

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

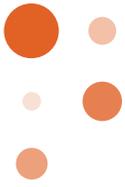
- What is evil? Did the Nazi regime fit your definition? Does the Iranian regime? Why or why not?
- Mr. Prager states that many people deny the existence of evil, “Because once people acknowledge evil’s existence, they know that they have to confront it. And most people prefer not to confront evil.” Why do you think this is the case, especially when the evil can directly harm people – in other words why do people tend to ‘put their head in the sand’ rather than to acknowledge and confront evil? Do you think this reaction is part of human nature? Explain.
- We learn in the video that “Iran’s greatest aim is to exterminate the Jewish state;” that “The Iranian regime repeatedly calls for the extermination of Israel. No other country in the world is committed to annihilating another country” and that “...Iran has been at war with America for decades.” Why is the Iranian regime so unabashedly against Israel and the West? What could possibly make them hate other nations so much? Do you think it is in Iran’s best interest to hate other nations, to talk about their hate for other nations so much, and to actually act on their hate so much? Why or why not?
- In Logic, a fallacy is a piece of flawed reasoning meant to deceive. There is a fallacy called the ‘Black and White Fallacy’ whereby the committer of the fallacy presents an argument that presumably only has two outcomes, but in reality there are more. An example is the statement, “You’re either with us or against us.” This is the black and white fallacy because I could be supporting BOTH groups or NEITHER group (or either group). Supporters of the Iran Nuclear Deal invalidate their argument by committing this fallacy when they argue that the only choice the American government has is to sign the deal or go to war with Iran. However, Mr. Prager points out that, “...the alternative to this agreement was continuing and tightening the sanctions that were weakening the Iranian regime and greatly diminishing its ability to fund terror groups around the world.” And to further weaken the argument, Mr. Prager points out that, “...because the agreement so strengthens Iran, it makes war far more likely.” In addition to the fact that Iran has already “...been at war with America for decades.” But the other argument that supporters of the Iran deal make is that “...this agreement has the capacity to bring Iran into the ‘community of nations.’” What exactly is the ‘community of nations?’ Why do you think supporters would want to include a “... regime [that] has executed more people than any country except China and killed more than 6,000 Iranians just for being homosexual” into a peaceful community? Do you think that supporters of the Iran deal are truly so naïve that they think including Iran would stop the regime from being dedicated to and committing evil acts? Why or why not? Do you think supporters are ignorant regarding this issue? Why or why not?
- Considering that the world knows that “Iran is already the world’s greatest funder of terror organizations” and that “The Iranian regime is composed of religious fanatics who are morally indistinguishable from ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and all the other mass murdering Islamist movements,” why would Congress even consider approving such a deal with Iran? Why would they even be communicating with Iran at all? What do you think will happen if Iran’s millions in frozen assets are given back to them and they are allowed to develop nuclear weapons?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Iran Brutality

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article, “Don’t Mistake Iran’s Brutality For Strength,” then answer the questions that follow.

- Would you consider the actions of the Iranian regime to be evil? Why or why not?
- What do the authors conclude is the main challenge to the Iranian people’s struggle for freedom and a better future in terms of reconciling peace with vengeance for victims of the regime? Where do they believe that a ‘historical transformation’ needs to begin?
- The authors contend that, “...the reason why such regimes murder and torture and imprison and silence dissent and control free speech, is because they lack legitimacy, because they are afraid of their own people, because they consider power not as a responsibility that makes them answerable to the nation, but as a license for abuse and corruption.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Considering that the people of Iran do not consider their own government as legitimate, should the U.S. Government not only consider it legitimate, but also validate and support it through negotiating deals? Why or why not?



QUIZ

THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

1. What led to World War II?

- a. A disagreement between Vietnam and Russia.
- b. A disagreement between Germany and England.
- c. Acknowledging the existence of the evil of Nazism.
- d. Denying the existence of the evil of Nazism.

