

HAMBURG FILMFEST
2010

IOFA AMSTERDAM
2010

The Green Wave

PRESSBOOK

A FILM BY
ALI SAMADI AHADI

A DREAMER JOINT VENTURE FILMPRODUKTION * IN COPRODUCTION WITH WIZARD UG * STARRING PEGAH FERYDONI & NAVID AKHAVAN * ART DIRECTOR ALI SOOZANDEH
DRAWINGS ALI REZA DARVISH * MOTION DIRECTORS PROF. DR. SINA MOSTAFAWY & ALI SOOZANDEH * EDITORS BARBARA TOENNIESHEN & ANDREAS MENN * MUSIC BY ALI N. ASKIN
COMMISSIONING EDITORS DR. SABINE ROLLBERG, SABINE BOHLAND & MATHIAS WERTH * PRODUCERS JAN KRUEGER & OLIVER STOLTZ * WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ALI SAMADI AHADI

DREAMER
JOINT VENTURE

FLM

Förderung
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WDR

International Premiere at IDFA Amsterdam 2011

a film by Ali Samadi Ahadi

Produced by

DREAMER JOINT VENTURE Filmproduktion

In co-production with Wizard UG, WDR and WDR/ Arte

Supported by

Filmstiftung NRW, MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Nordmedia, MEDIA

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CAST & CREW

Written & Directed by	Ali Samadi Ahadi
Starring	Pegah Ferydoni, Navid Akhavan and many more
Director of Photography	Peter Jeschke, Ali Samadi Ahadi
Art Director	Ali Soozandeh
Drawings	Ali Reza Darvish
Motion Directors	Prof. Dr. Sina Mostafawy & Ali Soozandeh
Editors	Barbara Toennieshen & Andreas Menn
Music by	Ali N. Askin
Based on an Idea of	Ali Samadi Ahadi & Oliver Stoltz
Associate Producers	Roshanak Khodabakhsh & Thomas Saignes
Commissioning Editors	Dr. Sabine Rollberg (WDR/ Arte), Sabine Bohland & Mathias Werth (WDR)
Producers	Jan Krueger & Oliver Stoltz
Interview Partners (selection)	
	Dr. Shirin Ebadi
	Prof. Dr. Payam Akhavan
	Dr. Mohsen Kadivar
	Mehdi Mohseni
	Mitra Khalatbari
Germany 2010	
Technical Specs:	Runtime: 80 minutes, HD, 1:1.85
Languages:	International version in English and Farsi (English subtitles)
	German version in German, English and Farsi (German subtitles)

SYNOPSIS

Green is the color of hope. Green is the color of Islam. And Green was the symbol of recognition among the supporters of presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, who became the symbolic figure of the Green Revolution in Iran last year. The presidential elections on June 12th, 2009 were supposed to bring about a change, but contrary to all expectations the ultra-conservative populist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was confirmed in office. As clear as was the result, as loud and justified were the accusations of vote-rigging. The on-going Where is my vote? protest demonstrations were again and again worn down and broken up with brutal attacks



by government militia. Images taken from private persons with their cell phones or cameras bear witness to this excessive violence: people were beaten, stabbed, shot dead, arrested, kidnapped, some of them disappearing without trace. What remains is the countless number of dead or injured people and victims of torture, and another deep wound in the hearts of the Iranians.

THE GREEN WAVE is a touching documentary-collage illustrating the dramatic events and telling about the feelings of the people behind this revolution. Facebook reports, Twitter messages and videos posted in the internet were included in the film composition, and hundreds of real blog entries served as reference for the experiences and thoughts of two young students, whose story is running through the film as the main thread. The film describes their initial hope and curiosity, their desperate fear, and the courage to yet continue to fight. These fictional 'storylines'

have been animated as a motion comic – sort of a moving comic – framing the deeply affecting pictures of the revolution and the interviews with prominent human rights campaigners and exiled Iranians. Ali Samadi Ahadi's documentary is a highly contemporary chronicle of the Green Revolution and a memorial for all of those who believed in more freedom and lost their lives for it.

