

Please stand with our people

It's time for the men and women of Bangladesh's civil society, a community that has fought against tyranny and oppression for a century, to make their example known to our brothers and sisters in Iran. I sat inside the Shongshod, and dreamed of a free Iran.



HANIF YAZDI

OVER the past six months, I have stood by and watched as the Iranian government brutalised our people. It fired on my fellow students in the streets, and imprisoned and tortured by colleagues in the press and human rights community. Last week, the authorities hanged activists Mohammad Reza Ali Zamani, 37, and Arash Rahmanipour, 20, for being "enemies of God". They were tried in secret and did not have access to lawyers.

My own seventy eight year old grandfather, Dr. Ebrahim Yazdi, was detained for a second time from his Tehran home on December 28, for non-violently writing and speaking against the actions of this regime. He, along with hundreds of others, is being held in the Evin detention centre, which is nothing more than an Iranian version of America's Guantanamo prison.

I was visiting Bangladesh last summer, when the drama of our election first began to unfold. I felt completely helpless and removed, frustrated and angry that I was so

far from home at such a critical time in my nation's history. How could I possibly contribute in a country like Bangladesh? Back then I knew nothing of Bangladesh's history, her struggle for freedom, and her stand against tyranny for the last thirty years.

And so I walked past the Shohid Minar, and saw it full of young men, sitting with signs and banners. I asked them who they were. "We are factory workers, demanding our rights." I was shocked, and instantly wondered how a similar demonstration in Iran would be met with tear gas and batons.

The next night I visited the Jatiyo Shongshod with a friend, and witnessed a budget debate. I was struck by the number of women I saw, some with hijab, some without, and in positions of power from foreign minister to the head of state herself. I wondered if the day would ever come when one of my Iranian sisters would preside over our government, or at least represent our people overseas. I thought about the day when Iranian women could fight for their rights without fearing arrest and abuse. I thought about the sister of Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, now in jail, so that the government can pressure Ms. Ebadi into stopping her activities.

Later that week, I walked through Dhaka Bishbidolloy, and saw their plaster casts, not of some great leader or strongman to be worshipped, but of the students and activists who had fought and died for a more free and just Bangladesh. And I saw in those plaster cast faces, the face of Neda, murdered in the streets, of Sohrab arrested and disappeared. I saw on the chest of a Mukhti Bahini statue the words, "Gonotontro Mukti Pak" and thought, "how long must the voice of our generation be caged up back in Iran?"

A few days later students, activists and Bangladeshis of conscience, gathered for an impromptu demonstration in front of the Jatiyo Jadughar, to protest the harsh measures of the Iranian regime in the face of peaceful

demonstrators. They did this without a permit, without informing the authorities, and without incident. I thought, standing with my Bangladeshi brothers and sisters that day, how different our fate would be if we were conducting our peaceful demonstration in front of the national museum in Tehran. And an image came into my mind, of Basij militiamen racing towards us through a cloud of tear gas, armed with batons and box cutters, unaffected by screams of injured students running for their lives.

As I write this, my friends and family are preparing themselves for another big day of demonstrations. The authorities have promised a violent crackdown.

It's time for the men and women of Bangladesh's civil society, a community that has fought against tyranny and oppression for a century, to make their example known to our brothers and sisters in Iran. I sat inside the Shongshod, and dreamed of a free Iran. I dreamed of an Iran where a woman could hold the highest office, of an Iran with no more idols, no more strongmen, no more faces on currency and walls and entombed in billion dollar shrines. Khomeini lived a simple life, but in death, there is very little to set him apart from R king. I was struck by the simple home of Bangabandhu, by the small size of the Shohid Minar's size and the greatness of its significance. Bangladesh: small, unassuming and so full of passionate potential.

I am writing to ask you to stand with our people, to contact the Iranian embassy in Dhaka, or the Iranian cultural centre and voice your concern. I am asking the heads of student groups committed to liberty and united against religious bigotry to stand against tyranny in Iran. I ask you to make history and show the men and women marching in Tehran that they are not alone. Your voice will go far longer than you think.

Hanif Yazdi is an Iranian student.



'\$1 billion bilateral trade is achievable'

The Daily Star: How would you like to see Bangladesh-Turkey relations develop?

Abdullah Gul: The Turkish and Bangladeshi people enjoy a brotherly bond based on mutual respect, trust and deep friendship. Bangladesh and Turkey have full confidence in each other and have always supported each other through hard times. There are no political problems between our two countries. High-level visits will further enhance our relations.

