

Tehran prostitutes younger, better educated—married

IranTimes: New research finds that prostitutes in Tehran are no longer chiefly uneducated migrants from villages, but increasingly educated Tehran natives—including many married women trying to make a buck, with the knowl-

cerned about their secondary demands," he said, referring to the luxuries only money can buy. Typically, prostitutes in Tehran were known to be women who had emigrated from the provinces to the capital in search of a job or to pur-



edge of their husbands. Quoting academic research, Iran's Sarmayeh newspaper reported the face of prostitution has changed in Tehran. Today, higher percentages of married and local Tehran women are taking to prostitution whereas previously single migrants were responsible for the large numbers of women working the streets. In addition, while the prostitutes were commonly above 30 years old decades ago, the starting age is now 15. "According to recent research carried out in Tehran, the phenomenon of prostitution is being seen in married people more than single individuals," Kaze Rasoulzade Tabatabai, a specialist in women's studies, said. Tabatabai, who heads the psychology section of Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, said motivations for these women have also changed. "If prostitutes were only looking for covering their basic needs in the past, now they are con-

sue an education and entered the sex trade in order to make ends meet. But Tabatabai said that was changing. "The phenomena of prostitution was previously more common in migrants, but now this has been spreading more among the local Tehranis. We cannot relate it to the issue of migration anymore." These revelations, in addition to reports that show more educated women getting involved in the sex-industry, have some analysts linking prostitution with high unemployment rates and soaring food and housing prices. "Some 11 per cent of prostitutes in Tehran are involved in the business while their spouses are aware of it," said Hossain Ali Zaedipour, a member of the study group, adding, "These statistics show there should be more attention paid to the issue of the unemployment of men as much as of women."

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Ahmad Batebi...

"With this, you have signed your death warrant." Batebi said, "At first I was shocked and scared. But then I thought that even though they're going to kill me, I've caused a major blow to the regime." Batebi described 17 months in solitary confinement when his jailers whipped him with a metal cable, beat his testicles and kicked him in the teeth. They held his face down in a pool of excrement until he was forced to inhale it. They tied his arms behind his back and hung him from the ceiling. At other times, strapping him to a chair, they kept him awake night after night, cutting him and rubbing salt into the wounds—all in an attempt to force him to say on film that the famous tee-shirt was stained with paint or animal blood. Twice he was blindfolded and led to the gallows. Once the noose was left

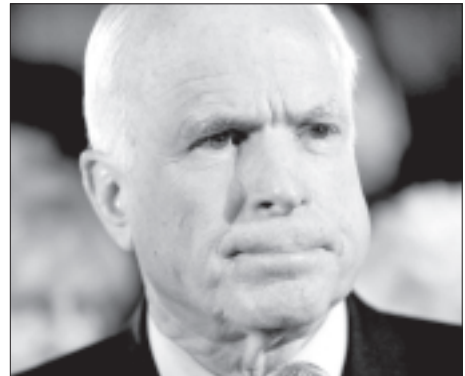


around his neck for 45 minutes, during which he said he passed out from fear. The second time, he stood with the noose as prisoners on each side of him were hanged. The photo that so infuriated the authorities may have saved him, as international activists took up his cause. His death sentence for "agitating people to create unrest" was commuted, first to 15 years and then to 10. In 2005, allowed a pass to take exams for a sociology degree, he decided to flee. He remained free for five months, working in the political underground and marrying a young dentist. But after she was jailed because of his activities, they ended their marriage, he said. Batebi was rearrested in 2006. Last year, Batebi suffered what was believed to be a stroke and several seizures that left the right side of his body numb. As a result, officials released him temporarily for medical treatment. In March, he was ordered to return to prison, but Batebi said he was drained. "I couldn't do more than I had," he said. "Everyone needs a life." On March 13, Batebi contacted Mazahery, the lawyer, on a Yahoo chat

site. He knew she had helped other Iranians seek refuge in the United States. At the same time, through a connection made in prison, Batebi sought help from the underground Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran. His Kurdish helpers—volunteers whose real names he never learned—said he had to leave immediately, taking advantage of the authorities' lax attention during the Now Ruz holidays. On Now Ruz, carrying only his laptop, a camera and a pocket-size video recorder, he began his escape. Over the next several days, Batebi was passed between different groups of Kurds who helped him cross the border into Iraq. Batebi finally arrived at the Erbil offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which began the process to move an Iranian with no passport and little identification to a new land. Shortly after his arrival in Erbil, the new cellphone provided by United Nations officials rang. Batebi said he was shocked to hear the familiar voice of his chief interrogator. "We know where you are," the interrogator said. "You must turn yourself in." The United Nations was arranging a placement in Sweden when Mazahery called to say the United States had granted Batebi's request for "humanitarian parole." Soon after he arrived in the United States, Batebi said he was surprised when an Iranian-American woman outside a Washington, D.C., grocery store walked past him, did a double take and called out his name. When he said that, yes, he was Batebi, she burst into tears. Batebi advocates peaceful change in Iran. He said although he has arrived during a time of tension between Iran and the United States, he does not want his story to increase the tension, saying that if the United States attacked, "I might go back and fight for my country myself." Batebi believes Iran could well turn solidly democratic some day. He said the government is religiously extreme, but the people are not. In an interview with Voice of America's Persian News Network, Batebi said, "I wish each and every Iranian could travel abroad, come to the U.S. or go to Europe, for just one week, and feel, smell, and breathe freedom, human dignity, and realize the value of their lives." Last month, Tehran arrested two prominent student activists following demonstrations marking the anniversary of the July 1999 student protests. Mohammad Hashemi and Bahareh Hedayat were arrested and sent to Evin prison, Etemad reported. The two are members of the central council of the proreform student group, the Office for Strengthening Solidarity. Hashemi's and Hedayat's arrests have raised the number of students arrested this month to about 18, the Kargozaran newspaper said.