PRESS RELEASE

Following the award-winning documentary LOST CHILDREN that he did together with Oliver Stoltz (among others the German Film Award) and his affectionate comedy SALAMI ALEIKUM – in his film THE GREEN WAVE Ali Samadi Ahadi reflects the dramatic events before and after the presidential elections 2009 in Iran.

Like an eager sigh, like an unstoppable wave, the desire for more freedom began to spread out in Iran last summer. The color Green of the supporters of presidential



candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi became the ever-present symbol of a potential change. But on election day the peaceful revolution failed and the regime under Ahmadinejad took action against the oppositionists, activists and demonstrators with a brutality almost too difficult to imagine.

Framed by animated 'scenes' which from the perspective of two young students convey a sense of the events, the film shows the real pictures of the revolution, taken

with cameras or cell phones: election meetings, demonstrations, unrest and finally the attacks of the militia with batons and knives. Ahadi's film produced by Oliver Stoltz and Jan Krueger (both of Dreamer Joint Venture Filmproduktion) is a courageous and encouraging collage composed of blog quotes, real video recordings, illustrative interviews with prominent exiled Iranians and human rights activists, and of a motion comic narrative thread – resulting in a stirring plea, an appeal for awareness and actions, and a shaking up, shocking and touching chronicle of the Green Revolution in Iran.



STORYLINE

"For a few weeks we had the feeling of being so close to our goal as never before ..."
– blog entry.

The Green Revolution in Iran owes its name to the color that became the symbol of recognition among the supporters of presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Being the color of Islam and the color of hope, and being one of the Iranian national colors this Green unfolded an unforeseen signal effect and symbolic power going far beyond the mere commitment to Mousavi. It was not just about election campaigning, not even about dissatisfaction with the regime under Ahmadinejad, but about a new collective spirit and the confidence that there could be another way for Iran, a way that is not characterized by reprisals, oppressions and despotism. This Green was the signal to set out, the symbol of courage and of the chance for a change that had been considered improbable for a long time.

In the streets of Tehran and other big cities, the euphoria was evident: cloths, bracelets, scarfs, nail polish, almost anything was appropriate as a green greeting, as an attribute of peaceful unity and as a gesture of rebellion.



Though news coverage from Iran was almost impossible, the Green Movement could also be sensed abroad, where usually nothing but Ahmadinejad's provocations were received. Twitter and Facebook messages, YouTube videos and especially numerous

blogs reflected an unforeseen euphoric mood. The Iranian blogger scene, which is considered to be one of the largest in the world, came up in the years 1999 to 2003 at the height of the reform movement of those days. Since 2005 this internet forum has had to struggle with more strict controls by the regime and has been curtailed as much as possible. Any blogger making critical comments has to live with the risk of prosecution by the government. In the months before the presidential elections in 2009 this scene started to flourish again and the internet has become an important vital lifeline for the revolution.

Over a thousand different entries in Iranian blogs have been the inspiration for the two 'fictional' students – their thoughts being the emotional thread running through the real events: how they perceive the awakening of the Green Movement, how they wake up from a frustrating hopelessness and feel that there is after all a chance to shape the future, how they become desperate with fear beginning to grow again, and how they despite all that do not give up hope.

The stories of the students Azadeh and Kaveh are animated as a motion comic, and rich in contrast going along with the real video images of the revolt and with the interviews with prominent Iranian personalities and human rights activists like Dr. Shirin Ebadi (Noble Peace Prize winner), the Shiite cleric Dr. Mohsen Kadivar (one of the most important critics of the Islamic Republic), the young journalist Mitra Khalatbari, Dr. Payam Akhavan (former UN war crimes prosecutor and a specialist in



human rights), or with Mehdi Mohseni (blogger and election assistant to Mir-Hossein Mousavi).