I was very happy to host President Rahman's visit to Turkey last November. I have the great honour to be the first Turkish president to visit Bangladesh in 13 years. There is strong political will on both sides to develop Turkish-Bangladeshi relations in all fields.

How can we increase the ties further to improve relations between our two countries?

I do believe that there is much room to expand our relations particularly in the economic and commercial fields. Despite the global economic crisis, our bilateral trade volume was around \$600 million in 2009. Increasing our trade volume to \$1 billion is an achievable target in the future.

To make this possible, we must encourage Turkish and Bangladeshi businessmen to come together more frequently.

I am also pleased to say that the Turkish Airlines will soon start scheduling direct flights to Dhaka. This development will further contribute to our relations.

How can we work together on international issues?

It is a source of satisfaction for us to see that Turkey and Bangladesh have similar positions on various important international issues. Global issues such as combating terrorism, energy security, climate change and addressing the financial crisis are among today's most important agenda items where Turkey and Bangladesh can and should cooperate more.

How is the so-called "war on terror" complicating the relations between the West and the Islamic world? What steps can we take to ease the situation?

Terrorism is a global scourge that affects every part of the world. Therefore, a collective response is required to fight terrorism at the international level. Nevertheless, terrorism cannot be defeated by military means alone. We need to develop social, political and economic policies as well, in order to eliminate the conditions that help breed terrorism.

The international community must also avoid associating any religion or culture with terrorism. Recently, Islamophobia in the West has acquired a disturbing dimension and the social climate facing Muslims has deteriorated. On the other hand, there have also been sincere efforts to contribute to understanding among different cultures and civilisations.

Turkey is trying to do its best to contribute to the international efforts against terrorism, while highlighting the common values that bind humanity together. Turkey's efforts in launching the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative have been a good statement of our approach in this regard.

What is the current status of Turkey's proposed EU membership and what would such membership mean to Turkey?

Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU are in progress. Simultaneously, we are pursuing a comprehensive and demanding reform process. This process constructs a sound framework for the political and economic reforms which our people want to see. The reforms we are instituting are raising the living standards of our people such as in health, environment, consumer rights, food safety, transportation, energy and education.

Turkey's membership to the EU will also help disprove the "clash of civilisations" thesis and will represent a major expansion of the zone of European peace, prosperity and stability. This accession will not only benefit Turkey and Europe, but will also have positive repercussions around the world.

What role does Turkey see for itself in the international community?

Turkish foreign policy has been consistent since the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, which is based on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's enduring maxim, "Peace at Home, Peace in the World." Another constant in our foreign policy is our determined stance to uphold democracy and such universal values as the rule of law and human rights.

The scope of our foreign policy outlook has expanded considerably. Turkey connects east to west and south to north whether geo-strategically, economically, socially and culturally. This connecting role is also valid in terms of energy or trade routes.

At the same time Turkey is a major force for peace and stability in its very broad neighbourhood. In this regard, our principal goal is establishing a sphere of peace, security and stability around our borders and beyond.

The basic pillars on which we build our policies, in line with this goal, are the notions of freedom and security for all -- high level political dialogue, economic integration and intercultural harmony and respect.

Therefore, we are vigorously contributing both to the resolution of yet unresolved regional conflicts by continuously striving to inspire confidence and moderation through our well-established role of a facilitator, as well as addressing such global issues as terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, poverty, climate change, food and energy supply security, radicalism and xenophobia.

This is the role that Turkey aspires to fulfill.

Do your research

MOHAMMAD MIZANUR RAHMAN

THE time has come to create a second wave of building institutions and of excellence in the field of education, research-based knowledge, dissemination of knowledge and capability building so that we are better prepared for the 21st century. In other words, all activities depend on education, knowledge and the application of knowledge in the specialised areas. Climate Change is a collective issue, but other issues, on which education has succeeded, offer a tighter connection between action and outcomes. Poor environmental literacy and inadequate knowledge of climate change are manifestations of a more profound problem, added with the low quality of science education in Bangladesh.

The weakness in our mass peoples' environmental literacy is especially apparent through their lack of knowledge about climate change, an issue for which information on basic scientific principles are essential.

The effort would mix these local elements with a coordinated national education strategy. All participating localities would be integrated into a nationally cohesive campaign using a variety of technology platforms, including a richly interactive webpage, group email lists, etc.

Recommendations for implementation

Valuable window: Each teacher has to be the priority to the improvements of technology that fights climate change. Teachers' preparation for this new accountability on science education provides a valuable window of opportunity to promote the incorporation of climate change contents.

