigh even that of the recent developments in the Arab world. It is a development that will require Iran to reexamine its regional policy (E'temad, September 25).

Meanwhile, two members of the Majles National Security and Foreign Policy Committee voiced reservations about the Palestinian UN bid. Majles member Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh branded the Palestinian UN bid as an American-Israeli conspiracy designed to divert the attention of the region's nations from the anti-American and anti-Zionist uprisings in the Arab world. The popular Islamic uprisings in the region have entered their anti-Zionist phase, Falahatpisheh said, and will likely turn against the American presence in the region in the third phase. The Palestinian UN bid was designed to create differences of opinion among the region's nations and divert their attention from the anti-Zionist and anti-American campaign to the issue of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state (Fars, September 24).

In an editorial published by the Majles member in the conservative daily Resalat, Falahatpisheh argued that, in any case, the United States and Israel will not allow the establishment of an independent Palestinian state that will turn into a base for the mobilization of anti-Zionist movements in the Middle East. The actors working behind the scenes of the Palestinian UN bid want to sway the revolutionist and anti-Zionist movements in the region from their chosen path and strengthen Israel (Resalat, September 25).

Majles member Parviz Sarvari also voiced reservations about the Palestinian UN bid, saying that it will only strengthen the regional position of Israel and the United States. He argued that, with the Palestinian UN bid, Israel seeks to transform the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into one that is purely domestic (Palestinian) and reinforce the position of Mahmoud Abbas in light of the increasing support for Hamas among Palestinians (Fars, September 24).

The conservative daily Jomhuri-ye Eslami was also critically opposed to the potential recognition of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. An editorial titled "Only one government in Palestine" said that if the proposal brought up by Mahmoud Abbas had included a statement calling for just one state and government in Palestine, his plan could have been defended. As it currently stands, however, his proposal includes recognition of the existence of a Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, and the establishment of two states and two governments in Palestine. The plan, therefore, is illegitimate, and the Palestinian people do not accept it.

Adopting Abu Mazen's plan is tantamount to recognizing Israel's existence, which serves the purpose of the Zionists to gain recognition from the Palestinian people. In addition, it promises to the Palestinians sovereignty in just one small part of Palestinian land. Such a plan goes against history, which proves that "Canaanite Arabs" were the rulers of Palestine as early as in 2500 BC, and that it was only 700 years later that the Jews came to Palestine from Egypt, only to leave once again. The establishment of a state named Israel for the Jews is a

Zionist conspiracy created less than one hundred years ago with the support of the United States and the other colonial powers, primarily Britain. The Jews have no right for sovereignty in Palestine. According to the daily, the Palestinian UN bid is an American-Zionist conspiracy to gain control of the storm that is shaking the foundations of the "Zionist regime" in light of the developments in the Arab world. The best way to protect Israel is through Abu Mazen's initiative to establish a Palestinian state, which will make recognition of the Zionist regime possible by deceiving public opinion. Jomhuri-ye Eslami said that the threat made by the United States to veto the Palestinian appeal and PM Netanyahu's opposition to Abu Mazen's initiative are just a tactic for the furtherance of the conspiracy, whose long-term goal is the implementation of Abu Mazen's plan, which will help the Zionist regime out of its current predicament.

The correct policy towards the Palestinian issue is based on the principle that all of Palestine belongs to the Palestinians, and that Zionists do not belong there. The struggle against the Zionist regime must continue until the complete liberation of Palestine, where only one government should rule based on the wishes of the Palestinian people, the daily said (Jomhuri-ye Eslami, September 25).

A different approach to the Palestinian UN bid could be seen in an editorial published by the daily Shargh. The reformist daily argued for unconditional support for the Palestinians' rights on the international scene, saying that support for the independence of Palestine also serves Iran's national interests. International recognition of two independent states, Israel and Palestine, will have no significant change as far as Iran is concerned, seeing as Israel is already recognized by most countries in the world and Iran's position towards it will not change. Even if the establishment of an independent Palestinian state will not solve all the issues of the Israeli-Arab conflict, it will boost the Palestinians' ability to realize their demands and rights (Shargh, September 26).

Another editorial published by Shargh criticized President Obama's position on the Palestinian appeal for international recognition. The daily argued that there's no difference between Obama and Bush, and that both presidents are willing to ignore the wrongs committed by the Jews against the Palestinians to get more votes. Any person or government that for any reason or argument opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state can never be called "a friend of Palestine", Shargh said (Shargh, September 25).

Strong criticism for decision to release two Americans

This week government critics strongly criticized the decision to release Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal, the two Americans imprisoned in Iran on charges of espionage for the United States. They were released from a Tehran prison last Wednesday on \$1 million bail after more than two years in custody.

