

# Tehran Friday Prayer / Ghods Day<sup>1</sup>

## November 29, 2002

The Friday prayer has become a major institution in Iran since the beginning of the revolution. It is, in its “new improved” version introduced by the Islamic Revolution, quite an innovative combination of three main elements:

Religious, political and a tribune for the regime’s domestic and foreign policy. In this respect it gives you an up-to-date image of the “mood” of the country. Depending on who is leading the prayers it can be very informative.

It is also a popular gathering place and “something to do” for many people on Fridays. Mr. Rafsanjani (I wonder why “Mr.” Seems to suit him better than “Ayatollah”!), by many counts the most powerful person in the country, delivered the sermon on this very important day. Unfortunately we could not attend the prayer proper because you have to check in your camera, mobile phone and arms!... before you can walk into the Tehran University campus, where the Friday prayer is held. But being around it and having freedom of movement was even better because instead of just listening to the sermon which, we could always catch later on in the papers or on TV, we could talk to people, take photos and be part of the event.



Two Basiji friends, met the same day and I (on the right)

The Ghods Day was proposed by Ayatollah Taleghani<sup>2</sup> and implemented by Imam Khomeini in August 1979<sup>3</sup> as the day of protest and support for Palestine. It falls on every last Friday of the lunar month of Ramadan. So its dates varies because of course last Fridays of months don't fall on

<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem, also written "Quds" . By extension has become to also refer to the Al-Aqsa mosque and to mean the liberalization of Palestine as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Very popular (to this day) and somewhat left-leaning cleric. Because of his popularity with the young and his good relations with various leftist factions, he was an instrumental person in the making of the revolution. He died or "was killed" less than a year after the revolution. He was the first post revolutionary Friday Prayer leader.

<sup>3</sup> "I invite Muslims all over the globe to consecrate the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as 'Quds Day' and to proclaim the international solidarity of Muslims in support of the legitimate rights of the Muslim people of Palestine." - Imam Khomeini (R.A.), Ramadan 1399AH ( August 1979)

the same date; on top of it the lunar year is shorter by abt 10 days than the solar calendar!

The Ghods Day has become a major political event in Iran. Apparently it has caught on in other Islamic countries as well.

Having not witnessed a “march” since the revolution I decided to go and “check out” the Friday Prayer and the Ghods Day. The bad weather not allowing us to go on a skiing tour was an extra incentive!

Marco D., my faithful touring partner and I arrived a little early.

The first thing that struck me was the festive mood. Even in the month of Ramadan the main avenue’s sidewalks leading to the Tehran University were full of vendors selling all kinds of cheap stuff, including computer CD’s!

The crowd is made of three main categories:

1. Families (mostly lower classes), which come here to participate and pray.
2. People that just come for the happening and something to do on Friday.
3. Organized marchers from various army and government sectors.

Even these people are mostly friendly and there is no feeling of animosity.

The burning of the

American or Israeli flag even is carried out without putting real heart into it.



Everyone is having a good time!

We wandered around for a couple of hours took some photos, talked to people and came back.

I could not help thinking that:

- This not at all what we see on TV, where one has the impression of seeing a very angry crowd.
- The cause is not that unintelligent either. The Palestinian people are indeed oppressed and defending them by whatever means is not an unworthy cause.

So, taking into account that the real target of the protest is not America and not even Israel but their treatment of our Palestinian “brothers”,

Why not the Ghods Day?

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