The hopes of the Green Movement for a victory of Mousavi and for reforms were bitterly dashed on the election day and the accusations of vote-rigging still called people into the streets. But ever since the supreme clerical leader of Iran, Khamenei, declared the election result official and uttered an explicit threat to the protesters, the measures against the peaceful resistance became more and more brutal. The images of Neda killed by a shot in the chest during a demonstration shortly afterwards went around the world. Countless videos taken with cameras or cell phones and put on the internet give evidence for the excessive brutality that the government militia used against the demonstrators: militias driving on motorbikes into the crowd of people, beating them with knives and batons, or treading on casualties lying defenselessly on the ground. The regime systematically took action against the ongoing protests, against oppositionists and – like in a frenzy of violence – also against innocent bystanders. Raids at night, arrests on a large scale, never-ending interrogations, raping, abductions, torture – any desire for freedom, any thought of rebellion should be suppressed with inhuman cruelty. Up to this day the pressure of the regime continues, but although the Green Revolution has been subjugated with every available means, the desire of the people for more freedom and dignity is unbroken – just as is their willingness to fight for it.

DIRECTOR ALI SAMADI AHADI ABOUT HIS FILM

It was June 12th, 2009. After having worked very hard for two years all of us were very much looking forward to the premiere of our comedy SALAMI ALEIKUM.

From all over Germany our colleagues gathered together for the International Film Festival in Emden where the film would be shown to the public for the first time. On the very same day my wife and I went to Bonn to submit our voting slip for the presidential elections in Iran. I always felt both, as an Iranian and as a German. So did my wife. We met in the no man's land of cultures and tried to bring together in our lives the positive aspects of both of the two worlds.

On the very same evening of June 12th it suddenly became clear that one of those worlds was in flames. Despite SALAMI ALEIKUM being a great success in Emden, our team did not at all feel like celebrating. We felt kind of petrified. Paralyzed. And this feeling of helplessness was to remain for weeks. Iran was in flames and we could not do anything. Day by day we were sitting in front of the television for hours, being on the phone with each other, one in Vienna, the others in Berlin and Cologne. Silent. We were not in the mood for talking, but then again did not want to be alone during these hours. We moved together – if only on the phone.

It really took me weeks to get out of this dizziness and to take the decision to do what I can do best: a film about the events in Iran in the summer of 2009.

But very soon it became clear that we had to find a special narrative style for this, because for the events behind us there existed only fragmentary poor-quality pictures taken with cell phones or images from archives covering the situation only in part.

A reenactment was out of question for me, especially since it was clear to me that as long as the regime in Iran was in power I could no longer visit Iran.

Iran is a nation of bloggers. Thousands of young people write down their feelings, write down what is on their minds in their blogs. If it was no longer possible for me to shoot my film in Iran, to interview the people there, these blogs were exactly the right source to reach the inner voices of the people.

For a long time Ali Soozandeh and I have been searching for an adequate visual language, when we came across the so-called motion comic to tell about these

blogs. I chose 15 blogs from 1,500 websites which we then translated into images. We attracted a range of actors like Pegah Ferydoni, Navid Akhavan, Jasmin Tabatabai and Caroline Schreiber. With them we re-enacted the scenes and took photos.

Alireza Darvish, a wonderful artist, accepted to do the drawings of the characters, and Sina Mostafawy and his team began with the animation of the scenes.

Finally, from the archive material, the recently shot interviews, the pictures from cell phones and the animations, Barbara Toennieshen and Andreas Menn composed this collage.

The whole production took 10 months. Within these 10 months the concept, the financing, 42 minutes of animations, the editing as well as the sound design, the music and the compositing came off.

The time pressure was immense and could only be put up with, because everybody plunged into the project and worked day and night.

And at the same time one thing was clear for the team of Iranian descent: because of their participation in this project they will never be able to visit Iran again. But as has Saadi so nicely said,

*„Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul,
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you've no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain!“*

THE PROTAGONISTS

Dr. SHIRIN EBADI – since many years the Noble Peace Prize winner and Iranian lawyer is fighting for more human rights and for freedom in Iran. She is the founder of the Centre for the Defense of Human Rights in Iran. On October 10th, 2003 she was awarded the most important peace prize for her ceaseless and pioneering efforts for democracy and human rights – especially women's, children's and refugee rights – being the first Iranian, and the first Muslim woman to have received this prize.

