

Ardeshir Zahedi:

Political crisis in Arab Nations... and lack of a Sound Natural Policy & Justice

The Political crisis in The Middle East and North Africa has had a widespread political repercussion on the media bringing about a host of questions and comments. The crisis have partly subsided in Tunisia and Egypt, the two dictators who rules their nations for years had to yield to the will of the people and relinquish power. However, in Libya and Bahrain the crises still persist (at least until the time when this publication went into print).

At the climax of the turning point in Tunisia and Egypt, we asked Mr. Zahedi's about his views on April 8 during a telephone conversation from Montreux, Switzerland the events. Mr Zahedi was the last Ambassador of Iran to the US and the Minister of foreign Affairs during the former regime. In one of the latest issue of *Rah-E-Zendegi* we have reported his valuable comments about the issues of the Middle East and North Africa. At the height of the incident in Libya, we asked Mr. Zahedi's view by telephone form Montreux, Switzerland.

Mr. Zahedi said: As I have already mentioned about Egypt, in the "tsunami of protest" which has enveloped this whole area, the momentum comes from the youth. Tunisian and Egyptian young men and women, with their restrained protests, demanded democracy and an end to dictatorship. They have been promised that their demands will be met and initial steps have been taken in that direction.

The roots of the storm of protest lie in the inequity and lack of an even-handed policy in those countries as well as the Western policy,

mostly the US, toward them.

When the war between the Shia and Sunni muslims is intensified, people will say, "This is hypocrisy. Why should Libya be under pressure and remain silent when Saudi Arabia sends arms and ammunitions to Bahrain? This is not justice, and because of it, a number of Arab nations have argued why Saudi Arabia does not dispatch troops to Israel, but has sent some to another Arab country.

As regards Libya, there are the relations with Iran and the present situation of the country... In the past, we never formally recognized Ghaddafi. During the course of the first Islamic conference in Morocco, I said to the reporters on the plane that we recognized Libya as "de facto" and I did not shake hands with Libyan envoys. We did not have an ambassador in Libya, but we did have one in Iraq. I personally never had any contacts with Saddam Hussein, not even in Islamic conferences... and, the contacts between the two countries were on the level of directorate general.

The United States did not have good relations with Ghaddafi, either, and in this connection, during His Majesty's visit to the White House in 1976 with former President Ford, Henry Kissinger and Under Secretary Joseph Sisco, the matter was clarified. When a Libyan citizen caused the crash of a Pan American airline in killing over 270 passengers mostly Americans, the hatred of American people and the people of the world toward Libya intensified.

Because of the pretexts and rumors that the man responsible



for the crash was suffering from cancer, Scotland decided last year that the terrorist be returned to Libya to join his family. That was when we all witnessed Ghaddafi meeting him at the airport and this created a wave of new anger among Americans and other people of the world. However, it was said in political circles and the mass media that the U.K. ignored the incident because of the BP oil agreement.

When Ghaddafi made a coup d'etat in Libya, Malek Idris, the king of Libya was in Greece. Then, after interventions Egypt gave him political asylum. Such circumstances prevailing, when Omar Montaser the Libyan Ambassador in London, who was my friend during my ambassadorship in London naturally faced problems. I sent a message to speak with him in Eskandar Mirza's house, but Ghaddafi's men detained and sent him to Libya to be imprisoned. It was said at that time the British authorities closed their eyes to this incident.

Montaser was finally released due to my attempts and efforts of other friendly countries with Mr. Aldeo Moro, Italian foreign minister, who had already been invited to Iran, as well as his colleagues Luigi Cotafavi who was the chief of operations of UN in Geneva and several African countries. of course, none of the Islamic countries paid any attention to the matter and did not take any measures to save his life.

Beside the United States and Britain who encouraged military attacks on Libya, there is some-

thing to be said about France. Sarkozy, the President of France had lost his popularity seemingly getting barely above 18% approval rating; but his attempts to defy Libya increased his popularity.

Isn't this double standard that there is such little reaction, if any, toward what is going on in Bahrain and Yemen while in Egypt and Tunisia, in addition to the U.S. intervention, there have been internet activities as well as Twitter, etc, and the question of heavy military attacks on Libya is also discussed.

