

Friday at the Iranian London Embassy

GLEN SEGELL | MARCH 15, 2018, 10:08 PM |

Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies, University of Haifa

On the horizon could be a new Arab Spring and indeed a new Revolution in Iran. Watching the Friday lunchtime mosque is a barometer for former in Sunni states while watching the Iranian Embassy in London could well be the same for Shia Iran

Since 1979, with the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, its leaders believe that its laws are universal and any crime should be punished according to it. Furthermore Iranian leaders are very sensitive when anyone doesn't like them. After all they are a minority in the world and even more so in the Islamic world and all minorities have rights.

Iranian leaders are also very quick to call for other countries to arrest, bring to trial and punish perpetrators of any protests or protestors against Iran especially if they might enter its Embassy enclosures. Under international public law, an Embassy or Consulate is considered the sovereign territory of that country and not the host country. However the law of the host country prevails in such events and the perpetrators cannot be brought back to Iran for trial.

Yet the same is never the case for any protests or protestors that might enter foreign Embassies in Teheran. In fact the Teheran regime is a strong sometimes silent and sometimes not so silent supporter of protests or violence against foreign government property and personal in Iran. This is usually the burning of foreign flags, especially American and Israeli. Yet more violent action is also the case. An example was the holding of hostage for 444 days of 52 American diplomats in 1979-1981. Former Iranian President Ahmadinejad was allegedly

involved in that when he was a student!

So on Friday 9 March it was no surprise that Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi strongly condemned an “attack” on the Islamic Republic’s embassy in London. He urged swift action to counter the attackers, it would seem based upon the legal system seen and enforced in Teheran: arrest with force, imprisonment without legal representation or trial, and subsequent disappearance.

To make sure that the message was clear and in following the international recognized diplomatic code of practice Britain’s ambassador to Tehran was summoned to the Iranian Foreign Minister. There Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araqchi voiced Tehran’s strong protest. No doubt he suspected and thought that the events in London had been planned and implemented in the same way that Teheran would have done so against a foreign embassy in Teheran. That is to say by the government of the Ayatollah.

According to the grapevine he refused to believe the British ambassador that Her Majesties Government had no involvement and only sparse knowledge of the events still in progress. But he did assure the government of the Ayatollah that the matter would be investigated by the local police in London and a full report compiled. Thereafter Araqchi called on British police “to fully protect the Iranian diplomats in London”.

Not wishing for the incident to escalate the British ambassador quickly consulted sources in London, offered the British government’s apology for the incident, and informed that anti-riot police were present in the embassy compound and had brought the situation under control. He emphasized that all necessary measures had been adopted to protect the Iranian diplomats and prevent further illegal entry into the embassy building. This irked Araqchi as in his view the British police had violated Iranian sovereignty by entering the embassy compound.

So what was all the fuss about? Well four protestors scaled the wall of Iran’s embassy building in London and waved their own flags from a balcony. The blue and white flag seen is the same as a group called Khoddam al-Mahdi, who support Ayatollah Shirazi as their supreme leader. They were protesting the detention of the son of Grand Ayatollah Sadegh Hossein Shirazi a religious figure and fierce critic of Iran’s regime, who was recently imprisoned for insulting Ayatollah Khamenei. They made no attempt to run away or resist arrest. They came

down voluntarily from the outside balcony. There was no violence and no damage was caused. Possibly they will be charged with the “1836 Vagrants Law (In and on top of enclosed premises)” as they didn’t “break or entry” into the Embassy, nor did they cause any damage. So a suspended sentence of one week may be all a Judge can award.

The spectacle is now over for the British Ambassador in Teheran and for the police in London. The protestors have made their point and received their media coverage. However the matter is not over for the Iranian Ambassador to London Hamid Baeidinejad. In a post on his official Twitter account on Friday, he confirmed the “assault”, he accused the British police of not carrying out any measure to protect the compound during the attack from an extreme cult and added that the assailants were carrying knives and sticks branded above their heads while they chanted slogans against Iranian officials.

Once the trial is held, all the evidence will be presented, I may be wrong yet I cannot seem to see any evidence of the Iranian Ambassadors allegations nor can I as a liberal democrat accept the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister’s call for such inhumane measures disproportional to the crime. Both of whom are also clearly promulgating “FakeNews” and double standards. That was last Friday in London, what will happen next? Will this be the start of the end of the Rule of the Ayatollah?