

Waking Up to Iran

✖ In recent weeks, the world seems to have finally awakened to the true nature of Iran's Islamic regime. First, Iran's leaders appear to have stolen a presidential election on behalf of their preferred candidate, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Then they brutally cracked down on those who protested the theft.

Rather than admit that the protests are an expression of Iranian dissent, these leaders have made the absurd claim that foreign agitators, primarily British, are responsible.

Finally, a young woman named Neda Agha-Soltan was shot and killed while observing the protests last week. As beautiful Neda died—her terrible final moments captured on video—the world's illusions about Iran seemed to die with her.

It is good that the world finally recognizes the true nature of Iran's regime. But it is simply inexplicable—and inexcusable—that it took so long for the world to wake up. While Neda's death is indeed tragic, she is hardly the Islamic Republic's first victim.

The hands of Iran mullah's drip with blood. The fact that much of this blood is Jewish and American should not make it any less meaningful, or any less shocking.

As we all know, Iran funds, trains and arms the two terrorist groups most committed to Israel's destruction, Hezbollah and Hamas. Iranian support enabled Hezbollah to attack Israel in July 2006 and force over 350,000 Israelis to flee their homes as Iranian-supplied missiles rained down on Israel's northern cities (and killed over 40 Israelis).

The Iranians have since rearmed Hezbollah with missiles that can reach almost all of Israel's major population centers. Iran has also been Hamas' main external source of support and has enabled and encouraged Hamas attacks on Israel. Iran is

now making every effort to supply Hamas with long range missiles that can reach Tel Aviv.

Of course, Iran has hardly limited its violence to citizens of the Jewish state.

Iranian-backed Hezbollah is widely believed to have been responsible for the 1983 bombing of our marine barracks in Beirut, which killed 299 American soldiers. On May 30, 2003, Judge Royce Lamberth of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, found Iran legally responsible for providing Hezbollah with financial and logistical support that helped them carry out this attack.

Likewise, Iran's Hezbollah proxies have been linked to the 1996 attacks on the Khobar Towers barracks in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 U.S. soldiers. More recently, our government has linked Iran to the Iraqi insurgents who have killed U.S. troops in Iraq.

In July 1994, the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was bombed, killing 85 people and injuring hundreds. Most of the victims were Argentinean Jews. On October 25, 2006, Argentine prosecutors formally accused the government of Iran of directing the bombing, and Hezbollah of carrying it out. It is for these reasons and many others that the U.S. State Department has repeatedly labeled Iran the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

Those who have suffered most under Iran's regime, of course, are the Iranian people themselves. During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980's, thousands of Iranian boys and teenagers lost their lives after they were forced to run into Iraqi minefields and machine gun fire in repeated "human waves" until a path was cleared for tanks to advance.

Thousands of Iranians have been arrested, beaten and even executed for their political views. Members of Iran's Jewish community have been falsely accused of spying for Israel,

Iran's Bahai community faces terrible persecution, and Iranian teenagers have been hung for being homosexuals.

Despite this long record of terror and bloodshed, much of the world and even our own administration continue to view Iran as a legitimate regime, one that can be reasoned with. For some reason, it took an Iranian clamp down on its own people to penetrate the world's complacency about Iran in a way that this prior record could not. Better late than never.

But this reality raises a concern. Will the world's recognition of the Islamic regime's true nature be as short lived as it has been belated? When the shock of Neda's death fades, will the world remember her and the thousands of other victims of this regime whose violent deaths were never caught on tape?

When Ahmadinejad claims that he wants nuclear power for peaceful purposes, will the world remember his lies about this election and about the protests that followed? We hope the world will remember. But we must do everything in our power to remind all who will listen of these facts lest they forget.