2. Because the agreement so strengthens Iran, it makes war far more likely.

- a. True
- b. False

3. What happened in 1938?

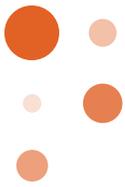
- a. Winston Churchill went to Munich to negotiate with Hitler.
- b. Germany annexed large portions of China.
- c. Democratic Western nations assured the world that they would do everything they could to prevent Hitler's expansion.
- d. Democratic Western nations assured a police state, the Nazi regime, that they would do nothing to prevent its expansion.

4. The Neville Chamberlains of 2015 defend the agreement with Iran on the grounds this agreement has the capacity to _____.

- a. bring Iran into the "community of nations."
- b. bring Iran into the European Union.
- c. create war.
- d. make Iran a democratic state.

5. Which of the following characteristics of the Nazi regime also apply to the Islamic Republic of Iran?

- a. It was a police state.
- b. Its greatest aim was to exterminate the Jews.
- c. It hated the West and its freedoms.
- d. All of the above.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/payam-akhavan/iran-human-rights_b_1813343.html

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Don't Mistake Iran's Brutality For Strength

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It cannot be denied that hatred and violence are fundamental characteristics of political power in contemporary Iran. The [highest per-capita rate of executions](#) in the world, [public hangings](#), systematic [torture and rape](#) in prisons, brutal repression of peaceful protests in the streets, show trials and hate propaganda, criminalization of political and religious dissent, the smearing of all opposition as a "foreign conspiracy," these notorious human rights abuses are all too familiar.

A central challenge in the Iranian people's historical struggle to achieve freedom and build a better future is how to reconcile with past violence in order to achieve a non-violent democratic transformation and avoid the horrors that we witness daily in places such as Syria. On the one hand, those that have suffered death and injury of family members and others seeking justice cannot be asked to simply forget the past and leave these crimes without an answer.

On the other hand, vengeance will result in further injustice and discourage peaceful change because those in power will fear that they themselves will be exposed to violence. Thus, beyond either forgetfulness or vengeance, the Iranian people must build a vision of truth and justice that will break the silence, recognize and account for past crimes -- not to provoke another cycle of violence, but to help the process of national healing and creating the context for building a non-violent and humane future.

The testimony of victims at the [Iran People's Tribunal](#) held in London in June of this year provided a glimpse of the terrible damage that more than three decades of violence has inflicted on the collective psyche of Iranians. A former political prisoner described how she was savagely beaten while six-months pregnant, while another described a mother being tortured in front of her one-year-old infant. Yet another spoke about a 14-year-old boy crying for his mother as the noose was put around his neck, and another explained how she was forced to pay for the bullets used to execute her 15-year-old in order to retrieve his body.

Others testified that a boy was brutally gang-raped for days until he hanged himself in his prison cell. It is estimated that in the first decade of the revolution between 1979 and 1989, [at least 15,000-20,000 people were executed](#) and countless more subject to other forms of abuse in Iran's torture chambers. In the summer of 1987 alone, up to 4,000-5,000 political prisoners were executed within a few days based on Khomeini's fatwa to punish political prisoners with "revolutionary rage and rancour". Beyond doubt, this is the bloodiest period in Iran's contemporary history, and the consequences of this far-reaching political violence still characterize the nature of power in the Islamic Republic today. In this regard, there is a direct connection between impunity for past crimes and the 2009 post-election atrocities in Kahrizak and other places.

In speaking of tens of thousands of victims, we must consider that behind each person there is a name, a family, a universe of human relations and emotions. For every person that was hanged or tortured or raped or unjustly imprisoned, there is a mother and father, a brother or sister, a husband or wife, a son or daughter, a school-friend or childhood playmate, a colleague from work, and so on. For each victim, there is an irredeemable loss, an unbearable anguish, a life-long trauma, affecting wider and wider circles of Iranian society. This unremedied violence continues to have a profound effect on our self-definition as a nation, on how we conceive citizenship and belonging, and the future that we are capable of imagining and building.

The lesson of history is that those who forget the past are bound to repeat the same mistakes again. The change that we need in Iran is not a narrow "regime change" which all too often substitutes one set of tyrants with another set of tyrants. The most profound revolution is that which comes from below, that which transforms the hearts and minds of people. Even if the struggle for freedom and justice eventually pours out into the streets, even if it should result in free and fair elections and respect for human rights and the rule of law, it begins in the conversations around dinner tables, and university campuses, and mosques, and volunteer organizations, and women's and student's groups, and labour unions, and all the other elements that bond people in their everyday lives.

