

I am a Refugee, but I am Not Silent: Some Musings on Israel's Attacks on Iran

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A very generous friend invited me to the ancient theater of Epidauros to watch a performance of Antigone. And in this heat and isolation of Athens, why should I have said no? Two hours of driving with an old friend, seeing the beautiful view of the sea and forest, cleared my mind from all thoughts of war and conflict. When we arrived, walking the path and sitting on the same stones where people sat 2500 years ago, away from the modern world, just to watch music and theater, was magical.

While the half-moon was slowly crossing the sky above me, I found myself sitting on the steps of the ancient amphitheater of Epidauros. The stage was breathtaking. In the middle of the play, down there, between the stones and the wind, Antigone, with a shaky but strong voice, declared her refusal to obey power. She said, "There is a law that existed before you, Creon. A human, divine, unwritten law. I follow that one."

I am a refugee. I am Iranian. I am an exile, someone who escaped prison, torture, and repression. But that night in Epidauros, I was more than just a spectator. I saw Antigone, but I heard her voice through the women who shouted in the streets of Sanandaj and Tehran: "Woman, Life, Freedom." She was no longer a character in a Greek tragedy. She was a Baluch girl, a Kurdish mother, a student from Evin prison, an exile in Athens, a journalist under pressure, or maybe even me.

In Sophocles' story, Antigone stands against a law that divides the dead. One deserves a grave. The other is left for the dogs. She does not do this for honor or rebellion. She does it for something she calls justice. Her justice is not legal or official. It comes from conscience.

Today, we are still in a world where dead bodies are treated differently depending on their political side. The Israeli attack on Iran reminded us of this brutal truth. In the eyes of power, even death has levels and propaganda use. Israel bombed houses in Tehran, Kermanshah, and Ilam.



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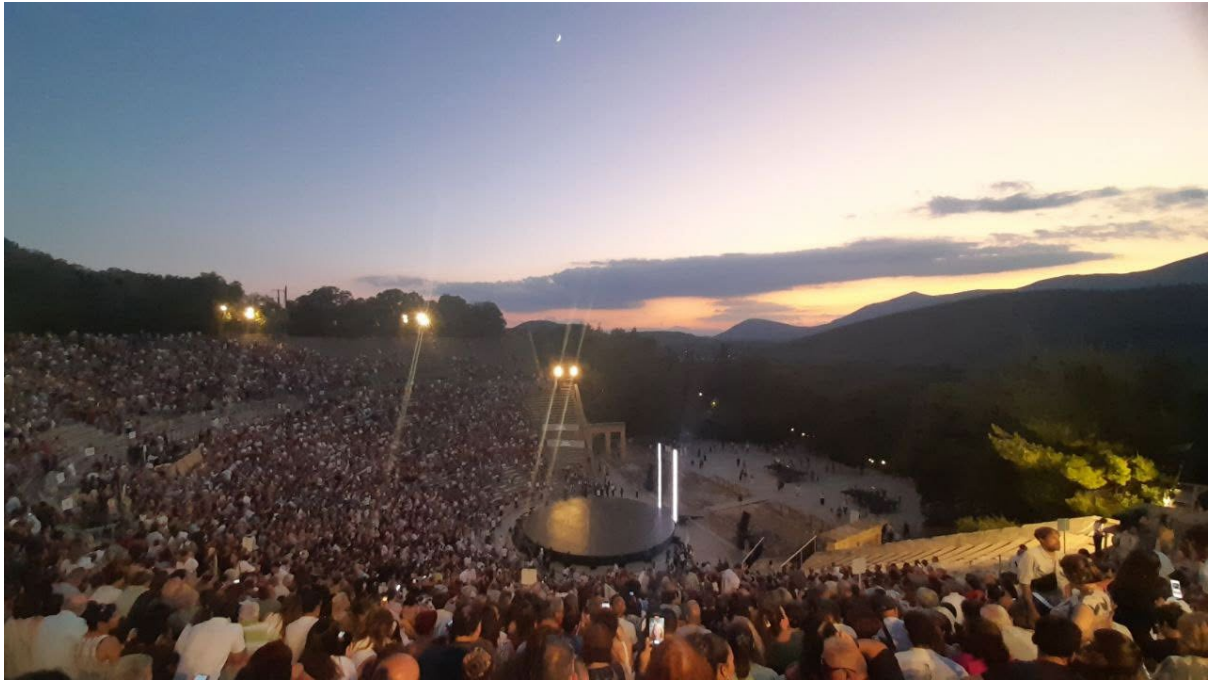
At the same time, the Islamic Republic, using the same excuse of “national security,” arrested and deported Afghan migrants, detained women and labor activists, silenced political prisoners, and crushed public mourning.

Now we have two Creons. One in Tel Aviv, with accurate and merciless missiles. The other in Tehran, with the sword of ideology. Both want to keep the people as hostages in the name of security. And once again, like always, Antigone is the weakest one, but also the only one who tells the truth.