This is double standard: people wonder why there is silence about Bahrain and Yemen and there is no silence about Egypt and Libya. When no flight zone on Libya was being discussed, Arab nations would accept it only if the UN Sanctioned it.

Out of 15 member countries of the security council, China and Russia abstained from voting and so did Germany and Brazil (during Obama's visit). Turkey also abstained from voting. Consequently, 5 countries abstained to vote and only 10 voted yes.

Mr. Zahedi pointed out the people's views in Europe and the United States and said:

"I wonder whether the people and the Arab world would accept the resolution and attack on Libya? isn't this going to create the danger of Libya's division into East and West sections. This has generated a lot of discussions. China and Russia the two security council members who possess the veto power voted abstention at a meeting to clear out the recent resolution on Libya and it was ratified that US and her allies could attack Libya.

It has been said that with regard to the world economic crisis and unstable economic circumstances in US and Europe, and heavy burden of military operations, it is not clear how much of an expenditure can be borne.

Cruise missiles cost \$300,000 each. So far, over 150 missiles have been launched bringing the total cost of only this kind of military operations, to \$150,000,000. The question is whether or not the burden of such expenditure will be on

the shoulder of American tax payers. The president of the United States is now being criticized for the expansion of the military conflict in Libya.

In the meantime, due to the escalation of war casualties, Amr Moussa, Secretary General of the Arab League has declared investigation into the matter. Also, Putin, the Prime Minister of Russia has protested that the UN resolution does not reveal the criticality of the situation.

Mr. Zahedi added: These days, it has been said that the West is bringing tremendous blows upon Ghaddafi to overthrow him, but now it is also being said that no change of regime is in mind. The U.S. secretary of state has also mentioned it. M.S. Clinton has reiterated that the change of regime in Libya is not in question.

The secretary general of African Union in an interview has said that more steps are necessary to prevent blood shed that nobody paid attention to and we were consulted, but also ignored altogether. However, nothing has been said about the recent incidents in Yemen where people demonstrated in protest against the 32 year old government of Mr. Saleh.

In Bahrain, where 72% of the 500,000 population are Shi'ite to Sunni Saudi Arabia has dispatched 1000 troops and tens of tanks and other armaments killing and injuring demonstrators.

The injustice has gone so far that according to the New York Times hospitals refrain from accepting Shi'ite patients. Even the ambulances, according to BBC, would not be allowed to carry Shi'ite patients to the hospitals. Where has Arabia got authorization to do such a thing?

The silence of the West is due to the fact that it has advantages such as the sale of 60 billion dollars of arms to the Sheikhdoms and 170 billion dollars to Saudi Arabia...

Are these deadly armaments apparently used for defence against the Iranian regime or aggressive forces or against peaceful demonstrations of the people?

According to American media, it's been the third time that the U.S. and the West in general, have launched an attack on the Muslim world. The Arab population in

North Africa and the Middle East is about 350 millions. There are also small countries around the Persian Gulf which they call Sheikhdoms with a population of one million to a million and 100 thousand.

People are worried that there will be another war such as the war in Iraq in which America alone had 45 thousand casualties. The incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan the conflicts in that region have not been forgotten yet.

Such behaviors have already occurred elsewhere. What is now being suggested in the European mass media is that the US in, supporting the people against their leaders in countries involved in crises, speaks about democracy, however, in all respects, their actions are not in harmony with their words. As regards the attack on Libya, out of 15 members of the security council, 10 countries voted for it.

But, last year, the security council with 14 votes in approval, obviated Israel from building new settlements in Palestinian areas. This of course, was vetoed by the American envoy to the U.N, Mrs. Rice.

In an election which was supposed to be free, Hamas was the winner, but Israel canceled the election and the United States called them terrorists. Egypt was under pressure to close her borders to Hamas. Of course, the new transient government of Egypt has opened them.

Therefore, I ask myself and the people of the world ask, what direction is the world going toward?

It has always been my firm belief that no war has a real winner. Problems of the countries need to be discussed through diplomacy.

Considering the undesirable conditions existing in the Middle East, North Africa and in Japan where millions are homeless having lost all their belongings because of the earthquake and tsunami and atomic radiations that have been estimated to cost \$400 Billion; it would be a lot wiser to spend the heavy military expenditures to improve the lives of the misfortunate Japanese people.

This is synopsis of the interview Conducted in Farsi on April 11-2011 for issue 1207