PROFESSOR DR. PAYAM AKHAVAN – the former war crimes prosecutor is a professor of international law at McGill University in Montréal. He teaches and researches in the areas of public international law and international criminal law with a particular interest in human rights and multiculturalism, UN reforms and the prevention of genocide. Akhavan has published numerous articles and books. His article *Beyond Impunity* about the chances and barriers in international criminal prosecution, published in 2001 in *American Journal of International Law*, is considered to be one of the most significant published journal essays in contemporary legal studies.

Professor Akhavan was the first Legal Advisor to the Prosecutor's Office of the International Criminal Tribunals for former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda and played a key role in the trial of Slobodan Milošević. He also served with the UN in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Guatemala, East Timor and Rwanda, and was appointed as legal advisor in many important cases before the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and the European Court of Human Rights. Professor Akhavan is a prominent human rights advocate for Iranian political prisoners and co-founder of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, an organization documenting human rights violations by Iranian leaders to prepare for legal actions.

Dr. MOHSEN KADIVAR – the Shiite cleric and philosopher, university lecturer, author and political dissident is one of the leading cleric critics of the Iranian system of Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist, established by Khomeini. Kadivar studied theology

and got his PhD in Islamic law and Islamic philosophy. For a long time Kadivar has been an advocate for more democracy and also religious reforms in Iran.

At the end of the 90ies, for example, he fell into disgrace after having voiced public criticism and was sentenced to 18 months in prison.

MEHDI MOHSENI – in his publications the blogger and journalist has advocated for reforms in Iran. He also was election assistant to Mousavi prior to the presidential elections. In summer 2009 he came to Germany in the course of a scientific exchange and since then has been living in exile there, because it would be too dangerous for him to return.

MITRA KHALATBARI – the award-winning journalist has experienced the consequences of the controversial presidential elections firsthand. To escape the pressure and the persecution of the regime, in autumn 2009 she fled from Iran to Cologne and has been living in exile since then.

THE CREW

ALI SAMADI AHADI (director & author)

Director and author Ali Samadi Ahadi was born in 1972 in the north Iranian city of Tabriz. In 1985, when he was 12 years old, he came to Germany without his family and later took his Abitur in Hannover. In Kassel he studied visual communication with the focus on film and television. At the end of the 90's he started his career as a filmmaker. He participated in several documentaries and reports as director, film editor or cinematographer. For his documentary CULTURE CLAN he was nominated for the Rose d'Or award, and in Cape Town he won the Channel O Award in the category of "Best Foreign Music Film". Literally a flood of awards followed soon after for his documentary LOST CHILDREN in co-production with Oliver Stoltz, which won the German Film Award 2006 as well as numerous international awards (among others the UNICEF Award, Al Jazeera Award). Recently, Ahadi made his first feature film SALAMI ALEIKUM, in 2009 reaching a top position in the Arthouse charts with this culture clash comedy.

Cast of the motion comic plots

PEGAH FERYDONI (AZADEH)

Pegah Ferydoni was born in Tehran in 1983. At the peak of the Iran-Iraq war her parents – artists and political intellectuals – escaped with their two-year-old daughter to Germany. She spent her childhood in West Berlin, and already as a teenager she gained first experience as an actress. She appeared in several TV and film productions, before she became known to a broader audience with the ARD series TÜRKISCH FÜR ANFÄNGER (TURKISH FOR BEGINNERS). She was playing one of the central characters in the three seasons of this award-winning series, appeared on screen in Til Schweiger's successful comedy RABIT WITHOUT EARS 2 and recently in WOMEN WITHOUT MEN, the directorial debut of the Iranian artist Shirin Neshat.



NAVID AKHAVAN (KAVEH)

Navid Akhavan was born in Tehran in 1980. Due to the Iran-Iraq war his family escaped from Iran a few years later. After living in the USA for some time Navid came with his parents and his little brother to Germany. He played his first important leading role in Elmar Fischer's **FREMDER FREUND**

and made appearances in TV productions like **KÖNIG VON KREUZBERG**. Recently, he was starring in Arash T. Riahi's award-winning refugee drama **FOR A MOMENT, FREEDOM**, in Shirin Neshat's directorial debut **WOMEN WITHOUT MEN** and in Ali Samadi Ahadi's comedy **SALAMI ALEIKUM**. In addition Akhavan is a stage actor and singer.

