

Statement prepared by
Committee Against Nihonmachi Eviction
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The recent events in Iran and the manner in which the U.S. government, media and segments of the American public have whipped up a racist campaign directed at Iranians in the United States follow a familiar and disturbing pattern that is re-emerging in this country. The recent anti-Iranian violence and government harassment is the latest example of the American experience in which a small group of people identified by color, religion, or nationality has been singled out as a scapegoat for larger domestic and international problems confronting the United States.

As Asian Americans, we are especially sensitive to the current anti-Iranian situation and the mob violence, threats of deportation or "protective custody," and government harassment directed at a small minority in the name of "patriotism." The similarity between the current situation and the anti-Japanese campaign of the early 1940's bears more than just a passing resemblance. Forty years ago, many Americans stood idly by while Japanese Americans were stripped of their constitutional rights, subjected to racist harassment, and forced into concentration camps "for their own protection." The recent events have shown that the lessons drawn from this act have still not deeply penetrated the American consciousness.

As concerned Americans, we cannot stand by as Iranians in the United States are harassed and threatened with mass deportations. We protest the massive and wholesale harassment directed against Iranians living and studying in this country and call on all fair-minded people to defend the constitutional and democratic rights of Iranians in the U.S.

In Iran - no one knew who was a Savak.
very frightening situation.

We have not heard the cries of the Iranian people - to give them support.

Must support their position. The democratization of their society.

Religious aspect. Shi'ite's - 93% - more liberal/progress than Sunnis.

for { Signs - that used to be "No dogs, No Negroes" -
now "No dogs, no Iranians."
Worst in Texas & California.
Example: Mexicans in Texas; Asians in California.
What Japanese-Americans went through - now
the next target - are the Iranians.

Must raise concerns & consciousness.

1st Q: Re: What good has Khomeini done?

A.

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Setting up democratic system of rule.

i. This time - ① Women not allowed in the political areas. ② Peasants - no houses; power. ③ Workers - received titles.

ii. Khomeini's time - ① Women became active to fight for their national decisions.
② Peasants - allows people to build houses.
③ Workers - better pay, benefits; insurance.
Khomeini's govt. Concerned about poor, not the rich.
Gave right to national minorities; also religious freedom.

Sasha should have asked the paper where did he get the impression that Christians have a hard time in Iran.

Q - Bahais + Christians

Christian churches do not face oppression or persecution. Churches go on openly.

Bahai's relationship to Shari'ah has been close. That's why they are not "acceptable" there.

An Iranian student who was taken to the Santa Rita jail in San Francisco for deportation hearings was beaten while in custody; 3 others said they were mistreated; were denied food and water for 2 days; awakened at 3 in the morning and punched in the face. Other Iranians said they were taken to jail for mere traffic tickets and terrorized behind-the-wall.

Someone from New York called the State Dept. on Dec. 4 and threatened to kidnap and execute 50 Iranian students if harm comes to American hostages.

At the Los Angeles Coliseum, some 6000 Americans came together shouting before the television cameras: "Nuke Iran" and "Bomb Iran," "Zap the Ayatollah." In Columbus, Ohio, the chants were: "Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Why not Iran!"

The fury is definitely building. Hysteria can be very dangerous. We Japanese Americans can never forget. At the outbreak of World War II, within 24 hours, 1,300 Japanese were picked up by the FBI. In a short while, an 8 O' clock curfew and a 5-mile travel ban were imposed on all Japanese. Japanese-Americans lost jobs; were told to leave college campuses; were accosted on the streets. Japanese businesses were closed; their money was frozen. Houses were stoned. Some farms were set on fire. A Chinese in Seattle was mistaken for Japanese and gruesomely killed. An elderly Japanese committed suicide in the Terminal Island Prison.

Then on February 19, only 3 months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which history has now surfaced that it was egged on by the U.S. government (just as is happening for Iran right now)--Pres. Roosevelt announced his Executive Order to evacuate all peoples of Japanese ancestry from the entire West Coast and intern them for the duration of the war in camps in the interior.

One of the reasons for the incarceration, as has been documented, was

for the purpose of using the incarcerated Japanese as hostages for American prisoner-exchange. And exchanges did take place twice during the war.

So—today, when we see the United States charging Iran in the United Nation's Security Council of taking hostages—we Japanese-Americans wonder how United States could have the gall to do so. United States did not not just grab 50 people. The number was 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry of which 70 % were American citizens; and not one of these people were given due process of law. Not one act of sabotage was ever committed. Sadly, no voices were raised for us.

But we Japanese-Americans want to share this experience and speak out
THAT THIS WILL NEVER HAPPEN TO ANOTHER PEOPLE AGAIN!