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IRANIAN AMERICAN INFORMATION NETWORK™
VOLUME 18 - NO. 215 May 2009
PEZHVAK ADVERTISING & MAILING P.O.Box 54067, San Jose, CA 95154-0067
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Trial of minutes convicts Saberri as spy

IranTimes: After a Revolutionary Court trial lasting less than an hour, Iranian-American Roxanna Saberri has been sentenced to eight years in prison on espionage charges; she is appealing the verdict. The sentence stunned the Obama Administration, which is trying to open doors to the Islamic Republic.



But many analysts thought the sentence would not hold for long. Eight days after she was convicted, Judiciary Chairman Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi issued a statement calling for a full investigation of the charges against Saberri, despite the fact that investigations are normally completed before trials. That order suggested Shahrudi was displeased by the handling of the case. And President Ahmadinejad said he wanted the appeal to guarantee all of

Saberri's rights, not exactly a statement of faith in the judicial system. Ahmadi-nejad has no authority over the Judicial Branch of government and cannot issue orders to it, but the public statement also telegraphed the president's displeasure with the trial court. There are many theories explaining Saberri's arrest and trial. Three theories have drawn the most attention. One holds that hardliners are behind the charges and are using the case to try to spike any efforts to improve relations with Washington. Abbas Milani, director of Iranian studies at Stanford University, said Saberri's trial and sentence might be an attempt by the ultra-right to throw off track any efforts towards reconciliation with the Obama administration. "The radical wing, opposed to the idea of rapprochement with the U.S., and influential in the Judiciary, is using the case to make such a change in U.S.-Iran relations more difficult," Milani told The New York Times. "It is part of a pattern. Every time the two countries come close to the moment of truth, radicals manufacture a crisis that renders negotiations more difficult."

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Chador Making Comeback as Fashion Item

by Raha Izadi

IranTimes: I stop and take a look at a sign in a shop window on Valiasr Square that reads, "National chadors, made from Japanese black silk, 32,000 tomans each (about \$32 U.S. dollars)." A woman wearing a long, dark dress and a tightly tied headscarf tells me why she is interested in buying one. "I want it for parties during Now Ruz time. It is smart and it gives you more mobility," she said. The "national" or "student" chador, with its decorated sleeves, is not only a



more elegant take on the traditional garment, but is also cut to allow greater freedom of movement. There are other advantages, too. For example, it is possible to wear long boots underneath, which you could not normally do without the morality police noticing. The shopkeeper says that around the time of Iranian New Year, he sells one every couple of days. Najmeh Babaei, who is from Tehran, is wearing a national chador, a long bright green dress and a white shawl and is carrying a folder of papers. She explains why the style appeals to her. "I personally do not believe in wearing the chador, but my father would not want me to leave home without one. That is why I bought the national chador. It is comfortable to wear and you do not look prudish," she said. The chador is part of a culture that wants women to be protected and hidden, a culture that is uncomfortable with women being easily visible in the public arena. However, clothes which offer greater freedom of movement—such as the manteau—have al-

lowed women to appear more in public and allowed them to do jobs that were previously monopolized by men. Fattaneh Jenabi, the original designer of the national chador, explains the problems women face when wearing a traditional chador. "We usually use our hands to secure the chador around our waists when we are getting into a car or climbing stairs, revealing our figures and the curves of our bodies, which is something women do not like to do," she said. "At other times, many women have to keep their

chador in place with their teeth when they are returning from shopping so that they can hold their bags with their hands. It's also a problem when a woman wearing a chador has to carry her baby's things as well as her own and has to manage a chador which is loose on all sides." Her version,

she says, has dealt with these drawbacks. "It is not a new fashion. It is the same normal chador, but it does not have the problems of the previous design. The front of this chador is completely closed with hidden buttons. That means you can wear it without a long dress underneath, so it is very good in the summer," she went on. "On the other hand, the sleeve design gives women more freedom so that they can ... carry on with their normal activities." She also filmed in the streets to research how women wear chadors. "According to my figures, 93 percent of women who wear the chador do not have a complete hijab and in fact it is their dress and scarf which keeps their chador in place," she said. Before Jenabi came up with her national chador in 2004, some young women, especially students, wore an Arabic chador—smarter than the traditional Iranian version and easier to move in. Jenabi's design is along the same lines, but less "posh" than the

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Iran is now world's No. 1 wheat importer

IranTimes: The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that Iran is now the world's largest importer of wheat, projecting it will import 8.5 million tons of the grain in the 2008-2009 year ending in June despite Tehran's claim it achieved self-sufficiency in the crop in 2004. According to an April 13 report by the USDA's Economic Research Service, Iran is now the largest global importer of the strategic crop it considers key to national food security. "The largest increase this month in wheat imports is for Iran, up 1.5 million tons to 8.5 million. With production in 2008 reduced by drought, Iran has set aside its goal of wheat self-sufficiency and emerged as the world's largest wheat importer, after importing

only 0.2 million tons in 2007/08," the study said. If the forecast proves accurate, Iranian imports



would account for about 6.5 percent of the global wheat trade. The total cost of the imports is esti-

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