McCain: Let American cigarettes kill Iranians

IranTimes: Senator John McCain, who has a reputation for questionable, acerbic humor, suggested cigarette sales to Iran might solve the nuclear problem by killing off Iranians. He had been asked about news reports of American sales of tobacco and other goods to Iran and chuckled, "Maybe that's a way of killing 'em." As soon



as he uttered those words, his wife, Cindy, was seen poking him in the back to signal he had said something he ought not to. McCain got the

wifely message and immediately added, "I meant that as a joke—as a person who hasn't had a cigarette in 28 years, 29 years." In Tehran, the Iranian Foreign Ministry, which is not noted for its sense of humor, objected that McCain's comment exposed his "warmongering" attitude to foreign policy. Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad-Ali Hossaini said, "McCain's crude remark on the indiscriminate killing of the Iranian people not only testifies to a disturbed state of mind, but also his warmongering approach to foreign policy." Later, the ministry's website added a less feisty comment: "We condemn such jokes and believe them to be inappropriate for a U.S. presidential candidate. It is most evident that jokes about genocide will not be tolerated by Iranians and Americans." There was little reaction in the United States, however. That was very unlike the complaints that flew from many critics last year when McCain was asked a question at a veterans gathering about attacking Iran and he responded by referring to the satirical takeoff on the Beach Boys' song, "Bar- Barbara Ann" by singing "Bomb, bomb Iran."

Obama: Cartoon insults Muslims, but not me

IranTimes: Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama responded to The New Yorker magazine cover by saying he has developed a "thick-skin," but the cartoon was an insult to Muslim Americans. The cover has received international attention for portraying Obama and his wife as flagburning, fist-bumping, Muslim radicals. "You know, there are wonderful Muslim-Americans all across the country who are doing wonderful things," the presidential candidate told CNN's Larry King. "And for this to be used as sort of an insult, or to raise suspicions about me, I think is unfortunate. And it's not what America's all about." The response seemed in part to be an effort to appeal to American Muslims who have expressed some irritation with Obama for denying he is a Muslim in a way that appears to some to be demeaning Islam. The cover of the magazine, published last Monday, features a drawing of Obama in traditional Muslim garb—sandals, robe and turban—while his wife, Michelle, carries an assault rifle over one shoulder and is dressed in camouflage and combat boots with her hair in a huge Afro, much like the non-Muslim black radical Angela Davis of the 1960s. The two fist-bump in the foreground while a portrait of Osama bin Laden hangs above the mantel of the fireplace in which an American flag is burning. The room is the presidential Oval Office. Obama, who is the son of a Muslim Kenyan father and a Christian American mother from Kansas, spent the first four years of elementary school in the largely Muslim nation of Indonesia. Those facts



have prompted rumors that he is a secret Muslim. Obama dealt with similar accusations in February after a photo surfaced of him dressed in traditional tribal garb during a visit to Africa in 2006. Obama spokesman Bill Burton described the magazine cover as "tasteless and offensive." The New Yorker said the cartoon was intended as a sendup of those who spread the many rumors about Obama and his wife by showing how ridiculous the rumors are.

Ahmadi-nejad: All of the world loves Iran

IranTimes: President Ahmadi-nejad assured the public that there is nothing to worry about be-



cause almost the entire world supports Iran's cause. In an interview on state television broadcast nationally, Ahmadi-nejad told the people: "World public opinion is almost unanimously

with the Iranian nation." What's more, he said, that support includes American public opinion, since the Americans have also realized the righteousness of the Iranians. As a result, he said, the next American administration that takes office in January will have no option other than to enter talks with the Islamic Republic. Ahmadi-nejad harped on what has been one of his recurring themes for many months—that Iran under his presidency has become a mighty and powerful state. Furthermore, he said, the Americans have not been promoting democracy and human rights, but simply trying to stop the relentless growth in Iranian power. He denounced American rhetoric opposing Iran's nuclear program as a mere smokescreen and said, "What they are really opposed to is a nation like Iran reaching a stage where it is a model for the rest of the world." Ahmadi-nejad also pursued a new theme that has emerged in just the last few weeks that Iran does not wish to talk to the Big Six powers only about Iran's nuclear program, but insists on being part of discussions on global issues, including even development policies in Latin America. Ahmadi-nejad told the television audience, "Our rights will be materialized in the framework of our role in resolving world crises." He said, "We have offered solutions to ease the world's worries. We have proposed ways for nuclear disarmament, world economic recovery, international security, and how to reach a satisfactory world order with peace and security." Iran issued a document several weeks ago that has become the centerpiece of Iranian foreign policy. It is essentially a demand by the Islamic Republic that it become the seventh state joining the Big Six to discuss and propose solutions for global challenges. Iran's proposal has so far been greeted with stunning silence by the major powers.

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