When I left the amphitheater, the cool night wind touched my face. But my thoughts were burning in Tehran. In the ruins of people’s homes. In the cries of mothers. In the quiet eyes of girls who no longer know which is more dangerous: Israel or the regime that has held them hostage for years. Where am I in this situation? I am a refugee, but I am not silent. I do not support bombings. I do not support religious fascism. I do not see Zionism as salvation, and I do not call the Islamic Republic a resistance. Like Antigone, I stand over the dead body of truth, with empty hands and a heart full of rage and sorrow.

Many of us are an Antigone without a homeland. I live in a foreign land, where some people who call themselves leftists take pictures with the flag of Islamic fascism. And the right-wing dreams of the blood of migrants. But I still have my voice. I still write. In the heat and tiredness of Athens, I still believe in human conscience. I believe that no power, neither religious nor military, can stop a human being from mourning the truth.

If Sophocles were alive today, maybe he would write Antigone in the clothes of a prisoner in a women’s ward. Or as a migrant without papers, standing in the asylum line. But the meaning of the tragedy would still be the same. A struggle without surrender, without heroes, but also without lies. I saw that tragedy in Epidaurus, but its voice was coming from the soil of Iran.



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Zionism, from the beginning, was not based on the right of return, but on exclusion, occupation, and domination. Today, while the people of Iran are being crushed from both sides, from inside by the Islamic Republic, and from outside by states that send bombs in the name of “human rights”, we must not believe the lie that freedom can be delivered by foreign attacks. No nation has ever been liberated by bombs. No regime has truly fallen unless the people inside that country created the conditions for change.

We Iranians come from a much older history than the birth certificate of Israel. On our land, they killed Siyavash, and people mourned him. They killed Hussein in Karbala, and for centuries people kept his memory alive as a symbol of ethical resistance. In Bukhara, Khorasan, Tabriz, and Ahvaz, our people did not fight with tanks and missiles, but with poetry, mourning rituals, civil disobedience, and local uprisings against tyranny. These roots go deeper than the foundations of any state that is still younger than our grandparents.

Those who claim to bring freedom with missiles are lying. Those who watch the crimes in Gaza in silence but cry fake tears for the people of Iran are not friends of freedom. They are merchants of blood.

Freedom in Iran will not come from above. It will come from below, from the women who stood in the streets, from the workers who went on strike, from the youth who rejected power even in religious spaces. That is where the seed of liberation has been planted. And only that seed can save this ancient land from dictatorship and hypocrisy, not the shadow of a drone that confuses freedom with death.

This is a photo of Sanandaj, a city in Kurdistan. It's the city where I grew up, and tonight, I miss it deeply.



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Three well-known women political prisoners in Iran, Golrokh Iraee, Reyhaneh Ansari, and Verisheh Moradi have published a letter from Qarchak Prison, released through the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Workers' Syndicate. Their message sheds light on the dangerous conditions inside Iran's prisons following Israel's recent missile attacks, and the ongoing struggles of women prisoners.

On Monday, June 24, while over 3,000 detainees were imprisoned in different sections of Evin Prison, Israeli rockets struck the facility. Some of the rockets landed directly inside the prison compound and hit buildings. Several people were reportedly killed. Others, especially those held in solitary confinement, are still unaccounted for.

The next morning, Iraee, Ansari, and Moradi were transferred under strict security conditions to Qarchak Prison in Varamin. Around 3,000 male prisoners from Evin were moved to Greater Tehran Prison at the same time. The authors report that conditions in Qarchak are worse than in Evin. Despite this, they say their struggle continues alongside their fellow prisoners in Greater Tehran.

"We are not separate from the pain imposed on the people of Iran," the letter states. They describe their imprisonment and current suffering as part of a long history of repression, from the Constitutional Revolution over a century ago to today's authoritarian government.

The letter emphasizes that the latest attack and transfers have not broken their will: "This is not a road where one can reach the end without pain," they write. They declare they will continue their resistance until dictatorship and all forms of authoritarianism are overthrown.

The political prisoners describe Qarchak Prison as a site of intense suffering, mostly inhabited by over 1,000 women with various charges. These women, the letter notes, are almost invisible in media and human rights reports. Yet their daily lives are filled with hardship and humiliation.

Many women sleep on broken beds no larger than graves. They suffer from poor hygiene, dirty walls, and lack of basic supplies. Some trade their bodies for cigarettes or food. Others work for hours each day—pushing food carts, cleaning prison staff rooms, or working in the prison's sewing workshop—without pay. In return, they are sometimes given a few extra minutes of phone time or a small pack of cigarettes.

Though political prisoners are usually kept apart from the general prison population, sometimes they are forced to live among them as punishment. The letter describes how the suffering of ordinary women prisoners mirrors and, in some cases, surpasses that of political detainees.

Iraee, Ansari, and Moradi call on all who support them to also support the women they now live alongside: "We ask you to improve the conditions for 'us,' regardless of our charges or gender. Those crushed under the attack's rubble, and those erased from public life, matter more than we do." They also urge the public not to forget these women and to include them in future struggles for freedom and justice.

The letter ends with a clear commitment: "We will continue the fight. Alongside the tireless efforts of the people against dictatorship, we walk

this path with clarity and determination." They hope to be one more link in the long chain of the Iranian people's fight for equality and freedom—after more than a century of enduring dictatorship and exploitation.

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