**DREAMER JOINT VENTURE FILMPRODUKTION
(PRODUCTION COMPANY)**

The production company Dreamer Joint Venture based in Berlin was founded in 1997 by Oliver Stoltz. Since then the company has produced various documentary and feature films, including, as an outstanding example, **LOST CHILDREN** (directed by Oliver Stoltz & Ali Samadi Ahadi) – winning the German Film Award for “Best Documentary Film” in 2006 and moreover getting an Emmy® nomination. Further productions have been **Leroy** (German Film Award 2008 for “Best Children's Film”), the successful Arthouse comedy **SALAMI ALEIKUM** and recently **LIFE, ABOVE ALL** by Oliver Schmitz, which had its world premiere at the International Cannes Film Festival 2010 in the category Un Certain Regard and has been selected as South Africa's entry for the 2011 Oscars®.

JAN KRUEGER (PRODUKTION)

Young producer Jan Krueger was born in 1981 in Oldenburg. After his Abitur he began to study film productions at the Film and Television University HFF Konrad Wolf in Potsdam. Already during his studies he was active in various projects as a freelance producer. In 2003 he founded his company K'Summer prod. and produced musical and short films. During his time at Dreamer Joint Venture he was responsible for LEROY (associate producer), SALAMI ALEIKUM (Producer) and THE GREEN WAVE (producer). Right now Jan Krueger is developing/financing two new documentaries (JOURNEY TO JAH and ALPHA STORY) and several features with his Berlin-based company Port-au-Prince Filmproduktion.

OLIVER STOLTZ (PRODUKTION)

Oliver Stoltz was born in Bonn in 1969. He studied film production in Potsdam at the Film and Television University HFF Konrad Wolf, and took his MFA graduation in motion picture producing in the Peter Stark Producing Program at the USC in Los Angeles. In 1996 he was associate producer for the motion picture Knockin' on Heaven's Door. One year later he founded the Dreamer Joint Venture Filmproduktion GmbH and produced various feature and documentary films for German TV channels like RTL, ProSieben, ZDF, Arte, as well as motion pictures for Warner and Disney. With Ali Samadi Ahadi as co-director, he gave his debut as a director in Lost Children, which became one of the most successful documentary films of the year and won the German Film Award 2006. The blaxploitation comedy Leroy produced by Stoltz could score twice at the German Film Awards 2008, in the categories of "Best children and youth film" and "Best Score". In 2008 Stoltz produced Ahadi's successful culture clash comedy Salami Aleikum which was released in the cinemas in 2009. Along with Ahadi's The Green Wave, his latest project is the film Life, Above All directed by Oliver Schmitz that has been sold successfully worldwide (Sony Pictures Classics, ARP sélection, Senator Film Verleih, etc.).

PRODUCTION NOTES

On June 12th, 2009 presidential elections took place in Iran. The hopes of the predominantly young voters (70% of the population are under 25) for a regime change were high. Surveys indicated a high victory of the opposition. Contrary to all expectations and forecasts Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected, and it was obvious that there had been large-scale vote-rigging. Not only that people had to bitterly realize what kind of farce this election had been, they were also battered, persecuted and even murdered when they peacefully voiced their protest. To this day, demonstrators in Iran are being arrested, tortured, raped and sentenced to death. During the last months, thousands of oppositionists and supporters of the Green Wave of protest had to flee into exile under the most difficult and life-threatening conditions and are now waiting in reception camps to be granted asylum.

But how can you portray these events in a motion picture, when there is hardly any objective visual material available, when you are not allowed to shoot in the country of events, because any form of Western journalism is inhibited? It was clear that there should be interviews with exiled Iranians and human rights activists that are able to assess the events in Iran. It was also clear that the first-hand videos, which often had been recorded only with photo cameras or cell phones, should be used. But how can one visualise the atmosphere of the awakening of a revolution and its failure on the screen? And how can one illustrate the disturbing reports about raids at night, abductions and torture when, of course, no pictures exist?