Design curriculum: Each educational institution, from primary to tertiary, should have a climate change knowledge-based curriculum designed for them. "Climate Change" researchers should be recruited to work with a selected group of leaders and instructional designers to design this curriculum to fulfil the proposed new climate change standards.

Train the teachers: Teachers should be trained to teach the proposed new standards-based climate change curricula, through on-going professional developments and other means. It is also proposed that the awareness of climate change be included in the teacher certification processes.

Recruit educational leaders and researchers: Major educational leaders, researchers and organisations should be cultivated and recruited in the educational system. Organisations like the Science Teachers Association, Environmental Organisation or related Research Organisation, which promotes national standards, are currently reviewing the quality of the standards in science and helping states prepare themselves in these areas.

Engage professional associations: Leading professional associations must also be engaged. Such associations would include Association of Teachers, Students, labours or religious leaders, Non-profit organisations, NGOs, all members of the local government body, head of primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, UNOs for upazillas and DCs for districts, all political parties, all print and electronic media in the local level, all research and voluntary organisations and all members of civil society.

Go beyond science to history, social studies etc: While the appropriate focus of this recommendation is on incorporating climate change into science standards, the issue is inherently multi-disciplinary and should be actively considered being incorporated into history, social studies, economics and other sub-

jects. This broader approach is consistent with the overall emphasis on moving climate change out of its customary silos of science, environmentalism, and inside towards the debates of policies.

Convene educational leaders: To launch this effort, convene a major meeting of formal and informal educators, as well as other key leaders, to identify appropriate formats, channels and tools.

Not just for kids: This campaign should have children as a key target audience, but would also reach out to adults, family units, especially community leaders and influential.

Mechanisms for national integrations: The effort would mix these local elements with a coordinated national education strategy. All participating localities would be integrated into a nationally cohesive campaign using a variety of technology platforms, including a richly interactive webpage, group email lists, etc.

Strengthen science education: While the priority here is on making climate change more explicit and prominent as a subject area, resources should also be invested for the quality of science education, especially the critical and thinking and analysis skills based education for these programs. These foundation skills are important in paving the way for a sound, contextual understanding of specific issues like climate change. Overall, we have to establish a more science and new technologies based educational institutions and also encourage science and technology based activities.

National climate change week: The national climate week kickoff could be held in convenient time, perhaps during the cyclone seasons. The week would serve as a focal period of activity and would reduce the burden of top-down through folksingers of the grassroots campaign, since all organisations could be urged to be independent plan events during this week.

Ubiquity: The campaign would create and distribute innovative informational or awareness products. Wearable, symbolic products should be considered, along with distilled information devices like pocket cards with climate change facts or light switch stickers about energy use and climate change, etc.

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Climate change education starts now.

Hands-on engagement

We should put more emphasise on engaging hands-on projects that employ verified methods for effective education, identify local competitions to devise the best and most locally appropriate ideas for activities. Some possible projects would be:

- Measure local watermarks and other indicators of coastline subsidence and sea level rise.
- Measure climate sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity changes, such as Sundarban and Cox's Bazaar areas.
- Reflect the co-benefits of controlling for green house gases and mercury emission from power plants, cements plants and other industrial sources.
- Initiate carbon reduction challenges for all local community level.
- Map local points of climate change vulnerability and required adaptation includes NAPA Strategy.
- Track local indicators of seasonal timing.
- Create voluntary organisations merit badges that reflect applied knowledge and monitoring of climate change.

More research on climate change

Research should give more priority to climate change related concepts to be more responsive to society's information and decision-making needs.

Focus more researches on climate change issues for Bangladesh in the following areas:

- Climate change impacts, especially at the local level.
- Non-linear consequences and feed-backs that could inform society's level of urgency on climate change such as greenhouse gases, especially carbon emission releases from permafrost melting.
- Adaptation and preparedness, extending from the sciences into applied technical and engineering works.
- Solutions especially mitigation or risk reduction and adaptation activities.
- Integrated visions of alternative futures that are scientifically coherent and could inform public understanding of the implications of alternative societal actions.
- Establishing scientifically calibrated temperature targets and endpoints in light of impacts research and backing up from these targets to actionable prescriptions.
- Pump up research and development into renewable energy sources like solar and wind, and support organisations bringing new technologies to market.

The government should launch these educational activities as soon as possible and design anti-global warming curriculum and invest more funds for research and development. Finding multifarious solutions to climate change impacts can bring benefits to our country.