Majles Research Center chairman Ahmad Tavakoli, considered one of the president's major opponents in the conservative camp, criticized the fact that the release of the two Americans coincided with President Ahmadinejad's visit to New York for the UN General Assembly meeting. The timing, Tavakoli said, was chosen to let the president portray himself as the "champion of the foreign policy scene" even at the cost of dishonoring Iran and compromising the country's interests. Tavakoli expressed his regret that the judiciary, which made the decision to release the two Americans, blindly obeyed the president and the executive branch, saying that this undermined the independence and status of the judiciary. If "compassion" was indeed the reason for the release, as stated in an announcement released by the Foreign Ministry, Tavakoli wondered, why did the release take place just before President Ahmadinejad's trip to New York? Tavakoli criticized the Foreign Ministry for not using the mediation services of such countries as Oman and Venezuela, which mediated the release of the Americans, to secure the release of the Iranians held by the United States (Fars, September 24).



Alef, a website affiliated with Ahmad Tavakoli, said in an editorial published after the release of the two Americans that it was inappropriate for someone charged in court with espionage to be released on bail and leave Iran. Even if the decision to release them was based on national interests, the least that could be done was to let the Iranian public know about it and avoid releasing the Americans on bail. The website added that the conduct of the judiciary in the affair has a negative impact on the public trust of the judiciary at a time when

it is required to address sensitive issues, such as the recently-exposed large embezzlement in Saderat Bank (Alef, September 25).

The criticism surrounding the release of the two Americans intensified as a result of the statements they made after being released. Speaking at a press conference in Oman, Bauer and Fattal described the harsh conditions of imprisonment throughout their custody, and said they had heard the screams of other detainees held in the same prison. The Iranian media said that this is how grateful the two Americans are for the mercy and compassion Iran showed by releasing them.

Tabnak, a website affiliated with the pragmatic conservative bloc, said that while the government and the president released the two Americans based on "humanitarian" considerations, the pair created an anti-Iranian atmosphere at their press conference, where they made "their false claims". The two young people gave the journalists irrelevant answers probably prepared for them in advance, the website claimed. While it is only natural that "spies" should make such claims, the decision to release them was not natural. Tabnak criticized the international media for putting an emphasis on the Americans' claims against Iran while completely ignoring Iran's good will and the humanitarian measure that was its decision to release them (Tabnak, September 16).

The conservative daily Siyasat-e Rooz also addressed the statements made by the two Americans after their release, saying that it was to be expected that the United States would use them for propaganda after the release, and that the necessary preparations should have been made for that possibility. By releasing the Americans, Iran's authorities intended to show their good will and the compassion of Islam, but the result was just the opposite (Siyasat-e Rooz, September 27).

The daily Resalat said that the statements made by the two Americans after their release show that they did not deserve the generosity and compassion of the Iranian government. The president made a mistake when he decided to act towards their release on the eve of his trip to New York and before legal proceedings against them were complete, said an editorial published by the daily. The indecency and derision shown by the two "American spies" towards the Iranian people and government are proof that the humanitarian considerations of Iranian politicians always receive barbaric reactions (Resalat, September 27).

Iran and the cyber challenge: second Cyber Hezbollah conference held in Tehran

Last weekend the second Cyber Hezbollah conference was held in Tehran. Cyber Hezbollah is an organization whose establishment was first reported several weeks ago. The conference was held on the occasion of the Holy Defense Week, marking the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War (September 1980), and was titled "Clicks of Resistance". Fars News Agency reported that the aim of the conference was to show appreciation for jihad and resistance activists operating in cyberspace as well as bloggers whose blogs are dedicated to jihad and sacrifice, and who attract considerable interest.

During the conference, Cyber Hezbollah member and spokesman Soheil Karimi read a statement emphasizing the need to spread the culture of sacrifice also in cyberspace (www.hizbullahcyber.com, September 22).



From www.hizbullahcyber.com

The main lecture of the conference was given by Dr. Hassan Abbasi, head of the Center for Doctrinal Analysis for Security across Frontiers, affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards. Abbasi is considered one of the major theoreticians of the radical faction in the conservative camp and the Revolutionary Guards.

Abbasi warned about the close monitoring of Iranians' web traffic by Western intelligence services, particularly the American National Security Agency (NSA). Addressing students who use the internet, he said that even though they currently do not possess important information that can be of interest to foreign intelligence services, they must exercise caution on the web, because someday they will have important and sensitive information that can be exposed by those who follow their online activity. He noted that the NSA is the organization that actually controls the world wide web.