Last but not least, it was these questions that the team of the full-length documentary film THE GREEN WAVE had to face. However, the answers lay in the nature of the Green Movement itself, the first revolution whose most important communication network was and is the internet. Blogs, networks, YouTube channels and Twitter messages provide the clearest picture of the Green Wave in Iran, and it was crucial to find a visually exciting way to bring these contents onto the screen.

In preparation of the film hundreds of internet blog entries and videos from Iran were reviewed and assessed, and soon it became clear that a reenactment of the atrocities for the camera was impossible. Together with the animation artist Ali Soozandeh – as a stylized and emotional illustration of blog entries and other first-

hand experience – a so-called motion comic style was developed, a sort of moving comic book that allowed a reenactment of these impressions and at the same time, in its alienation, should form a contrast to the frighteningly real and realistic video recordings, which are also used in the film. Yet during research and development it quickly became clear that a small documentary film budget would not be sufficient for such hard animation work and for the immense time pressure.

But chance would have it that due to the new situation in Iran the originally planned film of Ali Samadi Ahadi and Oliver Stoltz – a documentary about drugs in Iran – could no longer be realized. However, the commissioning editor in charge, Sabine Rollberg (WDR/Arte), at once saw the need for another 'new' film about Iran on the much more contemporary subject. In a joint effort also the WDR (Mathias Werth and Sabine Bohland) could be convinced. In the end it is thanks to the uncomplicated and spontaneous willingness of the federal funding organizations (Filmstiftung NRW, MFG Baden-Württemberg and Nordmedia) and of the two commissioning editors that this film could be financed and produced in record time (less than a year).

After research 15 contributions from the reviewed blogs were selected and interwoven into the experience and the thoughts of two fictional characters (Azandeh and Kaveh). Certainly the most well-known actors of Iranian descent in Germany, the two young actors Pegah Ferydoni (as Azandeh) and Navid Akhavan (as Kaveh) lend these two students their bodies, their faces and their voices. During photo sessions for several days photo templates were taken that afterwards were copied and colorized by a team of ten people under the direction of artist Ali Reza Darvish. In this way about 4,000 single images were created, which then were brought to life by more than twenty animation artists from Cologne, Hannover, Berlin and Ludwigsburg, under the direction of Sina Mostafawy from the Cologne-based agency RMH new

media. In addition to that interviews with exiled Iranians, for example, with the Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi or the young journalist Mitra Khalatbari, were filmed in Cologne, Berlin and Geneva. In collaboration with the editors Barbara Toennishen and Andreas Menn the filmed interviews, the archive video material and the single animated scenes were used to create a highly emotional collage that reflects the desire for more freedom in Iran as well as the bloody and bitter reality of a cruel rogue regime.



TIMELINE – RECENT HISTORY of IRAN, 1941 – 2009**August 1941**

British and Soviet occupation of Iran.

September 16th, 1941

Reza Shah Pahlavi is forced out of power and goes into exile. His son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi succeeds him on the throne.

1945/1946

Until the end of 1945 British troops, and until May 1946 Soviet troops withdraw from Iran.

April 29th, 1951

Mohammad Mossadeq is elected Prime Minister of Iran.

May 1951

Mossadeq opposes the shah's politics. He nationalizes the oil industry, which leads to a conflict with Britain that holds the majority shares of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The emerging conflict known as the Abadan Crisis led to the first exile of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

August 19th, 1953

Mossadeq is overthrown by a coup engineered by the CIA. The shah returns and Mossadeq is sentenced to three years in prison and subsequent house arrest before the end of August.

May 9th, 1961

The shah dissolves the parliament (Majlis). Iran is left without representative body for two years.

1962

Votes for women are introduced, and a land reform takes place – harbingers of the White Revolution initiated by the shah to modernize the country.

June 1963

Ruhollah Khomeini appears on the scene and denounces the shah and not least the measures of the White Revolution.

November 1964

The government sends Ayatollah Khomeini into exile.