A lasting change that humanizes society and creates national solidarity must be broader than an exclusive focus on power relations. If we cannot reckon with the past, if we cannot substitute justice for vengeance, if we cannot speak truth to power, if we cannot transform the fundamental values that motivate our conduct, the future that we build will be limited and precarious. To move from violence to non-violence, from inhumanity to humanity, we must re-define the basic social relations that are ultimately reflected in the

political sphere. Our historical transformation as a great civilization and nation begins in the everyday byways of family, work and social life.

Violence is often mistaken as a sign of strength. The exact contrary is true: Violence is the ultimate sign of weakness. The man who tortures a pregnant woman or ties the noose around the neck of a 14-year-old boy or who rapes in prison, and the regime that supports such a system of wickedness and terror, is not only morally depraved, it is also profoundly weak. It is no different than the man who beats his wife and children; he is no man at all; he is a coward who cannot accept his own cowardice, and thus preys on those weaker than him.

The reason why authoritarian regimes, from Argentina's repression of leftists under the military junta, to South Africa's dehumanization of black Africans under apartheid, to Milosevic's ethnic cleansing of Muslims in former Yugoslavia, to the Islamic Republic of Iran's pseudo-religious repression of its citizens today, the reason why such regimes murder and torture and imprison and silence dissent and control free speech, is because they lack legitimacy, because they are afraid of their own people, because they consider power not as a responsibility that makes them answerable to the nation, but as a license for abuse and corruption.

Why else, for example, would the regime be so afraid of the truth, that 25 years after the 1987 mass-executions that it still denies, it would use a bulldozer to remove the evidence of victims' skeletons from Khavaran? How ironic that the seemingly powerful are afraid of even the earthly remains of their victims. The power of truth and justice is far greater than the power of deceit and violence, and history demonstrates that time and again, a people united in their belief in justice and freedom will ultimately prevail.

It must be remembered that justice is not vengeance; it restores the humanity of both the victim and the perpetrator, for to be violent and cruel is a denial of the humanity of both actors. A future Iran must make those in power answerable for their crimes in order to avoid future abuses. There must be a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as in South Africa, because otherwise the unanswered grievances will explode into vengeance and violence. There must be trials of at least some of those most responsible, as in the prosecution of Milosevic and others for the mass-executions of Muslims in Srebrenica.

Ideally, such trials should be before the independent and impartial courts of a future democratic Iran and not the International Criminal Court at The Hague, so we can claim ownership over our own past and build our capacity for justice. Beyond that, a future democratically elected president, perhaps a woman and former political prisoner and torture victim (like President [Dilma Russeff of Brazil](#), who suffered under the military regime in the 1980s before assuming the highest office in her country), perhaps such a future Head of State will apologize to the Iranian people for the crimes of the past and usher in an era of reconciliation. Perhaps she will go to Khavaran and lay flowers on the graves of the nameless victims and help the nation heal. Perhaps she will finally shut [Evin prison](#) and make it into a museum like Auschwitz in Poland or Tuol Sleng in Cambodia where the Khmer Rouge tortured thousands.

The way in which we reckon with past violence will determine what kind of future we build for our long-suffering nation. The process of healing and national reconciliation begins with exposing the historical truth about past injustices as the basis for a dialogue among all Iranians as to what it means to be a citizen of this great nation; what it means to be a human being worthy of respect and dignity. Only then will Iran rise to the glory and greatness that it rightfully deserves as a leader among nations.

So long as we inflict mass-violence against our own citizens, so long as we allow political ideologies and beliefs to justify violations of human rights, we can never claim our place in history. Justice embraces both victims and perpetrators: those of us fighting for a better tomorrow must look beyond vengeance and blind rage to aliberating righteousness that will invite even the Basiji forces that beat our brothers and sisters to the table of contrition and brotherhood so that their humanity too can be restored.

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Payam Akhavan is a former UN prosecutor, founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, and professor of international law at McGill University.