

# Horrors of stoning captured on film

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In my snug little apartment on the Stanford University campus I have just watched on my TV screen 15 minutes of pure horror: the lashing and stoning ordered by Iranian judges of two Iranian men for committing so-called crimes.

The 15-minute film I viewed is an old one, shot outdoors in broad, sunny daylight in 1991 and very amateurish. But all is clear, much too clear for queasy stomachs. It was smuggled out only recently by agents of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. Stoning is still to this day the preferred method of execution. All Iranians are invited to join in hurling rocks at someone who is completely covered from topknotted head to toe in winding sheets and lifted standing up into a sandpit. The pit is then filled up to the victim's waist and the sand tamped down. Then the fun begins.

The orders from on high are that the stones must not be too small as death will not ensue; nor must they be too large as death may come too soon, says the instruction book. Devout Iranians have made sure the area is covered with stones that are just the right size. The distance between the throwers and the target is about 10 feet so it's hard to miss. In the film, the victims are stoned at a police barrack in Tehran in the presence of high-ranking officials of the regime's judiciary.

The victim's hands are obviously tied behind his back because only his head is free to move. So as each stone strikes its target, the victim's head starts again and again. Suddenly the part of the winding sheet that covers the victim's head becomes red-stained and in a minute or so the head sags forward and there is no more movement. All I could think is what I was watching was a lynch mob at work.

We have heard about such punishments in Iran since 1979 when the shah was overthrown and the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his murderous mullah theocracy took over. There is even an explanation by the late ayatollah himself for the 23-year reign of terror. In a sermon Feb. 3, 1984, later published in the government newspaper, *Ettelaat*, he said:

"Killing is a form of mercy because it rectifies the person. Sometimes a person cannot be reformed unless he is cut up and burned. You must kill, burn and lock up those in opposition."

His successors have more than lived up to that precept and have thereby brought Iran to the brink of revolution with their merciless rectification of unreformable Iranians. The State Department describes Iran as the "most active state sponsor of

terrorism" in the world.

The video I saw is a documentary recording of two individuals being stoned in one of the security centers in Tehran in the presence of high-ranking officials of the regime's judiciary. The video's opening scene is that of a tall mustached man being lashed after the prosecutor has read out the verdicts. The prosecutor declares the verdicts were issued by Ali Razini, the head of Judicial Organization of the Military Forces, who begins the festivities with these words:

"We have all gathered here to implement divine punishments. Oh, Almighty, we plead with you to give victory to Islam and Muslims."

Mr. Razini, seen later in the video tape as he throws the first stone, is currently the head of Tehran's Justice Department and also heads the "Special Clerical Court." At one point in the video, you can see on the back wall a large photograph of an angry-looking Ayatollah Khomeini.

Since the inception of the Iranian theocratic dictatorship, hundreds of men and women of various ages have been stoned to death throughout Iran, all in the name of Mohammed and the Koran.

The film has been shown to the U.N. Committee of Human Rights, presently under the chairmanship of Libya. (I am not joking). In offering compensation to the victims (in order to lift U.N. sanctions), Libya for all practical purposes has accepted responsibility for the Lockerbie terrorist bombing. That explosion on Dec. 1, 1988, killed 259 people on Pan-Am 103 and 11 people on the ground. Other members of the U.N. Committee of Human Rights include Zimbabwe, Sudan, China and Cuba. Little help can therefore be expected from that lot. President Bush might easily have included these countries in his "axis of evil."

The National Council of Resistance of Iran, which is supported by some 150 House Republicans and Democrats as a legitimate democratic opposition, has sent a copy of the stoning video to Condoleezza Rice, national security adviser.