June 2nd, 1967

Reza Shah Pahlavi visits Berlin. During the protest demonstrations Bruno Ohnesorg is shot dead by a policeman.

1967

The shah launches a family protection law that improves women's situation in divorce.

1971

The economical growth in the 1960ies had hardly any effect on most of the people in Iran. In fact, poverty in the cities even grew. The pompous celebration of 2500 years of Iranian monarchy led to loud criticism in the population.

March 2nd, 1975

The shah forces the dissolution of all remaining parties and implements the Rastakhiz Party as the new single party.

1978

The dissatisfaction among the population grows. More and more frequently anti-shah demonstrations and nationwide strikes arise. Repeatedly hundreds of thousands of people gather in Tehran, in December 1978, actually roughly one million people come together for an anti-shah demonstration. Partially with extreme brutality, police and military advance on the demonstrators that belonged to various factions,

including liberals and conservatives, seculars and religious, leftists and rightists. Ayatollah Khomeini is their common thread and takes over the role of a unifying figure. This unrest initiated the proclamation of the Islamic Republic.

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

January 16th, 1979

Following further demonstrations and partially bloody attacks against the demonstrators Reza Shah Pahlavi surrenders and goes into exile. He dies in Cairo in 1980.

February 1st, 1979

Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Tehran from exile. He is euphorically received by millions of people. With his rigid attitude against the shah he could also win over leftist and liberal forces.

March 30th/31st, 1979

In a referendum the people pronounce against the monarchy and in favour of the Islamic Republic.

1980

Since 1980 parliamentary elections take place every four years.

September 22nd, 1980

Iraq invades Iran – starting a war between the two neighbouring countries, which should last for eight years and claim about 1.5 million casualties.

1979 – 1982

In the following years the judicial and educational systems were Islamized. Women have to dress according to the Islamic dress code, and in public transportation gender segregation is implemented. Large parts of the economy are nationalized. Critics of the Islamic Republic are prosecuted and oppositions are murdered.

July – December 1988

After the war the economy is devastated, people are tired of war. For fear of internal unrest Iran's leaders have murdered numerous political prisoners, including leftist prisoners. It is assumed that more than 2,000 prisoners were executed.

RECONSTRUCTION**June 3rd, 1989**

Khomeini dies at the age of 86 and is succeeded by the former President Ali Khamenei. Up to this day, he is the Supreme Leader of Iran. Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani is sworn in as the new president of Iran.

1989 – 1993

Under the leadership of Rafsanjani the internal political situation eases, he indicates readiness to talk and wants to open the economic system.

June 1993

Rafsanjani is re-elected president, though his attempt to liberalize the economy remains unsuccessful. Corruption is growing, inflation is rising, the gap between rich and more is getting bigger.

April 30th, 1995

US President Bill Clinton imposes sanctions over Iran, first of all a trade embargo and the prohibition of American investments in Iran. The sanctions are used as a means of exerting pressure against Iran's controversial nuclear program.

REFORM ERA

May 1997

The liberal cleric Mohammad Khatami wins the presidential elections. In the hope of reforms and more freedom especially young people and women voted for him. On the domestic front he strengthens the freedom of press and opinion, with regard to international politics he relies on readiness to talk, but also during his term of office attacks on and persecution of intellectuals and oppositionists happen.

June 2001

Although Khatami is confirmed in office as president, his efforts for reform are considered to be too hesitant, especially by his younger supporters.

Summer 2002

The continuing controversy about Iran's nuclear program is once again provoked by the publication of information about uranium enrichment and heavy water production. Iran repeatedly violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and obstructs controls by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

June 2005

The religious conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, since 2003 mayor of Tehran, wins the presidential elections. His voters predominantly come from poorer and rural classes of society. As regards foreign policy he builds on provocation, and on populism with regard to home affairs.

2009

Previous to the presidential elections on June 12th, 2009 the Green Movement comes into existence – hoping for reforms with Mir-Hossein Mousavi. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is confirmed in office. Subsequently and in the following months repeatedly protest demonstrations take place. The cruelty with which the regime takes action against demonstrators, critics and oppositionists claims thousands of victims.