Abbasi said that the major concern is that a considerable part of the information on young Iranian men and women and their activity is currently online. While this doesn't mean that the internet is to be avoided, one should surf the web wisely and remember that it is

monitored by Iran's enemies, who wage a war against Muslim society and the religion of Islam. Iran's online presence, Abbasi said, is like an operation in enemy territory, and the principles of asymmetrical warfare should also be applied in cyberspace—that is, existing online tools should be used against the enemy.

Abbasi added that the United States intends to carry out a massive September 11-like cyber attack on Iran. He warned that the United States is looking for excuses to instigate wars across the globe to rescue its declining economy. Accordingly, Cyber Hezbollah activists must act cautiously to foil the plots hatched by the enemies and not give them any pretext to take action against Iran. They must also act in the cultural sphere against American websites and spread the message of the Muslim world in cyberspace (Fars, September 23).

Ya Lesarat, a weekly affiliated with the radical conservative organization Ansar Hezbollah, reported the launch of Cyber Hezbollah in early September. According to the report, the organization was established in June 2011 as a spontaneous collaboration of pro-regime activists who worked against regime opponents in cyberspace during the 2009 riots. The organization held its first conference in August 2011. A memorandum released by Cyber Hezbollah after its establishment specified its goals and objectives, which include coordinating between pro-regime activists operating in cyberspace, offering them courses and training, holding meetings aimed to acquaint the activists with cyber warfare tactics, and mobilizing the activists for various online activities (Ya Lesarat, September 1).

Meanwhile, Passive Resistance Organization chief Gholam-Reza Jalali discussed the efforts made by his organization to deal with cyber threats. Speaking at a press conference for Holy Defense Week, Jalali announced that cyberspace is one of the key focus areas of the Passive Resistance Organization in dealing with enemy threats.

Jalali specified the actions taken this past year to improve cyber preparation, including the establishment of a Cyber Defense Headquarters under the Armed Forces General Staff, which works together with the intelligence and telecommunications ministries and the National Security Supreme Council, and the launch of an experimental cyber defense study program in Tehran's Imam Hossein University. In addition, he said that 500 cyber defense drills are expected to take place this year to identify and correct weak spots in the country's executive systems (IRNA, September 26).

Iran's English-language Press TV network recently reported that the first national cyber defense conference is scheduled to take place in Iran on January 25-26, 2012. Sa'id Ghazi Maghrebi, the scientific secretary of the conference, reported that the conference will provide

a platform for cyber experts to present articles and give lectures on cyber defense (Press TV, September 15).

Barbie doll continues to anger conservatives as school year begins

As the school year begins in Iran, the popularity of Western characters, particularly the Barbie doll, with Iranian children is once again cause for concern among the country's conservative circles.

Last weekend the website Eqtesad-e Penhan ("Hidden Economy"), which operates on behalf of the Anti-Smuggling Headquarters, strongly condemned the extensive use of Western culture characters on school bags and stationery used by school children (www.epe.ir, September 21).

According to a report published on the website, most Iranian pupils now purchase school bags and stationery with such characters as Barbie, Spiderman, Shrek, Tom and Jerry, Cinderella, and so forth, even though they are usually expensive.

A stationery business owner said in an interview to the website that nearly 70 percent of all stationery sold on Iranian markets is made in China and features prints of Western characters. The immense popularity such prints enjoy with children has also led Iranian stationery manufacturers to use prints of Western characters on the school bags and stationery they produce. One trader said that even religious families purchase Barbie school bags for their children.

The Hidden Economy website criticized the culture and education authorities for not taking the necessary steps to encourage local manufacturers to produce stationery carrying original Iranian prints. The Barbie doll has forced itself into the lives of Iranian girls and is silently promoting the objectives of Iran's enemies, the editors of the website complained. It appears on school bags, chocolates, clothes, and watches, and is taking over the souls of Iranian children. In a year declared by the Supreme Leader as the "year of economic jihad", one could expect that those in charge of cultural activity in the country would collaborate with local manufacturers to improve local products and encourage the use of Iranian and Islamic characters and images to promote Iranian culture and Islamic beliefs among the future generation.



In previous years, conservative circles also complained that school children in Iran still prefer to buy school bags and stationery adorned with characters taken from Western culture.

In an attempt to combat the increasing influence of Ken and Barbie, several years ago Iran developed the dolls Dara and Sara as an original substitute. The design and distribution of the dolls, a modestly-dressed brother and sister pair, was aimed to promote traditional Islamic and Iranian values and better cope with the market penetration of American dolls, viewed as yet another means of introducing perverse and immoral American culture. It soon became clear, however, that these dolls could not capture the hearts of Iran's children, and that American dolls still dominate the country's toy market.

Pictures of the week: school year begins in Iran



